Chapter 2
Fragile Edges Between Security and Insecurity: China's Border Regions

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Abstract Considerable analysis has focused on regions in which a fragile state or states interact with neighboring states to incubate widening, regional conflict; however, work addressing the impact of fragile states on the countries with which they share an international border from a subregional or subnational perspective has been more limited. This chapter seeks to contribute to filling this gap by looking at the particular vulnerabilities to human security experienced by the subregions along borders of fragile states. Focusing on China's border with North Korea, this chapter examines the dimensions of fragility in China's border areas to formulate some preliminary conclusions about the dynamics of subregional fragility.

2.1 Introduction

When states are fragile and their legitimacy is in question or has been eroded by their failure to govern, the costs to human development, human suffering, the natural environment, and security are sobering. In recent years, significant international attention has been given to preventing state failure, specifically to addressing how fragile states may be refocused on fulfilling the social compact that is intrinsic to states' legitimacy and stability: that of providing for the security and welfare of their citizens (Penh 2010).

Much of the literature on state fragility has focused on its dynamics, including the determinants and degrees of vulnerability of states to conflict and other disruptions (Huang 2007). Studies suggest that it is the interactions among governance, development and conflict within societies that lead to the kinds of social disruptions that render states vulnerable to failure (Marshall 2008, 5). In addition, a substantial body of work has addressed the role of the international donor community and its cooperation with local actors within weak states to address the sources

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of fragility.[1] The regional implications of state fragility have received less attention. While there is considerable analysis of regions in which a fragile state or states interact with neighboring states to incubate widening, regional conflict, work addressing the impact of fragile states on the countries with which they share an international border at the subnational regional level has been more limited. Through an analysis focused on China's border region along its boundary with North Korea, this chapter seeks to contribute to filling this gap. It examines the ways in which conditions of fragility within North Korea create or exacerbate vulnerabilities on the Chinese side of the border and pose challenges to Chinese efforts to improve conditions for development in the border subregion. It concludes by briefly examining conditions in Chinese regions bordering other fragile states to draw some preliminary conclusions about the dimensions and dynamics of regional fragility from a subnational perspective.

2.2 Definitions

Before proceeding, a few definitions are in order. First, although the focus in this analysis is on regional fragility at the subnational level—what will also be called "subregional fragility" in this discussion—the concept of regional fragility is a derivative of state fragility. The idea of state fragility is highly variable in the literature, but there is an emerging consensus that static framings of state fragility are insufficient. State fragility is dynamic, involving shifts from vulnerable stability toward crisis, conflict, and perhaps, ultimately, moving toward failure and collapse (Brinkerhoff and Johnson 2009). Fragile states are also fragile along a spectrum, with governments that to varying degrees fail to provide the most basic human security—the "freedom from fear and freedom from want" of the 1994 Human Development Report—to their populations (Pelling and Dill 2010; Tadjbakhsh 2005). As will be shown in the case of the China's border region with North Korea, discussed below, conditions of subregional fragility derive principally from the presence of a fragile state in the region, but they may be made worse by factors within the locality along the border. This is the case even within China—a state that is often given high scores for government effectiveness, which exacerbate conditions of fragility in the subregion (World Bank Institute 2009).

2.3 Border Regions as Fragile Regions

The sources of fragility in border subregions are to a large degree endemic to such regions. Borders between states are Janus-faced entities. On the one hand, borders function as the "fences" that assert the territorial limits that make for the "good neighbors" of Robert Frost's well-known poem.[2] In the international neighborhood,

[1] See, for example, USAID (2005).

[2] "Mending Wall,"– Robert Frost (1915).

modern states seek to enforce their control where their sovereign territory encounters the limit of their neighbor's borders. These political boundaries, where mutually recognized, are unequivocal; whatever the reality on the ground, there's nothing fuzzy about the line on the map where one state begins and the other ends. On the other hand, against the waves of satellite communications, global trading networks, and the transnational environmental issues that are an increasing concern, political borders between states are much less meaningful barriers. Today, the forces linking people across national borders are arguably more significant in shaping the daily organization of human relationships and social identity around the globe than the Westphalian barriers that define and dominate international political relationships (Rosenau 1997).

As has been widely observed, this confluence of oppositional forces—the push of states against each of the political borders that proscribe territorial sovereignty and the pull of transnational flows—pose many new challenges to even the most capable nation-state (Rosenau 1997). Much has been written about the growing phenomenon of dual citizenship, the "deterritorialization" of national identity by many immigrant communities that do not integrate into the societies where they work but instead retain primary cultural and political identities with their country of origin. Even in multiethnic states, moreover, ethnic minorities may through technology now more easily forge common cause with ethnically similar groups beyond their borders in ways perceived as threatening to the political integrity of the state in which they live (Rosenau 2003). Other issues such as the growing environmental and often related health challenges cannot only be addressed as domestic challenges, but must also be taken up as international or global collective action problems. These are among the problems that test the ability of modern states to fulfill their roles even in the best of times as effective managers of the problems confronting the societies they govern, including their critical function of delivering security to the populations within the limits of their territorial sovereignty (Jacobson 1997; Migdal 1988).

One irony associated with international borders today is that as physical "real estate" the regions along these borders may be areas where the power of the state is both particularly obvious and also quite weak. On the one hand, along many borders, military or paramilitary troops may stand at the ready demarking military frontiers. On the other, states have very different capacities to govern at the local level and to achieve their objectives throughout the territory under their sovereign authority. It is not only what kind of political system a country has, but where a country is in its level of development, and what resources—from fiscal to infrastructural to moral—on which the state has to draw that are among the factors that determine how extensive a state's capacity to regulate and exert leverage over problems may be across its territory (Naughton and Yang 2004). In subnational border regions where the reach of states is attenuated, this capacity may be especially weak.

