



Diálogos

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4025.dialogos.v24i1>

ISSN 2177-2940
(Online)

ISSN 1415-9945
(Impresso)

Strategic Struggles to win Loyalties: Discourses and Policies towards the *huaqiao*¹ 华侨 'through Conference Reports in China (1951-1953)²

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4025.dialogos.v23i3.51951>

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<p>Key words: Chinese migration; kinship; family clans; Guanacaste (Costa Rica).</p>	<p>Strategic Struggles to win Loyalties: Discourses and Policies towards the <i>huaqiao</i> 华侨 'through Conference Reports in China (1951-1953)</p> <p>Abstract: In the context of the Cold War this paper analyzes conference reports linked to <i>huaqiao</i> or Overseas Chinese people, between 1951 and 1953. This period was the beginning of divided policies, between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Kuomintang (KMT) in Taiwan, towards Chinese communities abroad. More than supporting Chinese residents in foreign countries, who had to deal with exclusion and discrimination, the two Chinese governments created among the Overseas Chinese communities a battlefield to win loyalties, among strategic discourses and policies.</p>
<p>Palabras clave: Historia contemporánea; República Popular de China (RPC); chinos de ultramar; noticias de conferencias; políticas de gobierno.</p>	<p>Lucha estratégica para ganar las lealtades: discurso y políticas hacia los <i>huaqiao</i> 华侨 a través de reportes de conferencias en China (1951-1953)</p> <p>Resumen: En el contexto de Guerra Fría se analizan reportes de conferencias vinculadas con los <i>huaqiao</i>, o chinos de ultramar, realizadas entre 1951 y 1953. Este fue un periodo inicial de políticas divididas hacia las comunidades chinas en el extranjero, entre el gobierno de la República Popular de China y el Kuomintang, en Taiwán. Más que el apoyo a las poblaciones chinas en el extranjero, que enfrentaban dinámicas de exclusión y discriminación en los países donde residían, estos gobiernos de China encontraron en los compatriotas de ultramar un escenario de lucha por lealtades a través de discursos y estrategias políticas.</p>
<p>Palavras-chave: História contemporânea; República Popular da China (RPC); chineses no exterior; notícias da conferência; políticas governamentais.</p>	<p>Luta estratégica para obter lealdades: discurso e políticas em direção a <i>huaqiao</i> 华侨 através de relatórios de conferência na China (1951-1953)</p> <p>Resumo: No contexto da Guerra Fria, são analisados os relatórios das conferências relacionadas aos <i>Huaqiao</i>, ou chineses estrangeiros, entre 1951 e 1953. Esse foi um período inicial de políticas divididas entre as comunidades chinesas no exterior, entre o governo da República Popular da China e Guomindang, em Taiwan. Mais do que apoiar as populações chinesas no exterior, enfrentando dinâmicas de exclusão e discriminação nos países em que residiam, esses governos chineses encontraram nos compatriotas estrangeiros um cenário de luta por lealdade através de discursos e estratégias políticas.</p>
<p>Artigo recebido em: 26/01/2020. Aprovado em: 12/02/2020.</p>	

¹ This means the Chinese ethnic groups that emigrated and lived outside of China.

² This paper was based on a section of the author's doctoral dissertation that was concluded at Beijing Normal University (BNU) in 2017, with the economic support of the Chinese Scholarship Council. The author acknowledges the support received from Professor Zhang Hao at BNU, Professor Flora Botton, at El Colegio de Mexico; Yin Yulin, master student and Sun Bei, PhD student, both of them at the School of History at BNU, who provided valuable material to enrich this paper. Similarly, the author thanks Fabricio Fonseca, professor at the Latin American Institute at Tamkang University and Professor Glen Peterson at the University of British Columbia for their suggestions. In addition, the author wants to thank Paco, Rosita, Jack for personal communication, and especially Claudia for all her support. The author acknowledges Maria Isabel Barbosa, the dossier coordinators Lai Sai Acón Chan and Ronald Soto-Quirós for the style and edition suggestions of the original written version in Spanish, and Roni Rux for her corrections in the English version.

Introduction

In 2018, the fortieth anniversary of the economic reforms and the opening of China to the world –a date commemorated by China and the overseas Chinese community through conferences, forums, exhibitions and other celebrations (ANG SEE & ANG SEE, 2019) –was celebrated. In January of that year, a news report appeared in *China Daily* announcing that the “ethnic Chinese” abroad could, for the following month, apply for a Chinese visa valid for five years, with multiple entries and with a period of residence that could be extended for up to five years. This decision was aimed, according to Qu Yunhai, director of the immigration office in China, to facilitate family reunion, business, cultural exchanges, and encourage overseas Chinese “to participate in Chinese economic development.” (LUO & LI, 2018). Before that date, it was only possible for ethnic Chinese people to be granted visas for a maximum period of one year. While it is possible to infer a softening of migration policies, the report does not explicitly indicate who these “ethnic Chinese” people are,³ whose highest concentration has been pinned to Southeast Asian countries (SKINNER, 1959; OYEN, 2009). To define overseas Chinese, also known as the third China⁴ (FITZGERALD, C., 1965), has been a complex undertaking; since the beginning of the 1950’s a series of variables related to the conditions of the residence country, the type of linkage of that group with the host society, and their own identity have been revealed.⁵

