

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, Russian and Chinese leaders have succeeded in putting the history of past conflicts behind them and forging a partnership based on common foreign policy and economic interests. Considering the lengthy border the two neighbors share,¹ one would have expected regional relations to promote economic integration and deepen political relations. In fact, exactly the opposite has occurred: lagging regional relations have stymied the development of economic ties, and problems on the regional level, especially related to the issue of Chinese migration to the Russian Far East, have had to be addressed on the bilateral level. Russian regional leaders, and to a lesser extent, national officials, see in Chinese migration an opportunity to gain political capital by manipulating the “yellow peril” to improve their standing with otherwise dissatisfied voters. Moreover, adverse demographic and economic trends prompt Russian officials on the national and regional levels, as well as publics in these areas, to describe Chinese migration as a threat to their economic and societal security.

This paper examines Chinese migration to the Russian Far East in terms of the securitization/desecuritization dynamics elaborated by the Copenhagen School. Although this framework is useful in describing the tendency by Russian national and regional officials to securitize Chinese migration to the Russian Far East, it fails to explain the lack of urgency in the response by these same leaders to the alleged threat posed by migrants from China. The paper finds that Russian officials on the national and regional levels use the language of security to depict the consequences of Chinese migration, but, instead of enacting the urgent policy measures one would expect once an existential threat is identified, these officials have taken incremental steps to regulate cross-border flows. Moreover, the same Russian politicians who securitize Chinese migration to the Russian Far East when addressing Russian audiences call for increased regional cooperation when visiting China or meeting with Chinese leaders. The paper argues that the Copenhagen School’s focus on security as intersubjective, without seeking to determine the presence of actual security threats and responses to them, provides only half the picture and fails to explain the complicated array of responses to Chinese migration within Russia. Nevertheless, the theory is better at explaining the Chinese reaction, which, on both the regional and national levels, in speech as well as in deeds, has been to desecuritize the migration issue and address it instead as an economic or administrative problem.

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The Securitization of Chinese Migration to the Russian Far East: Rhetoric and Reality

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Securitizing Migration

In the post-Cold War era, debates emerged in security studies over the need to expand the agenda beyond threats to the nation-state and broaden the focus to include non-military threats. The Copenhagen School, a group of European scholars centered in the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, including Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, and other colleagues, has made an important contribution by viewing security as a social process. In their conception, security is not an objective condition, but the outcome of a “securitizing” speech act.² Thus, actors use the language of security, i.e. “securitize” an issue when it is perceived as an urgent threat to a given referent object (which may be a state, but also a region, a community, a class, the biosphere, or the economic system). An issue is successfully securitized when an audience agrees that there is an existential threat to a shared value.³ According to the Copenhagen school, security encompasses five issue areas or sectors exemplifying particular values: 1. military (territorial integrity of the state); 2. political (legitimacy of political authority) 3. societal (group identity); 4. environmental (global ecosystem); and 5. economic (access to resources, finances, and markets sufficient to sustain livelihood).⁴

Conversely, actors may downplay the existence of an existential security threat or “desecuritize” a given issue. According to Waever, defining security as an existential threat to a shared value strips the term of any positive meaning; in fact, he argues that dese securitization is optimal, since this process implies the end of a state of emergency and the return to politics as normal.⁵

The Copenhagen School has attracted criticism on many fronts, particularly for its conception of societal security.⁶ The application of their approach to the case of Chinese migration to the Russian Far East reveals an additional problem, the difficulty in distinguishing between securitization and politicization. As a constructivist approach, “securitization” is a process of rhetorical construction, placing existential issues above the day-to-day political issues. In practice, distinguishing between politicization (an actor’s manipulation of a problem for political ends) and securitization proves difficult without going beyond the rhetorical level and examining specific measures actors take to respond to a situation they depict as a security threat.

