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Master's Thesis

碩士論文

**Between Black and White:  
Overseas Chinese in the Republic of  
China's Friendship with South  
Africa (1949-1989)**

**黑白之間：  
中華民國與南非友誼下的海外華人  
(1949-1989)**

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## Abstract

Discussions of the existing literature mostly focus on the diplomatic ties between Republic of China and South Africa, but seldom mention about the role of overseas Chinese within it. The conventional wisdom of this official relationship also suggested that it was steady and stable. Nevertheless, the historical events and bilateral interactions had shown us that this relationship was in fact full of twists and turns. Especially with the special racial background accompanied by a series of segregation policies in South Africa, overseas Chinese played an essential role in between the two countries with their strong life instinct. Hence, this paper aims to review bilateral diplomatic relations in the perspective of overseas Chinese, and emphasizes their importance in consolidating this relationship during the Apartheid era. Through the lens of racial interactions, we are able to review the role of overseas Chinese in governments' foreign policy making as well as to study their strategies of survival under segregation policies inside South Africa.

**Keywords:** Overseas Chinese, South Africa, Republic of China, Segregation Policies, Honorary Whites

### 摘要

過去的文獻討論中普遍針對中國與南非兩國之外交關係進行討論，鮮少提及南非華僑在這段關係中扮演的角色。傳統上我們認為中華民國以及南非之官方關係乃堅若磐石，但就過去歷史背景和互動關係可以發現兩國之間的關係充滿著轉折和變數。尤其在一系列之種族政策以及背景之下，南非僑民仍在雙邊互動中具有關鍵性之影響，可從中觀察到僑民所具備的強烈生存意識。因此，本文將藉由僑民視角對這些觀點進行重新詮釋及修正，強調華僑在南非種族隔離期間扮演鞏固這段關係中重要角色。以種族關係之視角來切入，觀察海外華僑在南非在種族隔離政策之下之生存和因應之並了解僑民對於兩國彼此之間外交政策影響性為何。

**關鍵詞：**海外華人、南非、中華民國、種族隔離政策、榮譽白人

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## Introduction

It was not until this year that I find myself affiliated with this country because of a family member. A few months ago, I was chatting with my dad in the living room and then suddenly he asked me, “Did I ever tell you that your grandma’s parents migrated to South Africa back in the 70s?” It was how the whole research journey began.

I was so surprised that I started to look up relevant information about this country and found that there were many overseas Chinese staying in South Africa back in the 1970s and 1980s for greater economic opportunities. As I looked further into the background story, I realized that many overseas Chinese had encountered discriminatory policies during the apartheid era, and I’m even more amazed that the Republic of China (ROC) has almost a hundred years of diplomatic relationship with South Africa. As a student of international affairs, these findings intrigued me to conduct this research and to know more about this country as well as the overseas Chinese living there. In addition to that, I found that relevant electronic archives were online from the *Academia Historica* and some of the connected archives just released in recent years, which could be extremely helpful for the research.

Thus, I’ve combined all the factors that are correlated to the triangle relationship, including the ROC, South Africa, and the overseas Chinese. The chosen timeline of the proposed topic starts from the year of 1949 to 1989. In 1949, this was the watershed year for the ROC’s retreat to Taiwan. Moreover, it was just one year after the segregation policies in South Africa were officially announced. The year 1989 was a turning point for South Africa coming back from decades of international isolation, thanks to Frederik Willem de Klerk’s presidency and his constructive reformations. The alleviation of international tension has led the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to begin its engagement with South Africa, which turned out not an optimistic sign for the ROC. During these fifty years of interactions, ROC’s approach to South Africa changed over time without following identical patterns. Therefore, it could be a potential and thought-provoking topic to investigate further their bilateral relationships and to study the role of overseas Chinese, along with the two other actors.

# **Chapter 1 Literature Review: South Africa, Overseas Chinese, and Foreign Policy Making**

In this chapter, the discussion will be focusing on the existing literature on South Africa, overseas Chinese, and foreign policy making. This part of the literature review was composed chiefly of the following three sections: immigrants, overseas Chinese, and foreign policy; between Black and White; and the interactions of Republic of China, South Africa, and overseas Chinese. To clarify the associations between overseas Chinese and foreign policy and to understand the extent of overseas Chinese influences on countries' policymaking, the focus will be concentrating on the current studies related to this matter.

## **1.1 Immigrants, Overseas Chinese, and Foreign Policy**

### **1.1.1 Immigrants and Foreign Policy**

Immigration is undeniably an issue in international relations. In what way does immigration influence foreign policy making? What's the role of the immigrants within the policy-making process? And what could be the potential factors that may determine their presence within the host countries? According to conventional wisdom, the relationship between immigrants and foreign policy may frequently fall into the following categories, such as economic factors, domestic politics, or cultural influences. From the existing literature, the findings that are based on these above-mentioned questions can be categorized into three main groups of discussions.

The first group of literature focused on the components of the relationship between immigrants and foreign policy. To be precise, these scholars investigated "how" the immigrants may influence or have access to foreign policy making. Scholars such as Deconde (1992) and Ögelman et al. (2002) posed rather pessimistic attitudes on whether the immigrants may effectively make any changes in foreign policy. It is assumed that if the preconditions of the immigrants are large, homogenous, and well-organized, then they might have a better chance of influencing the foreign policy of the host country (Ögelman et al. 2002, 147). However, the historic events may tell us a different story. Take African-

Americans as an example of this. The African-American politicking and anti-apartheid movement under Reagan's presidency all indicated that results were limited due to internal conflicts among minorities themselves and the leaders still made its decision based on national interests (Deconde 1992, 181-182).

Regarding issues of immigrants toward foreign policy from a political angle, some scholars analyzed the performance of "lobbying" exercised by the immigrants (Mathias 1981; Ögelman et al. 2002). Notwithstanding their efforts toward the government, overall, the results were still limited. With the circumstance of imbalance of power, lack of cohesion, and strong support from the locals, it's become relatively difficult to achieve progress in foreign policy-making (Mathias 1981, 978).

The next group of literature has argued that economic interests are the prominent factor that may shift a country's foreign policy attitude towards the immigrants. Dodson (2010) proposed six explanatory factors to illustrate the situation of xenophobia toward foreign Africans in South Africa, and economic or material is one of them. Muller (1989) argued that immigration policy has a significant correlation to the United States' economic growth. Based on his studies, he found that the controversies derived from the impacts on social welfare and social stability prompted him to the findings into short-term and long-term perspectives. From a short-term perspective, these policies did bring incentives to the local economy, on the contrary, the overreliance on foreign-born personnel may take jobs away from the local Americans (Muller 1989, 135).

As the local grievances accumulated, this may lead to a surge in the anti-immigrant sentiment inside the country. Regarding the community level, this kind of friction and ethnicized economy has been formed by hatred and nationalism (Dodson 2010, 5). Honig (2016) also argued a similar point that the sense of anti-sentiment may cause immigrant exclusion within a country and in its foreign policy making. However, since the immigrants' economic power in the country is different from and so are the domestic policies, the exclusionary policies on the immigrants will also not be homogenous towards everyone (Honig 2016, 520). Therefore, this may indicate that what can the immigrants

bring to their host countries matters, and to what extent of positiveness they could bring into the country may also be crucial to foreign policy making.

Lastly, the third group pointed out that the immigrants tend to show different attitudes on foreign policy based on their ethnicities. In this group of literature, some argued that the immigrants are more aggressive on this issue, while others tend to be tranquil. Kingsley (1956) emphasized the priority of physiological factors of each ethnic matter. Due to the convergence of nationalism, ethnic-racial sensitivity, and other influential factors, it's hard to conclude that all immigrants share identical thoughts on foreign policy objectives, especially in Asia and Africa (Kingsley 1956, 309). Another interesting argument claims the advantage of the ethnic influence on American foreign policy can keep the country true to its ideological preferences to avoid isolationism from the international community (Shain 1995, 70).

Still, some argued that since the immigrants are still the minorities in a country and they see themselves as part of the national interest, they tend to play calm and be less hostile to foreign policy (Deconde 1992, 196). For instance, the Jewish immigrants in South Africa during the apartheid era have seen the racial inequalities of a country toward them as a force of upward group mobility (Stevens 1971, 124). In ways how these immigrants regard themselves as a part of national interest or tend to accommodate the host country's foreign policy, it seems that they tend to reflect on their pursuits of interests.

### **1.1.2 Overseas Chinese and Foreign Policy**

The very initial question before our discussion is: how do we define those overseas Chinese? Overseas Chinese is a huge topic that comprises diverse factors, including geographical factors, economic determinants, or even nationality which could all influence how we comprehend this concept. According to Wang (1993), the definition of the overseas Chinese in general refers to the Chinese living outside China, Taiwan, and Hongkong but tend to recognize their Chinese origins. Nevertheless, within the concept of overseas Chinese we may have different perceptions. Therefore, it's essential to identify the difference between the minority of overseas Chinese and the majority of foreign



nationals with ethnic Chinese (Wang 1993). Echoing the previous section of how some of the immigrants likely regard themselves as part of the host countries' national interest, we may see that normally the foreign nationals that are ethnic Chinese come with economic initiatives or behaviors. However, the minority of the overseas Chinese have adopted local nationalities that could be the possible driver for determining their ideas or attitudes to be less advocative to the sense of commonality for the greater China (Wang 1993, 927).

