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SITUATIONAL REALISM

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IAN HOWARD IS AN ARTIST AND EMERITUS PROFESSOR AT UNSW SYDNEY, FACULTY OF ARTS, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE. PREVIOUSLY HE WAS DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS (COFA) UNSW, AND PROVOST AND DIRECTOR OF THE QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF ART, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY. HE TRAINED IN SYDNEY, LONDON, AND MONTREAL. HIS ARTWORK PROGRESSES A CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND MILITARY INSTITUTIONS, CONCENTRATING ON TERRITORY AND BORDER ISSUES—WALLS, BARRIERS, AND CONTAINMENT, INCLUDING ENFORCING VEHICLES—AIRCRAFT, TANKS AND SHIPS. HE WORKS AND EXHIBITS INTERNATIONALLY. **REALISM** IN THE CLASSICAL SENSE ENCOMPASSES A PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE, ACCURACY OF SIMULATION, AND THEORIES THAT THINGS EXIST OBJECTIVELY, AND THAT STATEMENTS HAVE TRUTH VALUES. HOWARD'S ARTWORK HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS EXPERIMENTAL REALISM USING A DIRECT-MEDIA TECHNIQUE. HE ARGUES THAT THE INTERDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP THE SUBJECT HAS WITH THE ARTWORK IMAGE MEANS EACH WORK CONTAINS AN INTEGRITY OF REALISM. THIS ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONSHIP INCLUDES REPRESENTATION AT SIZE/SCALE, UNDERTAKEN ON LOCATION, AND WITHIN THE ACTUAL TIME AND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THAT SUBJECT MATTER. EXHIBITED IN PUBLIC SETTINGS, THIS REALISM IS ARGUABLY SELF-COMMUNICATING AND INHERENTLY, OR AT LEAST LATENTLY, EXPRESSIVE. IT THEREFORE PROVIDES FOR THE VIEWER OF THE WORKS A PATHWAY OF IMAGE AND CONTEXT FROM WHICH TO ASSEMBLE AN INFORMED MORALITY BASED RESPONSE.

I A N . H O W A R D @ U N S W . E D U . A U



A BORDER THROUGH TIME—THE GREAT WALL(S) OF CHINA, FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.E. WERE BUILT TO SEPARATE WARRING STATES, TO CONSOLIDATE DYNASTIES, AND FOR DEFENCE AGAINST NOMADIC GROUPS OF THE MONGOLIAN AND EURASIAN STEPPES. AS WELL, THEY FACILITATED EXPANSIONARY THRUSTS, WITH FORTS, ANNEXING AMBIGUOUS TERRITORIES AND SOLIDIFYING TERRITORIAL GAINS. THE WALLS PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS FOR GOODS AND MIGRATION BORDER CONTROLS ALONG WHAT BECAME KNOWN AS THE SILK ROAD. HOWEVER, BUILT BY MILLIONS, OFTEN IN FORCED LABOUR, THE RENOWNED WRITER LU XUN (1881-1936) NOTED, “MIGHTY AND ACCURSED GREAT WALL, IN REALITY, IT HAS NEVER SERVED ANY PURPOSE THAN TO MAKE COUNTLESS WORKERS LABOUR TO DEATH IN VAIN”. SUN YAT-SEN AND THE EARLY REPUBLIC EMBRACED THE WALL AS A NATIONAL SYMBOL BECAUSE IT CONTAINED AND PRESERVED THE CHINESE RACE AS WELL AS SYMBOLISED A COLLECTIVE RESOLVE. MAO AND THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC AMPLIFIED THE POSITIVE SYMBOLISM OF THE WALL, UNDERTAKING REPAIRS TO THE BADALING SECTION IN 1952. LATER, CULTURAL REVOLUTIONARIES DESTROYED MANY OTHER PARTS WITH DYNAMITE AND EXCAVATORS. LOCALS OVER THE CENTURIES PLUNDERED THE WALLS FOR BUILDING MATERIALS. IN 1980 DENG XIAOPING SAID, “LOVE OUR CHINA AND RESTORE OUR GREAT WALL”. DECLARED A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN 1987, IT IS NOW A FOREMOST NATIONAL SYMBOL, THE MOST POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATION AND AN OCCASIONAL CATWALK FOR HIGH FASHION MODELS. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/GREATWALLOFCHINA](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/greatwallofchina)



