

Trans-nationalising Chineseness: Overseas Chinese Policies of the PRC's Central Government

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Summary

This paper examines evolution and the scope of the PRC's policies towards overseas Chinese in the reform period. It analyses the mechanisms for incorporating the overseas Chinese into the Chinese modernisation strategy and considers how the Chinese leadership utilizes the global regimes of migration, trans-nationalism, media, and multiculturalism to affirm the CCP's political legitimacy, to extend China's political standing, to reassert Chinese culture, and to benefit China's economic performance. The argument contends that China's adaptability to the flexible nature of the global economic system signifies a departure from its position as a single territorially-restricted unit. It employs a new type of ideology of ethnic nationalism to engage in a single but territorially dispersed project ensuing in the Chinese nation-state being trans-nationalised.

Globalisation is commonly associated with the processes which complicate our understanding of national and ethnic affiliations and confuse the theorisation of such established concepts as nation and nation-state. Indeed, in the age of all-encompassing human mobility and information fluidity the meaning of place, space, community and nation becomes unstable and contestable. This seems especially pertinent when one considers the fates of those who, by free will or force seek to live outside the place which they would normally call 'home'. One of the phenomena often mentioned in relation to buoyant global capitalism is how, for the people of the diaspora trans-national identity seems homeless, 'empty', or lost in the time and space between themselves, their homeland, and their place of residence. While multiple forces compete to occupy this vacant space, in this paper I attempt to investigate how a nation-state works its way out to fill in this niche in the minds of its former subjects. It is true that the migrants themselves conjure up the images and reproduce the histories of their departed home. In fact, it has been suggested that the act of displacement or exile itself can generate 'powerful attachments to ideas of homeland that seem more deeply territorial than ever' (Appadurai 1996: 177). But it is difficult to deny that these imaginings are set off by a tangle of processes, in which a nation-state is an active player. And not only can a nation-state influence the minds of its former citizens, but it reaches out in new ways to its reclaimed subjects, who are

now accustomed to global opportunities. In doing so it also initiates negotiation of how a nation-state is constituted, operates, and, consequently, is imagined.

Taking all this into consideration, this paper examines how a Chinese nation-state exercises its overseas Chinese¹ policies in the context of the PRC's modernisation and of broader globalisation. It deals with the mechanisms for incorporating the overseas Chinese into the Chinese modernisation strategy, which is inbuilt in the organisation of the Overseas Chinese work and the practices of the relevant government institutions. In parallel to these immediate means, ready to hand for a sovereign nation-state, the paper considers how the Chinese leadership utilizes the global regimes of migration, mobility and trans-nationalism to affirm the CCP's political legitimacy, to extend China's political standing, to reassert Chinese culture, and to benefit China's economic performance. This paper aims to show how the Chinese nation-state travels outside its national space to operate with contemporary global processes to preserve its power over the identity of Chinese trans-nationals and to legitimise and reinforce itself outside its territorial terrain. I argue that China's adaptability to the flexible nature of the global economic system signifies a departure from its position as a single territorially-restricted unit. It employs a new type of ideology of ethnic nationalism to engage in a single but territorially dispersed project resulting in the Chinese nation-state being trans-nationalised.

The first two sections look at the organisation and content, respectively, of the Overseas Chinese work, after the start of the reforms. I argue that the re-establishment of the extensive Overseas Chinese affairs mechanism served as a backdrop for dealing with economic and political issues that arose after China opened to the outside world. The third section looks at how China re-appropriates the identity of the newly departed Chinese students and the so-called 'new migrants' to legitimise and reinforce their attachment to the motherland along with the process of adapting to their host society. The fourth section examines other channels used by China to export its symbolic or actual presence overseas. The examination reveals a dual phenomenon of accommodating the identity of the trans-nationals to the PRC's vision of Chineseness and of exporting the unifying model of the Chinese nation, as formulated by the Central Government, to the overseas Chinese communities. The last section maps out how China's economic and business connections with the overseas Chinese are translated into political leverage to address some of the political concerns in China's modernisation agenda.

¹ There is a certain degree of confusion in the West over how the Chinese terms *huaqiao*, *huaren*, and *huayi* should be translated into English. While there are important differences in the status of these groups and their relations to China – *huaqiao* denotes citizens of China living abroad, *huaren* and *huayi* refer to foreign nationals of Chinese descent – it seems that in the PRC's policy-making realm these distinctions are rarely drawn. In fact, most of the Chinese literature uses the generic term of *huaqiao huaren* signifying that both groups fall within the scope of the overseas Chinese policies of the PRC's government. Therefore, as used in this article, overseas Chinese is equivalent to the Chinese term *huaqiao huaren* and loosely refers to the Chinese people outside the PRC.

1 The re-establishment of the overseas Chinese affairs mechanism

With the re-direction of China's developmental course towards reform and opening-up, the revision of the overseas Chinese policies² was initiated. In December 1977, the CCP held an 'all nation overseas Chinese conference' in Beijing with the purpose of reviewing overseas Chinese policy in light of the critique of the 'Gang of Four' activities. The conference called for the revival and reinforcement of the overseas Chinese affairs. Different aspects³ of the policy on the overseas Chinese were brought together under the slogan of 'all patriots are one family', indicating the government's intention to use the overseas Chinese to serve their motherland (Wang 1980:16-18). The first conference was followed by two more nation-wide conferences held by the CCP in 1978: the All Overseas Chinese Affairs Conference and the Second All Nation Conference of Returnee Delegates.

These conferences marked a significant shift in the overseas Chinese policy, which after years of stalemate and ignorance of overseas Chinese affairs turned to one of liaising with the overseas Chinese for the purpose of economic construction. While the language of the calls for the overseas Chinese to come back or to make a contribution to socialist modernisation in China was largely embellished with the revolutionary lexicon of the old days, the message peeping out through the stream of class-struggle slogans was of a different character. It was a message of uniting the masses of all Chinese for the cause of socialist modernisation in China rather than for the purpose of international revolutionary struggle all over the world. As a result a United Front of revolutionary struggle was giving place to the United Front of modernisation construction. The contours and agenda of the front were yet to be specified, but the fervent ardour to work in this new direction has imbued the Party rhetoric of the early reform period:

As of 1979, the focus of party work will be shifted to modernization of socialist construction. So will the battlefield of overseas Chinese affairs, whose attention will be focused on the vigorous grasping of modernised socialist construction. The paramount task is to wholeheartedly carry out the party policy on overseas Chinese affairs, to actively elicit and raise the socialist aggressiveness of overseas Chinese returnees and their families. [...] With open arms we welcome the overseas Chinese support for socialist construction. Keep party in close association with overseas Chinese returnees.

² A translation version of the term *qiaowu gongzuo* (overseas Chinese work) widely used in Chinese official publications.

