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The Geopolitics of Tourism in the Indo-Pacific

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ABSTRACT

This introduction to the special section focuses on the geopolitical relevance of tourism in the Indo-Pacific region. We first review the literature on everyday geopolitics, or Popular Geopolitics 2.0, elaborating the trend of attention to tourism activities in political geography. We then turn to tourism studies and find the divergence and convergence between these literatures. Finally, we argue that a focus on the Indo-Pacific offers new points of purchase for critical scholars reassessing the geopolitics of tourism. This introduction sets a scene for the other articles in this special section, calling for a re-thinking of the links between tourism and geopolitics from a more inclusive perspective that goes beyond Euro(American)centrism.

Introduction

In early August 2022, several news outlets ran stories focusing on Chinese tourists on Pingtan Island, which is the closest part of the Chinese mainland to Taiwan island. These tourists happened to be vacationing on the Strait of Taiwan at the time of US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan island, which sparked a set of Chinese military exercises that rehearsed a potential military conflict across the strait. The tourists' images and videos of missiles and aircraft arcing overhead circulated online, providing viewers with the frisson of combat but from a subject position with which many could identify: the tourist.

The writers highlighted the juxtaposition between military exercises and tourism, for instance: 'Tourists on the beaches of Pingtan island, China's closest point to Taiwan island, were on Thursday treated to an unexpected sight: helicopters in formation and smoke trails from projectiles', (Reuters 2022) and 'The hum of holiday vibes and the selfie-snapping is interrupted by the roar of explosions as projectiles shoot up into the sky, prompting oohs and aahs from the surprised tourists', (France 2022). As Lisle (2016) argues, however, tourism and war have long been intertwined, and both express

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power relations that focus on hierarchy, spectacle, and spectatorship. In this case, the Chinese military exercises were meant to be seen, as a form of diplomatic performance, as the converse of the truism that tourists come as voyeurs to 'see' something. Tourists' spectatorship was signified in the reporting. One article began with the headline 'Bemused tourists granted front row seats to China's latest fire and fury' and later noted that 'Their cameras swiftly shift from documenting family fun to the latest geopolitical missive between Beijing and Taipei', (France 2022). The role of tourists in spectating the geopolitical literally constitutes the news, with videos and images from the tourists not only available in the articles but also with the performance of filming and photography itself serving as the subject of the article. We think this incident is intriguing in part because of what it says about a geopolitics that is evolving to be more inclusive of non-European/American agencies, even in the relatively privileged worlds of tourism.

It is of course impossible to choose a neutral language for politics; our framing of the special section as one centred on the 'Indo-Pacific' rather self-consciously follows the geographical nomenclature of Western security apparatuses over the past decade. The broadest outlines of the region include the coastal regions that surround the Indian and Pacific Oceans and all the islands in those oceans. From the perspective of the global tourism market, the Indo-Pacific region is also one of the regions with the most abundant tourism resources in the world, and the economic rise of China has made it a 'tourism superpower' in the region. This makes it a fruitful regional concept to bridge between the worlds of tourism and geopolitics, because its recent resurgence in usage is clearly linked to the dynamic world order and in particular the rise of China.

The term 'Indo-Pacific' has a long genealogy, featuring in the writings of Haushofer (1924) following his period of study in Japan. Somewhat predictably, he viewed the region as a natural one, linked by a common marine biology. Similarly, some of today's proponents of the strategic concept see it through the lens of nature, for instance Robert D. Kaplan (2010), who advocates for the centrality of 'Monsoon Asia' to the future of American power.

Others have, however, seen the region less as transcendent and more as emergent from a range of forces and events. Medcalf (2014, 471–472) argues that

the Indo-Pacific system is defined in part by the geographically expanding interests and reach of China and India, and the continued strategic role and presence of the USA in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This recognises the arc of trade routes, energy flows, diplomatic bonds and strategic connections between the two oceans. These links in turn emerge especially from the rise of China and India as outward-looking economic and military powers, the expansion of their economic interests, and their strategic and diplomatic imperatives in what each might once have considered its primary maritime zone of interest.

