The Origins and Development of Taiwan’s Policies toward the Overseas Citizens’ Participation in Homeland Governance and Decision-Making

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How International Relations (IR) Theories Matter?

- **Second-image reversed (Peter Gourevitch, 1978)**
  - International systemic changes affect domestic politics
  - Domestic political actors and institutions filter the effects of international conditions, resulting in changes of interests, coalitions, norms, ideas, identities and policies

- **Constructivist theory of argumentative persuasion (Thomas Risse, 2000)**
  - Interests and identities can be changed through the social interactive processes of argumentation, deliberation, and persuasion
Main Argument

• The Republic of China (ROC)/Taiwan’s policies toward overseas constituents have always been closely aligned with the government’s diplomatic objectives
  – From KMT’s pan-Chinese nationalism to Taiwan’s desire for a greater international space and political autonomy

• Transformations of international politics inevitably shape the domestic political situations in ROC/Taiwan, which, then, impact policies toward the overseas community

• Despite facing a rising People’s Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan’s democratization and rising Taiwanese consciousness have fostered a new set of identities, interests, and arguments that compete with Beijing’s “one China” principle
Defining the Concepts

- **Chinese diaspora**: Ethnic Chinese living outside of mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan
  - Overseas Chinese ("haiwai huaren"): Chinese who have adopted the nationality and/or citizenship of the countries of their residence
  - Chinese sojourners ("huaqiao"): Chinese nationals/citizens living abroad
  - Overseas Taiwanese and Taiwanese sojourners ("taiqiao"): Growing Taiwanese self-identity and consciousness, rejecting being lumped together with huaqiao
  - The management of affairs dealing with the overseas community is known as "qiaowu"

- This work uses **overseas citizens** to incorporate huaqiao and taiqiao who are eligible to participate in ROC’s civic rights and duties
The Republic of China (ROC) and Qiaowu

- Sun Yat-sen commented that the overseas citizens were the “mothers of the republican revolution”
- In 1929, following the Qing Dynasty’s 1909 policy, the KMT government (in Nanjing) set up the ROC’s Nationality Law based on the bloodline concept
  - “Jus Sanguinis” (bloodline): treating any person born of a Chinese father or mother (if the father were unknown) as a Chinese national and citizen regardless of birthplace
  - The notion of “pan-Chinese nationalism”
- In 1932, Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAC) was instituted under the Executive Yuan
ROC’s *Qiaowu* during the Sino-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War, 1937-49

- Between 1938-47, 34 overseas representatives were selected to the National Affairs Council (NAC), ROC’s wartime congress.
- In 1946, 41 overseas delegates were elected, either by the overseas Chinese community or handpicked by the OCAC, to the Constitutional National Assembly to draft ROC’s Constitution.
- In 1947, under the ROC Constitution, overseas Chinese citizens had the right to political representation in the National Assembly, Legislative Yuan, and the Control Yuan.
  - In the first National Assembly election of 1947, 65 of 3,045 seats (2.1%) were set aside for the overseas delegates. For the Legislative Yuan elections, 19 out of 773 seats (2.5%) were reserved for overseas delegates, and for the Control Yuan, 8 out 223 seats (3.9%) were allocated for overseas representatives.
  - Yet, due to logistical difficulty in administering overseas elections as well as hostility from the host countries toward KMT’s *pan-Chinese nationalism*, only 22 overseas citizens were elected to the National Assembly, 8 to the Legislative Yuan, and 1 to the Control Yuan.
From 1949-89, the KMT froze the government’s institutional framework, making only minor adjustments to reflect the political reality on Taiwan and offshore islands.


