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Beyond friends and foes: immigration policymaking in contemporary China

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Propositions

1. China's immigration policymaking reveals key tensions in its ambivalent approach to internationalization, which intensified as China became a global power.
2. Following decades of gradual depoliticization, in the Xi Jinping era, international mobility and exchange have been partially repoliticized.
3. While important, popular nationalism is not the only force shaping Chinese societal discourse on immigration.
4. The slow state response to the increase in immigration in reform era China, as well as its emerging societal politicization, fit a pattern of early-stage immigrant reception seen in other countries and regions.
5. The China migration field requires an integrated approach to the study of incoming, outgoing and return migration to improve understanding of their overlapping dynamics.
6. The role of immigration policy is underestimated in both societal and academic debate on immigrant belonging in China, which often focuses on cultural factors.
7. Research into immigration attitudes should be conscious of the full spectrum of attitudes that have been shown to exist across populations, to correct for a bias towards studying negative immigration attitudes.
8. While national case studies of immigration politics risk reifying national boundaries, studying a previously neglected case like mainland China enables in-depth international comparison which helps address the Euro-American bias of the field.
9. Changes in China's immigration policy during the pandemic were driven by public health, crisis management and political factors, rather than signaling a long-term policy shift on migration.
10. Facilitating the recovery of international migration and mobility – including of academic researchers – between China and other parts of the world should be a top policy priority worldwide.
11. Attention is the highest form of generosity (via Simone Weil).
12. How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing (Annie Dillard).