As previously mentioned, the dichotomization of the local born overseas Chinese seems to be different from those transnational overseas Chinese. The local-born influenced by the host countries' national system will avoid any symbols or tend to be on the defensive about relating to the Chinese community but rather focusing on their efforts on host countries' identities (Wang 1993, 945). Liao (2014) has further analyzed the overseas Chinese into four main types, including temporary residents, local born, stateless, and dual nationalities, while the status and the entitlement of the overseas Chinese will be based on these four categories. Suryadinata (2017) has argued that the side-effects of misusing the terminology of *huaqiao* and *huaren*, since it is a way of reflecting how the PRC government changed its foreign policy, especially the trend on a surge within recent decades. Interestingly, the finding and the empirical evidence have shown us that the more emphasis on the terminology of how Chinese should become a comprehensive unity abroad, the more backlash on how the host countries react to the Chinese living within the countries (Suryadinata 2017).

Other scholars have argued that "Chineseness" is significant for the overseas Chinese, and related the degree of Chineseness with different groups of overseas Chinese (Park 2009; Vasantkumar 2012; Lee 2017). It's interesting to see how their arguments within the discussion varied regarding this issue. The post-modern Chinese migration tends to be "transnational", while the other part of the migrants will take roots in the host country (Park 2009, 169). Therefore, the idea of great China itself accompanied by the various regimes may shape their identities in order to influence the Chinese community abroad (Park 2009). Vasantkumar (2012) on the other hand has used territorial-based factors to tell the national-born and transnational Chinese apart. It is said that the overseas Chinese often

reflects its nationalistic sentiment, and Chineseness within it should be processed instead of being inherited (Vasantkumar 2012, 441).

From the other angle, Lee (2017) argued that besides being influenced by the cultural and material effects, “time” and “distance” are the key factors for Chinese self-identification and adaptation. If the overseas Chinese have left their home country for quite a long time, the willingness of seeing themselves as part of the Chinese culture is lessening; while the further distance of the Chinese living apart from China may also show the similar consequence (Lee 2017, 132).

Hence, how does the Chinese government truly view the overseas Chinese? The historical evidence of China’s attitude on policy making and the relevant policies on the overseas Chinese may bring us some insights on this. The very first practical existence of China’s overseas Chinese policy could be dated back to the Qing dynasty when it officially announced the *Nanyang Prohibition Order in 1717* (Cheng and Huang, 2006). The sentiment of fear on the overseas Chinese of not being loyal to their home country has become the driver of the government's decision-making process, and the fear of an even more serious situation was collusion with the Westerners from the host countries that may have become destructive to a country’s national interests. Therefore, this has led the Qing government to regard the overseas Chinese as a threat to its regime stability and the sentiment has led to hostility on its policy making and has created a sense of anti-overseas Chinese perceptions towards them (Cheng and Huang 2006, 117-118).

Some argued that the Chinese government’s perceptions and its policies could be important indicators to investigate or explain the relationship between the overseas Chinese and host countries (Fitzgerald 1970; Chang 1990). Fitzgerald (1970) mentioned that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has changed its attitude into an eager and moderate approach on overseas Chinese policy towards South-East Asian countries after its dual nationality agreement with Indonesia in 1956, which has become a turning point for the Chinese government to react to overseas Chinese returning to motherland. Before then, CCP took no initiatives on the overseas Chinese but simply regarded them as a source of foreign exchange (Fitzgerald 1970, 12). As we may observe, the PRC’s policy approach

seems to be solely focused on the group of “domestic overseas Chinese”, which were the majority of transnational overseas Chinese instead of the minority local born ones. Moreover, whether the policy of protecting overseas Chinese interests would ultimately involve China in intervening in overseas Chinese affairs in South-East Asian may determine the effectiveness of how the overseas Chinese policy works in these host countries (Chang 1990, 283).

Chang (1990) also emphasized that there is a surge of an increasing role of overseas Chinese within China’s policy. The fast expansion of PRC’s *qiaowu* effort has expanded into different policies and programs in overseas Chinese communities all around the world, while Kuomintang (KMT) representing ROC adopted the mindset of combating communism that dominated the overseas Chinese communities over forty years (To 2014, 4). It seems that the overseas Chinese seems to have become a foreign policy tool for the PRC government and also for the ROC. The circumstances of Chinese diasporas have linked the overseas Chinese communities all together, which has mobilized the results in every aspect in both home and host countries respectively (To 2014, 2). Nevertheless, we can’t ignore one important factor which is the “motive” behind the policy since the party’s intention may still have impacted on the host countries to have a bad impression on these policies (Fitzgerald 1970, 18).

Therefore, the question may arise to what extent China's government’s policies may work on the overseas Chinese and how come the local born overseas Chinese tend to feel less affiliated to their bloodlines by acting more defensively in order to avoid any negative impact to them is another aspect to ponder on. This may provide us with an explicit indicator that the changes of Chinese government's policies on overseas Chinese may influence not only on how China’s views of the overseas Chinese have changed but also the effects on how the host countries react back to it.

## **1.2 Between Black and White**

As an existence between Black and White, Chinese stances and positions had changed over time chronologically. China’s attitude towards the Black starting from the

late Qing dynasty was having a negative impression on the Black, regarding them as the inferior ones (Dikotter 1992). Equally, the Chinese's attitude towards the Black may provide us insights into how they might interact with the White. Following the Western learning spread to the East, Darwinism's survival of the fittest had shaped how the Chinese viewed the Black (Liu 2018, 92). The tension of this contradictory mindset between anti-black sentiments and anti-colonialism had increased after the 1955 Bandung Conference which highly emphasized the unification of the colored people. This emphasis lasted until the 1970s when there was an emergence of a new engagement with the African countries since they realized that economic initiatives and winning markets could take effect on building relations with these countries (Alden 2008).

So, what are the determinants inside the race relations among the trilateral relationships among the White, the Black, and the Chinese? Some scholars regard that the economic initiative and the pursuit of survival are the predominant factors that influence how the Chinese react to the host countries' communities (Basu 1991; Wong 1996; Lin 2001; Hearn 2012). Lin (2001) stated that overseas Chinese merchants tend to own multiple nationalities to reduce commercial risks. Since the identity of being Chinese in foreign countries could not provide the stability and security, many overseas Chinese did not simply regard multiple nationalities as a risk reduction strategy but also as economic opportunities (Lin 2001, 1008).

Another determinant to ponder on this question is the concept of diaspora. As mentioned in the previous section, one contribution of this migration flow is to bind the Chinese communities altogether, and eventually, their influences may impact both host and home countries' policy-making. Traditionally, the definition of diaspora suggests a homogeneous group of geographically disseminated people linked with their culture and historical background (McKeown 1999, 311). However, McKeown (1993) also mentioned that this type of migration is an economic strategy that could go beyond geographical restrictions, which indicates that the concept of diaspora is not certainly attached to the physical location of these Chinese immigrants. Ma (2003) stated a novel perspective by claiming that space and place are the main structural components of diaspora. Moreover, these spatial networks are functional spaces categorized by the flow of population, goods,

and information between the home country and the host country (Ma 2003, 8). Thus, Chinese between the Black and the White must consider their living inside the country and between different races might lead them to develop new spatial networks inside the host country by neglecting their original nationalities or their connection with their home governments.

However, the host countries may see the economic success of the overseas Chinese as a threat to their self-interests. Hearn (2012) pointed out that the business interactions with the locals in Mexico and Cuba have been perceived as threats to their national interests. The in-group sentiment of the host countries will make the local business perceive themselves as a unity, which enhances the collective behavior on economic security (Hearn 2012, 115).

To guard down the vigilance of the host country, the overseas Chinese know how to keep themselves in the middle among different races. Basu (1991) argued that usually, the overseas Chinese communities of Calcutta under the caste system have a sense of entrepreneurial ethic for pursuing economic success. All these Calcutta Chinese cared about was achieving economic success, instead of attaining any political power or social status (Basu 1991, 234). The existing literature emphasized that overseas Chinese are the “third race” within the host country when the society was composed of the White, the Black, and the colored communities (Wong 1996). Normally, their recognition of their self-identities may often change based on the host countries’ domestic conditions and their contribution to the capitalist economy in the host countries (Wong 1996, 34).