³ The participants emphasised the need for re-establishing the overseas connections, for the rehabilitation of the victims of the 'Gang of Four' activities, for the protection of the overseas Chinese remittances, and for the relaxation of the entry/exit regulations for overseas Chinese and Chinese nationals with overseas connections. They urged the adoption of provisions which would facilitate the return of the overseas Chinese to the motherland for settlement; encouraged investment; underlined the importance of the favourable conditions for overseas Chinese students to attend schools on the mainland; and encouraged the overseas Chinese to choose the nationality of their country of residence and to abide by the law of their host country (Wang 1980: 16-18).

Expand the activities of the federation of overseas Chinese. Strengthen party leadership and overseas Chinese affairs to insure a sound structure.⁴

The early work of re-engagement with the overseas Chinese was played out through the rehabilitation of the status of the overseas Chinese relatives: introducing special treatment for them, as well as articulating protection of their rights in the Constitution 1982⁵ and in the special protection law of 1990. To revive the links of relatives of overseas Chinese and returnees with the overseas Chinese communities, a number of governmental and non-governmental administrative organs were re-established, responsible for the protection of the rights and interests of the returned overseas Chinese and their relatives. In 1978 an all-country overseas Chinese managing mechanism was set up under the State Council (SC): The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office⁶ (*qiaoban*) (OCAO). The ex-director of the OCAO characterised the purpose of his office in the following way: 'The Overseas Chinese Office has been set up for the sake of overseas Chinese'.⁷ As such, overseas Chinese affairs have come to be regarded as a matter of Chinese national interests. It is not an accident that in most official statements and publications on the overseas Chinese the phrasing emphasises that China has some claim on the identity of the overseas Chinese. It goes: 'China has got 30 million Overseas Chinese worldwide' (*zhongguo zai shijie ge di you 3000 wan huaqiao huaren*) (Zhao 1994: 8). In other words, there is an assumption that the overseas Chinese belong to China. The overseas Chinese are treated as a characteristic of China's 'unique national condition'⁸ which puts China in a superior position in comparison to other countries and also grants China legitimacy to incorporate the overseas Chinese into its modernisation construction and other national endeavours. It also legitimises the work aimed at enhancing the symbolic affiliation and material contribution of the overseas Chinese to their homeland. This work is central to the activities of the overseas Chinese bodies and is exercised at all levels of Chinese government.

Since 1978 every province (except Tibet), autonomous region, and municipality established their own OCAOs. Its work is replicated in the activities of a mass organisation which serves in parallel to the official organs of the Central authorities. All-China's Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC) (*qiaolian*) was initially set up in 1956, but during the years of the Cultural Revolution it suspended its work. In 1978 ACFROC was back in place serving under the slogan of '*yi qiao da*

⁴ From the report entitled 'Seriously implement the policy of overseas Chinese affairs and strive for building a modernised socialist fatherland' delivered by Liao Chengshih (quoted in Wang 1980: 20).

⁵ *The Constitution of the PRC*, Section 2, Article 50, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html>.

⁶ Initially this body was set up in 1949 after the establishment of the PRC and was called The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (*huaqiao shiwu weiyuanhui*). It preserved the same title after it was re-established in 1974 until 1978 when it was re-named as The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office.

⁷ FBIS, 29 December 2001.

⁸ Qian Qichen quoted in *Xinhua*, FBIS 19 January 1999.

qiao' which in a direct translation means 'building up a bridge out of overseas Chinese connections'. In other words, ACFROC's objective is to use returned overseas Chinese, their family members and overseas Chinese as a channel for absorbing manpower, intellect, financial resources, etc. for the promotion of socialist modernisation. By 1989 more than 2,000 organs of the ACFROC were established in 29 localities at the level of provinces, cities, and autonomous districts, they were complemented by 8,000 affiliated organisations at the lower administrative level (Thunø 2001: 916). Since 1984 the National Congress of Returned Overseas Chinese and Their Relatives has taken place every five years, with the last one held in Beijing in July 2004 to gather 1,000 delegates (*People's Daily*, 21 July 2004).

In 1983 the PRC's representative organ, the Chinese People's Congress (*renda*), established a special Overseas Chinese Commission (*huaqiao weiyuanhui* or *renda de qiaowei*) (CPCOCC) of fourteen members responsible for research, recommendation and observation of the implementation of government policies towards the relatives, returnees and overseas Chinese. There is also a party *Zhigongdang*⁹ which unites those Chinese subjects who have an overseas Chinese link, primarily returned overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese' relatives (*guiqiao qiaojuan*). The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) set up its own Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (*zhengxie tai ao gang qiaowei*) aimed to research, survey and consult on the formulation of overseas Chinese policy strategies.

As a result of the collective work of the above bodies, in the period from 1979 to 2000, the development of the overseas Chinese policy resulted in the adoption of more than 360 relevant laws and regulations by the CPC and more than 800 by the SC. The establishment of these administrative organs represents a governmental attempt to institutionalise different areas of overseas Chinese work in China and abroad: from the party responsible for the development and promulgation of the general scope of the work to the level of mass non-governmental organisations with instructions to implement the work on the ground. Such an extensive bureaucratisation of the apparatus of overseas Chinese affairs points to the urgency and importance of the overseas Chinese element in China's formulation of the policies conducive to modernisation. And this element is constructed on the assumption of common ethnic and national allegiances. It also suggests that behind the aspirations for immediate economic benefits, there is a broader political agenda ingrained in the tactics. These five bodies are often referred to as the 'five bridges' of the central

⁹ The party was initially established in San Francisco in 1925 to promote the interests and rights of overseas Chinese, to improve their status and image. In 1931 *Zhigongdang*'s central office was moved to Hong Kong. After establishment of the PRC, the party's centre moved from Hong Kong to Guangzhou. Since 1953 *Zhigongdang* is based in Beijing. There were 18,000 party members in 2001, and 17 provincial and 2 municipal offices across the country. In 1997 540 *Zhigongdang* members were representatives in the PC and 1,598 were representatives in the CPPCC (Lu Meiyuan 2001: 280).

government, which all pursue a similar objective of incorporating the overseas Chinese into the modernisation construction of China. The PRC's formulated invitation for the overseas Chinese to take part in socialist modernisation presumes that they are part of China's family and that China's interests are also their interests. And this family is grouped around the party regime in Beijing. The objectives to serve the interests and needs of the overseas Chinese and to implicitly provoke the overseas Chinese' contribution to the modernisation project in China have remained fundamental throughout the reform period. The methods and the scope of this work, however, have significantly altered. As the next two sections reveal, the Chinese nation-state's handling of overseas Chinese policies reflects the adaptation of the Chinese government's strategies to the global developments of accelerated communication, mobility, and technological innovation.