On the other hand, how have these populations been represented in China? What policies have been established by the Chinese government in favor of these communities? From the imperial period to the present, Chinese policy towards overseas Chinese people has leaned between exclusion and inclusion, condemnation and cordiality.⁶ Some works mention these variations (FITZGERALD, S., 1969; FITZGERALD, S., 1970; CHANG, 1980; CHOU, 2003; CHOU, 2004;

³ Among the Chinese people residing abroad would be the so-called overseas Chinese or huaqiao 华侨 who are Chinese emigrants, although this term turns out to be very broad. Strictly speaking, huaqiao are the Chinese people who live abroad and still retain Chinese nationality. They can also be identified in China as qiaobao 侨胞, which means Chinese nationals residing abroad. As ethnic Chinese people are also considered huaren 华人 who are foreign citizens of Chinese descent (SURYADINATA, 2017), also known as qiaosheng 侨生. It seems that the latter are the “ethnic Chinese” people noted in the report.

⁴ The two Chinas, according to that author, would be mainland China, known as the New China or the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and Formosa or Taiwan.

⁵ For example, citizens of some countries with foreign ancestors were not considered members of a foreign community. In other countries, there were specific rules regarding descendants of mixed marriages (between a national and a foreigner). Thus, the laws of certain states established that the status of a foreigner was determined by the purity of blood or the number of generations born in the territories of those countries. The best way to identify an overseas Chinese person was through self-perception, the use of clothing, the maintenance of customs and language (CIA. Worldwide Overseas, Feb. 1954).

⁶ Since the 6th century A.D. there are indications of the presence of Chinese people outside the borders of Imperial China. Reports of Chinese people in Southeast Asia are more frequent during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Both during that dynasty and the next one, the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the opening policies towards overseas Chinese people would vary and change. An example of this fluctuating policy can be seen with the Chinese Educational Mission (1872-1881) carried out by Yung Wing (Rong Hong 容闳, 1828-1912), who also served as a diplomat in defense of Chinese communities on the American continent (IBARRA, 2016).

SURYADINATA, 2017). After the founding of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter PRC), these swinging policies towards overseas Chinese people do not seem to have been the exception.⁷ For example, Mckeown (1999, p.329) points out that “the closing of the borders of China after the establishment of the PRC in 1949 severely weakened the links of migrant networks with their home villages.” For his part, Wang (2011) reports the role that the Kuomintang (hereinafter the KMT) Government in Taiwan had towards overseas Chinese population during the Cold War.

Mckeown (1999) adds other possible variables that determined changes in the perceptions of the Overseas Chinese communities, such as the division between Beijing and Taiwan, “the political suspicion and demands on the loyalty of overseas Chinese that came with the Cold War and the post-independence rise of Southeast Asian nationalism” (Mckeown, 1999, p. 329). In order to add more elements to this international complexity, Mansingh (1991) points out other factors that have come into play when addressing the issue of the Chinese diaspora from the PRC's side:

Pekin's dealings with overseas Chinese, contains many variables including roles played by the Chinese in a given country, their ties with Taiwan, local sentiment toward them, and the bilateral relations between that country and China, which in turn depends largely on Peking's general foreign policy orientation at the time.

Peking divides the subject of overseas Chinese affairs in two: overseas Chinese affairs at home, and overseas Chinese abroad. Broadly speaking, the policies of the People's Republic of China on the latter topic [...] have revolved around five consistent themes or objectives: protection of the legitimate rights of Chinese people abroad; questions of nationality or citizenship; the reunification of China; attracting talent and capital for the rebuilding and modernisation of China; winning goodwill or influence in Southeast Asia, otherwise known as the nanyang. (MANSINGH, 1991, p. 309).

In regards to the division that Mansingh (1991) refers to, some works have been carried out, such as those about transnational families in the early years of the PRC, with an interesting approach about the exchange of letters between people in China and their relatives abroad (PETERSON, 2007). Now regarding the policies from Chinese governments toward overseas Chinese a number of questions arise. What were the PRC's policies towards these people? How were the discourses of representation of those communities? What strategies were used by the PRC and Taiwan to approach the overseas Chinese? How did they change? This paper presents a reconstruction of the first policies of the PRC towards the overseas Chinese. The study is based on reports of conferences linked to the Chinese communities abroad that took place between the years of 1951 and 1953. This period is characterized by a transition towards socialism in the PRC, after the enactment of the law on agrarian reform in 1950 and the promulgation of the First Five-year Plan (1953-57). In the international context, this transition was nuanced by the Korean War that began in 1950 and continued until the signing of an armistice in 1953. This paper identifies those

⁷ One of these policies can be seen in initiatives that were later redressed, such as a series of regulations to provide loans to overseas Chinese who had returned to the Fujian Province, and those beyond the legal age to enter the army, to return to their countries of residence again (CIA, July 3, 1953).

changes in policies towards overseas Chinese population that occurred in the PRC along the period under study, especially at the level of discourse, and diverged from certain KMT governmental policies. This was configured as a struggle for the support and political legitimization of the overseas Chinese people (WANG, 2011). The sources used in this paper come from a review of the digital archives of the *Renmin Ribao*, *The New York Times*, and the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States (CIA), among others.

