Far Eastern Federal University

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Издание, подготовленное международным коллективом авторов, охватывает широкий спектр проблем исследований границ на пространстве самого крупного, культурно и политически разнородного континента планеты. Разделы книги посвящены теоретическим и сравнительным аспектам исследований границ в Евразии, вопросам формирования и исторического развития границ, а также современным трансграничным процессам и пограничной политике. Издание предназначено для специалистов в области исследований границ, практиков, преподавателей и студентов.

Ключевые слова: граница, исследования границ, трансграничные процессы, трансграничный регион, пограничная политика, Евразия, Северо-Восточная Азия.

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The collective work prepared by an international team of authors covers a wide range of problems of border studies within the space of the largest, culturally and politically diverse continent of the planet. Sections of the book are devoted to theoretical and comparative aspects of study of boundaries in Eurasia, the formation and historical development of the boundaries, as well as contemporary transborder processes and border policies. The publication is intended for specialists in the field of border studies, practitioners, teachers and students.

Keywords: border, border studies, transborder processes, transborder region, border policy, Eurasia, Northeast Asia.

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Section III.
Modern Transborder Processes and Border Policies in Eurasia

Economic and Symbolic Capital at the Border of Globalizing China: the Case of Heilongjiang Province

Sergei A. Ivanov

The decision of China's authorities in the late 1970s to integrate with the global economy required it open its borders to flows of capital, people and goods. While the central government retained control over the border itself, the gradual decentralization of the decision-making process provided local bureaucracy[1] with opportunities to take an active part in initiating, facilitating and managing cross-border economic activity through administrative control, international economic projects and public business. When in the second half of the 1980s China started cross-border cooperation with neighboring countries, the external economic sector was already decentralized, though it was still undergoing gradual reform.

In this paper I choose the case of Heilongjiang province to investigate the nature of the local authorities' participation in cross-border cooperation during the period of China's reform. The territory of the province shares about three fourths of the Sino-Russian border and its bureaucracy took a leading position in producing a discourse on how to promote cross-border collaboration with Russia.

The main aim of the paper is to explore *why* the Heilongjiang authorities were active in promoting cross-border cooperation with Russia, especially in contrast with their Russian counterparts. Within the framework of what Wallerstein defined as the liberal ideology that dominates the contemporary social sciences,[2] this question seems to be both primitive and strange

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[1] In the paper I intentionally use the terms "bureaucracy", "authority" and "government" as synonyms when analyzing local leadership. Sub-national leadership in China is de facto appointed and a part of the huge bureaucratic machine of the Chinese state, so cannot be treated as autonomous entities dependent mostly on local society. Also I use the terms "local" and "provincial" as synonyms, and analyze counties" initiatives only when they were part of the discourse of provincial authorities.

[2] Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The End of the World As We Know It: Social Science for the Twenty-First Century* (MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 87-103

in some ways, because liberal values such as globalization and openness suggest a belief that borders create a positive impact on economic development if accompanied by appropriate governance. Under the influence of this paradigm, the mainstream of research on borders has been to help the state find out *how* to intensify and accelerate cross-border interactions.[3] While problems of effectiveness have been brought to the forefront, scholars have formulated measures to be implemented and goals to be achieved in cross-border cooperation: the decentralization of administrative and economic resources to the borderlands that would eventually lead to post-national governance, the provision of financial and political support by national and supranational authorities in the realization of cross-border projects, a high level of openness of borders, a clear conceptualization of integration processes and the pursuit of common objectives by local authorities on both sides of the border.[4] In some ways, all countries were supposed to follow the historical path of the Western world.[5] Of course, some scholars have pointed out that local governments may have incentives other than economic ones,[6] and

[3] Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, "The State of Borders and Borderlands Studies 2009: A Historical View and a View from the Journal of Borderlands Studies," *Eurasia Border Review*. 1(1) (2010): 3-11

[4] Joachim Blatter, "Emerging Cross-border Regions as a Step Towards Sustainable Development: Experiences and Considerations from Examples in Europe and North America," *International Journal of Economic Development* 2(3) (2000): 426; Joachim Blatter, "Beyond Hierarchies and Networks: Institutional Logics and Change in Transboundary Spaces," *Governance: An international journal of policy, administration and institutions* 16(4) (2003): 519-520; Katri-Liis Lepik, "Euroregions as mechanisms for strengthening cross-border cooperation in the Baltic sea region," *Trames*, 3 (2009): 274-275; Tarmo Pikner, "Reorganizing Cross-border Governance Capacity. The Case of the Helsinki-Tallinn Euregio," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 15 (3) (2008): 223-224; Elisabetta Nadalutti, "Is Cross-Border Governance Emerging over the Border between Italy and Slovenia?" Journal of Contemporary European Studies 20 (2) (2012): 193-194; Olivier Walther and Bernard Reitel, "Cross-border policy networks in the trinational region of Basel," *CEPS/INSTEAD Working Paper* 2012-26 (2012): 27-28