2 The content of the overseas Chinese policies

In the early reform years, overseas Chinese policies have primarily targeted returned overseas Chinese and the relatives of the overseas Chinese who were seen as an important channel of their remittances and donations. In the period from 1978 to 1990 the Central authorities' bodies passed more than fifty laws and regulations, which all reflected a sixteen-character directive to pursue overseas Chinese affairs. This directive stipulated 'equal treatment without discrimination, considerations according to the particularities' (*yishi tongren, bude qishi, genju tedian, shidang zhaogu*) (Wang 1999: 289). The early reform of overseas Chinese law established a special position for returned overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese relatives, and outlined certain privileges, such as university quotas. It was complemented by the construction of the overseas Chinese native places or *qiaoxiang*, defined by the ratio of residing dependents and returnees, as an instrument of the emotional attachment of the overseas Chinese to China, as well as the destination for overseas Chinese remittances and investments (Thunø 2001: 918).¹⁰ According to Chinese official sources, about RMB 5.5 billion¹¹ of remittances was received from 1979 to 1989 predominately in the earlier reform years (*ibid.*).

By the mid 1980s remittances and donations stopped being adequate channels of foreign currency to China due to their insignificant rate. As a result, the authorities turned to the development of strategies to attract investments from overseas Chinese communities. The establishment of the Special Economic Zones and open cities in the Eastern coastal area of China, characterised by the high concentration of *qiaoxiang*, served this purpose. This economic arrangement was supplemented by 1983

¹⁰ The local authorities, with the Central authorities' blessing, play an active role in the transformation of the overseas Chinese' imaginary cultural homeland of *qiaoxiang* into reality. Tourism and publications catering for the overseas Chinese audience proved to be especially successful. In 1999 China attracted about 108,141 overseas Chinese tourists, but hopes that this rate will rise significantly with the help of special favourable policies directed to satisfy overseas Chinese interests (Mao 2001: 8).

¹¹ Thunø (2001: 918) questions the reliability of these data.

legislation and 1985 State Council provisions which granted special privileges to overseas Chinese citizens (including those in Hong Kong and Taiwan) and ethnic Chinese wanting to invest in China. These policy regulations were coined as a 'call back'¹² policy (Sie Hok Tzwan 1999) and were formulated around the overall objective of the economic development of China. They also appealed to the profit-oriented nature of the overseas Chinese. Jing Shuping, a chairman of the All-China Federation of Commerce and Industry, called upon Chinese entrepreneurs overseas 'to take advantage of their common roots by seizing the vast opportunities available in China' (quoted in Liu 1998: 595). These early calls to contribute to economic construction in China primarily targeted overseas Chinese concentrated in South-East Asia due to their acclaimed economic prominence. In the 1990s it was estimated that the private wealth of South-East Asia's 20 million ethnic Chinese exceeded US\$ 200 billion (Liu 1998: 594). More recent studies testify that in Malaysia ethnic Chinese share in GNP is 1.6 bigger than their population ratio, while in Indonesia their economic weight constitutes threefold proportion of their populace (De Vienne 2004: 7, footnote 41). The outcome of the calling-back policy was the predominant position of overseas Chinese capital on China's market throughout the whole period (see table 1).

Table 1: Overseas Chinese Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in China, 1979-2000 (in 1 mln US\$)

Years	Total amount of FDI	Overseas Chinese FDI	Percentage of overseas Chinese FDI
1979-1991	26,885	17,932	66%
1992-1997	196,810	127,600	65%
1998-2000	126,633	82,200	65%

Source: Zhuang 2000: 380.

In the early 1990s a major break from the initial strategy of reliance on overseas Chinese citizens, returnees and their dependants took place, which points to flexible and de-territorial interpretation of citizenship by the PRC. In 1989 at the All-Nation Overseas Chinese Conference it was underlined that 'the cooperation between overseas Chinese offices and overseas Chinese of foreign nationality has been continuously expanding. Overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese of foreign nationality have differences and commonalities. To continue successful overseas Chinese policies, our work should also pay considerable attention to the overseas Chinese of foreign nationality' (*Summary of the State Council's Overseas Chinese Work* 9 May 1989, quoted in Zhuang 2000: 6). Subsequently, the SC issued a number of internal documents which broadened the agenda of the overseas Chinese work to include all ethnic Chinese living abroad (Thunø 2001: 921). For example, a regulation 'About Strengthening of the Work towards Overseas Chinese and Foreigners of Chinese

¹² This strategy was also called 'to lure phoenix' policy (*yin feng*) (Wu 2003: 18).

Descent' issued by the OCC of the CPC stipulated two aspects of the work. Firstly, to take into account differences in the nationality status of the Overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese; secondly, not to treat ethnic Chinese and 'common foreigners' (*yibang waiguoren*) similarly; to cherish the national feelings of the overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese, to protect their interests and close relations with China (Zhuang 2000: 7).

This amorphous definition of the overseas Chinese has subsequently started conflating with the strategies of re-appropriating the identities of the new migrants and Chinese students studying abroad. In the course of the PRC citizens' exodus to Western societies after the start of the reform and the end of the Cold War the group of departed nationals especially attracted the attention of the relevant bodies. In 1996 the State Council circulated its directives to emphasise the new migrants work:

Since the beginning of the reforms and opening, the number of people who left Mainland China to reside abroad is currently becoming an important rising force within overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese communities. In the future, they will become a backbone force friendly to us in the United States and some other developed Western countries, especially all kinds of overseas students who have settled locally (*Collection of Laws and Regulations* quoted in Thunø 2001: 922).

During the years of reform and opening, the work of the Chinese government to integrate overseas Chinese into the modernisation project changed both in terms of the targets at which overseas Chinese work is directed and in terms of the scale and scope of the work. This shift of overseas Chinese policies, from preoccupation with rehabilitating the status of overseas Chinese returnees and their relatives and providing extra rights and privileges to overseas Chinese citizens abroad, to the formulation of a broad strategy to unite and serve the needs of all overseas Chinese on the grounds of their ethnic origins, points to a partial return to a pre-1955 policy¹³ of treating all overseas Chinese as China's citizens. While to renounce the law-binding treaty would threaten bilateral relations with the South-East Asian states, acting within the existing regime and allowing certain flexibilities in the interests of regional economies served as a favourable framework for the application of what Duara (2003: 140) has called 'de-territorialised ideology of nationalism'. This mode of ideology departs from the territorially restricted model to a fuzzily applied form of cultural-ethnic convergence attuned to 'the intensified quest for global competitiveness' (*ibid.*). To illustrate this claim the next section goes on to look at how the Chinese nation-state conceptualises and exercises a policy of New Chinese leaving the country and reaches out to re-appropriate the identity and emotional and bodily belonging of trans-nationals by adopting a flexible strategy of citizenship.¹⁴

¹³ In 1955 the PRC signed an agreement with Indonesia on the question of dual nationality for the overseas Chinese. It rejected the earlier *jus sanguinis* principle and the institution of dual nationality.