BORDERS FOR COLONIZATION—A.D. 122, EMPEROR HADRIAN BUILT A WALL ACROSS THE IMPERIAL PROVINCE OF BRITANNIA AS ‘BARBARIANS’, CALEDONIANS, AND REBELLIOUS CELTIC TRIBES OF THE NORTH THREATENED CONTROL FROM ROME. THE 118 KM WALL, LOCATED BETWEEN WALLSEND IN THE EAST AND BOWNESS IN THE WEST, WAS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE FOR NEARLY 300 YEARS, DEMONSTRATING THE ADMINISTRATIVE, SOCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCEFULNESS OF THE COLONISING EMPIRE. TAKING JUST SIX YEARS TO BUILD BY LEGIONS OF ROMAN INFANTRY, THE WALL, UP TO 4.6 METRES HIGH AND 3 METRES WIDE, PROVIDED PROTECTION FROM ATTACK AND FACILITATED SWIFT TROOP MOVEMENTS. GATES, GUARD POSTS AND INTERVENING OBSERVATION TOWERS WERE CONTROLLED BY SEVERAL FORTS. GATE APERTURES, VARIOUSLY WIDENED AND NARROWED OVER TIME DEPENDING ON THE HOSTILITY OF THE ERA, INDICATED THE NEED FOR CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY FOR LOCAL AND MILITARY PURPOSES. NECESSARY TRADE AND PEOPLE MOVEMENT WAS THEREBY CONTROLLED. KEEPING COLONISED BRITONS WITHIN THE EMPIRE WAS AS IMPORTANT AS KEEPING THE RESISTANT ‘BARBARIANS’ OUT. SETTLEMENTS GREW AROUND THE FORTS RESULTING IN AN EARLY FORM OF URBAN SPRAWL. WITH THE ABANDONMENT OF ROMAN BRITAIN IN 410, THE WALL BECAME A QUARRY OF STONE FOR FARMHOUSES, CHURCHES, AND CASTLES. THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT OF THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES, LED BY JOHN CLAYTON, ARRESTED, EVEN REVERSED, THIS DESTRUCTION. HADRIAN’S WALL WAS NAMED A WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN 1987. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/HADRIANSWALL](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/hadrianswall)