[5] Óscar Jáquez Martínez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1994), 5-10

[6] Enrico Gualini, "Cross-Border Governance: Inventing Regions in a Trans-National Multi-Level Polity," *disP – the Planning Review* 39(152) (2003): 45-50; Markus Perkmann, "Cross-border-Regions in Europe: Significance and Drivers of Regional Cross-border Co-operation," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10(2) (2003): 153-171

even identified these empirically,[7] but at the same time defined them as dangerous to the very nature of democracy and liberalization, and didn't perform a thorough analysis.

Answering the question of "why" requires moving away from a liberal ideology that studies the formal rationality of politics.[8] In order to do this and to give a systematic explanation of the Heilongjiang authorities' actions related to cross-border cooperation during the past 25 years, I intend to invoke some ideas of Pierre Bourdieu on symbolic capital, bureaucracy, and political and bureaucratic fields.

According to Bourdieu, a bureaucracy exercises power independent from the state leadership for two main reasons: first, to secure its systemic self-reproduction, and second, to carry on a permanent struggle against different agents within the administrative apparatus and against other key social groups.[9] The nature of this struggle must not be reduced to achieving economic goals or seeking objective values, as it is a result of the collision of subjective perceptions by social agents, who impose their beliefs on each other in order to receive benefits in the political, bureaucratic and other fields.[10] While applying this theoretical approach to cross-border cooperation, the border can be defined as the means by which the local authorities gain economic and other types of capital both directly (through rent, business, career development, etc) and indirectly (by producing symbolic capital[11] and by representing its subjective construction of reality for others). In the last case, the border fulfils a function of distinction[12] which helps the bureaucracy distinguish

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[7] Sonja Deppisch, "Social Capital and Other Main Influences on Governance Processes in *Cross-Border Micro-Regions," in Cross-border Governance and Sustainable Spatial Development – Mind the Gaps!*, ed. Markus Leibenath, Ewa Korcelli-Olejniczak and Robert Knippschild (Springer, 2008), 78-79

[8] Wallerstein, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 137-156

[9] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 196-197, 216-219; Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," *Sociological Theory* 12 (1) (1994): 1-18; Pierre Bourdieu, "From the King's House to the Reason of State: A Model of the. Genesis of the Bureaucratic Field," *Constellations* 11(1) (2004): 16-36

[10] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 229-251

[11] Symbolic capital is any form of capital when perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the incorporation of the structure of its distribution.

[12] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 238

itself within the economic, political and bureaucratic fields of the state.

As Anssi Paasi has noted, the construction of boundaries is carried out through numerous social practices and discourses, exploited first of all by central governments for the creation of territorial identities and for other purposes. Boundaries as a social construct are rarely produced in border areas.[13] While this is certainly the case, in this paper I want to develop the idea that local authorities are not powerless reproducers of the central government's discourse, but creators and active exploiters of the symbolic meanings of boundaries within the state.

From the practical point of view, this analysis doesn't aim to find an optimal strategy and to define problems that should be solved by central or local authorities. It's merely an attempt to understand the discourse of a particular Chinese Borderlands' bureaucracy on cross-border cooperation with Russia.

Borderlands' bureaucracy and economic capital

I want to start the empirical part of the paper by quoting from the published work of Finnish scholar Erlin Yang, who was commissioned by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy of Finland in 2007 to conduct research on opportunities for Finnish companies to enhance collaboration with Heilongjiang and other northeastern provinces. Based on Heilongjiang's official and scientific publications, as well as interviews with local government officials, experts and entrepreneurs,[14] it can be considered representative of the discourse on cooperation with Russia that the Heilongjiang bureaucracy was producing within China in the 2000s. Here is an example from this work:

> The border trade between Heilongjiang and Russia reached USD 7 billion in 2006, accounting for 20 percent of the whole bilateral trade of two countries… A batch of powerful enterprises from Heilongjiang has initiated international business in Russia in areas of timber cutting, mining exploration, real estate development, pulp and wood processing… The Heihe Bridge and the Luohe Bridge, which both across the Heilong River