¹⁴ The notion of 'flexible citizenship' was first introduced by Ong (1999). However, in her interpretation it refers to a tangle of business networks and practices flexibly exercised as far as the place of work and residence is concerned.

3 Claiming the trans-nationals: new Chinese migrants and Chinese students abroad in the PRC's policy considerations

The phenomenon of the so-called 'new Chinese migrants' (*xinyimin*) has been playing an important role in directing the vectors and in shaping the content of the overseas Chinese policies of the Chinese government. The pivotal role of the new Chinese migrants is underscored by the leading Mainland scholar on the overseas Chinese' issues, Zhuang Guotu, who designates them as 'the quintessence of the Chinese nation' (*zhonghua minzu de jingying*) (Zhuang 1997: 5).

The term 'new migrants' refers to a group of Chinese immigrants from China, as well as from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other South-East Asian countries, who left their places of residence for foreign destinations after the start of the reforms in the 1970s (Zhuang 1997; Chong 1999; Zhao 2000). The group itself is far from being homogeneous. The motives for and the procedure of leaving the countries have been diverse for the new Chinese migrants and they can hardly be brought together on any other grounds apart from the time span when they left. However, across a number of Chinese publications it is assumed that 'from the racial and cultural points of view, new Chinese migrants is a similar group' (*cong zhongzu, wenhua yiyi shang jiang, xinyimin shi wei tonglei quanti*) (Zhuang 1997: 6). The publications also stress that the ethnic identity of the new Chinese migrants is 'stable and strong' (*chijiū, qianglie*), and these sentiments are believed to constitute the basis of their attachment to their homeland (*ibid.*).

Going abroad was facilitated by the relaxed policies of leaving and entering the country documented in the Law of PRC on the Administration of the Exit and Entry of Citizens, adopted in 1985 (*zhonghua renmin gonghe guo churu jing guanli fa*).¹⁵ In the 1980s, when first groups of highly-skilled professionals and Chinese students went abroad to pursue further studies, and subsequently settled down in their host countries, a lot of Mainland scholars dubbed the trend as a 'brain drain' (*zhili liushi*) and were sceptical about the relaxed policies towards going abroad (Zhuang 2000: 10). Over the span of the next ten years this critical stance transformed into the promotion of overseas study programmes and strengthening the link between those who stayed abroad and Mainland China. A belief that students can still contribute to their homeland from overseas by the means of cooperation with the Mainland research institutes, by making research visits, and organising joint conferences became dominant in the offices of government officials and academics (Zhuang 2000: 10). As a result, instead of encouraging students to come back to China, the Chinese government has started concentrating on the promotion and strengthening of close

¹⁵ The Law was adopted at the 13th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Sixth National People's Congress, promulgated by Order No. 32 of the President of the PRC on 22 November 1985, and effective as of 1 February 1986. The law permitted departing from the country and granting passports if an invitation letter and sponsorship from abroad are provided (Biao 2003: 26).

relationships between the students and the government. In summer 1993 a twelve-character direction of policy towards Chinese students studying abroad was adopted, which stated 'support study overseas, promote return home, maintain freedom of movement' (*zhichi liuxue, guli huiguo, laiqu ziyou*) (Cheng 1999: 43). At the same time, sending Chinese abroad for primary and secondary study is not approved by the state on the grounds of the premature exposure to the Western culture (Sun 2002: 3). As such the government is in favour of sending consciously mature and nationally aware 'ripe' citizens. Also, the Chinese government encourages Chinese migrants with professional or business ties in both China and overseas to regularly travel back and forth (Biao 2003: 31). A series of government provisions and programmes aimed at the promotion of short visits or exchanges for Chinese migrants prompted a situation in which of 551 returned overseas Chinese who set up enterprises in 13 industrial parks¹⁶ in China, only 44% reside there permanently (PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted in Biao: *ibid.*).

The adoption of the above regulations and policies signifies several developments in the PRC's dealings with the overseas Chinese. First, it seems that the PRC exercises a flexible form of citizenship for ethnic Chinese or former nationals of the PRC, to establish favourable conditions for the participation of the overseas Chinese in the projects in the PRC or provide the emotional sense of belonging to the PRC. Second, the accelerated mobility resulted from the technological advancements in transportation and in the relaxed policies of leaving and entering the country also contributes to the maintenance of the strong attachment to the homeland due to the possibility of frequent visits and active involvement in matters in the PRC. Being on the move between the homeland and other parts of the world, Chinese communities with governmental participation 'do not feel that they have stopped being part of China' (Nyíri 1999b: 67). The 'reality' of closeness to home, or the PRC's poignant presence among the Chinese exiles abroad, is possible through the advances of the modern age with its inexhaustible cyber terrain and improved conditions of human mobility, which concoct favourable conditions for the Chinese state to make itself felt for its communities abroad. A Chinese scholar living in Australia remarks that "'leaving" may never be complete, just as "return", may never be total' (Sun 2002: 214). These processes are conducive to retaining a concept of a sovereign state and national history prioritised among the Chinese trans-nationals' imagination of place and belonging (*ibid.*: 215). This imagination of belonging is reproduced and sustained through the production and consumption of the national products produced by the PRC as well as by communication with compatriots, with occasional 'othering' of

¹⁶ Returned Overseas Students Industry Parks (*huiguo liuxuesheng chanye yuanqu*) is a key initiative of the Chinese government to attract Chinese students abroad to return to China. In 2003 there were more than 60 such parks nationwide which employed more than 2,000 returned students (Wu 2003b: 14-15). They enjoy significant benefits from the government. For example, industry park in Shenzhen annually receives RMB 300 mln (US\$ 3.8 mln) in investment funds from the provincial government (Biao 2003: 30).

non-Chinese people in their country of residence by referring to them as *laowai* or foreigners.

The Chinese government assigns certain expectations to its overseas vanguards such as to 'come back to visit the country often and tell overseas Chinese, students, and their American friends about China's progress and achievements and relevant policies in a comprehensive and objective manner'.¹⁷ Chinese scholars echo the government by identifying a number of ways of how new migrants can be beneficial to their motherland and Chinese nation. In 1998 during the seminar on Chinese reform and the role of Chinese students abroad conducted in the University of Maryland, a number of Chinese scholars expressed an opinion that the role of the new immigrants – students who have become young professionals – had transformed from 'to return to serve the country' and 'to serve the country' to the task of 'serving the nation' (*huiguo fuwu – weiguo fuwu – weihua fuwu*), that is to serve the cause of the Chinese nation from abroad (Chong 1999: 158). In the recommendations for the government policies towards new migrants Zhuang Guotu underlines the importance of government support for legal immigrants and the importance of governmental assistance to the establishment of relevant organisations for the overseas Chinese in their country of residence, which would establish contacts with the existing overseas Chinese associations, and would become the central force of the Chinese community (Zhuang 1997: 6). Chong (1999: 159) follows him in suggesting that the Chinese government should be a central force in unifying new overseas Chinese communities. They both recommend to the government that the new Chinese migrants should become the focus of the work of the overseas Chinese work departments. Zhuang (1997: 6) urges the establishment of links between the new migrants and the existing overseas Chinese organisation, among new migrants, and between new migrants and their homeland, by assisting the establishment of the overseas Chinese associations, unions, cultural and educational organisations. In his words 'every new migrant should become a member of one of the Chinese organisations' (*shi mei yi ge xinyimin chengwei mou yi huazu shehui de chengyuan zhi yi*) (ibid.). The role of the government is seen as taking an intermediary position between the promotion of overseas Chinese integration into their local community, and the accelerated spread of Chinese culture and traditions in their societies (Chong 1999: 160).

