

Research on the Optimization of Modernization Paths for Border Governance

Dexian Kong

School of Politics and Public Administration, Guangxi Normal University, Guilin, Guangxi, 541000, China

Abstract: Border governance modernization is an important component of the modernization of the national governance system and governance capabilities, and it is also an inevitable requirement for stabilizing and fortifying the borders, and promoting prosperity and well-being for the people along the borders. China has a long border line and is adjacent to many countries, with frequent cross-border personnel and cultural exchanges. The governance scenarios are complex and diverse. Promoting the process of border governance modernization is of vital importance. Currently, China's border governance has achieved remarkable results in areas such as border security, ecological construction, and improvement of people's livelihoods. However, there are still prominent problems such as the absence of a cross-border marriage governance mechanism, a low level of industrial structure, and border emptiness, which restrict the further improvement of governance levels. This article, based on the requirements of development in the new era, systematically analyzes the theoretical connotation and practical challenges of border governance modernization, combines the actual development of border areas, and proposes optimization countermeasures from the aspects of system improvement, industrial upgrading, and population aggregation. The aim is to solve governance difficulties through bilateral collaboration, cultivate diversified characteristic industries, improve policies for attracting and retaining talents, and establish a diversified co-governance system, in order to break through governance obstacles, promote the improvement and efficiency enhancement of border governance, strengthen the national security barrier, and promote the prosperity and stability of border areas.

Keywords: Border Governance; Modernization of Border Governance; Governing and Securing the Border.

1. Introduction

The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed "modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity," explicitly identifying the advancement of modernization in the national governance system and capacity as the overarching goal of comprehensive deepening reform. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to "promote border development and prosperity, and ensure border stability and consolidation." Borders serve as a political-geographical marker for a nation, define territorial integrity, and constitute the first line of national defense. With vast territory, extensive borders, and numerous neighboring countries, China's border regions hold significant economic and strategic value, making border governance a top national priority. The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Vision for 2035 states that we should "promote border development and prosperity, strengthen border stability and consolidation, significantly improve living and production conditions in border areas, enhance urban systems along the borders, support the construction of border ports, accelerate the development of villages and access routes near the border, foster innovative development of border trade, and provide targeted support for key border regions." [1]

Currently, academic circles at home and abroad have produced rich research outcomes on border governance, featuring diverse theoretical perspectives and substantial scholarly accumulation, thus laying a solid theoretical foundation for advancing modernization in border governance. However, existing studies mostly focus on isolated aspects such as border security, border economy, and

local residents' livelihoods, leaving insufficient systematic exploration into the overall practical pathways, current challenges, and optimization strategies for modernizing governance across entire border regions. Against the backdrop of new-era development, this paper takes the nationwide border region as its subject, clarifies the core connotations of modernized border governance, summarizes current governance achievements, analyzes prevailing problems, and proposes targeted improvement measures, aiming to steadily advance the modernization of China's border governance and contribute to long-term stability and prosperous development in border areas.

2. Concepts Related to Borders and The Modernization of Border Governance

(1) border

The land border is a frontier area with profound special connotations, playing an increasingly important comprehensive function that transcends the boundaries between countries and regions. The border also serves as a concrete manifestation of the land-based "border area", possessing multiple attributes such as ethnic areas, poverty-stricken areas, and border areas, and having extremely rich geopolitical significance and social governance demands. [2] The border can also be regarded as a geographical concept, referring to the area where a country or region borders with adjacent countries or regions. Generally, it has significant political, economic, cultural, and military importance. During times of war, border areas may become tense regions or even part of the front line. However, in general, most border areas have entry and exit restrictions, or are even designated as restricted areas. As a buffer zone between countries, the

border aims to reduce the possibility of conflicts. [3] In addition, border areas may also involve cross-border trade, tourism, and other forms of political, economic, and cultural exchanges.

(2) Modernization of Border Governance

Modernization of border governance is the practical exploration of national governance modernization in the border areas. It is a dynamic process under the leadership of the Party, involving continuous optimization of the institutional framework, reform of governance systems, innovation of operational mechanisms, and enhancement of governance efficiency. Border governance modernization is the most fundamental and important component of national governance modernization, and it is a process of positive evolution. Its aim is to gradually achieve a series of modernization goals through border governance actions, including enriching the border, strengthening the border, establishing security, fostering harmony, and building a beautiful border. [4] This process emphasizes a comprehensive approach, focusing on economic development, social stability, ethnic unity, as well as environmental protection and social progress, with the aim of achieving comprehensive revitalization and long-term stability in border areas. By leveraging modern perspectives, we will specifically translate our country's latest institutional advantages into concrete practices, implement policies, address institutional obstacles, conflicts of interests, and rights contradictions encountered in border governance, and promote the prosperity and development of border areas while ensuring the people's peaceful and contented lives.