[13] Anssi Paasi, "Boundaries as Social Practice and Discourse: The Finnish- Russian Border," in *Borders and Border Politics in a Globalizing World*, ed. Paul Ganster, David E. Lorey (MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 120-122

[14] Erlin Yang, *Business Opportunities in Northeast China: Jilin and Heilongjiang* (Finland: Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2008), 137-143

> are under construction, will link north-east China railway lines and Russian far eastern railways… The province ranks the first in China in the number of qualified personnel, particularly in both Russian language and Russian technologies, and in studies on Russia. In the early 1950s, Russian and Jewish people living in the region numbered up to 200,000. With some nostalgia, their descendents have been showing high interest in investing in the province.[15]

None of the statements in the passage above correspond to the reality of Sino-Russian cross-border cooperation, which can be grasped only through a comparative study of different types of Chinese and Russian data and field study. The above-mentioned bridges were not even in the preparatory stage of construction by 2013. By 2012, investment from Russia and Israel accounted for a tiny share of the total foreign investment in Heilongjiang (less than 1 percent),[16] so the "nostalgia" hasn't had any real economic consequences. The statement about the many provincial enterprises doing business in Russia (at least in the formal economy) also doesn't have any real basis.[17] Even the cited official statistics regarding Heilongjiang's trade with Russia is flimsy ground for the local bureaucracy's claiming Heilongjiang's leading position in Sino-Russian economic relations (which will be discussed below).

Errors in the quoted text cannot be attributed to mere accident, but rather to the absence of possibilities to check the facts. Misrepresentation of the reality of cross-border cooperation with Russia by the provincial bureaucracy is a systemic phenomenon. By studying only Heilongjiang's official materials on such "trans-border projects" as cross-border trade zones (*hushi maoyi qu*), the Cross-Border Trade Economic Complex Suifenhe-Pogranichnyi, cross-border bridges, the twin city of Heihe-Blagoveshchensk,[18] there is every likelihood that one

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[15] Yang, *Business Opportunities*, 70

[16] *Heilongjiang Statistical Yearbook 2012* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2012), 521

[17] Natalia P. Ryzhova, "Investichionnaia komponenta modeli korporativnoĭ integratsii Kitaia i Rossii [The Investment Component in the Corporate Integration Model between China and Russia]," *Spatial Economics* 3 (2011): 35-37

[18] Unlike with Heihe authorities, by the 2010s Amur oblast and Blagoveshchensk city officials had never announced the twin-city project as a path to economic integration with Heihe, and only recently have launched tourism program "Twin-Cities" independent from the Chinese side. Furthermore, in Russia, the "phenomenon" of Russian-Chinese twin cities Blagoveshchensk-Heihe is of little scientific interest and has never studied as a political issue, but as

would be convinced of the reality of these projects on both sides of Sino-Russian border. In fact, from the late 1980s to the early 2010s, the province had limited success in developing the economic sectors associated with cross-border cooperation.

Heilongjiang border cities and counties, which indeed accounted for 80-90 percent of the provincial trade with Russia in the 2000s, mainly fulfilled an intermediary function in trade between the eastern part of China and Russia.[19] The concentration of trading in several border municipalities no doubt favored their accelerated economic growth,[20] but such a development model was not what the central government expected to see when it initially planned to boost the Borderlands' productive sectors by delivering tax relief and permitting administrative preferences in cross-border trade. This preferential policy was restricted only to the goods of local origin in case of export and to the goods for local consumption in case of import.[21] These requirements were impossible to implement, and the borderland's companies used these preferences to trade all goods irrespective of the place of its origin and destination. "Cross-border" trade intermediaries have obviously accumulated huge amounts of money and have recently traded not only with Russia: the border city Suifenhe, after obtaining a license to purchase crude

an aspect of informal integration. See Natalia P. Ryzhova, "Informal Economy of Translocations. The case of the twin city of Blagoveshensk-Heihe," *Inner Asia* 10 (2008): 323 – 351

[19] Sergei A. Ivanov, "Usloviia formirovaniia I osobennosti prostranstvennoĭ organizatsii vneshneekonomicheskoĭ deiatelnosti na Severo-Vostoke Kitaia [Conditions of Forming and Features of Spatial Organization of Foreign Economic Activities in Northeast China]," *Bulletin of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 4 (2012): 141-142

[20] Natalia P. Ryzhova, "Rol' prigranichnogo sotrudnichestva v razvitii okrainnyh gorodov Kitaia I Rossii ["The Role of Border Cooperation in the Development of Outlying Cities of China and Russia]," *Far Eastern Affairs* 4 (2009): 65