As Alexander Wendt has pointed out, however, constructivist theories need not be oblivious to realities on the ground. To the contrary, Wendt outlines a “via media” between constructivism and positivist theories that is grounded in what he terms “scientific realism,” i.e. the assumption that the world exists independently of ideas and

language used to explain it.⁷ The analysis to follow, examining the securitization of Chinese migration to the Russian Far East, contrasts the language of security that a range of Russian political actors employ with the measures they take to combat the problem. On a rhetorical level, Russian officials appear to be securitizing the problem of Chinese migration, but, as we will see below, on a policy level Russian responses fall short of the steps one would expect in an urgent situation. In response, Russian officials have sought to regulate Chinese migration and limit regional economic integration with China, rather than to impose strict security measures such as those enacted by Soviet officials to guard against what they perceived as a security threat from the PRC during the period of Sino-Soviet confrontation in the 1960s and 1970s, i.e. creating a no-man's land along border, boosting border forces, and closing border to trade and travel.

Russia Securitizes

After more than thirty years of closure, it was not surprising that problems arose when the Sino-Russian border reopened to visa-free trade and tourism in the 1990s. For example, while in 1988 only 6,233 border crossings were reported in Amurskaia Oblast, a land-locked region bordering on China, by 1992 there were 287, 215, and the region's imports and exports were oriented almost entirely to the Chinese market.⁸ In 1992–93, which Chinese observers termed the “hot” period in border trade, traders were allowed to travel across the Sino-Russian border without visas. Initially, the Russian and Chinese border regions welcomed the rapid opening of border trade to address their economic needs, but poor regulation on both sides enabled criminals and unscrupulous business people to take advantage of the sudden opening of the border. Soon the new markets catering to cross-border trade became associated with criminal activity.

Moreover, by 1994, Russia's regional leaders began to view China as the main potential challenge to the regional balance of power. Although they recognized the positive aspects of expanding regional economic relations, they argued that the largely unregulated cross-border ties with China—with its large population, unemployment problem, and historical claims to Russian territory—could have serious consequences for the Russian border regions. Continued economic decline in the Russian Far East at a time of overall rapid economic growth in China (although the neighboring Northeastern provinces were left out of the Chinese boom) accentuated anxiety among Russians about increasing disparities in economic power between Russia and China.

Moreover, due to adverse demographic trends in the Russian Far East, the region lost 7% of its population from 1992-96 (though regions bordering on China experienced less of a decline, 3.3% in Khabarovskii Krai and 1.5% in Primorskii Krai).⁹ By 2004, the Russian Far East had a population of 6.68 million inhabiting a territory of more than 6.2 million square kilometers, compared to 107 million Chinese living in the three Northeastern provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning) with a territory of 1.9 million square kilometers.

As we will see below, Russian efforts to securitize Chinese migration have varied in intensity. The mid-1990s was the time of greatest controversy over the issue, though

attention to it varied by region, and regional officials have been inconsistent in their positions on the issue. National politicians have periodically sided with the demographic threat view, mostly during election campaigns. Fueled by wildly inaccurate “guesstimates” of the numbers of Chinese in Russia, demographic determinism is a regular feature of Russian policy and scholarly analyses of China-Russia relations.

Both national and regional media continually publish vastly inflated numbers of Chinese migrants in Russia—ranging from several hundred thousand to 5 million. According to reliable data from the Institute of Economic Research in Khabarovsk, even in 1992–93, the peak period of Sino-Russian border trade, 50,000-80,000 Chinese worked in the Russian Far East, including 10,000-15,000 contract workers and 10,000-12,000 students on long-term exchanges. Police data revealed that 5,000-6,000 Chinese were in Primorskii Krai and Khabarovskii Krai illegally in the early 1990s.¹⁰ According to estimates from a leading Russian specialist on Chinese migration, as of 2000 there were 250,000-450,000 Chinese in Russia, including approximately 20,000-25,000 in Moscow and a maximum of 20,000 in each of two of the border regions, Khabarovsk Krai and in Primorskii Krai.¹¹ In a March 23, 2004 article in *Izvestiia*, Sergei Prikhodko, the Russian president’s deputy chief of administration, stated that there are now no more than 150,000 to 200,000 Chinese living in Russia on a permanent basis and that the most recent census found an even smaller number—35,000. Prikhodko stated unequivocally that “there is no basis for saying that the government of the PRC ‘promotes’ its citizens to resettle in Russia, especially not illegally.”¹² The Russian interior ministry also supports this view—according to regional data, in 1994 just 64 percent of foreign visitors (predominantly Chinese) to Primorskii Krai left the region within the time allotted by their visas, but from 1997 to 2000, more than 99 percent left on schedule.¹³