"Governance of the country must start with governance of the border areas." The long-term stability of border regions directly affects national security and interests, and is of great significance for border governance. China is one of the countries with the longest land border and the most complex border situations. The border areas of our country have a long geographical depth, a large border area, many neighboring countries, and a complex ethnic composition. Currently, there are also some Western powers laying out their strategies and building containment systems against China on our borders, resulting in a relatively harsh geopolitical environment around our borders. The risks of border governance are increasingly showing diversified, systematic, and covert trends. It is rather difficult to govern and defend the borders solely relying on traditional governance methods in the border areas. Research on border governance has gradually deepened and expanded in recent years, and this process is also a summary and response to border governance practices. [5]

3. The Current Practical Achievements of Modernization in Border Governance in Our Country

Over the years, border areas across the country have been continuously working towards the overall goals of guarding, stabilizing, securing, and developing the border. They have carried out diversified governance practices based on regional ethnic characteristics and geographical conditions, achieving remarkable overall governance results and forming a favorable situation of coordinated development of security, ecology, and people's livelihood.

First, they have firmly established the bottom line of border security and achieved border stability. All regions have adhered to the leadership of the Party, deepened the joint

governance model involving the Party, government, military, and civilians, and integrated various forces to establish a comprehensive border security system. Through conducting theme publicity, patriotic education, and improving village regulations and conventions, they have continuously strengthened the border residents' sense of territory, border, national defense, and national identity, stimulating the internal driving force of the people to guard and protect the border. The vast number of border residents actively participated in border duty and hazard investigation, building a solid defense line for all citizens, effectively maintaining border order and national territory security.

Second, they have deeply cultivated ecological and livable construction, creating beautiful border areas. All border regions across the country have generally adopted the development concept of "green mountains and clear waters are as valuable as gold and silver". They have combined ecological governance with environmental improvement. They have established a hierarchical environmental management responsibility system, implemented long-term environmental management systems, and simultaneously promoted the renovation and upgrading of infrastructure such as water supply, sewage pipelines, and sanitary toilets, completely improving the living environment of border villages. Relying on rich forest resources, water resources, etc., they have prioritized ecological protection and developed green industries such as forest-based economy and ecological breeding in accordance with local conditions, achieving a two-way force of ecological protection and environmental beautification, and continuously improving the livability level of the border areas.

Third, they have focused on the goal of developing the border area for the benefit of the people, driving the increase of border residents' income. All regions have based themselves on local resource advantages and vigorously developed basic industries such as characteristic crop and livestock breeding and agricultural product processing. Through technical guidance, industrial upgrading, and reclamation of abandoned land, they have expanded agricultural income channels. At the same time, they have built employment service platforms, conducted vocational skills training, developed public welfare positions, and guided laborers to work locally. In addition, all regions have actively revitalized idle collective assets and expanded the collective economy through asset leasing, public service operation, etc., promoting the steady growth of per capita disposable income of residents in border areas and effectively consolidating the achievements of poverty alleviation.

4. Analysis of the Problems Encountered in the Modernization Practice of Border Governance

Apart from the governance effectiveness, influenced by multiple factors such as geographical location, ethnic integration, cross-border exchanges, industrial foundation, and population mobility, China's border governance still faces many practical challenges, which restrict the in-depth advancement of governance modernization. These challenges mainly lie in three aspects: cross-border personnel management, industrial development, and population structure.

(1) The lack of a proper management system for cross-border marriages

The border areas of our country are mostly populated by ethnic minorities. People of the same ethnic group from both inside and outside the border share the same language, similar customs, and are closely related by kinship. Their folk interactions have a long history, and cross-border marriages are very common. With the increasingly frequent cross-border personnel exchanges, the shortcomings in cross-border marriage governance have gradually become apparent. At the same time, since entering modern society, the laws of various countries have become increasingly strict in managing the nationality of their citizens. Our country has also introduced a series of relevant laws and regulations. However, due to the fact that the marriage systems of many neighboring countries are different from ours, there is a lack of cooperation and negotiation on the management of cross-border marriages among various countries. This easily leads to incomplete registration materials for cross-border marriages, making it impossible to conduct marriage registration, obtaining Chinese nationality, and resulting in "black people without household registration", forming "de facto marriages". Their children born in Myanmar also become "black children", unable to obtain household registration. This has caused a series of problems, such as early marriage, bigamy, fraud in marriage, and desertion in marriage. Some of these problems have even seriously affected the normal production and life of border residents, the growth and education of their children, and the stability and development of border areas. This has brought more difficulties and inconvenience to grassroots governance work, and grassroots staff often have no way to deal with this issue.