[21] "Guowuyuan bangongting zhuanfa jingmaobu guanyu jiji fazhan bianjing maoyi he jingji hezuo cujin bianjiang fanrong wending yijian de tongzhi [Notice of the General Office of the State Council on Sending to Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade Proposals on Active Development of Border Trade and Economic Cooperation to Promote Prosperity and Stability of the Borderlands]," in *Shewai jingji, waishi gongzuo wenjian xuanbian [Selected Documents on External Economic Activity and External Relations]* (Changchun: Forestry Department of Jilin Province, 1993), 157

oil, has been increasing its imports from Arab and African countries.[22]

The preferential treatment that was granted by the Chinese central government to its borderlands in order to attract foreign and domestic capital also hasn't lived up to expectations.[23] At the same time, the local bureaucracy hasn't succeeded in creating an export-oriented production sector. According to provincial authority estimates throughout various years between 1992 and 2013, the share of goods of local origin in Heilongjiang's total exports has experienced a persistent decline, from 50 percent in the 1990s,[24] to 36 percent in 2003[25] and 20 percent in the early 2010s[26]. When announcing these statistics, officials didn't take into account the previous estimates and consistently highlighted significant improvements in comparison with the past. Historical "amnesia" appeared once again in the 2013 Report on the Work of the Heilongjiang Government, where it was stated that the share of locally produced goods in exports continued to grow.[27]

Provincial plans to establish industry oriented towards processing raw materials imported from Russia have also had limited success. For example, by the end of the 2000s, Heilongjiang companies imported 20-30 percent of total wood pur-

[22] Sergei A. Ivanov, "Usloviia formirovaniia," 141

[23] Natalia P. Ryzhova, "Rol' prigranichnogo," 63-64

[24] "Shao Qihui tongzhi zai quansheng bianjing defang jingji maoyi gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua [Speech of Comrade Shao Qihui at the Working Meeting on Cross-Border Economic Cooperation and Trade in the Whole Province]," *Heilongjiang zhengbao [Bulletin of Heilongjiang Government]* 8 (1993): 215; *Heilongjiang duiwai jingji maoyi nianjian 1997-1998 [Almanac of Heilongjiang's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade 1997-1998]* (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1998), 362

[25] *Heilongjiang duiwai jingji maoyi nianjian 2003 [Almanac of Heilongjiang's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade 2003]* (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1998), 23

[26] "Duiwai kaifang fazhan, kuoda xiaofei hui minsheng – Heilongjiang shangwu shiye "shiyiwu" fazhan chengjiu zongshu [Further Implementation of Open Door Policy and Expansion of Consumption Promote People's Welfare – An Overview of Development Performance of Commercial Activity in Heilongjiang during 11th Five-Year Plan]," last modified January 17, 2011, http://heilongjiang.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/sjshangwudt/201101/20110107365894.html

[27] "2013 nian Heilongjiang sheng renmin zhengfu gongzuo baogao [Report on the Work of the Heilongjiang People's Government in 2013]," last modified February 20, 2013, http://www.gov.cn/test/2013-02/20/content_2336138.htm

chased outside China;[28] meanwhile provincial enterprises harvested approximately 7 percent of wood in China.[29] As a result, the province had a huge raw-materials base: in 2006 the lumber companies and trade intermediaries of Heilongjiang had at their disposal 17 million m^3 of wood, or 17 percent of China's wood market. Since the second half of the 2000s, Heilongjiang government reports argued that the region had succeeded in creating wood-processing industry clusters. However, the official national and provincial statistics reveal the opposite as the share of Heilongjiang in China's wood processing industry fell from 2 percent in 2006 to 0.4 percent in 2011, the pulp and paper sector from 0.82 percent to 0.39 percent, and the furniture industry from 1.25 percent to 0.42 percent.[30]

The fragmentary and incomplete analysis presented above was not designed to explore the effectiveness of the Heilongjiang bureaucracy in deriving direct economic benefits from cross-border cooperation with Russia. Moreover, I believe it's wrong to associate all success and failure in economic development with the authorities' actions, as still nobody can give a certain answer to Weber's question about what economic effect is exerted by bureaucracy.[31] There are many more significant factors – for example, the historically unfavorable structure of the economy in comparison with the eastern part of China,[32] the limits and instability of the Russian market and state,[33] etc. – that could

