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One of the most salient and pressing problems in today's world is the national identity/boundary problem, which challenges the unity of states and the legitimacy of political units, and highlights the tenuous relationship between the center and secessionist groups. It is a problem of nation-state boundaries, a problem of territorial disputes, in particular of secession or unification which involves the modification of national boundaries. The national boundary problem stems from a national identity problem. That is, certain sections of peoples do not identify themselves with the nation-states in which they live; rather they seek their own political identity through the reconstruction of their cultural and ethnic identities.

The national identity/boundary problem is salient in East Asia. China has made great efforts to maintain its gigantic geo-political body and to reunify with Taiwan through a construction of pan-Chinese national identity, but has faced challenges from not only the secessionist movements in Tibet and Xingjiang, but also Taiwan's independence movement. In Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party has invented and promoted the Taiwanese national identity and pushed hard for independence through democratisation. The democratisation of South Korea has impacted the politics of national identity, and the Korean peninsula is divided by the two Koreas confronting each other and grappling with the issue of unification. All these issues -- secession, independence and reunification -- are inextricably bound up with the national identity/boundary problem, although they have different formations, conditions and features, and require different solutions. While there is no single solution applicable to all of them, democratisation in South Korea and Taiwan has already impacted on the national identity question and on the way in which the issue can be managed.

Under the above background the central objective of my intellectual inquiry is to explore the question of whether, and under what conditions, democratic ideas, institutions and procedures can ease or intensify the tensions arising from the national identity conflict. It aims to examine and test Western theories of the democratic management of the national identity/boundary problem against the experience of East Asia. Through discussing the complex relationships between Western theories and East Asian practices, I will examine the applicability, conditionality, and implications of Western theories, challenge Euro-centric assumptions, and hopefully revise and develop Western theories into a theory grounded on, or appropriate to, the current development of national boundary politics and democratisation in East Asia.

I have been trained in Eastern and Western philosophy and social and political theories both in People's University of China, Beijing, China, and Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. My interest in the national identity/boundary issue and democratic governance dates back to 1985, when, as a graduate student in the People's University of China at Beijing, I wrote a piece entitled "Transcendence and Boundaries" which was judged the best essay in the University. This was the first time I thought about the identity/boundary issue in a Hegelian framework. In the last decade I have been working on the topic of democratisation in China and East Asia, and have been forced to think about national identity/boundary issues. The first issue with which I had to deal when I was a visiting scholar at Columbia University, in 1993, was the tough problem of the Tibetans right of secession in relation to Chinese democratization. I developed a number of arguments such as the trade-off argument, preventing civil war argument, promoting democratization argument, and democracy as a better chance to solve the boundary problem argument; the key point is that the right to secede should be limited *temporarily* in the context of Chinese democratization (See Baogang He, *The Democratisation of China*. London: Routledge, 1996, chap. 4). Since then, I have developed my research in the following three related areas.

The first research area is on China, with special attention to Tibet and Taiwan as my case study. I studied the multiple faces of nationalism, and found that Chinese nationalism is essentially a state nationalism, sponsored and manipulated by the Party-state, which is inventing a pan-Chinese national identity to protect the Chinese nation-state from secessionist tendencies. I have also considered the difficulties faced by Chinese democrats in trying to achieve a democratic state in China, when confronted with the national identity/boundary question (See my book *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China*, Ashgate, 2000; and "Why Is Establishing Democracy So Difficult in China: The Challenge of China's National Identity Question", *Chinese Contemporary Thought*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2003, pp. 71-92).