Loewen (1988) in his book *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White* also clearly outlined that the status of the Chinese and the reasons for the status change were all because of race relations. Chinese as the ethnic minorities between the two races have become the tool for the white upper class to manage and contain the blacks’ social positions (Loewen 1988, 4). To the host countries, the overseas Chinese have seemed to become an intervening force to put a stop to the elevation of the Black. Take overseas Chinese in the United States back in the late nineteenth century as another example, they suffered from the *1882 Chinese Exclusion Act* for nearly sixty years due to the increasing

number of Chinese flowing into the job market of the States which might threaten the locals. Therefore, the initial impression of these overseas Chinese tended to be vicious, but eventually the overseas Chinese converted their image to meet the needs and expectations of the host countries.

Chen (2014) pointed out that the *1882 Chinese Exclusion Act* was a watershed for the overseas Chinese because they finally found a way to survive between the two. They were aware that being economically supplementary to the local economy and lack of political consciousness might be the most efficient and probably the only way to alter the viewpoints of the host country that could benefit their likelihood of survival. Depending on their modest, hardworking, and friendly attitude in the United States, the overseas Chinese have finally been labeled as the Model Minority in the twentieth century. The meaning of Model Minority has provided a unique status for the Asian Americans, which has made their self-perceptions formed as a superior racial group compared to others or even better than the local White communities (Wong et al. 1998).

With their characteristics of being more prepared and motivated, they also tend to regard themselves as having higher career success (Wong et al. 1998, 113). Krenn (1999) argued about the impact of race on the United States' foreign policy, and how America's perception of race has not only affected the color lines among the different race groups but also how they interact with one another. As indicated, the foreign policy that was originally for benevolence many times turned into chauvinism and condescension, while those receiving benefits may often be perceived as the underdogs (Krenn 1999, 49). Though the purpose in the first place was to make the minorities the favorable ones among the communities ensuring that they behave well, the influence of these groups had extended far more than expected.

In line with the events that happened in South Africa back in the late nineteenth century, overseas Chinese also faced intensive exclusion policies. These exclusionary behaviors could have originated from the mindset of “preserving the culture of the White” from the Dutch and the British immigrants since the eighteenth century. Not until the Boer colonizers, also known as the successor of the Dutch immigrants, had this ethnocentric

mindset legalized in the *1856 Rustenburg Constitution*. The characteristic of colonized economy and racial slavery under the constitution had fortified the racial difference not only politically but also affirmed the unequal rights between the colored and the White (Zheng 2010, 132). During the same period, the importing of contracted Chinese labor into the African continent has increased to address the shortage of labor in the colonized territories as well as in South Africa (Lee 2000, 118-121; 562).

Despite the struggle and difficulties, the overseas Chinese under a living environment full of discrimination still figured out a way to survive in a fissure. Wan (2007) argued that though there were some security concerns, these economic opportunities still bring changes in social mobility. The Chinese newspaper in South Africa has also become a channel to deliver messages to the overseas Chinese to engage in the local environment (Wan 2007, 52). Some have formed overseas Chinese organizations to unite their voices to communicate with the host governments (Lee 2000, 385-386).

Furthermore, the establishment of the apartheid policies had made the colored communities all started pursuing the status of becoming the Honorary Whites. The entitlement of Honorary White has not only provided the Chinese to share equal rights as the White communities but also has formed competitiveness among the colored communities. The similar effects appeared consistent with how the perception of countries on racism may shape the forms of interactions or conflicts within the nation. Interestingly, the image of overseas Chinese in South Africa resembling the overseas Chinese in the United States is law-abiding, quiet, and likable. To fit into the host country, both the Chinese self-identification and their nationalistic sentiment toward the local community seem to be changeable and to be somewhat flexible.

### **1.3 Interactions of Republic of China, South Africa, and Overseas Chinese**

Before South Africa officially announced apartheid policies in 1948, a series of its anti-colored prohibition acts toward the Chinese and the colored communities had stirred strong backlash from the ROC government, including the *1885 Chinese Exclusion Act*, and the *1937 Aliens Act*, and the *1946 Asian Act*. The relationship between the Republic of

China and South Africa was relatively unstable due to the segregation policies over the colored communities.

Additionally, when the ROC was defeated and retreated to Taiwan, the overseas Chinese at this time became an important instrument, and also a diplomatic tool between the ROC government and South Africa. The ROC government could not develop authentic policies with South Africa which led to its focus on the overseas Chinese. To strengthen the protection of the rights of overseas Chinese, the ROC government back then came up with several countermeasures such as exchange of envoys, endorsement of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, or delivery of the request to the United Nations for further discussion on this issue and seek to elevate the mutual understandings.

In the 1960s, the intention behind assisting overseas Chinese had accompanied some ideological factor that ROC aimed for cooperation on combating communism and tried reaching out to the newly independent countries, especially the African ones. It was when ROC's "friendship" with South Africa was intentionally formed for the very first time. The reason for using the term "intentionally" was due to the ROC government's attitude to South Africa, which had changed over time from consideration, and hesitation, to friendliness within a decade. Due to the segregation policies, South Africa has faced the international sanctions of arms embargo from the Security Council *Resolution 181* in the year of 1963 (United Nations Security Council 1963). During the early 1960s, the ROC government was acting with a prudent and hesitant attitude in dealing with issues with South Africa.

Interestingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC established the Department of African Affairs in the same year. Tang (2006) argued that since then South Africa had become more active in interacting with the ROC such as requesting a Consulate set up in Taipei and building mechanisms of military intelligence in exchange for the enhancement of the bilateral diplomatic relationship. Nevertheless, under the international pressure and the desire of getting votes from other African countries, the ROC government turned down the inquiry and induced the grievance of the South Africa led to the consequence of intensive discrimination policies towards the overseas Chinese (Tang 2006, 99-100).



Although the Consulate of South Africa in Taipei was established successfully in 1967, all the interactions were still under covert operation without any official announcements because of ROC's contradictory sentiment. On the one hand, ROC needed to manage its external pressure from other countries that disapproved of South Africa's racial policies. On the other hand, the ROC government also considered its relationship with its friend, South Africa, which walked through thick and thin in every voting in the United Nations. In other words, the intention for the ROC being active in African affairs at that time was not because of the desire of engaging with South Africa but rather based on its self-interest in winning the hearts of other African allies.

Several events that happened in the 1970s such as ROC's expulsion from the United Nations under the *UN Resolution 2758* and South Africa being suspended its authority in the United Nations, had finally made the two become true friends with each other. Disregarding the contradictory sentiments previously, the ROC government decided not to hide this "secret relationship" and followed its heart fair and square. Since both countries found themselves trapped in the circle of international isolationism, the two countries equipped with Cold War anticommunist sentiments had resulted in increasing their bilateral trade and official visits for further warming interactions that strengthened their foreign policies (Yap and Man 1996, 417-418).

Moreover, the South African government had officially announced that the overseas Chinese could achieve benefits that were equivalent to the White in the early 1970s. This announcement has also raised the level of reciprocity to the overseas Chinese that endured the segregation policies and brought in more opportunities for the transnational overseas Chinese to come and invest in South Africa. With the establishment of diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1976, not only did both countries gain better interactions with each other but also the ROC government had begun punctuating the role of the overseas Chinese and how they were regarded highly in the local community.

From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, the emphasis was all on foreign investment in South Africa, which had attracted immigrants from the ROC who founded their businesses there. In addition, there was a Ministerial Economic and Technical Cooperation

Conference held in Taipei and Cape Town alternately every year (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC, 1990, 178). In this period, the overseas Chinese had also become a crucial position and a necessity in the middle. When the former Premier of the ROC Sun Yun-suan (孫運璿) visited Africa in the early 1980s, he encouraged overseas Chinese's "loyal" and "law-abiding" efforts and contribution to South Africa and hope that they could continuously play a constructive role inside the country to consolidate the bilateral relationship (Central Daily News, March 16, 1980).

After Sun's official visits, South Africa had begun to relax more limitations on the overseas Chinese where the ROC's immigrants could attain temporary residence permits, and freely apply to any local school for their offspring even under the segregation policies of the *Population Registration Act* and the *Group Area Act* (Yap and Man 1996, 418). Despite all the amicable policies beforehand, the overseas Chinese had waited not until September 1984 to achieve the status as the Honorary White when Lee Teng-hui visited South Africa (Xu and Yao 2018, 35).

The domestic anti-apartheid movements surging has led to a rapid change of situation in late 1988, which had raised the concern for the ROC once again and realized that it was necessary to also deal with the Black. Nevertheless, the ripple effects of the segregation policies still lasted in the mind of the ROC government they still wanted to keep a good relationship with the White government instead of the Black. When Nelson Mandela took his office, it was suggested the Black that the ROC government eventually dealt with are not the recommended ones from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Africa but were those figures from the anti-apartheid movements (Hu and Wang 2018, 118).

When South Africa's former President Frederik Willem de Klerk acceded in 1989, he accomplished a series of events that successfully improved the country's international image, including some reformation of segregation policies, negotiation with the African political party groups, and passing the act of abrogating the segregation policies in 1991. However, the ROC government awarded the side effects of his accomplishment that could make this friendship erratic. This had led to the new phase of how the ROC interacted with

the new styles of leadership since and created the adjustment period of the sides that foreshadowed the distrust between the ROC and South Africa with the involvement of the PRC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC 1993, 116-117).