Another set of potential contributions by the new Chinese migrants lies in a more pragmatic realm. Seeking to implement the strategy of 'invigorating China through science and education' China turned in the direction of the overseas Chinese. According to Chinese official statistics, out of 130,000 engineers in the United States, 30,000 are ethnic Chinese (Chen 2004: 3). It is also known that about 20 to 30% of the top-ranking American professors are of Chinese origins (Zhuang 2000: 2), which have been identified as role models (*bangyang*) for newly departing

¹⁷ Wen Jiabao quoted in *Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, FBIS 20 July 1996.

hordes of Chinese students.¹⁸ They are all included into China's calculation of the Chinese human and capital resources concentrated outside the PRC's territoriality. Especially valuable in this regard are new American-Chinese representatives of the leading American companies who constitute 65% of all representatives in Mainland China (Chen 2004: 3). In the eyes of the Chinese leadership, they are those who concentrate a unique combination of factors, such as an emotional attachment to the PRC and concern for its future, which could be reflected in the number of profitable contracts signed with the Mainland's companies.

The Chinese personnel minister Zhang Xuezhong underlined that overseas Chinese professionals have been 'a priority for the Chinese central and regional governments for more than a decade' and announced that 'it is the best time now for overseas Chinese trained professionals who live abroad to come back to China to start up businesses or take up an academic career'.¹⁹ There are special governmentally backed arrangements to assist Chinese professionals to be involved in China. The Overseas Chinese Worldwide Forum sponsored by the Chinese government was held in Qingdao in 2000 with the theme 'Prospects for the Economy and Science in China'. The state councillor Ismal Amatih in his opening speech expressed his hope that the overseas Chinese would expand economic cooperation with the motherland.²⁰ The 'go outside' (*zou chu qu*) strategy ardently pursued by the Chinese government since China's accession to the WTO makes provisions for a special role for the overseas Chinese in assisting China to promote its goods on the world market (*Zhejiang Province Overseas Chinese Office* 2003). It is estimated that with the help of the government since the mid-1990s the overseas Chinese have established over 3,000 enterprises in various economic development zones in China.²¹ When in 2002 a new high-tech development zone for enterprises was built in Shenzhen on the funds of the overseas Chinese, the director of the Shenzhen Overseas Chinese Affairs Office Zhang Xingxuan characterised this move as 'to accommodate the upsurge of investment by overseas Chinese living abroad'.²²

To adjust to the dislocated position of the Chinese migrants, the PRC exercises flexible policies of de-territorialised participation in the modernisation project. It claims the allegiances of Chinese trans-nationals by seizing the advantages of their extraterritorial links and by proliferating their pro-PRC orientation. In this section I considered how the PRC reiterates its primacy over the identity of overseas Chinese and subsumes their participation in modernisation construction on the Mainland. I

¹⁸ North-American Association of Chinese scientists had about 3,000 members in the late 1990s. The organisation is actively involved in the promotion of Chinese Science. With the help of the organisation, there were 10 laboratories and 6 collaborative centres set up. More than 50 articles were jointly published in the domestic and international academic journals.

¹⁹ *Xinhua*, FBIS, 22 December 2001.

²⁰ *Xinhua*, FBIS, 20 September 2000.

²¹ *Xinhua*, FBIS, 1 August 2001.

²² *Xinhua*, FBIS, 8 February 2002.

will next discuss the forms of the PRC's dispersed presence in multiple territorial locations.

4 The channels of the PRC's exported presence

Appropriating the identity of the overseas Chinese communities has been lubricated by the strategy of sending 'mature' nationals abroad. The cohorts of new migrants heading abroad serve the cause of the PRC by affecting the character of the overseas Chinese society. Before the 1970s the overseas Chinese had been increasingly assimilated into local society. Chinese scholars call this phenomenon a transformation 'from Chinese nationals to overseas Chinese to assimilated society' (*huaqiao – huaren – rongru dang de shehui*) (Zhuang 1997: 5). However, when a new wave from the PRC re-emerged after 1979, the majority of the new overseas Chinese were in their 20s or 30s, and because of their skills and age, adapted easily to their host society. Because most of them grew up and spent their youth at universities in China and maintained strong family links in China, the attachment to the homeland, traditions, and culture is believed to be quite strong. Chinese scholars assume that the new Chinese migrants all 'have strong identification with China and hope that China will become stronger and influential on the world arena' (Zhuang 1997: 5), and that the new Chinese immigrants are those who 'were born in New China, and grew up under the red flag' (*sheng zai xin zhongguo, zhang zai hongqi xia*) (Zhao 2000: 12). Therefore, with a new wave of overseas Chinese, not only has the overall number of overseas Chinese increased, but also the overall sense of Chineseness became stronger among the old Chinese diaspora (Zhou 2002: 345). Some contend that the new overseas Chinese 'continuously pour fresh blood into the overseas Chinese communities' (*wei haiwai huaren shehui yuanyuan buduan de zhuru xinxiang xueye*) (Zhao 2000: 13). At the opening of the OACO's National Directors' Meeting Qian Qichen noted: 'we must make an effort to increase our work with overseas Chinese, especially those living abroad, in order to raise the enthusiasm of more than 30 million overseas Chinese and to fully develop their advantages'.²³ 'To raise the enthusiasm' and 'to fully develop their advantages' is a format in which the work to secure the overseas Chinese' attachment to China is presented. The Chinese government recognises that migration leads to the revival of Chinese consciousness among the Chinese communities abroad, and fosters a development reverse to the one experienced in the 1970s, that is the development from Overseas Chinese to Chinese nation (*huaren – huazu*) (Zhuang 1997: 5). Currently, new migrants constitute 60-80% of the overseas Chinese population in the developed countries.²⁴ By claiming the new migrants as belonging to China, the PRC's leadership creates a channel to export its own image of a unifying force for the Chinese nation. The new migrants

²³ *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwenshe* (Chinese News Agency), FBIS, 16 January 2002.