(2) The industrial structure development lacks innovation

At present, the industrial layout in most border areas is still dominated by traditional agriculture and animal husbandry, and the industrial structure is monotonous with insufficient innovation in business models. The common shortcomings are small scale, scattered layout, and short industrial chains. The product value is low, there are no distinctive brands or market competitiveness, and the ability to resist natural disasters and market fluctuations is weak.

In the field of foreign economic and trade, the border location advantages have not been fully exploited. Constrained by weak infrastructure, low cultural levels of the people, and shortage of trade talents, cross-border trade is small in scale and has a traditional model. The integration of "bringing in" and "going out" is insufficient. At the same time, many border areas have high-quality cultural and tourism resources such as boundary markers, scenic landscapes, and ethnic customs. However, due to lagging infrastructure and insufficient publicity and promotion, the development of cultural and tourism industries is slow. The development of the second and third industries is lagging, the industrial development momentum is single, and the supply of employment positions is insufficient, making it difficult to support the high-quality development of the regional economy.

(3) The problem of border voidification is continuously worsening

In recent years, although the per capita disposable income in border areas has increased compared to previous years, this income alone is still not enough to retain talents. Many regions have a single industrial structure, mainly relying on agriculture, with few job opportunities and low incomes, leading to a large number of young and middle-aged people choosing to work outside. There is a shortage of labor in the

village. At the same time, there are significant development disparities between urban and rural areas. Urban areas have higher incomes, and many young and middle-aged people flock to cities, which also leads to an increase in rural left-behind children and empty-nest elderly, and a serious problem of aging labor force. Secondly, many border areas have not introduced policies with sufficient strength, and it is difficult to attract high-quality talents from other places through talent introduction policies. Even many college students in the village do not want to return to their hometowns for employment after graduation, and the local population has a relatively low level of education. The effect of professional training for the local population is not very good, resulting in an excessive shortage of talent resources. A large number of young people leave, and the number of left-behind children and elderly people in the village increases. Left-behind children lack the companionship and discipline of their parents, many children develop rebellious psychology, are immature in their minds, often have a rebellious attitude towards school, making the control of dropout rate and school attendance work in the village unable to be consistently achieved. In addition, many parents who have a certain economic foundation after moving to the cities choose to bring their children to the cities to receive better education, resulting in a decrease in the number of students and an annual decline in the number of students, making it more difficult for schools to carry out teaching and other activities, and causing waste of teaching resources. As a result, the permanent population in many border areas is also decreasing, and the border area becomes increasingly empty.

5. Analysis of Optimization Countermeasures for Modernization of Border Governance

In response to the various problems existing in current border governance, it is necessary to adopt a systematic approach, integrating the efforts of the government, grassroots organizations, social forces, and the vast number of border residents. Comprehensive measures should be taken from dimensions such as system construction, industrial upgrading, population aggregation, and collaborative governance to comprehensively address the governance challenges and promote the modernization of border governance in a steady and sustainable manner.

(1) Improve relevant laws and regulations and enhance the government's governance mechanism

The numerous problems in cross-border marriages stem fundamentally from the inconsistency and conflicts between the laws of the two countries. Solving these problems cannot be accomplished solely by one country; it requires communication and coordination with the government of Myanmar, discussing and formulating relevant agreements, procedures, and proof documents, negotiating and reaching consensus on marriage immigration policies, procedures, and processes, recognizing the legality of cross-border marriages, simplifying the application procedures, issuing relevant certificates, bilateral cooperation, and promoting friendly exchanges between the two countries (these tasks cannot be accomplished by local governments alone). Strengthening management of border areas, maintaining social harmony and stability is also necessary. At the same time, relevant laws and regulations regarding cross-border marriages in our country should be improved to fill the gaps. Conditional recognition

of existing cross-border marriages is possible, and for those meeting certain conditions, supplementary marriage registration and household registration can be carried out. For those lacking materials, appropriate assistance can be provided to obtain the necessary documents. Specialized cross-border marriage management institutions should be established in various regions, with dedicated personnel responsible. Specific laws and regulations should be transformed into practical and feasible measures based on local conditions to improve governance, simplify the registration procedures for cross-border marriages in our country, reduce costs, and provide convenience for the people. At the same time, relevant laws and regulations should be publicized to enhance villagers' understanding of the laws related to cross-border marriages, enabling them to know the law, understand the law, abide by the law, and apply the law. This can help minimize conflicts and disputes arising from cross-border marriages and maintain social stability.