To the South African government, enhancing the bilateral relationship with ROC seems to be a strategy of keeping an ally that balances the lash of the international community during the apartheid era. As for the overseas Chinese situated in the middle, critical factors such as economic initiative, the pursuit of survival, and the recognition of their roots have led them to lean toward the host country. Thus, we may see that ROC's friendship with South Africa is purportedly not just only based on mutual interests, but also on the value of its self-interests could alter the government's perception and behaviors toward South Africa as well as its rhetoric on the overseas Chinese.

## **1.4 Research Questions and Methodology**

### **1.4.1 Research Questions**

According to the context of these existing literature and the findings, the argument suggested that the overseas Chinese had played a key role between the ROC and South Africa, as well as its status between the Black and White inside South Africa. Besides, observation of the linkage of overseas Chinese and the foreign policy may be altered by their identity perceptions based on the roots, host countries, or simply just the interests. On the other hand, we will look into the interactions between the ROC and South Africa will be another dimension. As mentioned earlier, there seems to be twists and turns in the relationship between the ROC and the South from 1949 to 1989.

Thus, my research question on this topic will be investigating on what is the role of overseas Chinese in the friendship between the Republic of China and South Africa from 1949 to 1989. From 1949 to 1989, the time was the peak of the apartheid era in South Africa. Several watersheds between the two actors were crucial for further investigation of this research question, such as the ROC's expulsion from the United Nations after 1971, the 1965 consulate dispute between the ROC and the South African government, and South

Africa's segregation policies towards the non-white people. Based on the above-mentioned historical background, the investigation will concentrate on the main following aspects: first, the friendship between South Africa and the Republic of China before and after it was expelled from the United Nations; secondly, interactions between the Republic of China, South Africa and the overseas Chinese living in South Africa.

The intriguing part of the findings is to observe how the interactions among the main actors including overseas Chinese have posed their attitude toward one another, and how that may impact countries' policy-making process. Another noteworthy point that should be noted is the role overseas Chinese had played during this period. In the context of the preliminary findings, it seems that the ROC has utilized overseas Chinese as a policy tool or as a bargaining chip to drive its relations with South Africa. Anticipating that these findings and results of the research could bring us different perspectives regarding the relationship between the two countries that reconstruct our comprehension of this proclaimed rock-solid relationship between the two. Furthermore, to prove the statement of recognizing the overseas Chinese as an important actor, showing the potential in wandering the color lines and being an accessible member to both the home country and the host country. If the findings can infer a generality, the significance of overseas Chinese on foreign policy making may apply to other similar countries with the composition of diverse racial groups.

#### **1.4.2 Methodology**

Next, the methodology that will be used to approach our research question will be the qualitative research method, with document analysis and archival analysis. As Levy (2007) defined the usage of the qualitative method, it has contributed to elaborating the empirical evidence in the disciplines. Others argued that one of the benefits is to connect the heterogeneous factors into a larger scope of theoretical discussion (Bennett and Elman 2007, 117-118). The qualitative research method as a way of analyzing, categorizing, and comparing statements from different researchers, may provide us with comprehensive literature to conduct a proper literature review on this topic.

The purpose of the research is trying to first organize the sequence of ideas about the correlation between foreign policy and immigrants. Then, we'll extend the context to the role and perception of the overseas Chinese in foreign policy making. Numerous subfield factors are involved in the discussion, such as economic incentives, identities, and domestic affairs. Bowen (2009) mentioned that document analysis is a systematic framework for reviewing and examining both printed and electronic documents, which is a type of qualitative method that aims the collection of relevant literature to interpret the research questions.

Besides the secondary materials such as books and journal articles, the primary sources could be an additional way to enrich the expounders. Therefore, I'll be using archives and newspapers to conduct the analysis. Archives as the reservoir of items, written manuscripts, and pictures created by organizations or individuals, could provide us with first-hand information directly to understand the circumstances. Since there will be some discussion of the events on the diplomatic relationship between the ROC and South Africa as well as the development or issues overseas Chinese in South Africa, the archives from *Academia Historica* could bring us deeper insights on these issues. Also, the sources of the newspapers could assist us to observe from the other angle. Thus, I'll be using the three profound and highly regarded governmental newspapers back at that time, which are *Chinatimes*, *United Daily News*, and *Central Daily News* to inspect the statements from the ROC government to the public as the other approach to understanding the interactions among the ROC, South Africa and the overseas Chinese.

## Chapter 2 Republic of China's Friendship with South Africa

As the above-mentioned statement, our comprehension of the two countries was that ROC used to have a bonded relationship with South Africa now seemed to be a false assumption. Moreover, the existing literature seldom argued about the role of overseas Chinese in state actions. Therefore, this chapter will be punctuating the significant position of overseas Chinese through the interactions between ROC and South Africa. Firstly, we analyze the possible factors under the international system that may impact ROC's attitudes and behaviors towards Pretoria. Secondly, we investigate the ways that ROC maintained its relationship with South Africa and what exactly did Chinese community councils do that improve its status. Last but not least, the thesis examines the situational actions of the ROC government towards South Africa, which may explain why the overseas Chinese eventually have to rely on themselves and equipped with such a strong affiliation with the South African government instead of the ROC.

### 2.1 Evolution of International System

In retrospect, the twists in the diplomatic relationship between the ROC and South Africa were never just an internal issue between the two countries but rather a consequence of an outcome that has been influenced by different events and stages in the international system. We may also assume that ROC's attitude towards South Africa has changed over time along with how the entire international relations are operationalized. So why and how the international system affects ROC's interactions and foreign policy-making with South Africa? We may then break down the result into three main possible reasons for discussing the evolution of international structure.

First, the ideological confrontation under the Cold War starting in the late 1940s was a watershed that dichotomized the entire international society into two immense blocs. After the Second World War, the post-war aftermath has led countries to ponder on how to maintain the longest peace among countries, while "bipolarity" is one of the credible ways to do so (Waltz 1993, 44). Two hegemonic rivalries Soviet Union and the United States started an ideological confrontation back at that time, and both Communism and

Capitalism have significantly become the driving factors that defined the behaviors of these state actors within the international community and made them take sides. As for the ROC, the loss of the Civil War increased its hatred towards Communism, which made the combat against this ideology a priority for the ROC government to tackle. Meanwhile, South Africa also adopted the same mentality of anti-communism due to Beijing's engagement with its local opposition party, the African National Congress (ANC). Based on mutual understanding of anti-communist ideology, which may explain why ROC did not show intensive political interactions with South Africa during the time but instead chose to only focus on its overseas community affairs.

The second reason could be related to a greater degree of international responsibility among nations accompanied by the germination of the concept of human rights. In 1945, the establishment of the United Nations (UN) has undoubtedly heightened the consensus by upholding peace and commonwealth as the primacy for all nations. Along with the rise of human rights advocacy, which also raised the concern of the member states. UN as the main mechanism to react and put sanctions on South Africa's segregations policies developed a sense of anti-apartheid regime that provided concrete norms and regulations such as the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the 1963 Special Committee against Apartheid under the *UN Resolution 1761* to deal with the problem (Stultz 1991). The increasing consideration of human rights has led more countries to condemn South Africa for its domestic policymaking and influenced its status inside the organization.

Lastly, the trend of decolonization in the Third World countries in the 1950s was likewise another significant moment for these newly independent countries to develop their state capacities, especially in the region of Asia and Africa. The post-colonial sentiment has gathered the voices of the colored people from the Afro-Asian countries and made them act averse to imperialism. Based on this historical background, makes the African continent a perfect breeding ground for the ROC for expanding its economic and political purposes. Since the ROC did not only possess the membership inside the UN, but it was also a permanent member of the Security Council, having sufficient allies and gaining support from other nations truly matters for its existence.

Meanwhile, the PRC has been active in its aid strategy and engagement with the African countries since the 1955 Bandung Conference to win the hearts and minds of these countries since it was still an outsider of the UN at that time. Therefore, the ROC was urged to gain sustenance from the newly independent countries so that it could help to stabilize its power and position in the UN during the 1960s. In other words, South Africa as a state that wasn't favored by the UN members would certainly be put in the spot of second overall after the other African countries at this moment.

## **2.2 Policy Influence from the Overseas Chinese**

### **2.2.1 The Role of Chinese Community Council in South Africa**

Under this circumstance, the overseas Chinese have become an influential actor in the relationship between the two. Specifically, with all these changes in the international system along with the racial hierarchies happening in South Africa, the priorities for the overseas Chinese were to improve their social status for their living. Based on economic purposes, the overseas Chinese realize that keeping a low key in political affairs and social participation are the two vital components for incorporation into local societies (Lee 2017, 126).