²⁴ More specifically, they constitute 40-50% of all Chinese in the USA, 70-80% in Canada, 80% in Japan, 70% in Australia, and 80% in Western Europe (Zhuang 2001: 361).

also became executors of the PRC's overseas Chinese strategies through the activities of the newly established Chinese associations in their country of presence. It appears that China skilfully adapts to new global developments of migration, mobility, and trans-nationalism to address the issues of the overseas Chinese identity and their involvement in the modernisation projects in China. The particulars and the results of this work are visible when we consider the transformation of the so-called 'three pillars' of the overseas Chinese communities – overseas Chinese organisations, schools, and periodicals (Liu 1998: 582). These institutes and symbols of the collective identity of the overseas Chinese communities have undergone significant alterations in their structure and orientation, which, among other factors, can also be credited to the PRC's policy shift towards them.

Since the late 1980s there has been a considerable intensification in the activities of overseas Chinese organisations which, moreover, have acquired a large-scale and global character. According to Liu (1998: 586), about 100 world conventions of Chinese associations (*shetuan*) took place in two decades from 1980 to 1998. In 1994 there were 37 branches of the American Chinese Association with more than 6,000 members (Fang 1997: 10). In 1995 1,500 delegates from 23 countries attended the Third World Chinese Business Congress (*di san jie shijie shangdahui*). In September 2001 the attendance at the Sixth Congress rose to 3,000 businessmen from overseas, and 1,500 delegates from Mainland China (Zhou 2002: 342).

Apart from the frequency of the Chinese meetings, and the intensity of their activities, there have been more pertinent changes in the nature of overseas Chinese organisations. These changes have resulted not only from global technological developments but also from the repositioned role of the PRC towards overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese communities. One recently emerged trend is a growing approval and support for overseas Chinese organisations and their activities by the government in the PRC, which prompted a general re-orientation of the overseas Chinese communities towards the PRC. The newly emerged overseas Chinese organisations, as well as their activities, have been increasingly characterised by their strong apparent orientation towards the PRC (Nyíri 1999a, 1999b), or have been set up with the PRC's direct involvement and endorsement (Nyíri 1999b: 110). When the European Association of Chinese Organisations (*ouhua lianhui*) was established in 1992 out of the desire of 21²⁵ Chinese associations from ten countries to unite, this motion received high praise from the Government for uniting the overseas Chinese organisations, protecting the rights and interests of the overseas Chinese, facilitating and strengthening the dialogue with European states, and assisting newcomers to integrate into local society (Zhao 2000: 13). The PRC underscores the importance it attaches to such organisations by sending its representatives to the gatherings of overseas Chinese of all levels. In a sense, the PRC presents itself as a

²⁵ By 2000 more than 100 organisations from over 20 countries were part of the Association (Zhao 2000: 13).

hub giving impetus to the globalisation and intensification of Chinese networks and associations. In its eyes these newly established pro-Beijing organisations can serve as a successful medium in promoting the shift of the overseas Chinese ethnic identity from their host country towards the PRC (Nyíri 1999b: 58).

Another trend of the current wave of globalisation of the overseas Chinese associations is characterised by the significant level of institutionalisation (Liu 1998: 590) and centralisation (Nyíri 1999a, 1999b). In the past overseas Chinese organisations were characterised by their strong kinship and locality sentiments for the purpose of expanding business networks. In the reform period it transformed into close interaction between the overseas Chinese associations and their *qiaoxiang*. The organisations differed in their purpose and character. There were native place associations, family names associations, and organisations of a professional or religious nature. Since the 1990s there has been a tendency of bringing the regional organisations together under one unifying body and systematisation and coordination of their activities through the organisation of regional gatherings. In August 1997 the European meeting of the Chinese media bodies (*ouzhou huawen chuanmeihui*) gathered 35 organisations from 12 European states, and since then it holds meetings on an annual basis. To give another example of this trend, in 1995 the American Association of the Chinese Schools was established. It brought together 150 schools from 33 states with more than 40,000 school children and teachers enrolled. Centralisation of the activities of the overseas Chinese organisations has taken place at different levels and across all the continents.

The intensification of the economic activities of the overseas Chinese and the spread of their pro-Beijing associations was paralleled by the upsurge of the overseas Chinese media. For example, the multicultural environment of Australian society has made an especially favourable base for a thriving Chinese community. New Chinese migrants there gave rise to 43 Chinese periodicals, a 24-hour Chinese business radio station and a TV-channel (Zhao 2000: 14). In Europe there are more than 30 Chinese newspapers currently published; to name just a few: *European Times* (*ouzhou shibao*) (France), *Europe Daily* (*ouzhou ribao*) (France), *Chinese Communicator* (*huaqiao tongxun*) (the Netherlands), *United Business Paper* (*lianhe shangbao*) (Hungary), *Romanian Chinese* (*liluo huaren*) (Romania), *Chinese New Paper* (*huaxinbao*) (Spain), *Austrian Chinese* (*auhua*) (Austria). In Japan there are more than 40 different media bodies. In 1999 when a new newspaper of the new migrants, *Japanese New Chinese Paper* (*riben xinhua qiaobao*), was initiated, the aims of the new publication were outlined as follows: 'to serve as a bridge between new and old Chinese communities, to serve as a bridge between China and new migrants, and Japan and new Chinese migrants, as a bridge to global Chinese relations' (*xin lao huaqiao goutong de qiaoliang, zuguo yu xinhuaqiao de qiaoliang, riben yu xinhuaqiao qiaoliang, quanqiu huaqiao lianxi de qiaoliang*) (Zhao 2000: 14). This phrasing echoes almost word by word the recommendations given to the government by the scholars.

The newly arrived overseas Chinese also celebrate Chinese memorial days and holidays. In 1994 more than 6,000 New York overseas Chinese took part in the celebration of the anniversary of the PRC's national day (Zhao 2000: 12). The activities overseas are paralleled by the traditional October 1st grand reception for overseas Chinese in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The importance of the event is marked by the presence of the PRC's leading figures and is organised by the OCAC. In 2003 the *People's Daily International Edition* reported that about 300 Chinese in New York had organised activities to celebrate Mao Zedong's 100th birthday.²⁶ Although the number celebrating might be underwhelming, the fact that the PRC attached great importance to it, marked by the allocation of space to the coverage of the event in the national leading paper, speaks for itself. China feels sensitive about numbers in certain instances, but here the reassertion of the PRC's presence among the overseas Chinese communities, and the PRC's closeness to its departed nationals, are primary motivations behind the publications. By recurrently speaking about these events the PRC makes tangible the sense of community established between the overseas Chinese communities abroad and itself. At the same time the Chinese nation-state reiterates the importance of the PRC-bound sense of identity among overseas Chinese communities, which must be maintained and reproduced through exercising the collective memory in celebration of events that are significant for all members of the Chinese nation.