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[28] *China Statistical Yearbook 2010* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2010), 245-246; *China Statistical Yearbook 2008* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2008), 724-725; *Heilongjiang Statistical Yearbook 2010* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2010), 564-565; *Heilongjiang Statistical Yearbook 2008* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2008), 458-459

[29] *Yearbook 2010*, 489; *China Statistical Yearbook 2009* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2009), 468; *China Statistical Yearbook 2007* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2007), 482

[30] *China Statistical Yearbook 2012* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2012), 502-505; *Heilongjiang Statistical Yearbook 2012* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2012), 368-375; *China Statistical Yearbook 2007* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2007), 482, 502-505; *Heilongjiang Statistical Yearbook 2007* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2007), 296-303

[31] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 989-990, 1002

[32] Jae Ho Chung, Hongyi Lai and Jang-Hwan Joo, "Assessing the "Revive the Northeast" (zhenxingdongbei) Programme: Origins, Policies and Implementation," *The China Quarterly* 197 (2009): 109-111

[33] Maria V. Aleksandrova, "Chetvert' veka torgovo-economicheskogo sotrudnichestva RF I KNR (na primere provintsii Heĭluntszian) [25 Years of

explain the impossibility of the provincial authorities performing much better than they did and their tendency to use the border as an instrument to extract rent from cross-border flows through supporting the intermediary trade sector.

However, the analysis presented above is enough to reveal that the economic potential of the Sino-Russian border and direct economic capital deriving from it were much lower than what Heilongjiang authorities consciously and unconsciously represented within China. In this regard, two interrelated questions will be focused on in the following part of the paper. First, if the border for the past two and a half decades appears to have limited economic potential for the province, why did local bureaucracy systematically falsify information (almost always in a positive way) about the reality of cross-border cooperation with Russia? Second, who were the consumers of this falsified information?

Borderlands' bureaucracy and symbolic capital

In answering the questions raised above, I suggest returning to the passage of the Finnish scholar in order to understand the essence of the misrepresentation. Ideas which the bureaucracy sought to represent in it are: 1. significant penetration of the Russian commodities market; 2. developed and promising cross-border communication; 3. free access to Russian technologies; 4. the existence of some kind of historical and cultural relationship. The same statements could be found in Heilongjiang's numerous official materials and scientific papers by provincial scholars on economic integration with Russian borderlands in the 1990s-2000s.[34] All of these positions are within the frame-

Trade and Economic Relations between Russia and China (the Case of Heilongjiang Province)]," *Far Eastern Affairs* 6 (2009): 66-67

[34] Xu Jingxue, "Dongbeiya diqu kuaguo ziyou jingjiqu de jianshe: jiantan Heihe he Bulageweishensike lianjian ziyou jingjiqu de xuanze yu moshi [Establishing Transnational Free Economic Zone in Northeast Asia: alternatives and models of Joint Establishment of Free Economic Zone "Blagoveshchensk-Heihe"]," *Xiboliya yanjiu [Siberian Studies]* 1 (1994): 1-3, 10; Qiao Guanghan, "Shijie jingji quyu yitihua tiaojian xia zhonge quyu hezuo shexiang [Cooperation between Russian and Chinese Regions in the context of the Regionalization of the World Economy]," *Xiboliya yanjiu [Siberian Studies]* 3 (2001): 17-19; Song Kui and Yue Xiaoli, "Jianli zhonge sui-po ziyou maoyiqu de lilun he xianshi fenxi [Theory and Practice of Establishing Sino-Russian Free Trade Zone "Suifenhe-Pogranichnyĭ]," *Xiboliya yanjiu [Siberian Studies]* 3 (2005): 3-5; Qiu

work of liberal ideology and serve to represent significant integration between the Russian and Chinese parts of the border.

Why was it so important for the Heilongjiang provincial bureaucracy to impose such a "reality" of cross-border cooperation as occurring?

First of all, the thought of the bureaucrat pervaded by the official representation, by the belief that bureaucracy as a "universal" group is endowed with the intuition of, or a will to, universal interest.[35] In authoritarian China the universal interest was imposed by party leaders, who since the 1970s adopted liberal ideology in policymaking. From this point of view the Heilongjiang bureaucracy was obliged to produce the same discourse as the central government did.