1) Securitization Dynamics in the Russian Border Regions

By mid-1993, the local press in the Russian Far East was full of articles condemning China’s “quiet expansion” and calling for counter-measures for fear that the continued influx of Chinese workers and traders would become tantamount to a reassertion of de facto Chinese control over areas lost to the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century. Just as Moscow focused on improving bilateral relations with the PRC as the centerpiece of Russia’s Asia policy, regional leaders in the Russian Far East began advocating the need for new regulations to limit the region’s openness to economic cooperation with its Asian neighbors generally, and to control Sino-Russian regional relations more specifically. Due to mounting complaints from the Russian border regions about unregulated cross-border trade, on January 1, 1994, Russia and China decided to end the brief period of visa-free trade and once again required business visas for traders. New restrictions also were imposed on the use of foreign contract labor in Russia for construction and agriculture.

In addition to the new federal rules, regional authorities in the Russian border regions began taking steps of their own to prevent illegal Chinese immigration. Concerned that Chinese traders would circumvent new visa rules by joining fictitious tour

groups, not subject to the new visa requirements, Primorskii Krai authorities passed an edict in April 1994 limiting the number of hotels allowed to house foreign tourists and placing greater controls on tour groups from China. Under the new rules, travel agencies are responsible for ensuring that Chinese tourists travel only to the destinations specified and stay only for the time allotted by their visas.¹⁴ Moreover, public concern about massive numbers of Chinese living in Russia illegally prompted regional authorities in Primorskii Krai and Khabarovskii Krai to engage in police sweeps—called “Operation Foreigner”—of markets and tour companies. Conducted periodically since 1994, these campaigns have not produced evidence of large-scale violations of Russian visa rules.¹⁵ Although regional authorities claim that police sweeps are not directed against Chinese citizens, the majority of those apprehended have been from China.

Securitization of the Chinese migration issue has proceeded unevenly in the areas of the Russian Far East bordering on China. Officials in Amurskaya Oblast, one of the Russian Far East regions most dependent on trade with China, have consistently supported the use of Chinese labor (though they have also sought to balance it with North Korean labor). After the introduction of new visa rules in 1994, causing Sino-Russian trade to plummet by 34%, then Governor D’ianenko of Amurskaia Oblast stated that there was never any reason to fear a Chinese colonization of the border regions and the regional media criticized the new visa policy’s economic consequences.¹⁶ By contrast, in the mid-1990s officials (and the media outlets they controlled) in Primorskii Krai and Khabarovskii Krai were most vocal in warning of threat to the region posed by Chinese migrants. For the governors of these regions, Evgenii Nazdratenko of Primorskii Krai, and Viktor Ishaev of Khabarovskii Krai, the Chinese migration issue was linked to the border demarcation process proceeding in the 1990s that required some return of their territory to China (but also enabled them to gain some formerly Chinese territory).¹⁷ Nevertheless, Nazdratenko and Ishaev were well known for hailing the threat of Chinese migration when addressing their constituencies at home, but still going ahead with trade missions to China and telling Chinese audiences that they favored expanding economic cooperation. Now that the Sino-Russian eastern border has largely been demarcated and Nazdratenko was obliged to leave the governorship of Primorskii Krai,¹⁸ regional officials in Primorskii Krai and Khabarovskii Krai have been less strident in their criticism of cross-border relations with China in general, though underlying suspicions of Chinese intentions continue to pose obstacles to regional cooperation.

2) Securitizing and Desecuritizing Moves by Russian National Leaders

In Moscow, also a locus for Chinese migration (though largely a transit point for further migration to points West in Europe), the issue fueled debates in policy circles about the “China threat.” National leaders, seeking to boost their own electoral fortunes, also politicized the issue to curry favor with regional voters. As a result, the Chinese migration issue soon found itself on the Sino-Russian bilateral agenda, even as Russian and Chinese leaders hailed their “strategic partnership.”