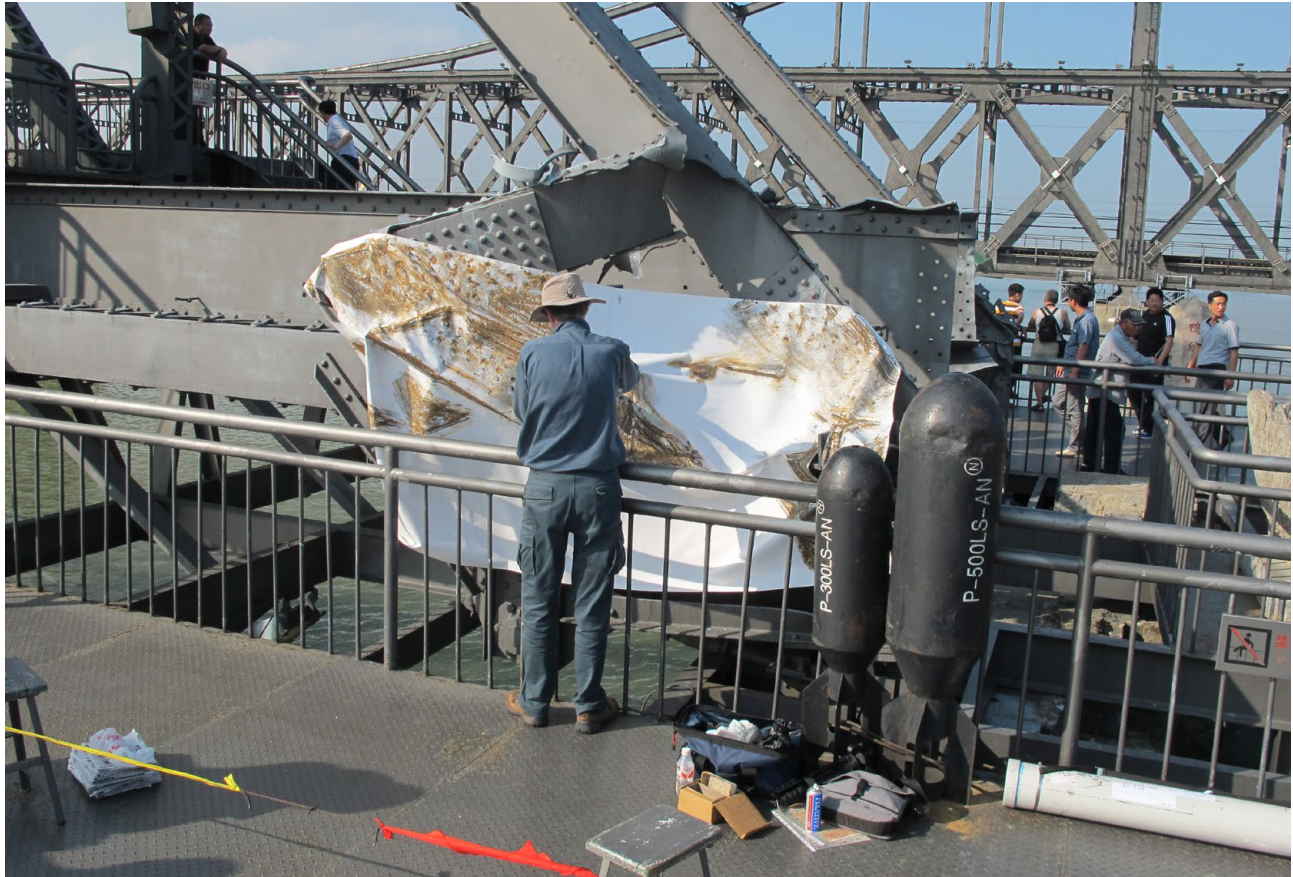
BORDERS, RIGHTS AND RELIGIONS—THE CITY WALLS OF DERRY WERE CONSTRUCTED 1613-1618 BY THE IRISH SOCIETY, A GROUP OF TRADES ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE CITY OF LONDON THAT SUPPORTED THE PLANTATION IN IRELAND. THE PLANTATION WAS THE COLONISATION OF ULSTER BY PROTESTANT BRITISH FAMILIES AT THE END OF THE FAILED IRISH NINE YEARS WAR AGAINST ENGLISH RULE FOLLOWING THE TUDOR CONQUESTS OF THE 16TH CENTURY. UP TO 8MS HIGH AND 10MS WIDE, THE ENCIRCLING WALLS WERE 1.5KM LONG. BUILT TO PROTECT THE NEWLY ARRIVED SETTLERS, SUCH INTENT WAS REINFORCED BY RE-NAMING THE TOWN LONDONDERRY. THE WALLS WERE EFFECTIVE DURING THE UNSUCCESSFUL SIEGE OF DERRY BY THE JACOBITES AND THE FRENCH IN 1689. PRIOR TO THE SIEGE, AN UNPOPULAR CHANGE OF GARRISON FROM PREDOMINANTLY PROTESTANT TO CATHOLIC SOLDIERS WAS THWARTED BY THIRTEEN APPRENTICES WHO QUICKLY LOCKED THE CITY GATES PREVENTING THE IRISH COMMANDER'S REGIMENT FROM ENTERING. THIS ACTION AND THE RESUPPLY OF THE TOWN BY ENGLISH SHIPS ON THE RIVER FOYLE DURING THE 105 DAY SIEGE ARE STILL COMMEMORATED ANNUALLY BY PROTESTANT MARCHES. HISTORIC AND 20TH CENTURY GRIEVANCES FELT BY THE CATHOLIC POPULATION BOILED OVER IN 1969 LEADING TO THE BATTLE OF THE BOGSIDE WHICH IGNITED THE THIRTY-YEAR CIVIL CONFLICT KNOWN AS THE TROUBLES. DURING THIS PERIOD THE BRITISH ARMY HAD A STRONG PRESENCE IN LONDONDERRY INCLUDING OBSERVATION POSTS OVERLOOKING THE CATHOLIC BOGSIDE FROM ON TOP OF THE CITY WALLS. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/CITYWALLSOFDERRY](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/citywallsofderry)