The variations of the role of the overseas Chinese could also represent policy influence and stimulus on the ROC's relationship with South Africa. Due to the domestic segregation policies, the colored people did not have the authority to franchise or participate in the political affairs back at this time, which made it reasonable why overseas Chinese did not have a strong intention of overturning policies made by the government. Therefore, forming overseas Chinese community councils is the most practical method to coordinate with the local society. For instance, local overseas Chinese community councils such as the Transvaal Chinese Association of South Africa (*Nanfeizhou dusheng zhonghua gonghui* 南斐洲杜省中華總公會) had bonded a close connection effectively not only with the ROC government but also had elevated to a higher level of association with the South African government officials for acquiring more assistance and delivering their requests



through the two channels on hand. Moreover, it was the leading actor in negotiating anti-racial policies during the premier stage of the apartheid era (Lee 2000, 385-386).

The condition of exclusive regulations on the Chinese in South Africa had yet begun in 1885, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROC also started its negotiation in 1942 with eliminating the restriction of Chinese living areas.<sup>1</sup> From this, the timeline has been pushed in advance of the segregation policies had been officially announced. For the ROC government, with the complicated situation of having segregation policies inside South Africa, ameliorating the treatment and status of the overseas Chinese became one network for the government to increase its interaction with the South African government.

However, though the ROC had tried to put its emphasis on dealing with issues that were related to the treatment of the overseas Chinese during the 1940s and 1950s, the substantial influences on lessening the discrimination were still quite limited. Not only because the capacity rebuilding was still in process for the ROC, but also because the scarcity of Chinese population living in this country that yet to is considered as the chief actor to lead this two-sided relationship. Regarding the populace at this moment, the overseas Chinese belonging to the Asian category was still the minority inside the local society with only 21,9691 people compared to other colored people, the Indians, with 1,769,661 people in total.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the impacts from the overseas Chinese had remained at a preliminary stage for both sides of government regardless of any purpose.

### 2.2.2 Lessons Learned from the Indian Immigrants

Besides the factor of the population that has been mentioned, another conceivable reason for this situation was because of the previous experiences of the Indians. Since the Indians as the second-largest colored people besides the Black and owned a particular

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<sup>1</sup> “Nanfei paihua keli zhi jiantao” [Review of South Africa's Severe Chinese exclusion]. October 12, 1946. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (1) [Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (1)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0003.

<sup>2</sup> “Huaqiao diaocha gaikuang baogao” [Report of investigation on the Overseas Chinese]. July 1941. In *Nanfei huaqiao diaocha gaikuang baogao [Report of Investigation on the Overseas Chinese in South Africa]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0010.

category under the segregation policies, the relationship between South Africa and India was even more complex than expected. Indian as one of the prominent racial categories under the segregation policies, its status, as well as its policies towards South African government, played a quite persuasive position for the colored people to learn from.

Right before the apartheid era had begun, the Indian government did not only raise this issue of racial inequality at the international level but also took governmental action on cutting down both diplomatic and economic activities with South Africa (Khan 2010, 618-619). When this conflict had been raised internationally and prompted the UN to handle the situation, which made South Africa more aggressive towards them and took revenge by using commercial means, such as the abolishment of working with the Indian companies.<sup>3</sup> Out of the sentiment of fear of causing any risk to economic relations, displeasing South Africa was not an option for the ROC to choose from. Consequently, the ROC decided to keep the conversation just between the two instead of following in the Indians' footsteps.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROC government had worked on analyzing the possible reasons why the Chinese have been excluded by the country and listed out the discrepancies between the Indians and the Chinese to ensure that the strategies that the government was implementing can be a feasible way to do so. Surprisingly, this trepidation derived from South Africa mainly based on economic purposes which were beyond the anti-racial sentiments.

From the historical development in South Africa, a similar indication had happened back in the early 1900s in South Africa when there was a competition between the Afrikaners and the English-speaking minorities. Despite the two groups of people required the privilege of having the same white complexion, the former colonization from the British Empire had made the Afrikaners aimed for impeding any economic possibility for the minority of English speakers, and also the founder of the South African National Party James Barry Munnik Hertzog had promoted a series of discriminated policies against them through political tactics to prevent any damage on Afrikaner's welfares (Feinberg 1993,

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<sup>3</sup> “Gaishan qiaomin zai nanfei daiyu an [Report of Alleviation for the Treatment on the Overseas Chinese in South Africa]. October 30, 1946. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (2) [Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (2)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0004.

71-72). This might enlighten why even if the South African government was implementing its whiteness project by avoiding “Indian Penetration”, it can’t ignore the efficiency that the Indian laborers could bring into the local market and even became one cause of why the Chinese exclusion had occurred simply because for conserving its national interests.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.2.3 Economic Activities

Under this circumstance, the ROC government is aware of the significance of economic interests for South Africa, which makes the overseas Chinese practicably a diplomatic tool to engage with South Africa. As mentioned earlier, the single action of the ROC was quite limited, while enhancing the connection with overseas Chinese become the most rational way for the ROC to attach itself attentively South African economy even when South Africa was facing the risks of international sanction from the UN in the 1960s and 1970s.

For the overseas Chinese, this reciprocal relationship with the ROC government was a conduit to obtain not only grander social status but also the economic opportunities that could be gained or regained from this country, which made this cooperation seem like a great deal and a chance to put themselves in the center of the focus within the diplomatic relationship. The promotion of social status for the overseas Chinese was another thing that it aimed insistently for, which was becoming the Honorary White. What makes this status tremendously special and attractive to the colored people was the equivalent dispensation with the White that could be acquired in the racial regime of South Africa.

With the segregation policies came into practice, the *1950 Group Area Act* had become the targeting issue for both the ROC government and the overseas Chinese. They had the mutual objective of abiding by regulations on categorizing Chinese as a different race apart from the White but not for their living areas (*huaren fenzong bu fenqu* 華人分種不分區). Overseas Chinese community council representing the voice of the ROC

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<sup>4</sup> “Nanfei tudi faan” [Land Act of South Africa]. Sep. 1947. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (3) (Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (3))*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0005.

government, had begun initiating contacts with the South African governmental sector that coped with land leasing, *Land Tenure Advisory Board*.

In the year of 1952, the chief of The Chinese Association Gauteng (*Nanfei zhonghua zongonghui* 南非中華總公會), Liang Lu-yuan (梁祿元), participated in a convention with the head of this committee, Vos Hugo, for its request of not mixing the Chinese and Indian in the same discussion due to the dissimilarity of traditional cultures, and also for the inquiry of purchasing overseas Chinese properties.<sup>5</sup> In the end, the South African government did not act harshly on the overseas Chinese and had offered verbal commits on this matter. Although this attempt did not go well as expected, such tradition still became the starting point for the overseas Chinese participating in the official negotiation with both sides' officials in a formal event.

From the following events, the converting implication of overseas Chinese was cognizant. When the Japanese received the social status of “Honorary Whites” in 1960, this made the overseas Chinese community councils extremely worried, especially the overseas Chinese who had been the ones fighting against segregation policies for years and were disappointed by the performance of the ROC. Liu Zong-han (劉宗瀚), who was the Chief Minister from the Consulate General of ROC in Johannesburg, together with the Chairman of the Transvaal Chinese Association persuaded the principal officials in Cape Town to improve the management of the overseas Chinese.<sup>6</sup> Also, the overseas Chinese acted as the focal point when South Africa’s request of setting up a Consulate in Taipei was turned down by the ROC government in 1965. In the petition written by the Transvaal Chinese Association, these overseas Chinese had made two demands clearly on this issue:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Nanfei zhengfu shishi zhongzhu fenqu faan yu nanfei tudi zulin guwen weyuanhui huishang jingguo” [Implementation of South Africa’s Group Area Act and Procedure of the Convening with Land Tenure Advisory Board of South Africa]. October 21, 1953. In *Nanfei zhengqing (6)* [Political Circumstances in South Africa (6)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-0723.

<sup>6</sup> “Nanfei huaqiao shiwu” [Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa]. February 22, 1962. In *Nanfei huaqiao shiwu (1)* [Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (1)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-2726.

<sup>7</sup> “Nanfei huaqiao diwei ji qiaoqing” [Social Status and Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa]. May 28, 1965. In *Nanfei huaqiao diwei ji qiaoqing (2)* [Social Status and Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (2)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0009.

*“First, we hope that the ROC government could show solicitude on the situation of South African overseas Chinese and do not react over acutely otherwise we are afraid that the South African government might take revenge on us. Secondly, please be diplomatic on handling the rights for the overseas Chinese to take the chance of seizing equal treatment as the White.”*

In reply to the concern of the overseas Chinese, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROC claimed that the rejection so far did not cause any detrimental effects on the bilateral relationship, and the treatment of the overseas Chinese had been improved with the help of the ROC government for years. For the ROC government, Pretoria’s decision to establish a Consulate in Taipei was not a clever decision to maintain the current relationship with other members inside the UN, especially considering the voting from other African countries.