Border regions are places where many of the transnational issues that are most challenging to state capabilities dominate and determine local conditions. Particularly where governance in the neighboring state is weak, and also in territorially larger states or in countries with mountainous or otherwise difficult terrain where border regions may be far from the national government's direct oversight,

border regions are often the loci for the pathologies of porous borders. Such pathologies range from smuggling to illegal migration, as well as hard-to-contain, monitor, and manage transboundary pollution (Dupont 2001). Border regions are also places where the presence of populations with transnational ethnic identities may give rise to cross-border ethno-nationalism, including ethno-political conflict (Gurr 2000). As places along the political borders between states, such regions may thus figure prominently in national security concerns, while also being especially vulnerable to state failures both from within their own states and from across the international border or borders they share with neighboring states. For example, when governance is weak or the state's legitimacy rests on a fragile foundation, as will be shown in the example from the China-North Korean border below, the activities of minority populations within the state along the borders may attract special scrutiny or even draw suspicion from their own national governments. At the same time, even when the issue affecting public security may not be as immediate and obvious a danger as that of the presence of rebel groups, for example, inadequate state capacity to manage problems along borders, such as the trafficking or environmental threats so often concentrated along national peripheries, amplifies these problems, degrading conditions for economic development. Regions along the borders of fragile states are not only highly vulnerable to spill-over effects from within neighboring states, they are in fact held hostage to political circumstances beyond their control, adding an additional dimension of fragility to already fragile local conditions (Patrick 2006).

2.4 China's Fragile Borders

China offers a compelling focus for an analysis of fragile border regions because, while it is a large and powerful country that places a high priority on political stability as a critical condition for development, it has received mixed assessments of its governance performance. In addition, it has a complex sociology, including substantial populations of non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities, many of which are the dominant ethnic group within some of its border regions. As noted, in terms of government performance, the World Bank assigns China a relatively high score on its ranking of government effectiveness; however, China performs less impressively on other measures of government accountability (World Bank Institute 2009). One key factor compromising positive assessments of government accountability in China relates to the challenges China's central government faces in governance at the local level. As has been well studied, China's political system decentralizes considerable decision-making authority to subnational levels of government, with the performance of localities and their leaders measured by national criteria, but with considerable latitude devolved to local governments to determine how to achieve these objectives.

This devolution of authority in China has proven effective as a way to incentivize both economic growth and policy initiative at the local level, but these strengths come at the expense of the central government's ability to ensure implementation of its directives to the letter of its intent. This may carry high costs, particularly in the social and environmental arenas, where national authorities have recently

put a premium on improving government effectiveness and responsiveness (OECD 2006), while local governments remain under intense pressure to generate revenue and grow the economies within their administrative purview (Saich 2004).

As some analysts have observed, this pattern is also characteristic of China's governance of its peripheral regions. Local governance there is rendered more complicated by often historically rooted concerns about stability and national integration linked to the ethnic identities of the populations in these regions. In the Chinese context, these populations are frequently distinct from China's dominant Han cultural group and have cultural if not kinship ties to the populations beyond China's territorial borders in adjacent states. Cultural differences may contribute to tensions and suspicions between local non-Han ethnic groups and Han officials seeking to pursue high-growth strategies to economic development that may collide with local preferences (Potter 2005). In addition, as a result of the social and economic changes associated with modernization, many of the fragile natural environments that typify much of China's periphery are no longer sustainable environments for economic development, but instead provide increasingly fertile ground for social tensions over diminishing resources (Fischer 2005).

The sheer number of states with which China shares a territorial border makes the governance of China's periphery more complicated. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, these grew to 14 different countries. This includes a 2,800 mile (4,506 km) border with India, of which over 600 miles (966 km) are disputed, and a 47-mile (76 km) border with Afghanistan, one of six of China's neighboring countries, is found in the "alert" category of the 2009 Failed States Index (Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy 2009).[3] China has a long tradition of managing a difficult frontier. John K. Fairbank familiarized American students of China with Qing Dynasty China's Lifan Yuan, its court for the administration of its outer provinces. (Di Cosmo 1998) However, institutions to manage China's ecologically and culturally diverse borderlands were already part of the fabric of China's imperial administration as early as the Han, which included such structures as military state farms worked by soldier-farmers along the borders that combined the sedentary agricultural practices of Han Chinese culture with the military organization of the dynastic political structure. It was thus not the networks of walls, including the "Great Wall," that delimited the reach of the Chinese state; rather it was the extension of the dynasty's demographic and cultural as well as military reach into the periphery that served as key instruments of dynastic management of its challenging frontier (Woodside 2007).

At the same time, throughout much of Chinese history, Chinese thinking about security has closely linked the management of frontier affairs to its domestic security. Traditionally, controlling the periphery was seen as critical to defending inner China: for one, even when the frontier was not viewed as a particular security challenge, the absence of external challenges to the Chinese state's control over its vast territory was viewed as an important affirmation of the dynasty's mandate to rule (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 50–51). Stability in Chinese frontier areas, including the absence of ethnic unrest, has also long been perceived as a critical dimension of

[3]The other five are North Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.

border defense itself. As scholar M. Taylor Fravel has pointed out, citing the example of an Urumqi Army Academy study on frontier defense, this is true today. The Urumqi Academy study describes the objectives of frontier defense as "safeguarding the integrity and security of territorial sovereignty; defending against foreign aggression; maintaining border order. . .[and] ensuring political stability. . . of border areas" (Fravel 2007). Economic development along China's border regions has been an important aspect of frontier management as a tool in reducing the potential for ethnic unrest, reflected in such policies as the "revitalize the border areas and enrich the minority people's lives" program introduced during the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s (China Daily April, 25, 2008; Wu 2005). China recognizes these regions as facing particular development constraints, with one analyst for a Chinese security thinktank drawing a contrast between the "shadow belt" of the periphery and the "sun belt" of China's trade and commercial centers (Lu 1993).