Scenario of loyalties and a first approach

With the KMT government withdrawal, led by General Chiang Kai-shek, to the island of Taiwan, the progressive takeover of the territory of mainland China by the troops of the People's Liberation Army and the subsequent foundation of the PRC in October 1949, a divergence of policies was generated toward the overseas Chinese population: on one hand, the new Beijing government initiated a rapprochement policy, mainly directed towards the young people of those diasporas. Students, predominantly from Southeast Asia, responded to this policy by enrolling at universities in the PRC (CHAN, 2014; CLOUGH, 1993). On the other hand, on facing new circumstances, the KMT government facing new circumstances had to redefine its policy towards these communities, in what Gamer (2012) calls "the divided loyalties problem."

In 1950, the war broke out on the Korean peninsula and the United States (U.S.) decided to intervene in the conflict. This action was interpreted by the PRC as a threat to its sovereignty. At the same time, the U.S. sent the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait with a subsequent suspension of the direct armed conflict between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party. The latter focused its actions on supporting North Korea by sending Chinese military personnel and in the reconstruction of mainland China.

In this context, a conference about overseas Chinese affairs was held from June 17 to 27, 1951. It was attended by 79 members, including representatives of the Central Government and representatives of the local offices in charge of overseas Chinese affairs in the Guangdong and Fujian provinces (XINHUASHE, 12 Jul. 1951) Although there is evidence of previous conferences at the provincial level,⁸ the conference mentioned above was the first meeting organized by the PRC Central Government Committee for Overseas Chinese Affairs (hereinafter the Overseas Chinese

⁸ There are reports of a conference of overseas Chinese held in Guangdong in early August 1950. It was organized by the South China headquarters of the Democratic League, the Guomindang Revolutionary Committee, the National Democratic Reconstruction Association, the Zhi Lung dang, and the southern office of communist China, and attended by representatives of the Communist Committee on Chinese affairs abroad and groups of Chinese abroad from the South China Sea area. The total number of attendees was 120 people. The decisions taken at that congress included expanding work among all overseas Chinese communities and organizations outside of China, clandestine activities or counter-espionage work (CIA, Oct. 30, 1950).

Affairs Committee, OCAC). This organization was created in October 1949,⁹ and since its foundation served by president He Xiangning;¹⁰ and vice presidents Li Renren and Liao Chengzhi.¹¹

From the report of this conference one can perceive, at least at the level of intentions, the formulation of a political strategy to approach overseas Chinese. This note mentions a report that, in first place, gave an account of the continuous work carried out during one year and eight months since the foundation of the OCAC. Secondly, it can be seen that the policy towards the overseas Chinese was oriented toward three purposes, as it can be observed in a quotation taken from that report: “to make every effort to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese abroad, intensify the fight against the crimes of the gangsters of Chiang Kai-shek abroad, and to promote the great patriotic unity abroad” (XINHUASHE, Jul. 12, 1951, our transl.).

The first line of action was for the “protection” of rights and the other for “unification” of overseas Chinese. These two lines were framed within attacks against General Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT government in Taiwan, at least at the discursive level. Such “protection” and “unification” were intended as a kind of defensive strategy against the siege, persecution and attacks that the Chinese were subjected to by nationalist movements in South Asian territories, especially after World War II. In some cases, under the order of the new states, resident Chinese would be considered foreigners or second-class citizens.¹² That is why, since 1950, a concern for Chinese residents in Indochina and Southeast Asia was evident. An initiative in favor of these populations was the inauguration of radio space that from the capital of the PRC would transmit topics of interest to that population segment (CIA, Oct. 30, 1950). Part of the rejection of these communities was due to the independence movements of Southeast Asia being nuanced by tensions generated in a Cold War context. In this regard, in a declassified CIA document was indicated that a small percentage of overseas Chinese in most Southeast Asian countries were members of communist groups. They were well-organized groups that had the support of the PRC and gave the impression of representing a larger population than the one that actually supported communism (CIA, Apr. 16, 1954). This impression could generate discomfort among the native populations of the new

⁹ The OCAC was one of the five organizations created on that occasion, including the Supreme People’s Court, the Supreme Office of the Attorney General’s Office, the Law Committee, and the Ethnic Affairs Committee (XINHUASHE, FIVE, Oct. 23, 1949).

¹⁰ He Xiangning何香凝 (1878-1972) was a poet and painter. In addition to the aforementioned position, she held other positions within the government of the PRC. She was also president of the Association of Chinese Artists and honorary president of the I to III session of the Women’s Federation of China (LI, 2019).

¹¹ Liao Chengzhi廖承志 (1908-1983) was the son of He Xiangning. He was also president of the Democratic Youth Federation of all of China and a member of the Committee for the organization of the Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific Region, which was held from October 2 to 12, 1952 (CPDWPC. Letter of Initiation, 1952). Subsequently, Liao Chengzhi would hold other important positions within the political leadership of the PRC. Liao Chengzhi’s extensive work in overseas Chinese affairs led to the development of a thought of relevance today that has influenced the vision of the Chinese Communist Party (WU, 2011).