If South Africa’s request had been approved, which manifested that ROC showed its intention in building a greater relationship with South Africa that was the last thing other member countries had in mind. Therefore, we could observe that the ROC government remain quite a conservative attitude on this issue in the 1960s. Even when the Consulate was eventually set up in Taipei in 1967, no official statement was made on this worth celebrating event by the ROC government to avoid any misunderstanding by other UN member states (United Daily News, January 11, 1967).

With the attitude hesitation of the ROC government behaved towards South Africa, these overseas Chinese decided to take a bigger approach in this relationship between ROC and South Africa to accelerate the speed of acquiring their status of Honorary White. During this time, the overseas Chinese community council such as the Transvaal Chinese Association expressed their request hoping that the ROC government could agree with the countermeasures on dealing with the categorizing living area of the Chinese with them before the official negotiation with the South African government.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the claim of the overseas Chinese had shown its influence in this diplomatic relationship in terms of

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<sup>8</sup> “Nanfei huaqiao daiyu an” [Case of Treatment on South Africa’s Overseas Chinese]. April 18, 1963. In *Nanfei huaqiao diwei ji qiaoping (1)* [Social Status and Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (1)] Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0008.

overseas Chinese community affairs and had become the primary actor that represents the overseas Chinese since the 1960s was completely tenable.

Nonetheless, as the overseas Chinese had progressively demonstrated its policy influence, everything comes with its price and without any exception. Under the international atmosphere against South Africa's segregation policies, ROC had to act pretty passively on strengthening its relationship with South Africa to go with this trend of human rights advocacy. Therefore, the presence of overseas Chinese had become a wonderful pretext to explain ROC's comportment versus South Africa in the UN. When the Chief Minister Wei Yu-sun (魏煜孫) from the Consulate General of ROC in Johannesburg visited the overseas Chinese at Bloemfontein in 1963, he stated that all the opposition towards South Africa inside the UN was based on the interests of overseas Chinese and exhorted them that they heed the ROC government was no less than other countries.<sup>9</sup>

From this statement, we could sense that the ROC government was trying to temper down overseas Chinese criticism of not developing bonded relationships with South Africa that might hurt their existing interests. To find a balance in these interactions of not losing faith in the overseas Chinese and preserving ties with South Africa, the ROC government decided to emphasize and promote its economic development in the country and assigned overseas Chinese to take the leading position in establishing future economic activities as long as they did not betray national interests. For the ROC government, conducting economic activities under the guise of overseas Chinese was the ultimate path to handle this precarious situation.

### **2.3 Situational Identity: Brotherhood or Selfishness?**

With the increasing scale and rising authority of the local Chinese community council, organizations like Transvaal Chinese Association has founded the board of trade between South Africa and the ROC for upgrading the economic relationship between the two in 1967, which was called the South African Chinese Trade Promotion (*Nanfei*

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<sup>9</sup> "Nanfei An" [Case of South Africa]. November 19, 1962. In *Nanfei huaqiao shiwu (2) [Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (2)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-2727.

*huaqiao maoyi cujinhui* 南斐華僑貿易促進會).<sup>10</sup> This successful attempt made by the overseas Chinese prompted the ROC government to follow up and extend more economic interactions with South Africa after its expulsion from the UN. At the beginning of 1972, ROC approved setting up the department for commercial specialists in South Africa for encouraging additional foreign investments flowing in (United Daily News, March 26, 1972).

Contrasting to the equivocal stance, ROC made a pretty clear statement in working with South Africa and had advanced the diplomatic ties from consular level to ambassadorial level in 1976, which was just a few years after its expulsion from the UN. Starting from the 1970s, the official relationship finally went public and was strongly advocated by the domestic media in ROC. One of the dominant governmental newspapers back at that time even claimed this diplomatic enhancement of bilateral relationships was necessary and with an active meaning (United Daily News, April 27, 1976).

With all the conversions and twists on ad hoc bilateral relationships, ROC in terms of its attitude towards South Africa was very situational and interest-oriented and so did its interaction with the overseas Chinese. Before its expulsion from the UN, the ROC government claimed that all of the unfavorable actions against South Africa were aimed at protecting overseas Chinese without any hard feelings towards South Africa but simply regarded this country as a true ideological ally to the ROC. After suffering from isolation by the UN, ROC decided to focus on its economic blueprint in African countries, especially the ones with abundant overseas Chinese. South Africa, was an ideal candidate for the ROC government to settle on due to a long history of overseas Chinese brisiking inside this country.

As we know that identity being a constructed outcome that could be altered by changes in both physical and psychological phenomena, its formation could be determined by miscellaneous factors. From a spiritual partner to an authentic friend, ROC's perception

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<sup>10</sup> "Nanfei huaqiao daiyu an" [Case of Treatment on South Africa's Overseas Chinese]. June 11, 1965. In *Nanfei huaqiao diwei ji qiaoping (2)* [Social Status and Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (2)] Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0009.

had altered dramatically when it faced different circumstances. So why and how an actor could respond distinctly in a short time? To explain this, the social identity theory proposed by Stets and Burke (2000) could help us comprehend this evolution. From the angle of social identity theory, situational activation may happen at a specific point which makes a particular identity salient in functioning interactions not only to the situation itself but also affects the traits of the percipient (Stets and Burke 2000, 31).

The theorem of Wendt's constructivism suggests that identities and interests are intentional actors constructed by shared ideas (Wendt 1999, 1). While the social identity theory argued from a different perspective that advocates the varied identities that put individuals in an interaction, guide behavior, or stabilize social relationships (Stets and Burke 2000, 32). Identity-based on constructivism theory is the congruent dependent variable in the process of conceptualization. As for the social identity theory, the role of identity acts as one of the independent variables to structure the situation. Sometimes the circumstance of multiple identities even happens when these actors try to address conflicts or hassles (Stets and Burke 2000, 44).

Hence, ROC as a form of constructed identity has its own "situational identity" by having this characteristic of multiple identities that could vary its interactions with the South African government and these overseas Chinese. Therefore, a double-track approach from the governmental to the societal level for its country's economic investment became ROC's priority in interrelating with South Africa.

Generally speaking, the situational identity did not only occur to the ROC government but also to the overseas Chinese interacting with the South African government. Besides the literature review about the Chinese diaspora under the sphere of spatial and territorial networks, the component of temporality matters in altering the intermediaries between relations of actors (Chan 2015, 109-110). Due to the desperation alleviating their treatment under the apartheid system, overseas Chinese's self-perception of their race tends to be changeable and flow to meet the expectation and requirements of the host country. On the flip side, they also need assistance from the home country to connect them with the governmental sectors in South Africa. In the next chapter, we will



see how the concept of race has developed in South Africa and what efforts the overseas Chinese make under the segregation policies to achieve their end: Honorary Whites.



## Chapter 3 Reinterpreting Whiteness: Chinese Immigrants in South Africa

As the social status of Honorary Whites becomes an ultimate goal for the overseas Chinese, their perceptions and actions on segregation policies as well as their attitudes towards local government may change over time due to the pursuit of promotion on social status. The existence of this exemption on the other hand also indicates that the racist system under the apartheid era is not certainly fixed and unchangeable, but rather a more efficient pathway for the non-white people to be like White without violating the Constitution of South Africa. During the process of overseas Chinese confronting unequal treatment, particularly between 1940s and 1960s, the arrangements and exclusion of these policies may not only revise our established conception of whiteness but also inspect the key reasons that have determined their social status under the apartheid era.

### 3.1 Whiteness in South Africa

When the concept of whiteness has gazed at through the lens of race, the content of the term is far more than just about dissimilarities in complexion or barely a symbol for signifying superiority, it also indicates having greater privilege or rights on certain issues matters in shaping perceptions on identity (Very and Quayle 2012, 566). As mentioned in Chapter 2, numerous essential reasons affected ROC's interactions with South Africa including ideological confrontation under the Cold War as well as the decolonization that created a repercussion on the sense of "white supremacy". Because of these occurrences, racial hierarchies have intentionally permeated inside whiteness, and have become even more severe in the post-colonization world (Grubbs 2008, 408).

The sentiment of racism has become one of the consequences due to the rise of whiteness, in which the White identity was a strategic position to contain other potential rivalries and preserve power for the individualists mostly for political purposes. Especially in South Africa, becoming white or being perceived as White has become a useful key to unlocking the path to achieving better living conditions and social status. Consequently, it is less surprising to see why whiteness as the mainstream culture at this time had dominated South African society for quite a long period under the apartheid era.

Yet, the key question here is why whiteness is crucial to South Africa? Some scholars have argued that race is a social construct or even a policy construct in South Africa that could be altered or transformed (Posel 2001; Green et al. 2007). The primary stage of racial classification existing in South Africa was not a dichotomization between black and white, but rather the distinction of colored people and natives as a situational decision for the local government to rule its country (Posel 2001, 92). As the Population Registration Act took place in 1950, modernizing and stabilizing racial classification became the utmost option for the Nationalist Party.