That is, there is nothing natural about the Indo-Pacific, but it is emergent from the resonance of multiple fields of action and sets of flows: the economic, the military, the logistical. These forces and flows have only been intensifying since 2013 when the Australian government adopted the phrase in their published defence strategy. The term has since subtly insinuated itself into Western security discourse, pushing aside earlier formulations of ‘the Asia-Pacific’. The United States Indo-Pacific Command was established in 2018. Medcalf (2014, 476) notes that the growth of the term in use ‘is an evolution of parallel perspectives, albeit with some cross-fertilisation, rather than a formal coordination of positions’.

The term, of course, also is potentially understood as a specific response to China’s rise and a discursive effort to describe geostrategic issues through a broad regional framing that includes India to dilute China’s regional power and contain the rise of a potential threat to the US-led order. Indeed, Gong (2020, 29) explicitly defines the ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’ (FOIP) policy as ‘perhaps the most significant geopolitical response formulated by major powers in the region with the aim of influencing Chinese behaviour and constraining China’s expanding ambitions’. Pan (2014, 458) goes further when he writes that

There is no better way of keeping the ‘barbarians’ apart than by designing a ‘super-region’ like the ‘Indo-Pacific’ in order to allow the USA to legitimately claim that ‘we are here to stay’, all the while thwarting the emergence of indigenous regional groupings.

Our use of the term here does not of course endorse any of these normative views of international relations. Rather, it reflects the convergence of attention on the ‘new’ metageography of twenty-first century geopolitics and transposes it to the field of tourism studies and tourism geography. What insights can be derived from such a conceptual transfer?

In the remainder of this article we set the scene for the other articles in this special section, but in particular we argue that the existing literature on tourism and geopolitics is primed for a reassessment from its relatively (Euro)America-centric underpinnings; the rise of China both as geopolitical power and as a tourism superpower offers a chance to re-think what has become common-sense in the field. First, we review the literature on everyday geopolitics, or Popular Geopolitics 2.0. We then review work in tourism studies and find the points of resonance between these literatures. Finally, we argue that a focus on the Indo-Pacific offers new points of purchase for critical scholars reassessing the geopolitics of tourism. We conclude by indicating how the papers in this special section advance these debates.

Everyday Geopolitics and Tourism Geographies

Geopolitics has been closely associated with state-centric politics since it was conceived, and has been widely used to describe the complex connection between geographic environment and national destiny. However, due to its intimate association with Nazi Germany during and before World War II, the term 'geopolitics' and related studies were once regarded as 'poison' and 'pseudoscience' after World War II (Dodds 2007). The academic revival of geopolitics in the past several decades is closely related to the rise of critical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics is a response to the classical geopolitical theory that prevailed before World War II. For example, early critical geopolitical studies were usually seen as kinds of critiques of the environmentally deterministic views of classical geopolitics, which regarded 'geography' not only as a kind of phenomenon waiting for geographers to discover. Rather, it was seen as a kind of subjective geo-graphing that was produced by geographers (or other writers), and therefore a broad-church research project investigating the impact of representations of geography on international relations (O'Tuathail 1996). The central purpose of early critical geopolitical studies was therefore to deconstruct the formation of various geopolitical discourses and their power relations, especially academic and policymaking geopolitical discourse (Dalby 1990; O'Tuathail 1992; O'Tuathail and Agnew 1992). In this oeuvre, the most representative topic in critical geopolitics was the discussion of the geopolitical discourses of the Cold War and the War on Terror.

Nevertheless, the research paradigms of critical geopolitics itself have continued to evolve. For example, the early attention paid to academics and policymakers and their productions of geopolitical discourse within critical geopolitics has been criticised for focusing too much on elite perspectives, while ignoring non-state or non-elite agencies that have also had a profound impact upon the production of geopolitical discourse, such as writers, journalists, and filmmakers (Dittmer 2010). What this critique resulted in is the birth of popular geopolitics (Sharp 2000), which focuses on how geopolitical knowledge is produced and made sense via popular culture and mass media, such as comics (Dittmer 2005), films (Dodds 2005), and video games (Power 2007). Despite that the existing literature of popular geopolitics has extended its observation of the scope of geopolitical discourse production widely into the realm of everyday life beyond academics and policymakers, there remains some deficiencies in this field of studies, such as the agency-centred conceptual framework as well as the textualism identified by Müller (2008) as well as Power and Campbell (2010).