AT THE BORDER OF EMPIRES—AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR THE POTSDAM AGREEMENT DIVIDED GERMANY INTO FOUR OCCUPATION ZONES: US, UK, FRENCH AND RUSSIAN. BERLIN WAS SIMILARLY DIVIDED EVEN THOUGH IT LAY WHOLLY INSIDE THE RUSSIAN ZONE. IN 1948, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE US UNIFIED THEIR SECTIONS INTO A SYMBOLICALLY FREE AND ECONOMICALLY POWERFUL WEST BERLIN RESULTING IN THE UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT BY THE RUSSIANS TO FORCE THEM OUT VIA THE BERLIN BLOCKADE. THE SOVIETS ESTABLISHED THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN 1949 TO COUNTER WESTERN INFLUENCE AND SUPPRESS EAST GERMAN DISSENT. CONSEQUENTLY, WEST BERLIN BECAME A MAGNET FOR THOSE WANTING TO ESCAPE. DURING THE 1950S 3.5 MILLION EAST GERMANS BI-PASSED EMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS AND DEFECTED TO WEST BERLIN AND BEYOND. AN IRON CURTAIN, THE SOVIETS ARGUED, WAS NECESSARY TO PROTECT ITS CITIZENS FROM WESTERN CAPITALISM. USING THIS ARGUMENT BUT ANTICIPATING ECONOMIC COLLAPSE DUE TO A BRAIN DRAIN AND WORKER EXODUS, THE GDR IN 1961 ERECTED A 156KM CONCRETE WALL AND METAL BARRIER, AROUND AND EXCISING WEST BERLIN. THE BARRIER WAS BUILT JUST INSIDE EAST GERMAN TERRITORY. BETWEEN 1961 AND THE FALL OF THE WALL IN 1989, 100,000 PEOPLE TRIED TO CROSS WITH MORE THAN 5000 BEING SUCCESSFUL. UP TO 200 PEOPLE WERE KILLED DURING THEIR ATTEMPT. FOR 28 YEARS THE BERLIN WALL WAS THE FLASHPOINT BETWEEN THE GREATER GEOPOLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL EMPIRES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE SOVIET UNION.
[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/BERLINWALL](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/BerlinWall)



BORDERS, SECURITY AND PROPERTY—THE ISRAELI WEST BANK WALL AND WEST BANK FENCE ARE PART OF THE OVERALL WEST BANK BARRIER INITIATED BY ISRAEL IN THE EARLY 2000S TO PREVENT PALESTINIAN MILITANTS FROM ENTERING ISRAEL FOLLOWING AN UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE DURING THE SECOND INTIFADA. THE BARRIER HAS A PLANNED LENGTH OF 708KM RUNNING FROM THE DEAD SEA IN THE SOUTH TO THE JORDAN RIVER IN THE NORTHEAST. ALTHOUGH GENERALLY FOLLOWING THE GREEN LINE, BEING THE 1949 ARMISTICE LINES DRAWN UP TO SEPARATE ISRAEL FROM JORDAN, EGYPT, SYRIA AND LEBANON, IT MAKES MANY INCURSIONS INCLUDING ANNEXING EAST JERUSALEM AND RUNNING UP TO 20KM INSIDE THE WEST BANK. THESE DEVIATIONS ENCIRCLE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS FOR SECURITY AND CUT OFF PALESTINIAN VILLAGES FROM THEIR LIVELIHOODS. THE BARRIER HAS BEEN CHALLENGED IN ISRAEL, AT THE UNITED NATIONS AND BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. CURRENTLY, IT IS PROPOSED THAT 77,000HA OF THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES BE CLAIMED WITHIN THE EXPANSIONARY BARRIER. INITIALLY CONSIDERED A TEMPORARY SECURITY MEASURE THE BARRIER IS NOW SEEN AS A POTENTIAL BORDER BETWEEN ISRAELI AND ANY FUTURE PALESTINIAN STATE. THE CONCRETE SECTIONS RUNNING THROUGH MORE DENSELY POPULATED AREAS ARE 9M HIGH AND ARE PUNCTUATED BY OBSERVATION TOWERS. THE BARRIER RESTRICTS PALESTINIANS' FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, THEIR ACCESS TO FARMING LANDS, RESOURCES, EMPLOYMENT, RELIGIOUS SITES, EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/ISRAELIBARRIER](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/israelibARRIER)