Race, thereby should not be regarded as a fixed essence but should be seen as a fluid conception that can be altered by the varying social phenomenon. Although there was a voice of denial stating the apartheid in South Africa should not be easily stated as the outcome of capitalism or racism (Lipton 1985, 365), we can't neglect that economic factors and the privilege that came along with a lighter complexion indeed played a decisive role in changing one's perception on self-identity, which ultimately might influence how the host country react to these people.

To answer exactly what was the stated social phenomenon, the presence of the overseas Chinese certainly took a huge role in that. According to the previous works of literature, some scholars were assuming that the South African government did not trust the Black labor and worried that they might interrupt the domestic economy (Lipton 1985, 18; Tiryakian 1960, 688). Earlier before South Africa had officially declared its segregation policies in the late 1940s, importing indentured Chinese labor was a rising trend during the wartime period of the Boer War to feed the needs of conserving interests for the White South African government. Thus, the principal form of the division between non-white and the white was highly correlated to those indentured Chinese laborers and these people were used for economic progression in the postwar South Africa (Huynh 2012, 142).

Based on the historical events, all that the South African government truly considered was preventing a salient group of races that might have any chance to overthrow the current regime. Therefore, at this time overseas Chinese as a smaller portion

of the racial group and viewed as “cheap” and “unskilled” laborers were slightly favored by the South African government compared to the Black (Huynh 2012, 139). Since the concept of race is fluid, particularly in South Africa, which makes the White identity a symbol or a status that can be pursued for acquiring living assurance, such as economic opportunities, higher education, and non-classification of living area. For overseas Chinese working and living in the country, their priority was also aiming that the economic progression that they provided to South Africa can become the ticket that guided them through.

As these overseas Chinese have established and expanded their impact through the Chinese community councils and economic activities, the precautious mindset of the South African government raised the alarm. When the ROC government was trying to consult an exchange of notes for sharing equality and reciprocity for the indentured Chinese labor, the South African government did not provide any feedback but left the ROC government with a one-sided approach.<sup>11</sup> Instead, a sequence of Chinese exclusion acts continued to deprive the rights of the overseas Chinese.

### **3.2 Overseas Chinese Fighting Against Segregation Policies**

Particularly during the 1940s to 1960s, several segregation policies had brought tremendous impacts on the Chinese living in the country. During these decades, the overseas Chinese did not simply face a single action under the apartheid era but had several acts that were very influential to them leading to their determination to pursue the status of becoming the White. Nonetheless, the discussion will be only focusing on segregation policies that were highly related to the daily lives of overseas Chinese due to the large scope and aspects that had covered which might lose our attention of the section. By following the three aspects in this section: living area, recreation, public premises, and education, we could look into the process of how the overseas Chinese fight against these policies to elevate their social status and treatment.

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<sup>11</sup> “Geguo dui huaqiao keli an” [Countries’ Exclusion Act on the Overseas Chinese]. October 28, 1942. In *Xiugai huagong chuguo tiaoli ji she gaishan huaqiao daiyu* [Revision of Principles on Overseas Chinese Labors and Alleviation of Treatment on the Overseas Chinese]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-070900-0029.

### 3.2.1 Living Area

The initial impression for most people regarding the circumstance of Chinese exclusion was the apartheid era when the Nationalist Party launched a series of segregation policies in 1948 that classified these citizens into different racial groups. However, this general comprehension of segregation policies was relatively narrow for understanding this issue. In South Africa, the whole concept of “living area” signifies how the races were distributed in certain districts and these people could only live with people that they were assigned. Yet for the overseas Chinese, it was all about how their identity had been settled and represented a differentiation of themselves from other races of colored people.

Besides the above-stated *1885 Chinese Exclusion Act* and the *1937 Alien Act*, the *1946 Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act* was the one that discouraged the overseas Chinese before the apartheid was officially proclaimed in South Africa. The motivation of this *Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act* was to restrict the rights of the Asians purchasing their housing properties in Natal and Transvaal provinces and to confine their economic impacts purposely.<sup>12</sup> When the South African government heralded the *Group Area Act* in 1950, it had drawn a huge backlash from the overseas Chinese because they were settled in the “colored district” in which the Indians and the Malaysians all living together inside this area. For the overseas Chinese, just living with the colored people predestined that they were treated as second-class citizens and this irritated them.

As the trend of segregation policies grew in South Africa, this new act had not only replaced all the relevant acts in the provinces of Natal and Transvaal but mainly targeted the Cape Province, which was one of the most populated provinces in South Africa. In order not to mix the rights with the other colored people, both the ROC government and the local overseas Chinese had requested the South African authority to make some differentiation and three suggestions had been made: firstly, South Africa should give the overseas Chinese the principle of most favored nation treatment based on reciprocity;

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<sup>12</sup> “Nanfei yazhouren faan baogao” [South African Asian Act Report]. July 26, 1947. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (3)* [*Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (3)*]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0005.

secondly, the overseas Chinese should be removed from the classification of Asians; lastly, the overseas Chinese could apply the letter of exemption for acquiring a residence in certain areas.<sup>13</sup>

According to the *Land Tenure Advisory Board*, the South African government could not remove the overseas Chinese from the colored area due to the regulation of segregation policies but advised that they could set up a specific area for the Chinese. In this case, the vice president Vos Hugo from the *Land Tenure Advisory Board* had expressed his recommendations when the representatives from the Chinese Association Gauteng visited the Cape Province:<sup>14</sup>

*“Whether the cases that overseas Chinese were involved under the 1946 Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act can be held off should be determined by the Minister of Interior of South Africa. Regarding the Group Area Act, we could announce these South African Chinese as ‘a Chinese group without a group area’ just like the ‘China Town’ in North America, since the overseas Chinese had uniqueness in their own culture and had less population inside the country.”*

At this point, the ROC government did not play the leading position during the negotiating process but decided to let these Chinese community councils deal with the problems due to political concerns. However, the achievements were far more than anticipated with the efforts of the overseas Chinese. For instance, the letter of exemption and a special area particular for the Chinese could be observed as some privileges and most importantly the watershed of turning overseas Chinese into the Honorary Whites. Even though the overseas Chinese was still part of the Asian group at this stage, the moderate approach of how the South African government handled the matter of living area has opened up an unusual possibility for not only the overseas Chinese but more chances of interactions for the ROC government to bargain with the country.

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<sup>13</sup> “Baohu huaqiao an” [Act of Protecting Overseas Chinese]. September 19, 1950. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (4)* [Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (4)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0006.

<sup>14</sup> “Guanyu zhongzufenqufa shi” [Affairs of Group Area Act]. September 19, 1950. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (4)* [Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (4)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0006.

### 3.2.2 Recreation and Public Premises

Besides race and complexion may imply white superiority and privilege in South Africa, enjoying recreation and sharing public premises with the Europeans can also denote that overseas Chinese belong to the same group as White. Since the early 1900s, for colored people access to liquor had been the most vigorous issue among all types of recreation. Exceptionally for the overseas Chinese, they had acquired its exclusion twice from the *1928 Liquor Act*.<sup>15</sup>

In the former section, the argument stated that the division of living areas or purchasing estates could be an index to tell whether these people were dispensed or not, entering bars or expending on alcohol had suggested that the overseas Chinese could afford high-end entertainment and were perceived equally to some extent as the White. Unlike the gradual development of these overseas Chinese fighting for their living area, it was also surprising to see how the historical context of liquor rights had evolved and this process was fairly tortuous. The prohibition on accessing liquor originally was not for the colored people but the Black. However, the motives behind why the government implemented restrictions on these people were somehow identical. This sentiment of ambivalence toward liquor industry interests had molded racial attitudes inside South Africa, which explained why alcohol policies and the government's perception of the race were mutually malleable contexts (Martens 2001, 316-317).

For the first time that the overseas Chinese were not listed as the Asians after the negotiation between the government was in 1943. Originally, the *Liquor Act* was aimed at prohibiting Asians to consume and drinking alcohol. With the ban lifted, the overseas Chinese had begun to resell the liquors to the Indians and the Blacks to gain economic interests for themselves, which had ultimately angered the South African government and relisted overseas Chinese back to the banning list in 1952. Since this movement had raised the anger and torment of the overseas Chinese, the ROC government had no choice but to

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<sup>15</sup> “Wei nanfei zhengfu tongling huifu huaren jiuji” [Circular for South African Government Restoring Liquor Ban on the Chinese]. September 1, 1952. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (4)* [*Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (4)*]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0006.

get the conciliation started.<sup>16</sup> In the end, the South African government decided to lift the ban once again only for the overseas Chinese and claimed that the restrictions which do not apply to Europeans, shall not apply to the members of the Chinese race.

Nevertheless, there were still some restrictions that remained as the precaution that the overseas Chinese should abide by. Afterward, they needed approval from the Minister of Justice when purchasing the liquors in the future (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC, April 5, 1954). Regardless of the successful achievements that were made during the event, the previous action that the overseas Chinese had done which could have harmed economic interests domestically already intrigued the cautious mindset of the South African government. The overseas Chinese were not granted any permanent rights, but rather faced consecutive segregation policies after this.