In addition, I examined the question of a democratic solution to the Tibet issue and obstacles to such an approach (see "The Dalai Lama's Autonomy Proposal: A One-Side Wish" in *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development and Society in a Disputed Region,* eds. by Barry Sautman and June Dreyer, ME Sharpe, 2006, pp. 67-84; and "The Politics of the Dalai Lama's New Initiative for Autonomy" (co-author with Barry Sautman), *Pacific Affair*, vol. 78, no. 4, 2005-2006, pp. 601-629). I have also examined the democratic versus nationalist approaches to the Taiwan question (see "Democratic versus Nationalist Management of Taiwan Straits Conflicts", in *Uncertain Future: Taiwan-Hong Kong-China Relations after Hong Kong's Return to Chinese Sovereignty*, eds., by C. L. Chiou and Leong H. Liew, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 23-45; "Can Democracy Provide an Answer to the National Identity Question in China?: A Historical Approach", in *China's Post-Jiang Leadership Succession: Problems and Perspectives*, eds., by John Wong and Zheng Yongnian, the National University of Singapore Press, 2002, 163-188; "Power, Responsibility and Sovereignty: China's Policy towards Taiwan's Bid for a UN Seat", *Power and Responsibility in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds., by Yongjin Zhang and Greg Austin, Asia Pacific Press, ANU, 2001, 196-218).

The second research area is comparative work on national identity, civil society, democratization and democratic governance in Asia. A growing literature testifies to the emerging importance of civil society in defining the boundaries of political communities, such that the participation by ordinary people and the institutions of civil society in defining these boundaries gives rise to a democratic approach to the national identity/boundary issue and new forms of associated democratic governance. International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) have played a key role in shaping world culture and international opinion with regards to the national identity issue. Both the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet and the International Commission of Jurists, for example, confirmed that, under international law, Tibet was classified as a state during the period 1913–1950. The International Commission of Jurists has called on the UN General Assembly to resume its debate on the question of Tibet based on its resolutions of 1959, 1961, and 1965. In such a context, I have developed a transnational civil society approach to studying the range of interactions which occur across national borders in the context of national identity politics, examining the role played by International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in defining the boundaries of political communities and empowering small ethnic groups in the region to pursue their cause for self-determination. (See Baogang He, *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China*, chap. 6; "The Roles of Civil Society in Defining the Boundary of a Political Community: the Case of South Korea and Taiwan", *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 23, no. 1, 1999, pp. 27-48; and "Transnational Civil Society and the National Identity Question in East Asia", *Global Governance*, Vol. 10, No. 2, May 2004, pp. 227-246).

I have also examined the case of Aceh (See Baogang He and Anthony Reid, eds., a special issue on the Aceh in *Asian Ethnicity,* Vol. 15, No. 3, 2004), the questions concerning minority rights, national identity and liberal multiculturalism (see Will Kymlicka and Baogang He, eds., *Multiculturalism in Asia,* Oxford University Press, 2005), and the question of whether multinational federalism provides a solution to national identity conflicts in Asia (Baogang He, Brian Galigan, Takashi Inoguchi*,* eds., *Federalism in Asia*, Edwards Elgar, 2007). I have also compared national identity and elites' strategies in Russia and China ("National Integrity, Elites and Democracy: Russia and China Compared" (with J. Pakulski), *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1999, pp. 69-87).

The third research area is democratic theories of national identity, self-determination, minority rights, and secession. I explored the answers to the following theoretical issues. Should democracy or nationalism, among other things, constitute a primary source for the justification of the boundary of a political community? Should the boundary problem be settled by votes or force? Furthermore, the democratic management of the national identity/boundary problem gives rise to some questions of membership boundaries; that is, who has the right to decide the boundary of a political community? Who are 'the people'? Who has the right to vote? Can democracy decide the membership of a political community?

I have made intellectual advances in testing, modifying and extending the following theoretical hypotheses. To respond to Will Kymlicka's theory of minority rights I articulated a Confucian approach towards minority rights. Minority rights, Confucian-style, have such Chinese characteristics as: customary rights of autonomy (for example, headmen enjoyed a number of autonomous powers, such as the right to tax and the right to have their culturally regulated laws in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties), duty-deriving minority rights (for example, a majority has the duty to look after minorities with brotherly love, the duty to protect younger minority 'brothers'), minorities' entitlement to certain benefits, paternalistic affirmative traditions, communitarian support for collective rights, and above all, instrumental minority rights for the purpose of great unity and harmony, that is, minority rights should support the moral development of man and the unity of society rather than being disruptive of society. Confucianism prefers its own version of assimilation through cultural diffusion rather than military force. It emphasizes great unity and harmony, and is hostile towards Kymlicka's argument for non-assimilation for indigenous people. Nevertheless, Confucianism has its internal limits. Confucian customary rights, ethnic autonomy, paternalistic affirmative policies, and minorities' entitlements are often compromised in reality. Confucian communitarianism fails to recognize equality between different cultural communities and cannot guarantee its full protection to minority rights. (See Baogang He, "Confucianism versus Liberalism over Minority Rights: A Critical Responses to Will Kymlicka", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2004, pp. 103-123).