At the social level, resources and talents should be integrated to accelerate the cultivation of social organizations. The grassroots governance requires the active participation of social organizations. The governments of all regions should also continue to improve policies and regulations, support and encourage social organizations to engage in social public welfare undertakings and provide public services, forming a governance mechanism where the resources and information of the government and social organizations are complementary and interact with each other, and jointly addressing social issues. [6]

In terms of rights protection, legal guarantees should be strengthened to enhance labor rights and social security rights. Many Burmese women who have married into China have no jobs and are not allowed to work outside. They can only rely on their husbands and have very low family incomes. Each region can consider providing them with some less-demanding positions, organizing basic training, providing them with some basic guarantees, and conducting regular research on cross-border marriage families to help solve the problems they encounter in life and enhance their sense of happiness. [7]

(2) Uncover the potential of unique resources and cultivate the development of specialized industries

Based on the border location, resources and ethnic characteristics, break the single industrial pattern and build a modern industrial system integrating the first, second and third industries. Achieve prosperity of industries to enrich the people in border areas. First, strengthen the development of the characteristic primary industry. Continuously optimize the cultivation and breeding industries, promote the standardization and large-scale development of agricultural products, create regional characteristic agricultural product brands, extend the primary processing and deep processing industrial chains, and increase the product value-added. Increase the investment in attracting foreign investment, introduce leading enterprises to drive the development of small-scale farmers, and enhance the industry's ability to resist risks. Second, activate the commercial vitality along the border. Improve logistics, customs clearance and other infrastructure, deepen customs facilitation reforms, take advantage of the border port advantages to expand cross-border trade; strengthen the cultivation of professional foreign trade talents, collaborate with universities and vocational schools to carry out targeted training, and build a professional commercial team. Third, vigorously develop the

third industry. Integrate tourism resources such as border scenery, boundary markers culture and ethnic minority customs, improve tourism facilities, increase publicity and promotion efforts, and create border characteristic tourism routes. Through diversified industrial development, create sufficient job opportunities, broaden the channels for people's income growth, and lay a solid foundation for border economic development.

(3) Unite the efforts of border policies and implement the strategy of border settlement

Border residents are the main body of people living along the border. To prevent the border from becoming empty, we must first guide the border residents to settle along the border. First, implement policies to support border settlement, increase financial investment, continuously improve public infrastructure such as transportation, education, healthcare, and elderly care, enhance the quality of life and public service levels in border areas, and increase the happiness and sense of belonging of border residents. Utilize publicity methods such as border defense stories and patriotic education to strengthen border residents' national identity and sense of responsibility for guarding the border, and guide them to settle locally and guard the border. Second, strengthen policy support for talent attraction and cultivation, introduce a series of preferential policies such as housing, salary, entrepreneurship, and children's education, on the one hand, attract high-quality talents from outside to invest in border construction, and on the other hand, encourage local young people who have left for work or study to return to their hometowns to start businesses and find jobs. Conduct regular training for local labor force to enhance their employment capabilities and adapt to the needs of industrial development. Third, rely on industrial development to gather population, and through border trade, characteristic agriculture and breeding, and cultural tourism industries to create employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, narrow the income gap between the border and inland cities, fundamentally reduce population outflow, and achieve a virtuous cycle of "people in the border, guarding the border well, and developing the border well".

6. Conclusion

Border governance modernization is a long-term and systematic project that is crucial for national security, border stability, and national rejuvenation. In the context of the new era, China's border governance has achieved solid results in areas such as security construction, ecological improvement, and people's livelihood development. However, issues such as cross-border marriages, industrial structure, and population outflow remain as practical challenges in the governance process. During the governance process, encountering problems is inevitable. The government and its grassroots staff should analyze specific problems specifically and solve them in a practical manner. By strengthening top-level design, improving laws and regulations, innovating governance models, strengthening international trade cooperation, and enhancing talent support, effective progress can be made in border governance modernization, achieving stability, security, and development in border areas, and laying a solid foundation for the long-term stability and high-quality development of the country.

References

- [1] (2021). Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives through 2035 of the People's Republic of China.
- [2] Gao, Y. J. (2020). Special research on "border and governance". *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 41(10), 28.
- [3] Su, R. Y. (2019). A study on strategies for improving the livelihoods of border guard herders from the perspective of border security and stability: A case study of Alxa Left Banner [Master's thesis]. Inner Mongolia Agricultural University.
- [4] Lü, Z. H. (2020). The new era significance, application, and prospects of the "two major situations" strategic concept: An analysis from the perspective of modernization in western border governance. *Socialist Studies*, (3), 85–92.
- [5] Ren, C. W. (2023). Exploring the governance path for border areas from the perspective of the "Fengqiao Experience" in the new era. *Leadership Science Forum*, (1), 101–105.
- [6] Liu, Y. M. (2017). Research on cross-border marriages between China and Myanmar in Longling County [Conference paper]. Yunnan University of Finance and Economics.
- [7] Guang, L. M., & Wang, B. T. (2016). The dilemmas and thoughts of cross-border marriage families of border residents in China: A case study of the border areas of Yunnan and Guangxi. *Journal of Central University of Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, (2), 72–78.