BORDERS BY GEOGRAPHY AND EXPEDIENCY—THE YALU AND TUMEN RIVER BORDERS BETWEEN CHINA AND NORTH KOREA HAVE SEPARATED STATES OF NE ASIA SINCE THE 15TH CENTURY. THE SOURCE OF EACH RIVER IS PAKTU MOUNTAIN'S HEAVENLY LAKE. THE YALU FLOWS SW FOR 800 KM TO THE YELLOW SEA AND THE TUMEN RUNS NE FOR OVER 500 KM TO THE NORTH KOREA-RUSSIA-CHINA TRIPOINT AT THE SEA OF JAPAN. THE RIVER BORDERS PROVIDE NORTH KOREA'S ACCESS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. MOST OFFICIAL TRADE PASSES ACROSS THE SINO-KOREAN FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE AT DANDONG, CHINA-SINUJU, NORTH KOREA. THE AMERICAN AIR FORCE BOMBED THE EARLIER BRIDGE DURING THE KOREAN WAR. THESE WATERY BORDERS ARE POROUS. THE YALU CONTAINS 205 ISLANDS, EITHER CHINESE OR NORTH KOREAN AND UNLIKE MOST RIVERINE BORDERS, THERE IS NO DECLARED THREAD OF THE CHANNEL. BOATS, AND EVEN SWIMMERS, CAN VENTURE UP TRIBUTARIES AND APPROACH THE BANKS OF THE ADJOINING COUNTRY. IN WINTER, SECTIONS OF THE RIVERS FREEZE OVER AND CAN BE WALKED ACROSS. THE MOTIVATIONS FOR NORTH KOREANS TO CROSS ARE NUMEROUS, FROM ACCESSING FOOD AND GOODS TO AS MANY AS 50,000 'OFFICIALLY' WORKING ON FARMS AND IN FACTORIES, TO ASYLUM SEEKERS WHOSE CLAIMS ARE TYPICALLY REJECTED BY CHINA. IN 2003 THE FIRST SHORT DISTANCES OF WIRE FENCING WERE ERECTED BY THE CHINESE PLA. IN 2007 NORTH KOREA BEGAN ERECTING ITS OWN FENCES; HOWEVER, THESE COLLECTIVE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN SPORADIC CONSIDERING THE LONG DISTANCES AND VARIED TERRAIN ENCOUNTERED.

[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/CHINANORTHKOREA](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/chinanorthkorea)



BORDERS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS—THE LINE FROM ROBERT FROST’S POEM “MENDING WALL”, “GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBOURS” CONTINUES TO CHALLENGE. HIS SHORT LINES SIT IN STARKEST CONTRAST TO THE GARGANTUAN SCALE OF THE US-MEXICO BORDER STRETCHING MORE THAN 3000KM FROM THE PACIFIC COAST TO THE GULF OF MEXICO. THE NUMBER OF LEGAL AND ILLEGAL DAILY CROSSINGS OF PEOPLE AND GOODS MAKES THIS LIKELY THE BUSIEST CONTESTED BORDER IN THE WORLD. TRAVERSING CITIES, DESERTS, MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS AND FOR HALF ITS LENGTH, FOLLOWING THE RIO GRANDE RIVER, THE BORDER RESULTS FROM THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR OF 1846-1848 WITH FINAL ADJUSTMENTS MADE AS RECENTLY AS 1970. AND THE CLOSENESS OF PEOPLE, AS NEIGHBOURS, ON EACH SIDE IS BOTH HISTORIC AND CONTINUING. ACCORDINGLY, ATTEMPTS TO FENCE THE BORDER ONLY STARTED IN THE 20TH CENTURY AND HAVE BEEN ERRATIC. EACH COUNTRY, A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC WITH ITS OWN DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS, PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND LEGAL CHALLENGES, HAS MEANT THAT COMPLEX BORDER ISSUES ARE DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE, INCLUDING THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF A PHYSICAL BARRIER. CONSEQUENTLY, THERE HAS BEEN A GROWTH IN POLICING THE BORDER WITH EXTRA PERSONNEL, SURVEILLANCE, AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES. REGARDLESS, DEATHS BY ATTEMPTED CROSSING HAVE INCREASED SHARPLY, AS HAS THE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS BEING DETAINED AT THE BORDER. ROBERT FROST’S INSIGHTS ARE KEEN. A ‘GOOD FENCE’ IS ONE THAT ADVANTAGES EACH SIDE’S PROSPERITY AND SECURITY. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/USMEXICOBORDER](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/usmexicoborder)