Along with this understanding, those governing China have also long recognized that conditions within China are themselves linked to conditions in the periphery; indeed, they even go as far as including conditions in adjacent countries beyond Chinese control in these considerations. Disruptions from countries along China's borders can spill into China, compromising China's internal stability and development. The Chinese state could seek to enforce stability along its periphery using military force and or by reinforcing static systems of defense, such as its extensive garrisons and walls in traditional times (Giersch 2006). China's historical record, however, suggests that its leaders deemed the costs of establishing military superiority over peripheral states to outweigh the Chinese state's principal objective of internal prosperity and stability, causing them to generally preference the non-coercive over the coercive in managing China's frontier relationships (Swaine and Tellis 2000; Fravel 2008). These political arrangements can be seen as part of a policy continuum, ranging from the traditional tribute system between China and many of its neighbors, which, while hierarchical, involved mutually beneficial trade, to the "peaceful coexistence" concept before its reform policies of the late 1970s, to today's "harmonious periphery" policy that stresses economic and regional cooperation with its neighboring states, and is heavily laden with a rhetoric of nonintervention in their internal affairs (Ma and Zhao 2008; Wang 1983).

China's local governments, of course, are the faces of the Chinese state on neighboring states' borders, with their principal objective that of seizing opportunities to increase economic growth in the region they administer—again, an objective reinforced by the emphasis placed on high rates of local growth in the performance assessments of local leaders used in determining promotions. With this emphasis on economic development, nontraditional as well as traditional threats have become included among the threats to "stability and development in [China's] border areas" (Ma and Zhao 2008).

2.5 The Sino-North Korean Border as a Fragile Subregion

When states along China's borders cooperate in seeking to address these threats, using economic linkages to foster cooperation and mutual benefit across China's borders may offer an effective way for China's to help secure its interests in stability

along its periphery.[4] In general, however, the states on China's borders are less than easy-going neighbors, some of which find cooperating to reduce cross-border crime difficult due to their own weak governance capabilities and economic policies; in some cases, their own political and economic fragility is itself the source of these problems. North Korea, bordering China at China's Northeast, is among China's most challenging neighbors. By nearly all assessments it is a fragile state. On the Country Indicators for Fragility(CIFP) index, North Korea ranks 52 out of 64 overall. Using an "authority, legitimacy and capacity" (ALC) framework, however, North Korea moves well up the rankings for fragility, given its very weak score for legitimacy (Carment et al. 2008). On the Index of State Weakness in the Developing World, North Korea ranks in the bottom quintile for economic weakness as well (Rice and Patrick 2008).

Despite its economic constraints, North Korea has devoted considerable resources toward a nuclear weapons program, which some argue it sees not only as critical to its defense in the face of its assessment of American-led hostility, but also as vital to its prestige and regime survival in the face of South Korea's "economic miracle." As some analysts have pointed out, in addition to these security and political objectives, North Korea's nuclear program has also been used by the regime as leverage for continuous foreign aid to support its brittle economy.[5] The paranoia of Pyongyang and the brutal political repression and economic deprivation that has accompanied it are directly linked to the litany of transnational and other international pathologies with which North Korea is associated. These include crime, trafficking in weapons and related materials, drugs and humans, infectious diseases, and environmental threats.

The consequences of these symptoms of governance failures on the part of Pyongyang and its "military-first" policy have both broader international and cross-border implications for China. At the level of high politics, these have included putting the spotlight on China in international efforts to bring an end to Kim Jong-Il's quest for a nuclear deterrent. Their cross-border impacts are less well known. Most widely discussed among them is the potential for a flood of refugees entering China from North Korea, perhaps linked to the very real threat of a political succession crisis, which could bring a possibly severe humanitarian crisis across China's doorstep into Chinese territory. China has already contended with the migration associated with a severe famine in North Korea, which sent a flood of refugees across China's border in the late 1990s. A variety of more acute scenarios can be imagined given what appear to be political conditions in North Korea at the time of writing. In the throes of a succession or other political crisis, North Korean authorities might go so far as encourage a Mariel-style outpouring in which large numbers of their citizens are expelled into China; including "problem citizens" or unproductive members of society, from the physically or mentally infirm to prisoners, among them potentially violent criminals. Alternatively, a full-blown political collapse of

[4]China's cooperation with Kazakhstan on transnational crimes offers an example. See "The Cooperation Strategy between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 21st Century". Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, (December 21, 2006): http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t285011.htm. Accessed March 25, 2010.

[5]See, for example, Jin (2009).

the regime would very likely trigger the flight of large numbers of refugees across the border into China, threatening social order on the Chinese side of the border and requiring large-scale mobilization of security and humanitarian resources on the part of Chinese authorities (Thompson and Freeman 2009).

2.6 Yanbian Prefecture: A Failure to Thrive

What are some of the specific cross-border effects of North Korea's regime fragility on China and how do they relate to other impediments to development and security on the Chinese side of the border? To begin to address these questions, some understanding of the variations between two of the largest administrative subregions along China's boundary with North Korea is useful. The China-North Korea border is approximately 880 miles (1,416 km) long. It follows the logic of physical geography, running for most of its length first along the Yalu River, which flows south from Mt. Paektu (Baitoushan), the highest peak of the Chanbaek (Changbai) mountain range and then flows southwest, describing the boundary between China's Liaoning and part of Jilin provinces and North Korea's North Pyongan, South Pyongan, and Ryanggang provinces to the Korean Bay. The border then runs along much of the length of the Tumen River, which divides China's Jilin and North Korea's North Hamgyong provinces, as it flows from its origins on Mt. Paektu, to its delta on the East Sea or Sea of Japan.

There is a marked contrast between the border area in Liaoning along North Korea's North Pyongan province and the Jilin- North Hamgyong province subregion. The former includes the municipality Dandong on the banks of the Yalu at the mouth of the Yalu River delta. Dandong, linked across the Yalu to North Korea's city of Sinuiju by the Grand Bridge of Sino-DPRK Friendship, proudly promotes its distinction as "China's largest border city" (Dandong City 2010a). Sinuiju was designated a Special Administrative Region/ Special Economic Zone in 2002—a designation which included a legal framework modeled after Hong Kong, ostensibly designed to foster rapid growth aimed at generating revenue by Pyongyang. Progress toward development of the zone has been very limited, with two islands in the Yalu (Weihua and Huangjinbing) the most recent focal point for development (Global Times 2010). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that, in balance, Dandong has prospered rather than suffered from its proximity to North Korea, serving as the main port for China's cross-border trade in consumer goods with that country, with some reports indicating that as much as 70% of China's exports to North Korea pass through Dandong, as does approximately 40% of North Korea's export trade, with many of the numerous legal trading companies reporting millions of *yuan* in deals with North Korea over the past decade (Li, Di and Zhao 2009). Dandong officially recorded exports of USD351 million to North Korea in 2007 (Dandong City 2010b). In 2009, even as North Korea proceeded with policies aimed at choking out emerging free market activity in the country, a North Korean consular office was opened in Dandong, indicating a desire to further develop the bilateral trade relationship (Choson Ilbo 2009). Dandong is also a tourist destination; revenue from tourism

