

AIS General Research Fund (GRF) and Early Career Scheme (ECS) Success Round 2020-21

Project Title:

The Role of Cities and Provinces in China's regional relations

Brief Abstract:

In the past three decades, China has emerged from relative isolation to become a regional hub of economic and political power. This project focuses on the relations China has forged in this period from a bottom-up perspective, asking to what extent subnational ties (those between cities and provinces respectively) are able to form bilateral bridges. This project will explore the value these ties add to foreign relations between China and three countries (Japan, India, and the United States). This research is intended to answer an understudied question in Chinese foreign policy: what is the role of subnational actors? In answering this question, this project will advance theoretical questions regarding the role of such subnational actors in international relations as well as clarify the agency such actors have in states with centralized political structures. In undertaking this research, I will draw upon a refined research methodologies developed in earlier fieldwork in this area (Thomas and Williams 2017). I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with local government officials, which will be buttressed with interviews with other local level actors. This fieldwork will be supported by secondary materials and desk-top research.

Investigator: Dr Nicholas THOMAS

Biography:

Dr Nicholas Thomas conducts research on regional politics and non-traditional security issues. His most recent research focuses on Chinese perspectives of the international order as well as the macrosecuritisation of health threats. He has previously published in the Journal of Contemporary Asia, the Journal of Contemporary China, International Studies Perspectives, Pacific Review, and Security Dialogue.