¹² This situation would force an exodus of return that, between 1950 and 1960, would lead to China more than 420, 000 Chinese from Southeast Asia (CHAN, 2014)

independent territories or in the process of becoming one and that would later raise the nationalist flags.

However, what generated greater discomfort among the native populations of Southeast Asia towards the Chinese residents can be traced back to the colonial period. Under the protection of the European colonial authorities, the populations of Chinese residents developed economically, in the face of the limitations of the native populations that were becoming increasingly upset towards minorities of Chinese origin. With national independence, the Chinese residents in these new countries were at the mercy of new governments whose migration policies were inconvenient or exclusive and, on the other hand, were subject to xenophobic threats by native movements.¹³ With regard to this situation, a protest message against the “imperialist intimidation of the Chinese abroad” and “concern for expatriates” was approved within the 1951 overseas Chinese conference. The same message expressed “support for all unity and fight against persecution and in defense of their legitimate rights and interests.” (XINHUASHE, Jul. 12, 1951). The report of that conference also mentions the recognition that the PRC gave in to popular governments for the collaboration provided to protect the rights and interests of the Chinese returning to their country.

Another issue that underlines the confrontational tone of the report of that conference is the supposed inspiration that the victory of the movement of resistance to the United States and aid to North Korea generated among the overseas Chinese, which would have increased “the love of foreign compatriots for their homeland” (XINHUASHE, Jul. 12, 1951). At that conference, the PRC government also represented the KMT government as “reactionary forces that betray the nation” and “harm the Chinese abroad” (Our trans. XINHUASHE, Jul. 12, 1951, p. 1). Fitzgerald (1970) mentions that the peak of that combative tone would be manifested precisely in Liao Chengzhi’s report, during this first conference.

The report of that conference alluded to the main tasks of the OCAC:

- to unite all compatriots who were faithful to the regime of the PRC;
- to educate in patriotism and support the PRC;
- to expose the crimes of the gang of Chiang, traitor of the nation and aggressor of foreigners;
- to crush all the lies and slander of General Jiang’s gang;
- to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese people abroad and oppose any persecution against them;
- to develop the culture and education of the Chinese abroad;
- to carry forward the tradition of the Chinese in the establishment of schools and in the management of newspapers;

¹³ One of those countries was Indonesia. While the archipelago was a Dutch colony, large segments of Chinese who engaged in commercial activities came to have a higher socioeconomic status than the natives. This situation was generating resentments among the native populations, which associated resident Chinese as accomplices of European colonialism, so, during the struggle for liberation and after independence, in 1945, they were targeted by violent demonstrations by the population (CIA, set. 1958).

- to present great achievements of the political, economic, and cultural construction of the homeland, and to disseminate Mao Zedong thought, the new democracy, the common program and the various policies and decrees of the popular government;
- to promote friendly relations between Chinese abroad and local people;
- to increase a cultural exchange between Chinese abroad and local people, as well as solidarity and mutual help to defend world peace (XINHUASHE, Jul. 12, 1951, p. 1).
- A listing of the tasks and plans within the OCAC was also included as follows:
- to initiate the participation of family members of expatriates and returnees in agrarian reform to take a radical political and economic turn in favor of family members of expatriates;
- to initiate and organize the participation of family members of expatriates and returnees in production;
- to properly manage remittances sent by expatriates;
- to help returnees to participate in the construction of national production;
- to help as a bridge on the return to southern China;
- to organize family members of expatriates and returnees to carry out various studies on current affairs, politics, culture, as well as the construction of a complete bridge office, and the administration of recovery schools for expatriate students (XINHUASHE, Jul. 12, 1951, p. 1, my translation).

As a complement, the PRC government extended “a series of special rights and privileges” (CHAN, 2014, p. 222) to the overseas Chinese seeking refuge in the country, their dependent relatives living in China and those repatriated during the early 1950s.

During the early 1950s, the PRC sought ways to attract investment from overseas Chinese. In that sense, a CIA report gives an account of representatives of bodies that supervised the work of Chinese affairs in the Zhangzhou-Amoy area and the adoption of a program that had the following tasks:

- a. to contact all the men and women in the area who had family members living abroad, asking them to write to request financial help for various construction projects of the PRC.
- b. To encourage repatriated overseas Chinese to leave the Zhuangzhou area to return to their homes, and from there, to spread the benefits derived from a program to build China.
- c. To mobilize the women’s association, the school union, the youth body and the young avant-garde bodies in order to send representatives and offer help to overseas families, explaining to the members of each family the main characteristics of each organization.
- d. To establish a protocol when overseas Chinese returned to southern China (CIA, Sept. 1, 1952, p. 2, my translation).