In addition to the promotion of overseas Chinese organisations that are sympathetic and loyal to the regime in Beijing, the authorities made a considerable effort to revive and preserve the sense of Chineseness among young people of Chinese descent. In the 1990s the Office for Overseas Chinese Affairs initiated the organisation of the annual 'summer camps for foreign youths of Chinese origin on a root-seeking trip to China', aiming in the official formulation to 'disseminate Chinese culture'. In 2001 it attracted about 3,000 people.²⁷ In 2000 the OCAO organised the 'Solidarity of Overseas Chinese and Foreign Nationals of Chinese Origin in the New Century'. As evaluated by official Chinese sources, the event, which gathered more than 220 organisations of overseas Chinese and foreign national of Chinese origin from 60 countries and regions, was 'another successful attempt on the part of the OCAO to forge closer ties with overseas Chinese and foreign national of Chinese origin'.²⁸ The PRC also appeals to the Chinese communities by the means of modern technology. PRC-based media projects, such as the coverage of Beijing's successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics as well as programmes of Star TV broadcasting Chinese programmes worldwide, and Chinese Central Television's (CCTV) gala concerts and drama series, are produced with both PRC-based and 'absent' audiences in mind.²⁹ In

²⁶ *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 23 December 2003.

²⁷ *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, FBIS, 29 December 2001.

²⁸ *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, FBIS, 29 December 2001.

²⁹ Gao Jia (2004: 17) reports that 85% of her more than 100 New Australian Chinese respondents revealed that they watch the live broadcast of the Chinese New Year's Eve concert showed by the

a thought-provoking study of how the Chinese media shape the identity of the new Chinese migrants, Sun Wangning does not draw a dividing line between 'China' and its 'diaspora'; instead, she argues that the global age witnesses the emergence of one 'mediatized' Chinese community (2002: 9). Throughout the book she reiterates that this development is credited to the power of the PRC, as well as to the prevalence of the Chinese collective memory. In other words, Sun argues that while the movement of the new Chinese migrants goes in accordance with the patterns of flexibility, mobility and de-territorialisation, the identity and symbolic attachment of the immigrants from the PRC is organised in a way that is possible because of the PRC (Sun 2002: 11). While she limits herself to the analysis of media identity production and consumption among former PRC nationals, it would be fair to state that although the PRC is probably more successful in securing the loyalty of newly departed overseas Chinese, its practices are by no means limited to their circles.

The above developments suggest that the Chinese government has made a considerable effort to bring together Chinese of all walks of life and origins under the banner of patriotism toward the motherland and the unity of all Chinese. It seems that an intensification of global mobility, trade, communication, technological advancements, and other qualifications of globalisation benefit and advance the modernising agenda of the Chinese nation-state. The authorities in Beijing seize onto global trends to serve their cause. In other words, adapting to the new realities of a global age, the Chinese nation-state remains strongly in place. The format of this existence remains essentially trans-national. Nyíri (1999a: 255) illustrates the diversity of Chinese people who have recently become lenient towards the mainland government. For example, the first association with an ambition to represent the interests of all Chinese in Hungary was chaired by a Hong Kong businessman from England, who after one year of his presidency was replaced by a Qingtianese from the Philippines. The leading Chinese association in Belgium, The Friends' Society, brought together Chinese people from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Belgium. By satisfying the largely economic-profit-centred demands of the overseas Chinese all over the world, the PRC proves to be successful in extending its presence and culturally uniting the overseas Chinese to the regime in Beijing. In the perception of the Chinese leaders, 'trade contacts are cultural contacts',³⁰ and they can work in both directions, to extend trade interdependence, and to disseminate and elevate basic cultural ties.

5 Political dimensions of the overseas Chinese work

The PRC's economic interests prevail in China's organisation and implementation of the overseas Chinese policies. However, in policy considerations the Chinese long adhered to the formula of promoting 'politics through business, to influence govern-

CCTV. She further underlines that the total number would approach 100% if those who watch the recorded version of the concert are taken into account.

³⁰ Hungarian Association leader quoted in Nyíri (1999a: 253).

ment through people' (Liu 1998: 596). As such, while overseas Chinese policies serve the primarily economic cause of modernisation they also stretch out to embrace the political realm. During the 1980s Tong Djoe, an Indonesian-Chinese tycoon living in Singapore with substantial investments in South China, played a significant role in the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Indonesia (Liu 1998: 591). American ethnic Chinese made a considerable effort to influence the decision of the U.S. government to grant China the status of the most favoured nation. There is a record of 250,000 cases of relevant actions undertaken by 28 Chinese associations to influence the decision of the American President and the Congress (Wang 1999: 305). The authorities in Beijing quickly realised the potential political assets concentrated outside China's sovereignty and worked hard to win the overseas Chinese' loyalty. In 1997 when the Chinese National Association for Overseas Liaisons was formed under the Ministry of United Front, some of the leaders of the overseas Chinese organisations were invited to serve as its founding members (Liu 1998: 596).

Although the potential of the contribution of the overseas Chinese to the political realm is not overtly recognized in the scholarly discourse to avoid stirring up the sensitive issue of their political affiliation, de-facto, the work to integrate the overseas Chinese into political consultancy and lobbying is well underway. As was revealed during one of the interviews, some leading organisations including governmental organs employ overseas Chinese as their consultants.³¹ In December 2000 a special consultation group consisting of 30 Chinese experts and entrepreneurs staying abroad was set up to offer consultation and suggestions to Beijing's city authorities on issues related to its economic and social development.³² Intrinsic to China's modernisation project is a quest for reunification and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. They were identified as the key political objectives for China in the 21st century and the overseas Chinese are targeted to play an active role in implementing these tasks:

Officials doing overseas Chinese affairs will shoulder an arduous mission as to how to organise overseas Chinese in order that they play a bigger role in rejuvenating the Chinese nation and promoting the reunification of the motherland in the new century.³³

Moreover, the masses of the overseas Chinese are seen as an essential part of the reunification process. At one of the group meetings of overseas Chinese organisations in the new century, Guo Dongpo said: 'Historical experience has shown that the rise and regeneration of the Chinese nation cannot do without the participation and support of overseas Chinese and foreign nationals of Chinese origin'.³⁴

³¹ Interview with Chen Wenshou, August 2003.

³² *People's Daily*, 22 December 2000.

³³ Vice-premier Qian Qichen, FBIS, 6 January 2001.

³⁴ *Xinhua*, FBIS, 20 June 2001.