accounts for nearly 10% of local GDP. Most tourism is directed toward visiting the region's historic Korean war and scenic sites on the Chinese side of the border, but Chinese tourism from Dandong to North Korea's Sinuiju was reportedly restarted in 2009 after being suspended in 2006, with more than 10,000 applications for passes to take part in a 1-day package tour to the DPRK that year (World News Connection December 3 2009).

Yanbian's cross-border experience with North Korea stands in distinct contrast, however. Located along the Tumen stretch of the Sino-North Korean border, Yanbian is an autonomous ethnic Korean prefecture that occupies about a quarter of the area of China's Jilin province and runs along approximately 325 miles (522 km) of Yanbian's 750 mile (1,206 km) long border with North Korea. Cities in the region include the prefectural capital of Yanji, less than 10 miles (16 km) from the North Korean border. Among Yanbian's border ports and cities are Tumen, which is connected by bridge across the Tumen River to North Korea's Nanyang City, and Hunchun, which has links to Yanbian's Shatuozi and Quanhe ports, which serve the DPRK. It is apparent to visitors to Yanji and other smaller cities in Yanbian that these border cities are far less vibrant than others in China, including Dandong (French 2010). The total populations of the two Chinese subregions along China's border with North Korea are close in size. Although the populations of Dandong municipality and Yanbian prefecture are very close (2.4 and 2.1 million respectively), Yanbian's population is quite distinct from that of Dandong in that approximately 40% of it is ethnically Korean.

Economic data supports the impression that Jilin's Yanbian has lagged behind its Liaoning border cousin in terms of economic growth and development. In 2009, official figures reported by the Dandong municipal government indicated an increase in GDP growth of 16.5% over 2008, driven by significant increases in both its industrial and the construction and real estate sectors, and also sustained growth in retail sales consumer goods as well as exports (Dandong Daily February 26 2010; Dandong Daily March 11 2010). Total municipal GDP for Dandong reached 65.579 billion *yuan*, indicating a per capita income of approximately $3600 in 2009—the national average for China, according to IMF data. Although Yanbian reported high economic growth of more than 18%, total prefectural GDP stood at 45 billion *yuan*, putting per capita GDP at a far lower approximately $1800 for 2009.[6]

This gap in levels of economic development between the two subregions is attributable to a number of factors. The first is geographic, including the relative navigability of the Yalu versus Tumen Rivers. Although the Yalu is heavily silted and not easily navigable for much of its length, at Dandong the river is navigable to the Korea Bay. Freight rail lines connect Dandong to other points in China—including linking it to Yanbian, which does not itself have access to ocean transport. The Tumen, in contrast, is navigable only for the last 53 miles (85 km) of its length

[6]Yanbian's total economic output ranks fifth in the national minority autonomous prefecture; based on other data, estimates would put Yanbian's per capita urban income at closer to $1400. See http://gxt.jl.gov.cn/szjjxx/200905/t20090518_580980.html. Accessed February 27, 2010.

as it approaches the Sea of Japan (East Sea). As a result of territorial losses in the 19th century, Chinese territory falls about 11 miles (17 km) short of the sea, leaving China's Tumen Delta region landlocked. A railway bridge between Russia and North Korea at the mouth of the river acts as an effective block to any shipping at all on the river. Unlike Dandong, which has been able to develop itself as a logistical center for exports from Northeast China, Yanbian has had to rely on air, rail, and trucking links for international trade. In any case, infrastructure on the North Korean side of the border at Yanbian has failed to develop to match that on the Chinese side. Efforts by Chinese authorities from Yanbian prefecture and from the Jilin provincial government to gain access to nearby Korean ports, such as Rajin, less than 80 miles (127 km) from Hunchun, have yielded a number of agreements on port development, including a long-term lease agreement reached in early 2010. However, to date these have fallen disappointingly short of Chinese expectations, although China has exported coal through Rajin for a number of years (2point6billion.com/news, March 9 2010).

A second and related factor contributing to Yanbian's relatively lower level of development and per capita GDP connects to regional economic structure. Both Yanbian and Dandong are located in China's Northeast region, which had the largest regional concentration of large-scale heavy state-owned industry under China's planned economic system. The challenges the region has faced in making the transition to China's market-oriented economic reforms have been well studied. According to a recent spatial study of urban employability—defined as the capacity of workers to find jobs and of the area studied to create them—in Northeast China, Dandong's workers rank significantly higher than those in Yanbian. In this respect, Yanbian typifies regions with lower levels of worker employability—consistent with the relatively high degree of state ownership and heavy industry in its economic mix and its location on the border. Dandong in contrast offered greater opportunities to its workers and had seen a substantial increase in opportunity for its work force during the period measured from 1991 to 2002, while Yanbian's ranking had declined significantly over the same period (Li et al. 2007). Dandong's development pattern is more like that of other coastal regions in China; indeed, the city is a key port in Liaoning's "coastal economic belt" plan, introduced in 2005, aimed at deepening economic cooperation among China, Japan, Russia, as well as South Korea (China Daily August 3 2009).

Nonetheless, Yanbian would seem to have at least one potential advantage over Dandong—this is its ethnic Korean population. About 80% of Yanbian's ethnic Koreans originated in areas that are now part of North Korea. After 1982 when China reopened cross-border trade with its neighbors, most of its border trade quickly became dominated between trade between Yanbian and DPRK, rather than the (then) Soviet Union, with China selling mainly agricultural and consumer goods and importing raw materials—principally iron ore—across its Tumen River border with North Korea. This is a pattern that has continued, facilitated in part by the socio-cultural and linguistic ties between the Chinese Korean ethnic group that is the predominant population in Yanbian with Koreans across the border.