This shortcoming has also begun to be gradually improved in recent development of popular geopolitics. For example, in Dittmer and Gray's (2010) review of popular geopolitics, they proposed the concept of 'popular geopolitics 2.0', by which they suggested an updated methodology that attempts to

employ the theories and concepts of affect, emotion, performance, embodied practice, and post-human networks on the basis of theoretical advances in feminist geopolitics, non-representational theories, and audience studies to widely examine how geopolitical knowledge production is entangled with power relations in the everyday realm beyond textualism and agency-centred framework. Among these theories, feminist geopolitics focuses on the agency of marginalised groups in geopolitical knowledge production, while non-representational theories and audience studies are critiques of textual, rational, subjective, and anthropocentric geopolitical knowledge production. These critiques push the geopolitical observation of knowledge production broadly into the realm of everyday life, encouraging us to search for geopolitics as a field which we all produce through our everyday interactions with one another in everyday life, as well as through the technologies that mediate those interactions.

Despite the evolution of critical geopolitics to focus on non-state actors and everyday life, we can apparently find that geopolitical research has long underplayed an important dimension of popular geopolitics, i.e., tourism (c.f. Lisle 2016). Although the definitions of the term 'tourism' are quite diverse, what they have in common is that tourism involves mobility; that is, tourists leave the place where they reside, live, and work, and go to other places for non-profit activities such as sightseeing and recreation. This may explain why tourism has remained outside the study of 'everyday life'; tourism is itself framed as a break from everyday life. Nevertheless, for more affluent populations it is a regular occurrence that is ubiquitous if highly variegated. Further, under the New Mobilities research paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006), mobility not only involves individual or group's physical flows from A to B and related mechanisms, but also involves the encounter, collision, and integration of different political systems, economic structures, social customs, cultural atmosphere, identity, and civic consciousness across (national) boundaries, which touches upon rich social and cultural political issues. In this regard, tourism is clearly an important field of geopolitical performance, for both states and individuals.

Much of the existing literature on tourism geopolitics in political geography has examined geopolitical issues experienced in tourism activities by drawing attention to tourism mobilities and the socio-political contexts that (dis) encourage tourism mobilities. For geopolitical issues related to tourism mobilities, political geographers have widely assessed the importance of the inflows and outflows of tourists themselves as well as the accompanying intercultural encounters and exchanges on geopolitical issues such as (national) identity construction (Elledge and Faria 2020), state-building (Connell 2019), geopolitical imaginaries (Yang 2020), geopolitical confrontation (Miller and Del Casino 2018), and border security (Daigle 2021); Further, scholars in political geography have also discussed the geopolitical issues about how a country or

its governors attempt to use tourism as kinds of soft power to facilitate or hinder (cross-border) tourist mobilities thereby mediating inter-state relations. In this regard, the social infrastructure for tourism such as the processing of travel visas (Bianchi, Stephenson, and Hannam 2020; Mostafanezhad, Cheer, and Sin 2020) and policies related to border control (Stoffelen 2022) have all been highly endowed with geopolitical significance. Regarding to this topic, the more stringent travel visa policies for Asians, Muslims, and Mexican groups introduced during the Trump Administration in the name of preventing COVID-19 or protecting national security interests (Firat 2022), as well as China's invention about Approved Destination Status (ADS) system in tourism industry that can either encourage or discourage the international tourist flows between China and foreign countries through the adjustment of its outbound tourism granting policy (Tse 2013), are two representative examples for such tourism geopolitical performance. Despite that tourism activities are taking place in an 'escape' from everyday life, from the above studies and cases we can find that tourism, like other details of people's everyday life, is an important way of shaping the global geopolitical landscape and a unique way to understand geopolitics, which is exactly what political geographers who are currently engaging in scholarship on the geopolitics of tourism are focusing on.

Nevertheless, the geographic location – an important geographic feature – has seldom received attention in the existing literature about tourism geopolitics, although the existing case studies involve a high degree of regional heterogeneity and cover nearly all continents around the world, including the polar regions (Bennett and Iaquinto 2021). In the Indo-Pacific region, China is currently both a growing global/regional geopolitical power and a tourism superpower with a huge market size (as the largest tourist exporting country and one of the largest tourist importing countries). This must be set alongside wider geopolitical framings of the region (discussed earlier), and the traditional importance of tourism to Pacific island economies, to properly appreciate the Indo-Pacific as a space through which the geopolitics of tourism can be reconsidered.