The first conference on overseas Chinese in 1951 was held in the context of the agrarian reform that had begun in China, after the law passed in 1950. This reform is part of the process of rebuilding the country and occurred at the beginning of a phase of political and socioeconomic transition characterized by a series of events: the criticism movement that began in May 1951; the publication of Mao Zedong’s Selected Works and the centralization of his leadership within the Chinese Communist Party; the implementation of the “three against” *san fan* 三反, which was a movement that would remove corruption, waste and bureaucracy, extended until April 1952; the implementation of the “five against” *wu fan* 五反, which was a purge of people who committed

bribes, fraud, tax evasions, theft of public goods and the escape of state economic information. This campaign would last until June 1952. Both the fight against the counterrevolutionaries that ended in 1953, as well as the technical tie in the Korean peninsula war began a new economic stage under Soviet influence (CORNEJO, 2011). It should be noted that this initial enthusiasm –mainly of young people– towards the PRC declined as a result of “the deaths, imprisonment and discrimination suffered by relatives of overseas Chinese.” (CLOUGH, 1993, p. 35). These events occurred in the context of the transformation movements.

Strategies between Beijing and Taipei towards the overseas Chinese

One of the most announced and best prepared conferences in the PRC during the period 1951-53 was the Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific regions. This event was held in Beijing from October 2 to 12, 1952.¹⁴ This was the most popular international participation summit to that date, organized in the PRC, with 367 delegates and 37 observers (RENMINCHUBANSHE, 1952). The main topic of discussion was the search for peaceful solutions to the conflicts of the time, regarding the war on the Korean peninsula and the complaint made by the Beijing government about the alleged use of biological weapons by the United States government. But what was the relationship of this conference with overseas Chinese? First, Liao Chengzhi (see note 11), who was one of the vice-presidents of the OCAC, also participated as a member of the organizing committee at that peace conference. For that reason, it is possible to correlate this conference and the overseas Chinese, especially because the issues addressed at this event were mainly directed towards East Asian countries.

Second, the conference was attended by delegations from several countries belonging to the Pacific coast of the American Continent, western and southern Asia and Southeast Asia –a region where the largest population of overseas Chinese was concentrated. This conference was perceived by British diplomacy in the PRC as a Beijing strategy to achieve leadership in East Asia, this time through the peace movement (BEST, 2006). Interestingly, the Chinese Press Agency would begin radio broadcasts of news, twice a day, exclusively to overseas Chinese from October 1, 1952, coinciding with the date of the third anniversary of the founding of the PRC, and only one day before the beginning of the Peace Conference (CIA, Jan. 8, 1953).

Third, after the conclusion of this conference in Beijing, in the same month of October, the first National Conference on Overseas Chinese was held in Taiwan,¹⁵ in the city of Taipei from

¹⁴ Actually, two peace conferences were held: a preparation conference between June 3 and 6, 1952, and the proper event between October 2 and 12 of that year, immediately after concluding the celebration of the third anniversary of the foundation of the PRC.

¹⁵ A reference to this conference is found in a declassified CIA file. This is a report with a list of names of

October 20 to 30, 1952 (LIEBERMAN, Oct. 31, 1952, p. 2). It was attended by 262 delegates from 28 Chinese communities throughout the world.¹⁶ During this meeting, some guidelines were adopted, such as the establishment of a permanent organization in order to “strengthen the unity of overseas Chinese, to promote their well-being and to facilitate the coordination of government policy to recover mainland China” (THE OVERSEAS, Nov. 1, 1952, p. 20). Previously, between the 10th and 20th of that same month of October, the seventh National Congress was held (WALKER, 1959), which would be the first major political event to be held in Taiwan, after the tactical withdrawal of leader Chiang Kai-shek together with the KMT in 1949. According to what was reported by Henry Lieberman (1952), a news correspondent of the *New York Times* in Hong Kong, the resolutions of this conference were directly focused on supporting General Chiang Kai-shek and sabotaging the policies of the PRC:

to launch an economic war against red China,
to boycott overseas Chinese relations with the communists,
to raise funds to support the nationalist government and,
to cooperate with the nationalists in the anti-communists struggle. (LIBERMAN, Oct. 31, 1952, p. 2)

Lieberman made an assessment of the Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific Regions in Beijing, as well as of the Overseas Chinese Conference in Taipei. In the case of the conference in Taipei, the author mentioned that it was very premature to measure the success of that conference. In the case of the Peace Conference in Beijing, Lieberman considered that “success would depend a lot on what delegates would achieve when they returned to their respective communities.” (LIBERMAN, Oct. 31, 1952, p. 2). Given this assessment, the following question arises: did Chinese representatives from overseas attend the Beijing Peace Conference? The answer is that there were indeed descendants of overseas Chinese among the delegations that attended this conference.¹⁷

The Taipei overseas Chinese conference adopted, in addition to the above-mentioned resolutions, another initiative not less important: the establishment of October 21 as the “overseas Chinese festival” (HUAQIAO, n.d.).¹⁸ This celebration was added to other special dates and

representatives from Tokyo and Yokohama who attended the meeting in Taipei. (CIA, Nov. 10, 1952). See also: (WANG, 2011).

¹⁶ From this conference, the CIA took some data from the overseas Chinese delegates as a source for the preparation of a report concerning the population of Chinese abroad (CIA, Feb. 1954).

¹⁷ One of those overseas Chinese representatives came with the Panamanian delegation. He was the Chinese-Panamanian painter Francisco Chang Marin. A report gives an account of the pronouncement made by Carlos Augusto Cajal, of the People’s Party, made on February 27, 1953 on the imprisonment of Chang along with Cleto Manuel Souza and Guillermo de Bello Pedreschi in Panama (CIA, Apr. 20, 1953). These three people attended the Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific Regions as representatives of Panama. It is likely that they were arrested, upon returning from this conference in China, as part of a hemispheric policy against any activity linked to communism.