2.7 Efforts to Mitigate Fragility Across the Border

Indeed, with strong provincial and central support, local officials have sought to expand opportunities for development in Yanbian through cooperation with North Korea (and other countries in the region) through legitimate economic activity, promoting various local and regional development schemes. These have included both unilateral initiatives to deepen cross-border economic linkages with North Korea and involvement in a multilateral scheme. Cross-border trade not only has economic benefits for Yanbian and helps fill shortfalls in supplies of basic goods within North Korea. Chinese leaders have also viewed even simple border transactions as augmenting the awareness of market practices by North Koreans, and so potentially facilitating reform and greater stability within North Korea—actions which of course also have economic benefit to China (Li 2006). Among these efforts are those aimed at expanding the volume and scope of border transactions, including involving local companies in North Korea's exports of iron and other minerals, as well as selling Chinese finished goods and agricultural products to North Korea. In late 2009, China announced plans for a major new development zone along its North Korean border that, in addition to linking Dandong to other cities in Liaoning through expanded transit facilities, would also strengthen logistical links between Changchun, Jilin's capital, and the border through other major provincial cities (China Economic Net November 19 2009). The deal was publicized as negotiations were reportedly concluded between China and North Korea on extending China's 10-year lease on North Korea's Rajin port (signed in 2008) for an additional decade, as noted above, following an unusual visit by Kim Jong-Il to the port in December 2009 as part of a broader regional development project discussed between Jilin provincial leadership and North Korean authorities (Liu and Lu November 20 2009; Yonhap December 17 2009). Chinese investment has been critical to significant upgrades of Rajin's facilities and, after years of delays, the dirt road from the port to the Chinese border may be paved, linking it to the significant infrastructure improvements, including miles of high-speed road to the North Korea border, already completed in Yanbian as part of the prefecture's so-called "10 billion dollar" infrastructure development program (Freeman 2008). The Chinese border city of Hunchun reached an agreement on a 50-year lease with Rajin in 2009 as well, which also provides for the construction of an industrial zone. North Korea and the government of the city of Tumen also agreed to repair the railway linking the city with the North Korean port of Chongjin with Tumen partially financing the repair with a USD10 million loan to North Korea (Snyder 2010; Seatrade Asia Maritime News 2010).

Accompanying these efforts, local authorities announced plans to expand tourism cooperation with their North Korean counterparts. A number of 2-day tours to North Korea from Yanbian for Chinese tourists were announced in early 2010, building on limited tourist programs between the border town Sanhe and North Korea's industrial city of Chongjin. More ambitious passenger rail links have also been planned from Tumen City to North Korea's Namyang, Chongjin, and Ch'ilbosan.

The plan aimed at developing the border region that has attracted the most international attention has focused on the multilateral development of the Tumen

River delta, where the borders of China, North Korea, and Russia come together, and the surrounding region. As the Tumen project was first conceptualized in the late 1980s and early 1990s, China—and Yanbian—would gain access to the Sea of Japan or Yellow Sea at the Tumen delta through cooperating with its regional neighbors with financial and technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to create a new international port city on this largely developed and lightly populated land. In an early iteration of the plan, a UN-organized international management commission or development corporation would lease the land from Russia, China, and North Korea on which the trans-boundary zone would be constructed, thus going so far as to pool the three countries' sovereign territory within a "growth triangle." Ports along the coast in the subregion, such as the North Korean port of Rajin, would be integrated into the zone, making it into a major logistics hub for Northeast Asia (Tsuji 2004).

While the new port development concept has been abandoned, the project has endured. The latest version of the program is the UNDP-led Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI), a framework that seeks to promote regional cooperation within a much enlarged regional area, including more of Northeast China, as well as Mongolia's eastern provinces, Russia's Primorsky territory, South Korea's eastern port cities, and North Korea's ice-free Rajin port. Chinese leaders have understood the Tumen plan as more than an infrastructure development program, viewing it as a potential inducement to North Korea to open its economy through regional economic linkages, providing one possible way in which to nurture Chinese-style reform in North Korea while also supporting China's development objectives for its own border region. The project's potential in this regard was reflected in the creation of a Rajin-Sonbong (Rason) free trade zone by North Korea as a step toward participation in the Tumen scheme in the early 1990s.

The Tumen plan also included an effort to formalize improved international cooperation not only on subregional economic development, but also on related concerns (http://www.tumennet.org/tumenriver/china.html; http://www.tumenprogramme.org/data/upload/download/Pollution%20Abatement%20of%20Tumen%20River/Part%205.pdf). These include the growing environmental problems in this environmentally sensitive and significantly degraded bioregion. The historical void in multilateral cooperation has exacerbated already considerable environmental destruction as a result of the over-exploitation of forest resources and the deterioration of water quality, both of inland and of coastal waterways—including the Tumen River—from a range of sources. Despite the internationally recognized ecological significance of the region as the location of key endangered species and as a critical area for migrating birds, as well as growing acknowledgement that degradation of the region's natural environment has implications for sustainable growth in the region, China and Russia have engaged in only limited cooperation on transboundary environmental issues, while North Korean cooperation on the environment has been intermittent. Rising pollution from Chinese and North Korean sources is becoming an increasing source regional friction, including between China and Russia over pollution from Chinese sources of Russian waters and the poaching of endangered species by Chinese nationals in Russian territory

(Hunter 1998; Nobuhiro 2005). At the same time, pollution is a growing concern on the part of both local governments and residents of the region as the link between human health and the environment is more widely understood. (Byun 2008/2009; Yanji Municipal Sewerage Treatment Co. 2007).