Therefore, the main purpose of this special section in *Geopolitics* is to focus on how the locational uniqueness of the newly-popular security concept of the Indo-Pacific region allows us to rethink the topic of tourism geopolitics. For example, the Belt and Road Initiative, the US presence, the South China Sea issue, and the Taiwan Strait issue that are mentioned in this special section are all iconic geopolitical issues in the Indo-Pacific region, all of which are fully discussed from a tourism perspective. In this sense, what follows in this introduction is a detailed discussion of how the Indo-Pacific region differentiates its tourism-related geopolitical issues from established work that focuses on (for instance) the relationship

between Euro-American tourists and their markets in the Caribbean, Middle East, and Africa (Henry 2021; Lisle 2016). Before doing so, the writers will first introduce how geopolitics is conceptualised in tourism studies.

The View from Tourism Studies: Conceptualising Geopolitics

Echoing political geographers' attention to tourism geopolitical issues, there are also a group of scholars in the field of tourism studies who are trying to conceptualise geopolitics from the tourism perspective. This research trend in tourism studies is closely linked to the socio-economic context of the rise of globally cross-border tourism activities since the new millennium. With deepening globalisation, rapid advancement of transportation technology, as well as decreased travel cost, the international tourism market has flourished. An increasing number of people have the opportunity and can afford to go abroad for global travelling. Tourism is no longer the privilege of a global minority, and a more diverse group of people and places are being drawn into the politico-economic field. With the increasing frequency of (transnational) tourism activities, quite a wide range of political geographical issues have been noticed within such activities, such as national identity or other national narratives being reflected within tourism (Stoffelen, Ioannides, and Vanneste 2017). In turn, the various cultural imaginations held by various tourist and tourism-hosting populations, or acute geopolitical crises like the THAAD deployed by the US in South Korea, also profoundly affected the choice of tourist destinations, tourists' travelling experience, and tourist behaviour (Mostafanezhad and Norum 2016), all of which become important factors affecting the development of local tourism.

In this context, scholars in the field of tourism studies have also begun to pay attention to the analysis of the relationship between tourism activities and international politics, which is a little different from the traditional tourism research on the political dimension of tourism activities. Rather than focusing on the political topics through the micro-scale that is favoured by most of the traditional tourism studies, such as the (dis)empowerment of tourism activities to communities in tourism development (e.g., Tian, Stoffelen, and Vanclay 2021), scholars in the field of tourism studies have recently also touched upon the issues like national politics, international relations, and inter-cultural integration involved in tourism activities, which connect the micro-scale with the macro-scale political issues through tourism. For example, in some very representative journals within the discipline of tourism studies, such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Geographies*, *Tourism Management*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, and *Tourist Studies*, scholars have extensively examined topics of geopolitical relevance in tourism, including territory (Amoamo 2021), boundaries (Gelbman and Timothy 2010),

geopolitical perceptions (Chaddad 2021), Orientalism (Putcha 2020), or religious geopolitics (Bhandari 2019).

These concerns with geopolitical issues in tourism studies essentially form a powerful synchrony with feminist geopolitics and everyday geopolitics in the discipline of political geography, the former of which underscores that scales are interconnected while the latter one highlights paying attention to the geopolitical performance in the everyday realm. In a sense, regarding the research topic of tourism geopolitics, political geography and tourism studies transcend the limitations of disciplines and come together to form a unique research field with interdisciplinary feature.

Despite that the focus on tourism geopolitics in tourism studies is similar to that in political geography in terms of research issues, the analytical framework adopted by tourism research on this topic is still distinctive from that in political geography, especially considering that the core research object in tourism research is 'tourism'. When discussing the definition of 'tourism', Williams and Lew (2015) indicated that the core elements of tourism activities mainly include the interaction between tourists and the destination, the tourism motivation of tourists (e.g., entertainment, business, education, social relations, health, or/and religion), and the facilities that support tourism activities (e.g., transport, accommodation, consumer markets, entertainment and attractions facilities). In this sense, although we can find that the definition of tourism seems to display a tendency of diversification at the conceptual level, we can still identify three core elements of tourism activities from Williams and Lew's (2015) work that mainly include: tourists, destinations, and tourism industry. In this regard, our understanding of the entanglement between tourism activities and geopolitics from the discipline of Tourism Studies can also be unfolded from these three aspects.