BORDERS OF TERRITORIAL CLAIM—FIVE SMALL ISLANDS AND THREE ROCKY OUTCROPS, TOTALLING 7SQ KM OF UNINHABITED LAND IN THE EAST CHINA SEA, NE OF TAIWAN AND SW OF OKINAWA, ARE CLAIMED BY CHINA, TAIWAN AND JAPAN, NAMED RESPECTIVELY THE DIAOYU, TIAOYUTAI AND SENKAKU ISLANDS. CHINA'S CLAIM TO TERRITORIAL RIGHTS DATES BACK TO 1534 AND IS LINKED TO A SIMILAR ARGUMENT FOR TAIWAN. ALTHOUGH AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II JAPAN WAS FORCED TO ABANDON MANY OF ITS VARIOUS TERRITORIES INCLUDING TAIWAN, THE 1951 TREATY OF SAN FRANCISCO ASSIGNED THE SENKAKU ISLANDS TO THE US WHICH RETURNED THEM TO JAPAN IN 1971. DURING THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, THERE WAS A JAPANESE FISHERIES FACTORY ON ONE OF THE ISLANDS AND OTHERS PASSED INTO PRIVATE OWNERSHIP. THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT MOVED TO BUY THEM BACK IN 2012. THIS, ALONG WITH THE ISLAND'S EXTENSIVE FISHING AND POTENTIAL UNDERWATER OIL AND GAS RESERVES MEANT POLITICAL CLAIMS AND COUNTER CLAIMS ESCALATED. CHINESE, TAIWANESE, AND JAPANESE ACTIVISTS HAVE TRIED TO REACH THE ISLANDS WITH EACH BEING INTERCEPTED BY THE JAPANESE COAST GUARD. HOSTILE AND DEADLY ACTIONS HAVE ENSUED. IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE OCCURRED IN SUPPORT OF CLAIMS AND PROTESTING COUNTER CLAIMS. GEOPOLITICALLY, THE ISLANDS ARE CLOSE TO STRATEGIC SHIPPING LANES AND IN 2013 WERE ENCOMPASSED WITHIN CHINA'S NEW AIR DEFENCE IDENTIFICATION ZONE. THE EXPANDED ZONE IS NOT RECOGNISED BY THE US AND MANY REGIONAL NATIONS. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/DIAOYUSENKAKUISLANDS](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/diaoyusenkakuislands)



BORDERS AGAINST DISORDER AND FEAR—THE 2013 AUSTRALIAN ELECTION FEATURED A “STOP THE BOATS” CAMPAIGN BY THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION WHICH ARGUABLY SWEEPED THEM INTO POWER. THE NEW GOVERNMENT INSTIGATED OPERATION SOVEREIGN BORDERS LED BY THE DEFENCE FORCE, AIRFORCE, NAVY, AND ARMY WERE INVOLVED IN SURVEILLANCE, INTERDICTION AND TURN-BACKS OF ASYLUM SEEKER BOATS. LITTLE INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AS IT WAS ARGUED REVEALING “ON WATER MATTERS” WOULD ASSIST PEOPLE SMUGGLERS. CONCURRENTLY, A REGIONAL DETERRENCE FRAMEWORK INCLUDED AN UNSUCCESSFUL SCHEME TO BUY ASYLUM SEEKER BOATS PRIOR TO EMBARKATION. A 90% REDUCTION IN ASYLUM SEEKER ARRIVALS WAS CLAIMED WITHIN OSB’S FIRST YEAR. TURN-BACKS OCCURRED INCLUDING SOME WHERE AN UNSEAWORTHY BOAT WAS REPLACED BY A NAVY DELIVERED ORANGE SEA SURVIVAL CAPSULE. DURING 2014 LEGAL CHALLENGES WERE BROUGHT AGAINST REFOULEMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY, LEGISLATION WAS ENACTED PRIORITISING BORDER POLICY ABOVE U.N. CONVENTION RIGHTS OF REFUGEES. ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM VESSELS THAT WERE NOT TURNED BACK WERE TAKEN TO NAURU AND MANUS ISLAND OFFSHORE REGIONAL PROCESSING CENTRES. MANY DIVERSE REFUGEE SUPPORTING GROUPS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, LEGAL EXPERTS AND CONCERNED CITIZENS PROTESTED THE POLITICISATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS ARRIVING BY BOAT AS A GROUP TO BE FEARED, THAT AT BEST WERE ECONOMIC MIGRANTS AND AT WORST, WOULD-BE TERRORISTS. [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/AUSTRALIASBORDER](https://vimeo.com/user80342967/AUSTRALIASBORDER)