¹⁸ During the first months of 2019, the author interviewed two Taiwanese residents abroad, about this celebration, but both expressed not knowing anything about it, so it seems not to be a very popular festivity, at least nowadays or

festivities that took place in October, which also had a great importance for Taiwan, such as the day of the “double ten” or National Day of Taiwan, celebrated on October 10th. Also for October 25, the day of the restoration of Taiwan is commemorated, which since 1945 marked the end of Japanese colonialism on that island, and the birthday of General Chiang Kai-shek on October 30.¹⁹

Regarding the conclusion of the Overseas Chinese Conference in Taipei, the assistant of the United States Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, John M. Allison, visited Taiwan as part of a five-day tour that also included Manila. It was the first time that a senior officer of the United States State Department visited Taiwan, after the occupation of the island by the KMT government in 1949. Also C. Tyler Wood, Associate Deputy Director of the Mutual Security Agency, conducted an inspection tour of the missions in the Far East (LIEBERMAN, Oct. 31, 1952, p. 2). Somehow, the United States took advantage of the event of the Overseas Chinese Conference to cover up the establishment of closer ties with the nationalist government of Taipei.

However, there is no knowledge of Beijing’s reaction to the conference in Taipei. At least in the press there was no mention of it, except for a congratulatory note addressed to the Peace Conference by overseas Chinese university students in the PRC (SEVEN HUNDRED, Oct. 21, 1952). This note was published nine days after the conclusion of the Peace Conference in Beijing, but interestingly, one day after the opening of the Conference on Chinese Affairs in Taipei. The authorship of that message is attributed to 703 overseas Chinese students who came from Southeast Asian countries. The message alludes to the fresh memory of the violations perpetuated by the Japanese invasions in those countries during World War II. They also pronounce a firm decision to “prevent such horrors from repeating” (SEVEN HUNDRED, Oct. 21, 1952, p. 2). The note mentions that the region was subject to the imperialist siege of the United States and that the beginning of another world war was feared. For this reason, the message expresses its support for the resolutions of the Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific Regions in the cause of lasting world peace.

On the one hand, both overseas Chinese who traveled to China for higher education and Chinese travelers who had sympathy for the PRC and visited mainland China were sponsored by the PRC and constituted a channel for communist control, indoctrination and infiltration in the countries of Southeast Asia (CIA, Apr. 16, 1954, p. 7). On the other hand, in order to counteract those activities promoted by the PRC, there is evidence of some organizational proposals linked to overseas Chinese youth that supported the KMT government in Taiwan. An example is a news report taken from the *Tiansheng ribao*, published between August 8 and November 17, 1952 in Jakarta, Indonesia, where five organizations created in the early 1950s are mentioned: the Athletic

outside the island.

¹⁹ Since 1950, it was set up in Taiwan in October as the most visited month by overseas Chinese: 94 people in 1950; 3,240, in 1956; 11,526, in 1971; 35,025, in 1980 (WANG, 2011, p. 72).

Association, founded on November 16, 1952; the Youth Drama Club, organized in May 1952; the Beijing Drama Club, organized in 1950; the Federation of teachers; and the Opera Club, organized in August 1951 (CIA, Apr. 24, 1953). These were organizations integrated mainly by young people and had as common denominator an anti-communist discourse.

Although not directly, another reaction to the overseas Chinese conference held in Taiwan is evidenced in a report in early November 1952: the PRC government launched an initiative through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before the gradual decline in the influence of Chinese communism in overseas populations. Likewise, that institution was ordered to increase contact with overseas Chinese through embassies and consulates; in countries where there were no diplomatic ties, joint work with local communist parties or non-governmental organizations was developed to gain the confidence of overseas Chinese, mainly in Southeast Asia (CIA, Feb. 5, 1953).

Loyalty with political participation

In 1953, the PRC adopted a system of a socialist economy under a Soviet influence. During that year, the People's Congress of all of China was convened, which would take place in 1954. This congress would have the purpose of promulgating the Five-Year Plan and approving the first Political Constitution of the PRC (OIR, Feb. 4, 1953). In that context, the OCAC organized a conference from November 1st to 5th, 1953 in Beijing, in which a total of 412 delegates participated, including representatives from Southeast Asia, North Korea, Mongolia, Japan, Europe, America, Africa and Oceania (XINHUASHE, Nov. 24, 1953). A few months prior to that conference, the PRC implemented certain initiatives to counteract the growing distancing of overseas Chinese from the Beijing regime. Among them, it is possible to mention the demand towards inhabitants in China who had relatives abroad, to send letters in which they made propaganda of the good government of the Communist Party and the command to certain Chinese citizens to visit Hong Kong and, from there, to telegraph messages of satisfaction on the performance of the PRC, aimed at relatives residing in Southeast Asia. All this was done under threat of punishment in case of failure (CIA, Aug. 25, 1953).