Tourists and Geopolitics

As the main subjects of tourism activities, tourists' behaviour is closely entangled with many geopolitical issues. As pointed out by Gillen and Mostafanezhad (2019), the essence of tourism activities is about encounters, including the physical, spatial, and identity encounters, which means conflicts, collisions, and coexistence of different social norms that accompany the inflows/outflows of different subjects within different spaces across borders. These encounters are inevitably entangled with the shifting geopolitics of how national identity, geopolitical sentiment, and geopolitical imagination are shaping (as well as shaped by) international relations, especially in the context of the rising international tourism market. For example, Kim, Prideaux, and Timothy (2016) discussed the factors that affected bilateral travel between China and Japan, and from which they found that national identity, as a very sensitive geopolitical factor between the two countries, has a significant impact

on their travel choices, particularly in the Chinese side. Furthermore, tourists' embodied practices and travel experiences are also seen as important details in the everyday arena that could (re)shape geopolitics, such as geopolitical sentiment (Jansen 2009) or/and geopolitical imaginations (An, Zhang, and Wang 2020). In this special section, An, Zhang, and Wang's (2020) study on the travelogues of Chinese tourists travelling to Africa is a representative study in this regard. Through discourse analysis of Chinese travelogues about Africa on *Mafengwo*, their analysis found that Chinese tourists' travel experiences constructed an exotic, dangerous, poor, and wild Africa that was supported by a modern and developing country – China –, which coincides with the official Chinese narrative of China-Africa cooperation and reflects the success of the official Chinese geopolitical narrative. However, An, Zhang, and Wang's (2020) study also found that Chinese tourists' writing about Africa reflected an affection connection between Africa and Europe. Such affection to some extent reflected the changes of Chinese people's cultural identity in China's modern history of foreign exchanges. The divergence between individual travel experience and official geopolitical narratives also highlights the tourist as an individual subject is capable of geo-graphing the global politics.

Tourism Destinations and Geopolitics

Compared with tourists, the geographical elements of tourism activities are also an indispensable part of understanding tourism activities. It is the constant 'human-human' and 'human-land' interactions between the origins and the destinations of tourists that constitute the tourism activities. In the research paradigm of everyday geopolitics or popular geopolitics, political geographers emphasise an ontology and epistemology of 'geo-graphing' (Dittmer 2010; Dittmer and Gray 2010). In this regard, Mostafanezhad (2018) argues that bringing a tourism perspective into geopolitics would help illustrate how 'geo' is 'graphed'. In the study of tourism geopolitics, this kind of geo-graphing is usually manifested in how tourism destinations or tourism products are painstakingly designed or spontaneously utilised for the formulation and implement of specific geopolitical purposes, including territorial maintenance, sovereignty claims, diplomatic goals, and other aspects of nation-building. Noteworthy here is that, although tourist destinations are usually seen as a venue for displaying geopolitical agendas, this does not mean that they are objects of exploitation or manipulation by powerful geopolitical forces; on the contrary, tourist destinations in a sense forms parts of tourism and geopolitical assemblage, which also produces unrepresentative and unpredictable geopolitical meanings beyond symbols and performance in the process of encountering with tourists, such as geopolitical sentiment. Waterton's (2022) analysis in this special section is a classic example. Taking the historical cultural heritage in the Pearl Harbor as an example, including the USS Arizona

Memorial, the USS Missouri Memorial, the Bowfin Submarine Museum and Park, and the Pacific Aviation Museum, Waterton (2022) observed how a tourist destination acted as a tourism geopolitical assemblage that imposed and fixed preferred narratives of history through the happenings within these tourist places and spaces.