Under Yeltsin, when improving relations with China was the cornerstone of Russia's Asia policy, Foreign Ministry officials refused to securitize the problem of Chinese migration to Russia. Russia's Ambassador to China, for example, while acknowledging that there were widespread instances of Chinese violating Russian passport rule, asserted that "the problem of the illegal penetration of Russia by China does not exist."¹⁹ Yet the Russian National Security Council warned repeatedly that illegal immigration from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa was undermining Russian security.²⁰

President Putin, like his predecessor, views partnership with China as a foreign policy priority, but Beijing's pride of place has diminished to some extent as Moscow has been improving ties with other Asian states, particularly South Korea, and to a lesser extent Japan and North Korea. In addition to a more evenhanded Asia policy, the Putin team also has been more forthright in asserting Russia's economic interests vis-à-vis China to prevent the excessive reliance of the Russian Far East on the Chinese economy, including the Chinese labor force.

Putin has placed a priority on the development of energy pipelines connecting the Russian Far East to Northeast Asia. Although China had hoped to be Russia's main partner in this effort, by late 2004 Putin had effectively abandoned a decade-old vision of a project connecting Eastern Siberian oilfields to Daqing in Heilongjiang province in favor of a pipeline ending in Nakhodka in Primorskii Krai in the Russian Far East. Japan has been lobbying hard for the Nakhodka and promised significant funding for the project. Unlike the Daqing variant, focused primarily on the Chinese market, the Nakhodka terminus would give Russia important access to the Japanese and South Korean markets as well.

In July 2000, President Putin told regional officials: "If in the short term we do not undertake real efforts to develop the Russian Far East, then in a few decades the Russian population will be speaking Japanese, Korean, and Chinese."²¹ According to Buzan, Waever, and deWilde, migrants may threaten societal security through their impact on the identity of the host population. Indeed some of Russian concerns about Chinese migration patterns stem from the fear that opening Russian borders to Chinese labor cooperation is paving the way for the institutionalization of Chinese migrant networks within Russia that are established to serve the needs of the Chinese economy, to Russia's detriment.²² It is true that Chinese communities are forming in Moscow and Vladivostok and other Russian cities to provide a variety of social and economic services just as they do in other major cities worldwide. What is distinctive about the formation of Chinese networks in Russia is the hostile Russian reaction to them due to concern over societal security. In part this reflects overall discomfort with multiculturalism—nonwhite minorities in Russia (Central Asians, Chechens, etc.) face pervasive discrimination²³—as well as some legitimate concerns regarding possible ties between transient populations and crime.

Attitudes towards Chinese migrants in Russia also are connected to the broader policy debate within the country over the "China threat." Although Russian policy toward

China has been consistent since the 1990s in seeking to further expand bilateral relations, including cross-border economic ties, there is a spectrum of opinion on the “China threat” and the related issue of Chinese migration. Centrists, who predominate in policy circles, continue to advocate greater cooperation with China; only democrats and ultra-nationalists, occupying the fringes of political opinion warn of a China “threat” (albeit for profoundly different reasons).²⁴ This is not to say that policy differences within Russian governing institutions do not exist. In the Ministry of Defense, for example, strategists are more cautious about long-term demographic trends, than military procurement officials, who view the Chinese arms market as crucial to Russian military-industrial complex. Nonetheless, the consensus within the Russian government about the priority of maintaining economic partnership with China, including the area of labor cooperation, is an important factor in explaining the relatively measured response to the migration problem, despite the securitizing language that Russian national officials have used periodically.

3) Russian Polling Data and the Migration Issue

While elites in Moscow differ over the “China threat,” public opinion of Chinese migrants in Russia is divided largely along geographic lines, reflecting differences in perceptions of the impact of the migrants on economic security in the capital and the periphery. In Moscow individuals holding positive views of Chinese migrants (16 %) outnumbered those with negative views (11%), while in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok the opposite results were found. The most pejorative assessments were found in Vladivostok, where 27.9% of respondents expressed negative or extremely negative views, compared to 11% of Muscovites or 21.3% of Khabarovsk residents.²⁵

Muscovites and residents of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk differed in their views of the consequences of Chinese migration to Russia.²⁶ Muscovites were twice as likely as respondents in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok to see no negative consequences of Chinese migration and least inclined to view Chinese migrants as a threat to Russian security.