According to the November 1953 conference report, He Xiangning, who continued to be the president of the OCAC, delivered the keynote address. In that speech, a change was perceived in relation to the treatment of overseas Chinese, when she exhorted them to work together for mutual assistance and to depend less on the PRC (XINHUASHE, Nov. 24, 1953). It was observed in the participation of the vice president of the National Committee of the Political Consultative

Conference of the Chinese People, Chen Shutong,²⁰ and the vice president of the preparatory committee of the National Federation of Industry and Commerce of China, Li Candun. At this conference, Liao Chengzhi, vice president of the OCAC, also presented a report in which he urged the diasporas to unite more to “help each other, protect their legitimate rights and interests, and unite closely around their homeland” (Our Trans. XINHUA SHE, Nov. 24, 1953). Zhuang Xiquan and Fei Zhendong, vice presidents of the OCAC, also presented their respective reports on the reception and resettlement work of repatriated overseas Chinese, on the education work of repatriated overseas Chinese students, as well as on the work of Overseas Chinese in the provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, Yunnan and the eastern region of China (XINHUA SHE, Nov 24, 1953).

This report was published 19 days after the end of the November 1953 conference. With the Korean War at halt, the issue of overseas Chinese seemed to have been left in a second place. Indeed, a less combative tone is observed in the report compared with the report of the first conference of 1951 (XINHUA SHE, July 12, 1951). An example is the allusion to the KMT government in Taiwan: “The aggressor groups and their minions are very fearful. Therefore, the situation of the Chinese abroad remains very complicated and difficult.” (Our trans. XINHUA SHE, Nov. 24, 1953, my translation). Also, at this conference, there was a realistic perception of the complexity of the circumstances that the Chinese lived while abroad. The PRC’s speech towards overseas Chinese seemed to assume a supportive position, but no longer so committed from the government because it invited them to “rely on their solidarity and mutual help, develop the good tradition of creating cultural enterprises and foster friendly relations between the Chinese abroad and the local people.” (XINHUA SHE, Nov. 24, 1953, my translation). What apparently could be perceived as a decrease in interest towards the issue of overseas Chinese population, was actually a change in the strategy of vying for loyalties.

A fundamental aspect of this conference was the decision to include a political representation of overseas Chinese within the government of the PRC. Specifically, 30 members were elected among the 412 attendees of that conference, to represent overseas Chinese in the first National People’s Assembly to be held in Beijing in September 1954²¹ and where, among other decisions, the first Constitution of the People’s Republic of China was promulgated.²² The

²⁰ Chen Shutong (陈叔通, 1876-1966) also served as Vice President of the Chinese People’s Committee in Defense of World Peace, and was also a member of the Committee for the Organization of the Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific Regions (CPDWPC. Letter of Initiation, 1952).

²¹ The first National Popular Assembly took place in Beijing between September 15 and 28, 1954. The number of representatives was 1,226 (PRC CPG, 2006).

²² On September 20, 1954, in the context of that First National People’s Assembly, the first Constitution of the People’s Republic of China was approved. This was based on the Common Program of the Political Consultative Conference of the Chinese People, an instrument that had been approved with the foundation of the Republic in 1949 and that served as a normative basis for almost five years (PRC NPRA, 1954). Article 49 of the Political Constitution stipulated the management of the affairs of overseas Chinese as part of the functions of the State Council (PRC NPRA, 1954).

distribution of the quota of overseas Chinese representatives for the National Popular Assembly can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Chinese population in countries / regions with representation in the Conference of Chinese Affairs Abroad (1953) and number of members chosen to participate in the National Popular Assembly²³

<i>Country / region</i>	<i>Number of overseas Chinese⁺</i>	<i>Number of representatives chosen</i>
Malaysia	3,012,415	5
Thailand	3,000,000	4
Indonesia	2,000,000	4
Vietnam	1,000,000	2
Pathet Lao (Laos)	10,794	
<i>Khmer</i> (Cambodia)	217,928	
American continent	257,865	2
Myanmar	300,000	1
Borneo	67,452	1
Philippines	230,000	1
Japan	44,000	1*
India	20,000	1
Pakistan	63	1
Europe	22,547	1
Africa and Middle East	60,457	1
Oceania	62,477	1
Total	10,305,998	26

⁺The dates of the provided data per country in the source shows variations. Most of the data corresponds to the years between 1950 and 1953. Therefore, the total number is an approximate. In 1953, the total number of overseas Chinese was considered 12 million.

*Representative for Japan, North Korea, and Mongolia

Source: Self elaboration with data from: (CIA, Worldwide, Feb. 1954) and (XINHUASHE, Nov. 24, 1953).

The decision of the Beijing government to give political representation to Chinese communities abroad, where representatives were elected for such an important instance as would be the First National People's Assembly of 1954, clearly evidenced a change in strategy in the Beijing's struggle against the KMT government in Taiwan to gain loyalty and support from overseas Chinese.