2.8 Cross-Border Effects of North Korean Fragility

North Korea has proven an unreliable partner in subregional development efforts. Progress in cooperation has been crippled by a number of factors, foremost among them the regional and international tensions associated with North Korea's nuclear program (Hunter 1998; Nobuhiro 2005). North Korea withdrew as a participant in the GTI, for example, after Pyongyang conducted its second nuclear test in May 2009. That North Korea has opted to end its engagement in the Tumen scheme is a frustrating development for China, which has played a critical role in keeping the Tumen project alive during the past decade and a half in the face of considerable international skepticism about the project's future viability. In addition to offering a development vision for the region, from the Chinese perspective the project has served as a valuable "track two" mechanism through which North Korea has been brought into dialogue with diverse regional actors, including Japan, Mongolia, and South Korea, as well as China and Russia, throughout the vicissitudes of geopolitical tensions over the same period (Freeman 2010).

Yanbian also feels the impact of corrosive spill-over effects from the depressed economic conditions within North Korea. This includes cross-border crime—what a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has referred to as among the "unspoken development constraints" (Hubschle 2005). Economic deprivation within North Korea pushes North Koreans to seek refuge in China by crossing the border illegally across the Tumen River—far shallower and narrower than the Yalu and, so, easier to traverse—a situation also conducive to human trafficking. Corrupt Chinese border guards may cooperate with their North Korean counterparts in human trafficking, with reports that a single Chinese border guard in Yanbian may sell as many as 40–50 women each year this way. Cooperation by local guards in drug trafficking is also a problem. Although the weight of North Korea's role in global drug production is contested, reports of hundreds of drug seizures, particularly of methamphetamines, and hundreds of thousands of *renminbi* in drug-related funds each year in Yanbian hint at the local impact of the problem (Sovacool 2009). In addition, smuggling of other products, such as agricultural goods, including grain, from China to North Korea has been on the rise due to low stocks of food and other staples in North Korea that have driven their prices up to levels far higher than those in China (World News Connection May 9 2009). Along with this, North Korean escapees are associated with violent crimes committed along the border, with armed North Korean troops reportedly also involved (World News Connection June 24 2008).

While the extent of collusion by local officials and state security agents with criminal activities would be difficult to measure accurately, the sheer challenge of

managing cross border crime by the local government certainly acts to foster a preference for intransparency by the state at the local level. It is the responsibility of local governments to deliver public security, including striving to implement China's national strategy for "drug free communities," for example (Choson Ilbo February 12 2010). Failure to make progress toward this and other central government priorities hampers the chances of local officials for promotion; when resources are insufficient to adequately address the problem, then the response by local officials tends to be to keep a tight grip on information so as to underreport problems and to exaggerate successes (Huang 2007).

Conditions within North Korea and the uncertainties associated with North Korea's regional behavior have imposed other less obvious and direct constraints on development in the subregion. Along with the pursuit of direct links to North Korea, local authorities in Yanbian have also remained eager to capitalize on the ethnic Korean identity of the prefecture's ethnic majority and its location on the North Korea border to promote local development. They have not only encouraged trade and labor exports to South Korea, as mentioned previously, but have also sought to draw South Korean investment to the region as a base for South Korean economic activity involving both China and North Korea. In the first years after Beijing's normalization of relations with Seoul, investment trends along with trade on the part of South Koreans in Yanbian were promising. After a number of years of steady increases, as trade faltered and Yanbian's principal link to South Korea become as a source of labor imports—with its Korean-speaking population responding to steady demand from South Korea's labor market—South Korean investment within Yanbian actually declined.[7] For possible reasons explored below, South Korean investors have complained about investment conditions in Yanbian, citing not so much unhappiness with the quality of human capital, but frustrations with the levels of corruption and opacity of the Yanji government, as well as the low level of trust exhibited by officials toward South Korean business personnel (interview by author in Yanbian 2008; Freeman 2009).

Indeed, while in theory authorities have been supportive of South Korean investment in the region, in practice ethnic politics have made fostering such ties difficult—even a security concern for both local and national officials in China. For much of the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the ethnic Korean minority, including the population concentrated in Yanbian, was viewed by central authorities as a model minority group, whose agricultural communities in the era of collectivized agriculture were to be emulated and whose revolutionary credentials were impeccable. The normalization of relations between China and South Korea and increasing contacts between Chinese Koreans in Yanbian and South Koreans has played a role in changing this view. The attention given to Yanbian by human rights activists from South Korea concerned about the forced repatriation by the Chinese government of the many North Korean escapees who cross into China in the region

[7]By 2002, an estimated 48,000 Chinese Koreans from Yanbian were in South Korea. See more on this discussion in Luova (2007, 155–156; 185; 189).

is one factor. While China is a party to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and the 1967 Protocol, it has refused to classify North Koreans who cross the border illegally as refugees, thus rejecting the view that the principle of non-refoulement should be applied to them and returning them to North Korea (Margesson et al. 2007). The tensions between China and South Korean groups over this issue as China has sustained and even reinforced its hard-line policy toward North Koreans who cross the border, have contributed to the suspicion with which South Koreans are viewed in the region, dampening their interest in investment (author's interviews Yanbian 2008).

This unwelcoming atmosphere for South Korean participation in the Yanbian economy is worsened by Chinese and South Korean suspicions about each other's long-term intentions vis à vis North Korea, on the one hand, and Yanbian, on the other. Some South Koreans see China's interest in deepening economic cooperation with North Korea as an effort to add a "fourth Northeastern province" to Chinese territory. At the same time, some nationalist groups in South Korea assert that Yanbian is historically part of Korea and should be restored to Korean sovereignty. After China removed references to Korean history before 1948 from its website in 2004, a group of Korean lawmakers submitted a bill calling for the nullification of the so-called "Gando Agreement" between China and Japan, which had formally recognized Chinese control over the territory largely coincident with Yanbian. Han Chinese migration to the region over the past several decades as well as out migration by ethnic Koreans for job opportunities has continued to dilute the percentage of ethnic Koreans in Yanbian's population mix. It has fallen from around 60% in 1953 to around 36% in 2000 and is expected to drop still further to around 25% in the next decade and a half. Some South Koreans allege this is a plot to diminish Korean cultural influence in the region that is in part an effort to weaken Korean territorial claims (Freeman 2008).