Table 1

How do you assess Chinese migrants to Russia	Moscow	Khabarovsk	Vladivostok
Positively	16%	14.6%	13%
Normally, no change has resulted	39%	28.3%	23.1%
They come because economic conditions are bad in China, but we'd be better off without them	20%	15.1%	14.9%
Negatively	10%	15.6%	24%

Extremely negatively	1%	4.7%	3.9%
Indifferently	12%	17.5 %	16.8 %
Hard to say	1.5%	4.2%	4.3%
Refused to answer	0.5%	0%	0%

In Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, the majority of respondents expressing a negative view of Chinese migrants above all complained that they lived better than local residents (56.1% in Khabarovsk and 60.1% in Vladivostok, compared to 21.5 % in Moscow). Khabarovsk respondents were most likely to report Chinese migrants as a threat to Russian security (10.9 % compared to 3.9 % in Vladivostok and 0.5% in Moscow), a testament to the unresolved border demarcation issue in the region.

Negative views in the Russian Far East stem from perceptions of the adverse impact of Chinese migrants on respondents' economic security. The Russian Far East, like the Chinese Northeast, has been experiencing economic decline. As of 2000 industrial production in the Russian Far East amounted to less than 44 percent of the 1990 level (compared to 54.4 percent for Russia as a whole). Although Russia experienced an average decrease in employment of 16.8 percent from 1990-98, the Russian Far East saw a 22 percent drop. Because the cost of living is higher in this part of Russia, the standard of living of the population fell. Regions such as Khabarovsk Krai with more diverse economies reported 28.9 percent of the population living below the subsistence level (just below the national average of 29 percent), while 70 percent of Chukotka residents had incomes below subsistence.²⁷

As Table 2 shows, respondents in the Khabarovsk and Vladivostok object to Chinese migrants because of the belief that the latter live better than Russians do.

Table 2

Consequences of Chinese migration to Russia	Moscow	Khabarovsk	Vladivostok
No negative consequences	38.5%	19.3%	21.1%
Take Russian jobs, refuse to process raw materials	10%	15.6%	20.6%
Inexperienced in trade, unreliable, trade in low quality goods	10%	4.3%	5.3%
Present a security threat to Russia, engage in drug trafficking, organize	0.5%	10.9%	3.9%

criminal groups			
Live better than we do, take earnings back to China, rent housing, act badly	21.5%	56.1%	60.1%
Hard to say	24%	11.8%	10.1%
Refused to answer	0%	1.4%	0.5%

According to Vil'ya Gel'bras, Russian cities with high unemployment rates tend not to attract significant numbers of foreign migrants and the concern often expressed in the Russian Far East about competition for jobs from Chinese workers is largely unfounded.²⁸ Thus, Russian perceptions about the detrimental impact of the Chinese migrants on their economic security may depend less on the overall economic situation where the Russian respondents reside, and instead reflect their individual assessments of the net gains or losses incurred by the activities of Chinese in their locality, or the degree to which local leaders and media have succeeded in securitizing the Chinese presence and conflated the Chinese threat.²⁹

4) Policy Responses

If the presence of Chinese migrant labor poses a threat to the economic and societal security of Russians, then we would expect that regional and national officials would make border control a priority and taken urgent measures to control the flow of Chinese migrants. In fact Moscow-based officials took a series of measures to regulate cross-border exchanges, by requiring visas for business travel as of January 1994, instituting quotas by region for foreign migrants, monitoring more closely entry and exit of tour groups from China, and developing a new “green card” system for foreign workers, introduced in 2003. In the border regions, officials on both sides took additional steps to regulate the tourism industry and to crack down on visa violations.