In the context of the independence of the territories of Southeast Asia, the communities of overseas Chinese, who lived in a situation of uncertainty regarding their immigration status, demanded definitive citizenship in their places of residence, thus facing constant discrimination in countries such as Thailand and Malaysia (CIA, Feb. 9, 1954). But, how would these communities benefit from representation before the National People's Assembly of the PRC? Overseas representation in the Beijing parliament would be a significant form three points of view. First, it

²³According to the conference report, to complete the quota of 30 members, the appointment of four representatives would be pending.

would allow the Beijing government to support overseas Chinese more directly, through a diplomatic status that would be conferred to delegates from the Chinese colonies with the demand for special rights by granting them diplomatic passports. Second, Beijing would be in a position to avoid undercover policies or the practice of influencing through propaganda, as it had been doing. Third, the parliamentary representation of overseas Chinese would be the beginning of a larger-scale projection, with the launch of the Asian five-year plan expected toward the year 1958, with the idea of creating a compact political, economic and ethnic system (CIA, Feb. 9, 1954).

In summary, the 1953 conference developed two parallel agendas to guide overseas Chinese in their countries of residence as a public agenda “that promoted the unity of the Chinese abroad and the cordial relations with the towns where they lived as well as the fulfillment of the laws of the country of residence” (CIA, Feb. 9, 1954, p. 1) and, in parallel, a confidential program linked to the intervention of Beijing internal affairs of the countries where the overseas Chinese lived” (CIA, Feb. 9, 1954, p. 1).

Conclusion

Regarding the reports studied in this paper, a synthesis of the conferences, the discourse and the resolutions towards the overseas Chinese can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Conferences related to overseas Chinese communities (1951-1953): discursive strategies and resolutions

<i>Conference name</i>	<i>I Expanded Conference on Overseas Chinese Affairs</i>	<i>Peace Conference of Asia and the Pacific Regions</i>	<i>National Conference on Overseas Chinese</i>	<i>II Expanded Conference on Overseas Chinese Affairs</i>
<i>Dates</i>	June 17-27, 1951	October 2-12, 1952	October 20-30, 1952	November 1-5, 1953
<i>Place</i>	Beijing	Beijing	Taipei	Beijing
<i>Speech tone</i>	Combative towards Chiang Kai-shek and KMT in Taiwan	Combative towards American imperialism	Combative towards the PRC government	Less warlike and more exhortative: Chiang Kai-shek disappears in speech
<i>Context</i>	Korean War Agrarian reform Persecutions to landowners and bourgeois	PRC denounces the use of biological weapons in the Korean War.	Celebrations in Taiwan in October First visit of U.S. government official to Taiwan	Signing of an armistice in the Korean War in July Convocation and preparation for the First National Popular Assembly of 1954 Start of transition to socialist economy in PRC with First Five-Year Plan
<i>Resolutions Synthesis</i>	Welcoming actions for repatriated Chinese Combative defense of the rights of Chinese communities abroad	Message for peace in East Asia and exhortation of economic and commercial development with Southeast Asia Indirect speech to overseas Chinese through delegations	Establishment of overseas Chinese day Creation of organizations linked with overseas Chinese Raise money to boycott the PRC and fight for the recovery of mainland China	Exhortation for overseas Chinese to the unit for the defense of rights abroad Actions of political representation of overseas Chinese in the PRC

Source: Self elaboration.

To conclude, in the first part of this study it was found that beyond a genuine interest in gaining loyalty within Chinese overseas communities, the PRC sought support in these communities for the economic development of the country, to influence the internal policy of the countries where these communities resided and welcome the Chinese who returned to their country in the face of persecutions in their countries of residence. The messages of defense before these vicissitudes suffered by the compatriots abroad seemed to be limited to the discursive level and without the intention of transcending, due to lack of diplomatic ties or because they were not interested in creating a diplomatic conflict, mainly with the countries of Southeast Asia. As it was observed in the last conference studied, the PRC changed its discursive tone and took a turn, regarding the first conference analyzed, by proposing a concrete action to represent overseas Chinese for a national event: the First Popular National Assembly, which would promulgate the First Political Constitution of the country.

In the middle of the first and second conferences, both organized by the OCAC, it was possible to observe the organization of a conference for overseas Chinese by the KMT government in Taipei, with a few days of separation from the Peace Conference for Asia and the Pacific Regions, organized by Beijing at the beginning of October 1952. In the first conference, a confrontational tone was perceived by the KMT, expressed in event reports. Although the Peace Conference was not directly linked to Chinese abroad, the main economic discourse was aimed at

the countries of East and Southeast Asia –region where most of the Chinese population abroad lived–. That conference had representatives from countries that were ethnic Chinese and was supported by overseas Chinese students. Beijing's tone towards Taipei moderated, but it was evident confrontations against the United States in the regional context of war on the Korean peninsula. In the 1953 conference that tone declined further, most likely due to the armistice that had been signed between the United States and North Korea in July of that year, four months before this conference. But also, the tone of the speech was moderated because the preparation environment for the First National People's Assembly. A less combative discourse was observed that rather urged the Chinese communities themselves to solve their own problems in their countries of residence.

Possible ideas for future study could be geared toward contextualizing the role of political representation of overseas Chinese communities in the context of the First National People's Assembly and the development of relations that the PRC established, mainly, with the countries of Southeast Asia, in the light of the 1954 Bandung Conference, where PRC delegates played a leading role. It would be also worth comparing the reports of conferences analyzed with reports of the following conferences, which took place after 1953.

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