However, a simple recapitulation of the principal points of the new ideology was not enough to hold Heilongjiang authorities' position in the bureaucratic and political field of the state. Policy towards integration with the world economy put them under pressure. Heavy industry and the military industrial sector – the major sources of capital formation in the region during the period of centrally planned economy – were uncompetitive on the international market.[36] It was impossible to convince Beijing to subsidize the province's budget (which in a certain sense means subsidizing the survival of the bureaucracy), as until the late 1990s the central government moved away from distribution of economic resources within the state.[37] As a result, the main sources of income for local authorities were diminishing fiscal returns and revenue from state-owned enterprises under their jurisdiction. Fiscal and administrative preferences, the main instrument of regional policy for the central government until the beginning of the 2000s, were mainly granted to the regions that, due to their geographical position, had the potential to develop foreign economic relations.

Shi, "Zhonge difang guojihua chanye jiqun shixian tujing fenxi [Ways of Establishing Sino-Russian International Industrial Cluster]," *Xiboliya yanjiu [Siberian Studies]* 2 (2008): 31-35

[35] Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State," 2

[36] Xiao Geng and John Weiss, "Development in North East People's Republic of China: An analysis of enterprise performance 1995 – 2002," *China Economic Review* 18 (2007): 183

[37] X.B. Zhao and L. Zhang, "Decentralization reforms and regionalism in China: a review," *International Regional Science Review* 22(3) (1999): 258-261

Heilongjiang lacks an outlet to the sea but it did have the border with USSR/Russia. This border was used by the local bureaucracy as an instrument to increase its significance within the framework of China's foreign economic policy, and subsequently, since the early 2000s, to access the distribution of preferences and economic capital meted out by the central government. In other words, the above mentioned misrepresentation was essential as a means of producing symbolic capital that later could be transformed into material resources or political benefits (career development etc.).

The economic significance of the Sino-Russian border for national foreign economic strategy was claimed by the Heilongjiang bureaucracy from the very start of the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. It was made through deliberately identifying the initiative to start cross-border cooperation with the former General Secretary Hu Yaobang. His statements on economic cooperation with China's northern neighbor, especially the phrase "Shenzhen in the South, Heihe in the North – they should take off side by side",[38] allegedly made while inspecting the province in August 1982 and 1984,[39] were endlessly repeated by Heilongjiang authorities and scholars.

While there is no evidence from the central authorities' sources that the Heilongjiang border was really viewed as crucial to foreign economic strategy (including the absence of any information on the importance of the above mentioned Hu Yaobang's trips to national economic strategy), appealing on the

[38] By the middle 2000s, there was not only authorities of border city Heihe who had claimed to gain symbolic status of "Northern Shenzhen", but almost all relatively big cities along the Sino-Russian border. See, "Suifenhe shiwei shuji E Zhongqi: fahui youshi, dazao "Beifang Shenzhen" [Suifenhe Municipal Committee Secretary E Zhongqi: we should use the advantage to create "Northern Shenzhen"]", last modified April 24, 2007, http://chinaneast.xinhuanet.com/2007-04/26/content_9896622.htm; "Fengshengshuiqi kan Hunchun [Take a Look at Prosperous Hunchun]," last modified December 20, 2010, http://www.jl.gov.cn/ggkf/dwkf/qykfkf/201012/t20101220_925513.html; "Manzhouli neng chengwei beifang Shenzhen ma [Is it possible for Manzhouli to become Northern Shenzhen]," Qingnianbao [Youth Daily], April 24, 2000, 4

[39] Elizabeth Wishnick, "Chinese Perspectives on Cross-Border Relations," in *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. Sh. Garnett (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), 231; Wang Zhenqi, "Hu Yaobang de liang ci longjiang xing [Two trips of Hu Yaobang to Heilongjiang]," Shijiqiao [Bridge of Century] 24 (2011): 52-59; Zhang Chijian, "1984 nian Hu Yaobang zhongsu bianjing xing [A trip of Hu Yaobang to the Sino-Soviet Border in 1984]," Yanhuang Chunqiu 10 (2008): 53-57

grounds of statements made by one of the party leaders pressured the central bureaucracy to give the same preferential treatment in the foreign economic sector as that which the coastal provinces had been given.[40] In August 1990, the Heilongjiang Government Study Group on Economic Cooperation with the USSR reported to Beijing that the latter should establish a Heihe Special Economic Zone, as Heihe was unique in allowing the development of an export-oriented economy. To realize this potential, Beijing was asked to give preferential treatment to infrastructure projects, to provide tax breaks and to reduce income tax rates, to allow for the abolition of the collection of local taxes, to provide funds for capital construction, and so forth. [41]

A symbolic bargain between the province and Beijing over its exclusive power to carry on cross-border economic collaboration with the USSR\Russia in the late 1980s and the early 1990s was described in the memoirs of the former vice-governor of Heilongjiang province, Du Xianzhong.[42] The belief that Heilongjiang needed special treatment from Beijing and that the local bureaucracy should struggle to get this treatment runs throughout the book.