These are all administrative solutions, which seek to regulate Chinese migration, not to stop it altogether. Despite the securitizing language of national and regional officials, there never has been as serious attempt to return to the border regime of the time of Sino-Soviet hostility in the 1960s and 1970s, when most cross-border interactions ceased and the border region became a highly militarized no-man's land.

The contrast between securitizing language and policy responses points to a weakness of securitization theory. According to the Copenhagen School, securitization is a speech act, i.e. the point is the identification of a problem as an emergency situation, not the follow-up in policy terms. The problem is, without examining whether policy responses support the securitizing speech, it is difficult to distinguish between securitization and politicization. Although Buzan et al. note that the urgency of the speech should be the distinguishing factor, Russian statements about the consequences of Chinese migrants involved securitizing language, but, the regulatory policy measures

enacted in response lacked urgency and pointed instead to a process of politicization accompanied by securitizing speech acts.

China Desecuritizes

Chinese policymakers support legal labor cooperation with Russia because they contend that it takes advantage of the natural economic complementarities (*hubuxing*) between the two countries—Russia has land and resources, but suffers from a shortage of workers, while China lacks land and resources but has an oversupply of labor. Nevertheless, Chinese officials consistently deny Russian allegations that China is promoting illegal migration. During Jiang Zemin’s first visit to Moscow in September 1994, at the height of Russian concern regarding Chinese migration to Russia, the Chinese leader defended China’s policies in the border regions and stated that he hoped that Russia “would protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens who are engaged in normal trade and other activities. Jiang stated his opposition to illegal migration and attributed concerns over the issue to the inadequate preparation on both sides to the opening of the border.³⁰ The Chinese leader noted that he and Russian President Boris Yeltsin had agreed to continue to develop regional cooperation despite these problems, “rather than giving up eating for fear of choking, as the Chinese saying goes.”³¹

Despite reassurance by Jiang and subsequent efforts by other Chinese officials, Russian policymakers on the national and regional level have continued to raise the Chinese migration issue. In reflection of its continuing importance to Sino-Russian bilateral relations, the July 2001 Agreement on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China pledged that the two countries would combat illegal migration, promote stability in their border regions, and to develop mutual trust in their regional relations.³² Nevertheless, Chinese officials and scholars have sought to desecuritize the migration question.

1) Chinese Desecuritizing Efforts

Chinese officials and scholars on both the national and regional level question Russian motives in securitizing Chinese migration to Russia. Chinese officials deny that Chinese migration to Russia constitutes a real problem either for Russia or Sino-Russian relations.³³ To explain why Russians securitize the issue, many Chinese scholars attribute Russian concerns over Chinese migrants to the popularity of “China threat” views in the Russian Far East, particularly during gubernatorial elections.³⁴ According to one regional expert, Russian allegations of Chinese expansionism in the region stems from trends within Russia, such as nationalism, Eurocentrism, and concern with Russia’s weak position in the Northeast Asian balance of economic power.³⁵ Reflecting some Chinese concern over the consequences of the post-9/11 improvement in Russian-American relations, another scholar attributed the continued Russian securitization of the migration issue to the influence of discussion of the “China threat” in the U.S. According

to this analysis, American “China threat” views were then transplanted to Russia and refocused on the imbalance in population between China and Russia, China’s territorial claims, the lack of democracy in China, and the historical tendency for the most populous countries to be expansionist.³⁶ Other scholars are prepared to go only so far as to admit a problem of trust in Sino-Russian regional relations owing to the history of their border relations.³⁷

Apart from rebutting Russian claims that Chinese migration poses a threat to the security of the Russian Far East, Chinese scholars object to using the term “migrants” (*yimin*) to refer to Chinese working in the region. Chinese analysts further desecuritize the problem by referring to these workers as overseas workers (*waipai laowu*). Although Chinese scholars assert that boosting Sino-Russian labor cooperation would be mutually beneficial, they note a number of shortcomings in current exchanges due to the participation of inexperienced small firms and poorly trained workers.³⁸ However Chinese analysts acknowledge that it may difficult to attract highly qualified Chinese workers for positions in Russia, since they have better opportunities elsewhere.³⁹ Heilongjiang province, which sends 65% of Chinese workers to Russia, currently sends only 3,000-5,000 workers to Russia annually via provincial or non-state labor supply firms.⁴⁰ The small numbers involved reflect both Russia’s interest in diversifying its foreign work force (workers from North Korea and Vietnam compete for farming and construction jobs with Chinese laborers), as well as the strict quotas in Russia limiting the number of foreign workers for each province.