Historically both sides of the Taiwan strait have been competing with each other over the position of a unifying factor for the overseas Chinese and a provider of the model of Chinese modernity. To date this rivalry has not been resolved. Beijing works hard to win the loyalty of the overseas Chinese over Taiwan using the slogan 'Chinese cultural roots are in China not in Taiwan' (Wang 1999: 281). During her recent interview given to the Beijing News Centre, director of the OCAO Chen Yujie stipulated that the work of the overseas Chinese bodies should 'enable them [pro-Taiwan overseas Chinese] to personally experience the rapid development of their motherland (ancestral homes) and hometowns, publicize among them and introduce to them the principles of 'peaceful reunification' and 'one country, two systems,' and expose the words and deeds of the Taiwan authorities, which have ignored overall national interests, created separation, and schemed to seek independence'.³⁵ Since the first attempts in this direction were made in the 1990s, there have been significant victories over Taiwan. In May 1996 when a group of senior leaders from San Francisco's Chinese Association paid a visit to Mainland China, this act triggered a negative reaction from Taiwanese authorities, and members of the Chinese community who were lenient to Taiwan. However, after the report of the delegation was published outlining the results of the visit, Chinese reform achievements, as well as the advantages of these developments for San Francisco Chinese community, the attitude towards the government in Beijing acquired a positive overtone. In 1995 the Fujian-American Association and the United Chinese Association of New York after a struggle with the ROC-oriented United Chinese Charities won a right to sponsor a parade on the PRC's national holiday (Nyíri 1999b: 111). This celebration of the 46th anniversary of the PRC was also marked by the first ever ceremony of hoisting the Chinese flag in front of the building of New York city authorities (Wang 1999: 305).

Since the Taiwan issue has gained uppermost importance in China's domestic and foreign concerns, all relevant bodies have been linked up to contribute to this work.³⁶ In May 2000 the ACFROC held a workshop on anti-Taiwan independence and promoting the reunification of China. The chairman of the federation for the time proposed that his organisation should play a role in promoting cross-Straits exchanges in the economic and cultural areas.³⁷ There are about 110 'China Councils for Promoting Peaceful Reunification' set up in over 70 countries, which regularly organise 'Conferences of Overseas Chinese and Chinese Residing Abroad to Promote China's Peaceful Reunification'.³⁸ A recent conference held in Moscow in September 2003 adopted the 'Moscow Declaration' which calls upon 'overseas Chi-

³⁵ *Hong Kong Wen Wei Po*, FBIS, 2 April 2003.

³⁶ On July 17, 1996 the head of the Overseas Chinese Affairs of Taiwan delivered a report to the Guomindang Central standing Committee where he warned about the increased work of the Mainland China among the overseas Chinese communities in North America to win their loyalty.

³⁷ *Xinhua*, FBIS, 8 May 2000.

³⁸ *Hong Kong Wen Wei Po*, FBIS, 2 April 2003.

nese to play a role of a bridge in maintaining and developing ties across the Taiwan Straits and make new contributions to the peaceful reunification of China'.³⁹ Pro-Beijing overseas Chinese in Central and South America organised a conference in March 2003 to promote China's peaceful reunification which culminated in the establishment of the Association of Central and South American Overseas Chinese and Chinese Community for Promoting China's Peaceful Reunification.⁴⁰

Mainland China also pays considerable attention to spreading propaganda messages with the help of the overseas Chinese communities. The central authorities give relevant instructions to the organisations abroad to provide their support and assistance to China's dubious efforts to promote its positive moralistic image in the world. In the late 1990s and early 2000s many such efforts were made in handling China's policies towards a religious organisation Falungong. In October 2001 the World Federation of the Organisation of Overseas Chinese and Foreign Citizens of Chinese Descent was set up in Hong Kong to work on the achievement of China's complete reunification, on the promotion of the outstanding culture of the Chinese nation and the promotion of the unity of overseas Chinese and foreign citizens of Chinese origin all over the globe. The spokesman of the organisation urged that 'exposing and criticizing Falungong by overseas Chinese and foreign citizens of Chinese origin all over the world constitutes the best action for loving the country, native place, and Chinese nation at the moment'.⁴¹

Guo Dongpo pointed out: 'it is necessary to bring into play the advantages of the overseas Chinese circles and the role of overseas compatriots and unite all forces that can be united to expose the sophistries and heresies' of Falungong.⁴² These statements are crude examples of the propaganda of state ideology at work, which moves way from state-bounded territoriality to remind the overseas Chinese communities of the real and virtual omnipresence of the Chinese nation-state. Such territorially dispersed propagandistic activities of the Chinese nation-state have become a manifestation of what Billig (1995) terms 'banal nationalism', which is directed to the recurrent reunification and reproduction of the party-state driven nation. The importance of being morally supported by the overseas Chinese can be credited to their unique position of being caught up in-between time and space, and being Chinese and non-Chinese at the same time. Securing the sympathy of the Chinese trans-nationals can have a payoff for the Chinese nation-state in the form of promoting a favourable image of the PRC-originated economic and political programmes of change.

³⁹ *China Daily*, 13-14 September 2003.

⁴⁰ *Xinhua*, FBIS, 9 April 2003.

⁴¹ *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, FBIS, 11 February 2001.

⁴² *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, FBIS, 2 February 2001.

Conclusion

The Chinese nation-state engages with the global processes of mobility of people, images, and ideas to impact the imagination of Chinese trans-nationals. An intricate intersection of party-state nationalism and trans-nationalism marks an emergence of a transformation of the way the Chinese nation-state is imagined. It is true that not all trans-nationals are characterised by a 'cosmopolitan' nature (Sun 2002: 202), and this can be provoked by the subjective affiliations of the trans-nationals, as much as by the interference of outside forces, including the nation state. In this paper I demonstrate that the PRC's authorities make considerable efforts to win the loyalty of the overseas Chinese and to organise them in a strong and loyal ethnically conscious and politically sympathetic pro-Beijing front of Chinese people who are concentrated outside the sovereignty of the PRC. Among the newly available channels to exercise this will, the new Chinese migrants stand out as a coalescing factor and a medium for China to pursue its interests and exercise its symbolic and ideological presence in multiple localities. It was argued elsewhere that migration from China is often perceived by the Chinese government as a modern and patriotic gesture falling in line with the current Chinese project of modernisation (Nyíri 2001, 2002).

To take this claim further, it seems that reaching out to trans-nationals, as a way to extend and expand the Chinese presence in the world under the leadership of the Central government has become an essential part of China's contemporary modernity project. While this project is associated with the economic and technological advancements, as well as political reassurance of the PRC, in practical terms it exceeds the territorial limits of the nation-state to reach a trans-national level. The present dynamics of migration and increased mobility in developed countries are manipulated by the Chinese government to promote Chinese nationalist ideas with the core in mainland China under the leadership of the CCP. By claiming the Chinese identity of all ethnic Chinese, not only those who originate on the mainland, China seeks to mobilise not-so-cosmopolitan trans-nationals to serve its own national cause of economic modernisation and political assertiveness. As such, seeking to pursue socialist modernisation by all available means, we could argue that China goes beyond and even negates the very basis of the idea of a modern nation-state – its territorial limitation.

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