These irredentist expressions from Korean nationalists contribute to rising worries on the part of Chinese authorities about the potential for burgeoning ethnonationalism from their Korean minority. The arrest on charges of spying for South Korea of Yanbian native and Chinese Academy of Social Sciences scholar, Jin Xide, has only added substance to such paranoia (Lee 2009). Along with this, Koreans on both sides of the DMZ dispute Chinese claims to part of the Mt. Paektu peak, which is seen as the birthplace of the Korean people. This has led some analysts to speculate that China has begun to worry that a united Korea could stake formal claims to some of Yanbian's territory, concerns reflected in China's so-called "Northeast Project" to counter historically based Korean claims over any part of the region. Chinese specialists on the region have called for the adaptation of historical research on the Korean minority to the changing social and historical environment because "strengthening the national and regional historical research has significant implications for developing national culture and home-consciousness… [on the part of China's Korean minority]" (Lee 2005). Some reports indicate that Beijing placed the Yanbian Autonomous prefecture on its watch list of regional security concerns as a "sensitive area" (Freeman 2008; 2010).

Thus, although Chinese leaders are fundamentally supportive of deepening trade relations between Yanbian and the Korean peninsula as way to boost local growth, this support is tarnished with suspicion about the inherent loyalty to the Chinese national project of its Korean minority. One response to these concerns about potential ethno nationalism within the prefecture on the part of Chinese authorities has been to increase transfers of central development funding to the region, a pattern typical of regions in China that the central government sees as vulnerable to social instability (Wang 2005). For a decade or more, Yanbian has been the recipient of central and provincial funds through such programs as the "Develop the West" program and the "Program to Develop Border Areas and Improve the Lives of the People There." In a 2009 speech commemorating the latter, Jilin governor Han Changfu highlighted this fiscal support to the region: "Jilin has always attached importance to the development of minority areas...The ethnic autonomous areas are tilted in infrastructure construction project, financial transfer payment, or national bonds project, etc. Over the past 5 years, in Yanbian Prefecture and other ethnic areas, construction has started on 880 large-scale projects, all of which are included in China's eleventh 5-year plan" (Jilin Government September 7 2009). Ironically, therefore, unlike Dandong, which has a primarily Han and Manchu population and thus lacks Yanbian's ethnic ties to the peninsula, in the context of rising Korean nationalism, the prefecture's ethnic Korean identity may act in practice to stymie economic openness while also reinforcing the region's dependence on state funds.

2.9 Hard Security for the Border

Along with these measures, China has also continued to deploy an array of "hard security" tools for managing cross-border and internal security. Generally, border security is the purview of border public security force, some branches of which are under the command of provincial-level civilian authorities. In 2003, the defense of both the China-North Korea and the Yunnan section of the China-Myanmar border were assigned to China's PLA border defense force, adding additional depth to border defense operations (Freeman and Thompson 2009). As the international financial crisis unfolded, Yanbian drew particular concern from provincial as well as local-level officials about its resilience through the crisis, not only because of the impact of the crisis on local economic conditions, but also because of potential increases in the numbers of escapees from North Korea as the result of spiking food costs within North Korea (Jilin Government September 7 2009). There is evidence that the number of North Korean escapees from North Hamgyung has once again been on the rise. According to one defector's report, while during the food crisis of the 1990s, North Korean authorities punished the families whose members had fled North Korea, they no longer take punitive action because the number of escapees has grown to such an extent (Choson Ilbo March 4 2010).

In this context, China has further tightened surveillance and control along the North Korean border. The Border Defense Corps of Jilin Province has organized

patrol groups for every village in every border township or town under its jurisdiction, tasked with village-based patrol and security precautions. Officers of the Yanbian Military Sub-district are also increasingly employing "informatized" methods of handling border contingencies, including video monitoring and control, as well as border sensors that provide 24-h monitoring and control. The technology on border patrol vehicles has also been upgraded so that they are now equipped with laser night vision devices, digital wireless communication equipment, and satellite positioning devices. The cost of these security improvements to the region has been high. According to one report, Jilin Province has invested over 10 million *yuan* in voice-answering systems and interlinked alarms in border defense stations and the homes of inhabitants in frontline border villages under its jurisdiction, as well as mobile police vehicles and related equipment alone (World News Connection November 28 2008; October 6 2009).

Along with these security precautions, the region maintains a fairly well-developed civilian emergency response system that can be utilized in the event of a flood of North Korean refugees across the border or other crisis. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces are also tasked with disaster relief and, as in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, would play a critical role in managing such as crisis. Both the PLA and People's Armed Police (PAP) have guidelines for managing "sudden incidents" affecting social order (Thompson and Freeman 2009).

In addition to a potential refugee emergency, the region also remains vulnerable in other ways to North Korea's military-first doctrine. This includes the impact on the environment and human health from North Korea's nuclear testing. Indeed, when North Korea conducted its second nuclear test in May 2009, it did so just 22 miles (35 km) from Ch'ilbosan (with the missiles launched only 12.5 miles (20 km) from that city), triggering an earthquake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale, with an epicenter just 112 miles (180 km) from Yanji (Xinwen Zhongxin 2009). Concerns by local citizens, communicated to the Yanbian Prefecture Committee's propaganda department and published on the web, included fears of nuclear contamination resulting from the test. Local authorities in Yanbian were criticized for their failure to take measures to "handle the contamination issue," but anger toward North Korea on the part of Chinese citizens was universal. Two such comments read:

> The DPRK is really disappointing to the Chinese people; China has not declared its position on the nuclear test. But you should not have conducted test at this place! You know how great the mental stress this has created for the people in Yanbian? Not to mention the impact on Yanbian after the nuclear test. The people of Yanbian are utterly saddened indeed... (ellipses as published)

and

> Why didn't they choose somewhere close to Japan and the ROK to conduct the test? Shouldn't the Chinese Government make some response? The nuclear test has put our children in danger! This must be made clear to the DPRK! (Yanbian Xinxigang May 25 2009)

North Korea's nuclear test and the resulting sense of insecurity among citizens in Yanbian encapsulate the high costs of its propinquity to North Korea, whose actions

may literally cause tremors across the region. North Korea's behavior shapes local perceptions of personal security and health; it also lowers the appeal of investment in the subregion and, therefore, the prospects for economic development. If at the level of high politics, Beijing is attempting to bring North Korea to the table to discuss denuclearization, it has sought to do what it can without directly intervening in North Korean affairs to help influence economic development. This has included encouraging greater economic openness within North Korea. At the same time, the pathologies associated with sharing a relatively porous border with a fragile state act as an impediment to development and a steady drain on the local resources of a region already facing geographic, among other, constraints on development. Fiscal transfers by Beijing through various programs to the area to help mitigate threats to social stability and security in the ethnically Korean region are a symptom of mistrust on the part of Chinese authorities of this once model minority region, while they reinforce local dependency on fiscal transfers from central coffers, perhaps contributing to crowding out private investment.