- The qualifications of the candidates are based on their contributions to the ROC, their respective overseas communities, education, occupation, professional achievements, and their anti-communist (patriotic) sentiments.
- They were primarily of mainlander Chinese origin.
  - 11% of overseas Legislative Yuan representatives were of Taiwanese descent and none for the Control Yuan.
Overseas Citizens’ Contributions to Taiwan’s Economic Development and Democratization

- Despite its authoritarian rule during the martial law period, the KMT government initiated a series of policies and strategies for Taiwan’s national construction and economic development.
  - Western-educated elites, intellectuals, and technocrats were recruited (i.e., Lee Kuo-ting, Chao Yau-tong, Morris Chang)
  - In 1966, the Youth Assistance and Counseling Commission (Qing Fu Hui) was set up to promote professional and education opportunities and services for youths in Taiwan as well as overseas citizens to contribute to Taiwan’s development
  - In 1972, the Chinese-American Professional Associations (Guo Jian Hui) was created to invite overseas scholars and intellectuals to attend conferences and seminars in Taiwan to provide suggestions and policy recommendations for ROC’s domestic and foreign policies
    - E.g., Laid foundations for Taiwan’s social welfare and healthcare policies
Overseas Citizens’ Contributions, Cont.

• Starting in the early 1970s, Taiwan’s international conditions have become very precarious and unstable, as PRC replaced ROC in the UN and U.S. also normalized its relations with Beijing.

• President Chiang Ching-kuo, in his late years, began the process of Taiwan’s democratization and Taiwanization. Presidents Lee Teng-hui, Chen Shui-bian further consolidating these policies

• Many overseas Taiwanese elites returned to Taiwan and were recruited to government (i.e., Lee Yuan-tseh, Tsai Tong-rong, Chen Tang-shan, Tien Hung-mao)
Post-Cold War, China’s Rise, Taiwan’s Democratization and Growing Self-Identity

- Revisions of the ROC Constitution 7 times between 1991 and 2005
- ROC nationals and ROC citizens do not enjoy the same rights (suffrage, health insurance)
- Overseas representatives would be eligible to vote and run for offices based not solely on the traditional bloodline (*jus sanguinis*) concept, but, more vitally, by possession of ROC national ID card, as well as valid household registration (*huji*). (*ROC Constitution Additional Articles # 2 and # 10, Taiwan’s Immigration Law, Article # 9, and Taiwan’s Civil Servants Election and Recall Act, Ch. 3, Sections 1 and 3*)
- The National Assembly was suspended in 2000 and abolished officially in 2005
- Control Yuan members are nominated and, with the consent of the Legislative Yuan, appointed by the ROC President (*ROC Constitution Additional Article # 7*)
- Beginning with the 7th Legislative Yuan of 2008, the Legislative Yuan seats are reduced from 225 to 113, and there is no longer any reserved seats for overseas Taiwanese citizens. Of that 113 seats, 34 are elected (from a nationwide constituency and among citizens residing abroad) from the lists of political parties in proportion to the number of votes won by each party that obtains at least 5 percent of the vote (*ROC Constitution, Additional Article # 4*)
Since the Lee administration, overseas representatives have been mostly Taiwanese-born who followed Taiwan’s political scene closely, but overseas absentee ballots are still not allowed in Taiwan today due to various political considerations (i.e., fear of meddling from the PRC).

Before 1988, OCAC Commissioners were largely Cantonese who identified with the KMT’s political claim of ROC being China’s sole legitimate government. During the Lee era, an increasingly higher number of Commissioners were *taiqiao*.

In 2000, under the Chen Shui-bian administration, Dr. Chang Fu-mei became the first Taiwan-born minister of OCAC. In 2006, OCAC also had a name-change: from Overseas “Chinese” Affairs Commission to Overseas “Compatriot” Affairs Commission. The Ma Ying-jeou administration briefly restored OCAC to its original name after 2008, but, in 2012, changed to Overseas “Community” Affairs Commission.
• Changes in the ROC’s overseas community policy clearly reflects Taiwan’s rising consciousness to view itself as a separate entity from the PRC

• Beginning with President Chiang Ching-kuo’s “I am a Chinese as well as a Taiwanese,” leaders in Taiwan have proposed various arguments and discourse to compete with Beijing’s “one China” principle:

• Overseas citizens:
  – Assets for Taiwan’s national construction, socioeconomic development, and democratization
  – Important lobby and voices for Taiwan in the international arena to express Taiwan’s democratic values and desire for greater international space and profile