Why do Russians speak of a Chinese migration threat since the numbers of Chinese participating in legal Chinese exchanges is small and these workers return home at the end of their contracts? There are two related problems here: 1) the quasi-legal visa status of Chinese, who circumvent Russian visa rules for overseas workers by traveling on tourist visas; and 2) the inadequate enforcement on both sides of the border of legal procedures for tourists.

Despite Russian and Chinese pledges to expand trade and economic ties between their two countries, business travel remains onerous and costly. Business visas for Chinese citizens wishing to travel to Russia cost 700 yuan (\$84.50) for regular two-week processing and 1200 yuan (\$145) for a rush job. The only Russian consulate in the Northeast of China is in Shenyang in Liaoning province. A personal interview is sometimes required, adding to the cost and inconvenience of the application process. Consequently it is much simpler and cheaper for a businessperson to join a tour group to Russia for 600-700 yuan and avoid all the bureaucracy involved in obtaining a business visa.⁴¹ Even Chinese workers with contracts for particular projects end up joining tour groups to return to Russia if they have trouble extending their work visas in order to complete their projects.⁴²

As a result, cross-border tourism has been expanding rapidly, a testimony to the growth of cross-border trade, since few of the participants are actually engaging in tourism. According to figures from the Heilongjiang provincial government, in 2002 there were 630,000 instances of border crossings by tourists traveling between

Heilongjiang province and Russia (largely to the Russian Far East), a 21% increase over 2001, while 2003 figures show a decline to 568,626 such crossings.⁴³ Chinese tourists from Heilongjiang province accounted for 160,000 of the 630,000 crossings in 2002, or 25.3% of the total.⁴⁴

The Russian government is well aware that business travelers from Chinese circumvent the business visa rules by joining tour groups and, in response, has tightened restrictions on tourism between Russia and China. Tour group participants are only allowed to stay a maximum of 30 days and are restricted to cities specified in advance on their tour agenda. Tour group leaders hold on to the passports of all group members and must present a list of all participants at entry and departure. If any tourist fails to return with the rest of the group, then Russian customs fines the tour organizer 5000 rubles and the company risks losing its right to engage in border tourism.⁴⁵ As with Chinese tour groups to Southeast Asia, organizers who are concerned about tourists failing to return to China, may charge a “deposit” of 15,000 yuan (\$1811), to be repaid upon return to China.⁴⁶

Chinese officials further desecuritize the Chinese migrant issue by attributing problems with tourists overstaying their visas on lax Russian enforcement of visa rules and corruption among the Russian police.⁴⁷ Enforcement of stricter rules on tour groups varies wildly. Although Chinese tour groups face fines if they failing to return with all of their registered tourists, in practice the penalties incurred depend on the relationship between the tour group and Russian and Chinese authorities.⁴⁸ According to many Chinese business travelers, instead of requiring that Chinese who overstay leave Russia immediately, local officials demand regular “payments,” thereby creating a mutually beneficial criminal situation, allowing Chinese to remain beyond their allowed time limit, while providing a source of regular illegal income for Russian officials. Chinese visitors who travel to Russia legally also complain of being harassed by Russian authorities, taken to the police station to show their documents, and charged “fees” as high as 500 rubles to be left alone, even if they hold valid passports and visas.⁴⁹

2) Chinese Migrants in the Russian Far East: Public Opinion Data

In July 2004, I carried out a public opinion poll of 250 Chinese from three cities in Heilongjiang province (Harbin, 40; Suifenhe, 90; Dongning, 60; and Heihe, 60) who worked in the Russian Far East. This survey shows a pattern of migratory labor—a majority of respondents (76%) stayed less than one year at a time and traveled back and forth to Russia over a five-year period.

Table 3

How long did you stay in the Russian Far East?