2.10 Conclusion: Implications for Other Chinese Border Subregions Along Fragile States

Although the challenge of nuclear testing by North Korea presents something of an extreme case, the preceding analysis of the China-North Korea border subregion at Yanbian offers a number of lessons for understanding the dynamics and implications of fragility in other Chinese subregions bordering on fragile states. Consider two other examples: the China-Myanmar border along the Yunnan province and the border between China's Northwestern region, especially the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, and Central Asia as well as Afghanistan. In the case of China's borders with Central Asia, China has, as it has for its border with North Korea, generally encouraged cross-border trade, in the interest of fostering economic development on its side of the border, including by Xinjiang, despite concerns about intensifying separatism on the part of Xinjiang Uyghurs and other ethnic groups in the region. Over half of Xinjiang's trade is reportedly conducted as border trade. China has been more chary, however, about Xinjiang's linkages through its relatively short border with Afghanistan, whose civil war and armed militant groups make it a clear and present security threat. After a history of maintaining strict controls over the Wakhan Corridor, some local authorities in Xinjiang with the government in Kabul have approached Beijing about opening the China-Afghan border to facilitate greater cross-border trade. To date, Beijing has proceeded cautiously amid concerns that appearing to be aligned with the US-led anti-Taliban coalition could increase the likelihood that China could become a target of international terrorism as well as potentially making it more difficult for China to engage with a future Afghan government (Weitz 2010 and World News Connection February 10 2010).

An increasing appetite for Afghan minerals and a growing role in infrastructure construction along with the potential market represented by Afghanistan for China's construction industry and finished products, however, have made the restoration

of cross-border ties and transportation infrastructure between the two countries increasingly appealing to Chinese authorities and commercial entities. While China has been improving transportation infrastructure along the border, it has also been strengthening security infrastructure, reflecting governmental ambivalence about opening the door wide to threats to China's security, such as to members of the "East Turkistan Islamic Movement," which it views as fomenting anti-Chinese activities in Xinjiang. In addition, there is some concern given the well-known Tajik role in the international opium trade and the heavily Tajik population along China's Afghan border that opening the border to legitimate trade will also open it to drug trafficking. Other analyses, however, contend that because of harsh weather conditions that close the pass for at least 5 months a year, an increase in trafficking across that section of the Afghan border—while the Afghan-Tajik border remains relatively easy to cross—is unlikely (Townsend 2005). Given less attention is the impact that development associated with an increase in cross-border transactions would have on the nomads and mountain farmers who subsist on the subregion's fragile natural ecology, potentially exacerbating social tensions (World News Connection March 6, 2010 and Kreutzmann 2003).

Drugs and human trafficking are well-known features of the difficult-to-monitor China-Myanmar border. Recent developments have offered China an additional lesson in the challenges of seeking to maintain relatively open borders as part of efforts to use economic ties to influence regional neighbors whose governments seek to maintain their grip on power through repression and force rather than through improved governance. As part of a series of military actions to consolidate control over the country in advance of planned national elections, Naypidaw's Tatmadaw forces attacked the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army in the ethnically Chinese Kokang region, occupying the regional capital. More than 35,000 refugees fled across the border into Nansen county in Yunnan, including both Kokang ethnic Chinese as well as Chinese nationals. Hundreds of Kokang fighters were among these refugees, requiring the use of Chinese troops to disarm them. The incident, which Nansen and Yunnan authorities managed to contain with central government support, was a reminder that for all of China's expansive economic linkages to Myanmar, this economic interdependence provides no guarantee that decisions made by a government that fails to provide for the basic welfare of its own citizens will be influenced by these economic stakes (Storey 2009). In addition, while the Kokang border crisis was declared a "Level 1" incident, which opened the door to direct central oversight of the response—Minister of Public Security Meng Jianzhu was dispatched to Yunnan to oversee the crisis—it was the Yunnan government that provided the emergency response. Yunann's local and provincial governments demonstrated an impressive capacity to set up refugee camps and provide humanitarian assistance to thousands of refugees as the crisis unfolded (Thompson 2009). The crisis also underscored the critical role played by provincial and local governments in managing cross-border relationships and offered another example of the degree to which human security along China's border subregions with fragile states depends upon the capacity of subnational governments on the Chinese side of the border.

These examples suggest that, despite concerted efforts to provide security and development opportunities to subregions inside the Chinese border, fragile states breed fragile subregions. When subregions share territorial borders with a fragile state, their social, political, economic and also ecological environments remain vulnerable to failures in governance and development by these states. Where governance in adjacent states remains weak, effective border security mechanisms, including emergency management systems, are necessary accompaniments to efforts to reduce insecurity through cross-border trade and investment, which may be disrupted by the neighboring state whose policies may be driven foremost by concerns that do not include the provision of human security to their citizens. It is also apparent that the presence of ethnic minority populations with transboundary ties may contribute a complicating dimension that may give rise to or exacerbate insecurity within the subregion, with adverse implications for economic development. The lessons of history have taught China that its internal security is intimately linked to conditions along its territorial borders, but the presence of fragile states along China's borders make this security elusory. While multilateral approaches, such as the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI), may hold the potential to simultaneously address multiple sources of insecurity, the very sources of insecurity that raise their stakes and value may also disrupt progress toward their implementation.

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