The symbolic significance of the border itself in the discourse of the Heilongjiang bureaucracy has declined since the mid-1990s when the political elite recognized the limitations of the direct economic[43] and, more importantly, symbolic benefits that could be gained from emphasizing cross-border cooperation. This was a result of two factors: the stagnation of economic ex-

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[40] For example, in January 1986, vice-governor of Heilongjiang province Du Xianzhong while giving a speech at the conference on economic cooperation and trade with Soviet Union and Western Europe, organized by the central government and border provinces, based his arguments for giving the same preferential treatment to border municipalities that Shenzhen was given, on the two-year old statements of Hu Yaobang and relative similarity of conditions in Shenzhen and Sino-Russian border municipalities. See, Du Xianzhong, *Bianmao Moulue* [Stratagems of Border Trade] (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), 8-10

[41] "Guangyu zai Heilongjiang Heihe shi jianli jingji tequ de kexingxing yanjiu baogao [Report on Feasibility Study of Establishing Special Economic Zone in Heihe city, Heilongjiang,]" in Heilongjiang sheng dui su jingmao zhanlue he zhengce yanjiu [Policy and Strategy of Heilongjiang Province for Economic Cooperation and Trade with Soviet Union], ed. Zhang Housheng (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1991), 181-183, 185-189

[42] Du Xianzhong, *Bianmao Moulue*, 582

[43] Heilongjiang nianjian 1994 [Heilongjiang Yearbook 1994] (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1994), 3

change between Russian and Chinese regions and, more importantly, the end of the era of preferences applied to small territories as one of the major instruments of Beijing's regional policy. Since the late 1990s, the central government has increased its ability to redistribute economic resources within the state, one that focuses on macro-regional, large sub-provincial and industry-specific projects.

Such changes led to a transformation in the nature of the arrangement between the province and Beijing. The Heilongjiang bureaucracy partially "rebranded" its ideology of participating in national foreign economic policy: the idea of the border as a narrow strip of counties and cities was transformed into the concept of a "broader" border, where the whole province was presented as a bridge between China and Russia, and, in the future, between China and Northeast Asia.[44] If in the late 1980s and early 1990s Beijing was asked to provide Heilongjiang border counties and cities with fiscal and administrative preferences in foreign trade and investment, in the 2000s the emphasis in bargaining shifted to establishing integrated development plans which covered all or most of the province's territory and sought to attract direct funding from Beijing. This distinction can be traced on the basis of information from the sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) in the second half of the 2000s ***(Table 1)***, where the Heilongjiang delegates suggested various initiatives. Of course, NPC sessions are not the only way of promoting local initiatives at the level of central government, and the examples listed below are a small part of a provincial discourse on the cross-border location of Heilongjiang.

Conclusion

The empirical analysis in this paper raises serious doubts about the adequacy of the conventional liberal approach to studying political and administrative authorities' efforts in cross-border cooperation, at least in the non-western world. Economic benefits were not the only, and perhaps not even the most important, incentive for the Heilongjiang bureaucracy to promote

[44] Sergei A. Ivanov, "Vostok Rossii v prostranstnennoĭ organizatsii vneshneĭ politiki Kitaia [East of Russia in the Spatial Organization of China's Foreign Policy]," *Russiia i ATR [Russia and the Pacific]* 4 (2010): 94

cross-border cooperation. Although I use the term "cross-border cooperation" in this paper, the most appropriate question is to what extent claims to promote "cross-border cooperation" are about collaboration with international partners, and to what extent they are about bargaining or simple imitation internal to the discourse of the bureaucracy within the political field of China.

Over the past 25 years, provincial authorities represented the border territory under their jurisdiction initially as an important facility to implement national foreign economic strategy and later as a platform through which other territories of the state could cooperate with Russia. The meaning of this representation was twofold: first, to produce the same discourse as the central government, and second, to gain symbolic capital that could later be transformed into material resources or political benefits in bargaining with Beijing, the major consumer of provincial information about cross-border cooperation. That's why the message of the provincial bureaucracy was in line with the liberal ideology adopted by the central government and aimed to increase the power of the province within the state with regards to foreign economic activity with Russian border regions.