1-3 Months	14.8%
4-6 Months	31.6%
7 Months-1 Year	29.6%
1-5 Years	15.6%

More Than Five Years	7.6%
No Answer	08%

While previous surveys of Chinese working in Russia showed a population interested in putting down roots,⁵⁰ my July 2004 survey of Chinese in Heilongjiang province shows a transient population, temporarily residing in Russia for work purposes, but retaining family and cultural ties to China. A majority of respondents remained tied to their families in China: most respondents were married (79.2%) and, of those, only 3.6% lived in the Russian Far East with both spouse and children. A majority of respondents lived in temporary quarters in the Russian Far East, 56.8% in dormitories and 14% in hotels, though some rented apartments (22%), stayed with friends or relatives (4.4%) and a few (1.6%) owned housing. More than half (50.8%) reported little interaction with Russians and 69.2% admitted to limited Russian language ability.

Respondents sought work in Russia for a variety of economic reasons⁵¹ (unemployment 49.2%; better job 16%, sent by work unit 21.6%) and earned considerably higher wages than the average monthly minimum wage of 600 yuan (37.2% reported monthly earnings of 3,000-5,000 yuan; 36.4% earned 1,000-3,000 yuan; and 14.4% claimed they brought in more than 10,000 yuan). Many returned home for economic reasons as well (32.4% complained of too much competition from other Chinese in their industry; 23.2% completed their contract or project), although 14% cited visa problems as the primary factor in their return.

Although a majority of respondents described their experience in Russia as satisfactory (56%), positive overall despite problems (14%), or very positive (6.4%), there was much less consensus about the desirability of a permanent move to the Russian Far East, as Table 4 shows.

Table 4

If you had the opportunity would you choose to work in the Russian Far East permanently?

Definitely	16%
A short term stay is sufficient	14.8%
Maybe	36.8%
Absolutely not	21.6%
Don't know	8.4%
No answer	2.4%

These results reflect the many difficulties that Chinese workers experience during their stay in the Russian Far East, especially crime and corruption.

Table 5

What was the most significant problem you encountered?⁵²

1. Problems with boss or colleague	5.6%
2. Difficulties with Russian officials	14%
3. Problems in relations with local Russians	4.8%

4. High cost of living	14%
5. Missed home/family	7.2%
6. Visa problems	23.6%
7. Corruption	26%
8. Victim of crime (robbery, attack, etc.)	34%
No answer	0.4

Conclusions

Although Waever contends that desecuritization is the optimal goal, China's desecuritization of the migration issue has the counterproductive effect of increasing distrust of Chinese intentions, especially in the Russian border regions. If Russian elites use the language of security to earn political capital, then by downplaying the potential security consequences of migration Chinese officials appear to take Russian concerns less seriously. Indeed, on the migration issue, China and Russia take such diametrically opposed approaches that they fail to address each other's underlying concerns. Thus, in the case of a bilateral relationship, both parties must desecuritize for a stable outcome to be achieved. If one party securitizes and the other desecuritizes, tensions between the two countries may actually increase.

Despite their vastly different rhetoric on migration, China and Russia have been cooperating in regulating cross-border migration through administrative measures. Thus, despite Russia's securitizing language and China's desecuritizing assertions, both countries have recognized that steps can be taken to increase oversight over tourists and business travelers. The effectiveness of these measures is another problem due to corruption on both sides of the border. Nevertheless, without taking into account the policy responses to securitization and desecuritization, the Copenhagen School leaves out an important piece of the problem. Labeling an issue a security problem defines a situation, but without comparing the speech act to subsequent policy choices, it is difficult to establish whether or not securitization has taken place or not. An analysis of the Sino-Russian interactions on the migration issue points to securitizing speech acts on the Russian side that were never taken to their logical conclusion. This does not stem from China's success in desecuritizing the problem, but in the interest of both sides in resolving their differences peacefully and in the stake they both share in maintaining the partnership they forged in the 1990s after decades of conflict.

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¹³ Igor' Verba, "Polzuchaia ekspansiia velikogo soseda [The Great Neighbor's Purposeful Expansion]," Source? February 17, 2001.

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