Tourism Industry and Geopolitics

Tourism activities are essentially kinds of mobilities across (national) borders, and this mobility requires certain infrastructure to support that is called tourism industry, including the preparation necessary documents for travel, and travel agencies' arrangements for routes, transportation, and accommodation. Therefore, our analysis of the geopolitical entanglement with tourism activities also needs to be discussed from the tourism industry. Generally, the constraints on travel mobility are relatively weak: the easiest type of visa to obtain from one country to another is usually the travel visa. However, the tourism mobility, or the tourism industry more broadly, is increasingly entangled with geopolitics. For example, the issuance of tourist visas and the convenience of tourist movement are beginning to be affected by personal identity, racism, xenophobia, and other geopolitical factors (Bianchi, Stephenson, and Hannam 2020; Breakey and Breakey 2013). Meanwhile, tourism has been gradually developed as the economic pillar of some countries and regions in the 21st century, and those countries/regions with huge markets have also begun to mediate regional geopolitical and geoeconomic relations by controlling the tourism industry, including to intervene travel agencies, flight routes, and travel documents. These examples form a complex entanglement between the global tourism industry and geopolitical landscapes. There are two articles in this special section that discuss how the tourism industry is intersected with geopolitics. The first article is a discussion by Huang (2022) on the development of the tourism industry in the South China Sea and its geopolitical implications. The article investigates two cruise lines to the South China Sea opened by Chinese travel agencies since 2016 for Chinese tourists, making it clear that the tourism industry forms part of China's geopolitical restructuring of the South China Sea; While Rowen's (2022) article discusses the international travel booking engines, as a form of infrastructure that serve tourists, have become the target of competition between different camps. To some extent, the article finds that the international travel booking engines can produce popular geopolitical effects that exceed their own technical systems through the regulation of global mobility.

This section discusses how geopolitics is conceptualised in tourism studies from the three basic dimensions of tourism activities, as well as how tourism geopolitics issues are divergently and convergently analysed in the disciplines of political geography and tourism studies. Despite that, it is worth noting that

the three aspects only provide a path to observe and analyse tourism geopolitics, which does not mean that they are separate from each other. Taking Huang's (2022) research as an example, they not only focused on how tourism industry was utilised for geopolitical purposes, but also highlighted the South China Sea tourism as a commodity for the manifestation of China's sovereignty claims. Moreover, similar to the discipline of political geography, it has also not yet received sufficient attention to evaluate the significance of geographic location in re-examining the links between tourism and geopolitics in the field of tourism research. Therefore, the next section will turn to the underlying reasons for why the Indo-Pacific region is selected as an important entry point for this special section.

Re-Thinking the Link Between Tourism and Geopolitics via the Indo-Pacific

Now that we have introduced the papers of this special section and located them within the typology of tourism/geopolitics, we would like to return to the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, while there have been a lot of papers examining tourism and geopolitics, and even in the Indo-Pacific, the collective import of this work has perhaps been less appreciated than it should. In the remainder of this introduction, we make the case for this regional take on the geopolitics of tourism, arguing that it allows for the bringing together of the shifting landscapes of both geopolitics and tourism in ways that tilt less Euro-American than the past, although not necessarily less colonial.

Recent work in tourism studies has re-considered the field's Eurocentric and colonial biases (Yang and Ong 2020). The historical conjuncture between tourism, development and geopolitics is one marked by colonial and neo-colonial relations, indicating that tourism economies might be understood as Euro-American colonialism by other means. However, the contemporary moment is marked by the emergence of the Asian tourist market, and simultaneously of Asian tourism scholarship. However, the rise of Asian tourism studies does not necessarily manifest as a decolonisation of tourism studies (Chang 2015; Khoo-Lattimore 2019; Winter 2009), as Euro-American theory has tended to be imported, in part because of the neo-colonial prestige economy around the politics of citation that exists within global higher education (Wijesinghe, Mura, and Culala 2019). Alongside that theory is imported many behavioural norms and empirical expectations that embed the White Gaze deep under the surface of Asian tourism studies (Li, Tucker, and Chen 2022). While efforts have been made to think outside these norms and expectations, such as rethinking tourism studies through the New Mobilities paradigm (Cohen and Cohen 2015), or through methodological reflection (Rezaei 2019), this is still very much a transition that is underway.

While sometimes this intellectual agenda is described as pluralising the theory and practices of the field, sometimes it is represented as being about decolonisation, taking a turn of phrase from wider debates around higher education in the West. This is particularly salient when the link between tourism and development is highlighted (e.g., Higgins-Desbiolles, Scheyvens, and Bhatia 2022). Here, however, we must tread with caution, as new Asian origins for tourists does not necessarily hail a less colonial or exploitative set of relations. To consider this further requires consideration of the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, which helps to make sense of the inter-state rivalries unfolding in the region. While it may seem paradoxical to import a Western framing of the region to de-centre Western theory, we do so because it allows for the geopolitical and the touristic to be clearly juxtaposed.