The symbolic significance of the frontier needed to be proved with factual materials. As a result, the Heilongjiang authorities and experts deliberately or unconsciously produced a corrupted information flow for Beijing and other consumers within China. This raises the question, is it possible to find appropriate ways of governing cross-border cooperation based on this sort of misrepresented data? The situation gets worse if we take into account the fact that misrepresentation with its own characteristics can also be found in Russia. So the question "why" agents do what they do, and say what they say, is vital for studying "how" agents should act in improving cross-border cooperation.

Table 1. Proposals advanced by Heilongjiang province delegates at group discussions of national policy within National People's Congress sessions, 2005-2013

NPC session, year	Mover of the proposal	Proposal description	Support required from Beijing
3rd session of the 10th NPC, March 2005	Tang Xiuting, head of the provincial Development and Reform Commission	The province should take the lead in creating a national energy and raw material base due to its proximity to Russia and border location	Beijing should appropriate special purpose funds from central budget to back large-scale projects. Import VAT and customs duties on all raw materials need to be abolished for provincial companies. Enterprises should be allowed to process all types of raw materials and sell products on their own[1].
4th session of the 10th NPC, March 2006	He Hongda, party official of China's Ministry of Railways, former head of Harbin Railway Bureau	Heilongjiang private companies which import such a strategic resource as wood from Russia need to be supported. The companies have flexible mechanisms of doing business needed while collaborating with Russian border regions[2].	Details of required support were not announced.
4th session of the 10th NPC, March 2006	Wang Shuguo, president of Harbin Institute of Technology	Research and development sector of the province should be supported due to developing agriculture, developing the manufacturing industry and proximity to Russia.	Heilongjiang should be given a bigger stake in inter-provincial redistribution of financial resources in the research and development sector[3].
1st session of the 11th NPC, March 2008	No data	National integrated experimental zone of border openness should be established in Heilongjiang	The project should be granted the status of national strategy[4] which means funding from the central budget, and the highest possible administrative and fiscal preferences.

4th session of the 11th NPC, March 2011	Shi Jiaxing, head of Secretariat of People's Government of Harbin	«Border belt of the northern part of China's Northeast" should be established in almost all of the territory of Heilongjiang	The project should be granted the status of national strategy[5], which means funding from the central budget, and the highest possible administrative and fiscal preferences.
1st session of the 12th NPC, March 2013	Wang Dongguang, head of provincial Development and Reform Commission	National strategy of border openness should be adopted towards Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia	The project should be granted the status of national strategy[6], which means funding from the central budget, and the highest possible administrative and fiscal preferences.

[1] "Daibiao huyu: dazao beifang Shenzhen, zhongshi dui e maoyi [The Delegate Urges to Create Northern Shenzhen and Attach Importance to Trade with Russia]," last modified March 6, 2005, http://www.hljrd.gov.cn/ztxw/ard10_3/rdxw/200504050011.htm

[2] "He Hongda: ying dui Heilongjiang minjian fazhan dui e maoyi jiyu zhichi [He Hongda: There Is a Necessity to Support Non-Public Sector in Promoting Trade with Russia]," last modified March 10, 2006, http://www.hljrd.gov.cn/ztxw/ard10_4/hyxw/200603100002.htm

[3] "Wang Shuguo: tisheng jiaoyu zhiliang, heli buju guojia keji ziyuan [Wang Shuguo urges to improve quality of Education and Allocate National Science and Technology Resources Rationally]," last modified March 8, 2006, http://www.hljrd.gov.cn/ztxw/ard10_4/hyxw/200603080003.htm

[4] Xin yaoqiu xin qidai: wo sheng daibiao canjia quanguo shiyi jie renda yi ci huiyi zongshu [New Requirements, New Hopes: An Overview of Participation of Our Province Delegation in the First Session of the Eleventh National People's Congress]," last modified April 29, 2008, http://www.hljrd.gov.cn/gzdt/pygz/200804290019.htm

[5] "Daibiao huyu Heilongjiang sheng zhongyao jingjiqu shangsheng wei guojia zhanlue [Delegates Urge to Upgrade the Projects of the Main Economic Zones of Heilongjiang Province to the Status of National Strategy]," last modified March 6, 2011, http://www.chinaneast.gov.cn/2011-03/06/c_13763456.htm

[6] "Heilongjiang sheng daibiao changtan kuan lingyu duocengci kaizhan dui e hezuo [Heilongjiang Province Delegates Exchanges Ideas on Expanding the Fields and Increasing the Layers of Cooperation with Russia]," last modified March 16, 2013, http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/dbdhhy/12_1/2013-03/16/content_1786303.htm