My study of all 173 boundary-related referenda (1791-1998) shows that the wide use of referenda to settle the national boundary question contradicts the ideas, held by some democratic theorists, that the scope of community is not decided by people and that there is no democratic way to manage the boundary question. (see Baogang He, "Referenda as a Solution to the National Identity/Boundary Question: An Empirical Critique of the Theoretical Literature", *Alternatives*: *Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2002, pp. 67-97).

I re-examined D. Rustow's theory of sequence (that the resolution of the national identity question must precede democratization) and provided a balanced critical evaluation of Rustow's theory. While I rejected and falsified Rustow's particular sequence developed in his 1970 article, I developed other patterns of political development which are latent in his 1967 book. Specifically, I considered the linkage pattern found in the former Soviet Union where the resolution to national identity conflicts is linked closely to political and economic reforms, the preceding of democratization to the settlement of the East Timor question in Indonesia, and the initial separation model of sequence in South Korea and Taiwan. I showed that, when taking into account the substantial changes in global conditions, Rustow's theory neglects the democratic management of the national identity question and fails to make a conceptual distinction between the membership question and the national boundary/identity question. (See Baogang He, "The National Identity Problem and Democratization", *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 36, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 97-119)

It is often found that when nation-state democracy itself is locked into the state system, it is limited in its ability to manage the national identity question. This has led me to investigate the question of whether the idea of cosmopolitan democracy can offer an alternative way of thinking about a transnational approach to the national identity problem. I therefore studied the idea of cosmopolitan democracy put forward by David Held, Richard Falk and others, and extended and modified the idea of cosmopolitan democracy to the national identity issue. The idea of cosmopolitan democracy provides a new approach to the national identity problem by advocating international, transnational, global

democratic management which provides an alternative to nation-state democracy and helps to manage the national identity problem. This is demonstrated by the experiment of the EU where European democracy, to some degree, helps to manage the national identity problem, thereby opening a chapter in human history on the possibility of that problem being managed by transnational democratic means. Cosmopolitan democracy stresses the ideas of multi-citizenships, the sharing of boundaries, and overlapping communities and peoples. These ideas demonstrate the fundamental limits of the idea of self-determination, which is unable to adequately answer the question of who 'the people' are. I examined this new approach against, first, the EU experiment, then, the East Asian experience, and explore the normative significance and fundamental limits of cosmopolitan democracy in the East Asian context. (See Baogang He, "Cosmopolitan Democracy and the National Identity Question in Europe and East Asia", *International Relations of Asia Pacific*, Oxford University Press, Volume 2, No. 1, 47-68, 2002).

Now, I am working on one edited volume on federalism in Asia. The aim of this volume is to explore different ways of developing federalism in the south and east Asian context. It also aims to contribute to an understanding of how federal or confederal institutions manage ethnic conflicts and accommodate difference, how democratization facilitates the development of federalism and how federalism facilitates or inhibits democratization in Asia.

After completing the above volume, I will work on my own book on democratic governance and national identity conflict in East Asia. The book will examine the prospect of democratic governance with regards to the national identity conflict in East Asia. Currently, the East Asian writings lack a substantial study of the strengths and limits of Western theories and of the conditions under which Western theories can be applied in East Asia. A substantial analysis of the impact of democratisation on identity/boundary problems in East Asia is urgently required. And a synthesis of the two literatures (Western theories and East Asian writings) promises to generate a dialogue between Western and East Asian scholars and to lead to a deeper understanding of this topic.