We return to the distinction between Euro(American)-centrism and coloniality as it was discussed earlier with regard to tourism studies. If the Indo-Pacific region is a crucible in which tourism studies is being reconsidered, in an effort to rethink its Euro-American conceptual baggage in light of the rise of the Asian tourist, it also makes sense to re-think the role of power in tourism geography and tourism studies in light of the changing geopolitical circumstances. Does the rise of China mark the end of tourism-as-colonialism, both as academic discourse and as practice? Or does it reflect a change in style but not in substance? Does geopolitical and economic power re-make tourist subjectivities, or are there substantive national or other differences that are not mediated by such fields? The Indo-Pacific is surely the venue of choice for considering these questions.

Here is the task of the geopolitics of tourism for the coming period – to re-evaluate the relationship between power and tourism both within academic debates and in practice. To that end, we have pulled together a range of authors from across Euro-American and Chinese contexts to reflect on the future of the geopolitics of tourism in the Indo-Pacific context. We recommend these papers to you.

Conclusion

The geopolitics of tourism has emerged as an interdisciplinary research topic, bringing together scholars from geography and tourism studies to examine the nexus of economic and political power. As such it has to both confront the intellectual politics of the academy, re-thinking the biases embedded in the field from its early focus on Euro-American tourism and Euro-American imperium. It is also an opportunity to examine the evolution of how power continues to be exercised and deployed through tourism as tourism becomes less Euro-American in practice. The time is ripe for this reconsideration, not only because of the increasing cross-border mobility spawned by the mass tourism in the international tourism

market since the 21st century, but also because of the changing origins and (to some extent) destinations of those tourists. For this reason, we have focused on the Indo-Pacific region, shifting it from the geopolitical realm to the touristic one (if those can even be said to be different). From the perspectives of political geography and tourism studies respectively, this special section on the *Geopolitics* journal indicates attempts to improve the balance of attention to tourism as an important everyday dimension of political geography, while reflecting both the enthusiasm for study of the everyday in political geography and the neglect of grand (geo)political analysis in tourism studies. Together these highlight the necessity and significance for analysing tourism geopolitics from an interdisciplinary perspective.

There are four thought-provoking papers in this special section: An, Zhang, and Wang's (2020) study discusses how the global geographical expansion of China's economic activities (particularly alongside with the Belt and Road Initiative) is reflected in and refracted by the tourism sector; Waterton (2022) examines how the US presence in the Indo-Pacific is performed via tourism activities by employing the case study of the historical and cultural heritage of Pearl Harbor; Huang (2022) observe how the geopolitical hotspots – the South China Sea – has been (de-)territorialised in such a soft way as tourism; and Rowen (2022) pays attention to another geopolitical hotspot in the Indo-Pacific region – the Taiwan strait – by talking about how tourism industry has been becoming a geopolitical battlefield. The contributors in this special section, who have taken the changing nature of the geopolitics of tourism in the Indo-Pacific region as a shared discussion point, have provided a variety of inspiring empirical case studies to put us forward to deeper and further considerations of what kinds of geopolitical issues were entangled with tourism activities, and in what ways they made sense. From the *tourist* perspective, An, Zhang, and Wang's (2020) article discussed how Chinese outbound tourists' writings diverged and converged from the official Chinese narrative of its overseas activities; From *tourism destination* perspective, Waterton's (2022) article examined how tourism destinations were painstakingly or spontaneously designed and utilised as kinds of tourism geopolitical assemblage to write, arouse, fix, and impose geopolitical significance; From the perspective of *tourism industry*, Huang and Suliman (2022) article and Rowen's (2022) article analysed how tourism industries were maintained, manipulated, and contested as a social infrastructure that could restructure geopolitical landscapes and produce geopolitical effects. With these case studies, this special section helps proceed an analytical approach for tourism geopolitics studies that could develop their analysis from the perspectives of tourists, tourism destinations, and tourism industries to examine their geopolitical entanglements.

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