After closing the dispute on the *Liquor Act*, the South African government announced a novel act called “*The Reservation of Separate Amenities*” in the same year. The incentive of this lately announced regulation was to separate the Europeans and non-Europeans from the public premises as well as the public vehicles. What makes it extremely unusual compared to the previous regulations that worked on the colored people was that the law had strictly been implemented and was oblivious to any exception, even the overseas Chinese that had their receipt issuing granted by the Consulate of Johannesburg.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the overseas Chinese couldn’t receive special authority from the *Group Area Act* and be seen as a cohort with the Indians and other colored people, which had become a massive hurdle for the overseas Chinese to overcome in the process of pursuing greater social status.

In general terms, the picture of changing certain legal acts had been quite diverse between the South African government and the overseas Chinese. For the South African

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<sup>16</sup> “Guanyu nanfei zhengfu chongban huaren jiujiu yan” [Case of South African Government Restoring Liquor Ban on the Chinese]. February 20, 1953. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (4)* [Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (4)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0006.

<sup>17</sup> “Nanfei xinban shezhifeniexiangyongfa yuanwen ji yiwen” [Original Text and Translation of South African government New Announcement on *The Reservation of Separate Amenities*]. November 6, 1953. In *Baohu nanfei huaqiao (4)* [Protect Overseas Chinese in South Africa (4)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0006.



government, the whole purpose behind was not about discriminating against the ample colored people through the lens of the race but rather preserving their economic interests and domestic stability through these regulations as its tool of protection. As for the colored people specifically the overseas Chinese, loosening restrictions on recreation and public premises represents an elevation of identity.

### 3.2.3 Education

In South Africa, the racial hierarchy appeared conspicuously under the apartheid system, in which the schools were ranked in sequence as the White, Indians, Colored, and Africans (Morrow 1990, 174-175). To put it simply, enrolling in the White education was a higher level of significance compared to living area, recreation, and public premises that portended an elevation of their social status and identity in the country.

In the early 1960s, Pretoria decided to transfer the internal affairs of the overseas Chinese to the Ministry of Interior due to the cancellation of the Department of Asian Affairs, which was a turning point for the overseas Chinese because they were directly governed by the government with the Europeans apart from the Indians.<sup>18</sup> Because of this reassessment, the overseas Chinese consciously think that they were another step closer to sharing the same privileges as the White at the present, thus beginning their pursuit for the rights of their offspring to enroll in the European schools.

Furthermore, if they could get into the European schools, not only would it address this resentfulness from the overseas Chinese on this matter but also would do a huge favor for them to deal with the South African government in the future. Consequently, which made cultivating overseas Chinese education become a vital task for the ROC government since most of the courses were taught in the Cantonese dialect, which was problematic to some Chinese students who spoke Hakka.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, things did not turn out well as to

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<sup>18</sup> “Jiaoshe nanfei zhongzu qishi renzhong keli” [Negotiating Principles of Racial Discrimination in South Africa]. September 13, 1968. In *Nanfei huaqiao shiwu (3) [Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (3)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-2731.

<sup>19</sup> “Jiaoshe qiaotong jinru ouren xuexiao jingguo yiu” [Negotiation for the Overseas Chinese Children Entering European Schools]. December 19, 1962. In *Nanfei huaqiao shiwu (3) [Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (3)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-2728.

their wishes. Since the apartheid education system was accompanied by the *1950 Group Area Act*, which made these education stipulations had ascertained both schooling facilities and financial expenditure that eventually favored the European schools (Nel and Binns 1999, 119).

Even if a progression had been made, the overseas Chinese were still legally placed in the group of colored persons as far as legally concerned, which made the education provisions concerning the colored people such as the *Colored Persons Education Act 47 of 1963* and the *Colored Persons Education Amendment Act 76 of 1967* still legally abiding by them. In the document, it cited explicitly that no people could manage schools for the education of colored people that was state-regulated or state-aided (Government Gazette Extraordinary 1963). As a result, the topmost problem was that the primary criteria for the overseas Chinese children studying in these schools is living nearby school districts, which was merely impossible for the colored people to get access to it due to the *1950 Group Area Act* and made this a fleeting opportunity for the overseas Chinese to make grand changes towards the education policies in just a transient moment.

Generally, these above-mentioned contexts provided us with practical insights into overseas Chinese striving for their rights on crucial topics under the racist system in South Africa. Specifically, during the period between the 1940s and 1960s, with a succession of segregation policies implemented that even though overseas Chinese were hitherto part of the Asian Group, these endeavors and accomplishments had transformed specifically into those prearrangements to become the Honorary White.

### **3.3 Becoming the Honorary Whites**

#### **3.3.1 Overseas Chinese as the Honorary Whites**

“Honorary White” is a unique social status from the South African government which is a standard to classify colored people and to measure whether these people could access the rights that were only for the Europeans. This hierarchical division of race had granted these non-whites the entitlements not only literally speaking but also practically

affected their living quality, which makes this an extremely attractive goal to attain. To acquire this social status, overseas Chinese had tackled the issues of unequal management and treatment carefully and deliberately on this matter.

As revealed beforehand the exclusion of the Chinese already ensued since the late 19th century, the amount of Chinese indentured labor increased and the rising impact from the Chinese community councils had caused the South African government acting vigilant towards them. Therefore, several segregation policies worked straightforwardly on the overseas Chinese, and the assurances granted by the local government in the premature phases of the official apartheid system with most of them appearing to be very superficial without law-binding implementations. Nevertheless, this did not dishearten the overseas Chinese to act passively or pessimistically towards the South African government. Dissimilar to what many scholars have been emphasizing about the concept of “Chinese-ness” may define how the South African overseas Chinese thinking of not wanting to be seen as the White (Park 2017, 37), the existing shreds of evidence tell us another side of the story.

A conversation between Wei Yu-sun (魏煜孫), the Chief Minister of the Consulate General of ROC in Johannesburg, and the overseas Chinese leader at the beginning of the 1960s, cited distinctly that the overseas Chinese had taken a more serious attitude toward South Africa’s interests rather than the ROC.<sup>20</sup> It is striking to see how these overseas Chinese who lived in South Africa tend to perceive the national interests of South Africa as the foremost welfare to them, which made the overseas Chinese in South Africa an unusual case to study since most of the conventional wisdom and scholarly works often highlighted the connection of the overseas Chinese and their home country (Li 2017; Park 2017). What makes it even more astounding is that these overseas Chinese views themselves as the “South African”.

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<sup>20</sup> “Nanfei zhonghua zonggonghui gaixuan ji gaihui daibiao jinjian nanfei zongli fabiao shengming” [Re-election of Chinese Association Gauteng and the Statement Calling on Prime Minister of South Africa]. January 4, 1963. In *Nanfei huaqiao shiwu (4)* [Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (4)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-2729.

In one article from the *United Daily News*, the context stated that the representatives of the Chinese Association Gauteng visited Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd handing him a loyal guarantee which claimed that: “we were truly dissatisfied by the ROC government voting on sanctioning South Africa and we regarded ourselves as people of the country. Thus, we shared the same stance as yours on this issue (*United Daily News*, November 14, 1962).”

At this moment, the only imperative to the overseas Chinese was to maintain rights and was trying to promote their treatments instead of putting their relationship with the ROC government in the first place. Fortunately, their dedication did pay off and was recognized by the host government long since the official declaration of the Chinese as the Honorary White in 1984 when the former Vice President Lee Teng-hui paid their visit to South Africa. In other words, the timeline of obtaining the status of Honorary White was talking past each other.

Approximately a decade before this, the South African government antecedently esteemed the Chinese community councils as part of the White community and were privileged with the rights same as the Europeans (*United Daily News*, October 12, 1970). After this, the following breakthrough accomplished the access to public premises and hostels that used to be prohibited by the local government (*United Daily News*, April 5, 1970). Based on these actions, the announcement and progression on achieving better status were contracted only to the overseas Chinese, not the ROC government. Due to the vague standpoint of the ROC government, the South African government did not grant any promising policies before its expulsion from the United Nations. As for the overseas Chinese, their stance towards overseas Chinese had been relatively constant and active. On that account, the social status of announcing Chinese as the Honorary White should be credited chiefly to the efforts of overseas Chinese.

At the same time, the launch of Honorary White was an unusual situation in the apartheid system, and yet to be found in other African countries, which made the exploration even more thought-provoking by observing in which way did the colored people go all out for changing their status to be the equivalent of the White. As the

overseas Chinese had multiple times been granted immunities by the South African government, the fluctuations of their status could reflect the current relationship with the local government as well as ROC's connection with South Africa.

### **3.3.2 Status of Overseas Chinese under the Apartheid**

Discussion of overseas Chinese status in South Africa was a wrangling topic to talk upon at the apartheid era. Mainly because most people stated that these overseas Chinese as a race in the middle between the Black and the White, its fixed position had always been perceived as “too white for the Black and too black for the White” (Ho 2012, 112). As a matter of fact, the previous scholarly works identified that there was a “grey area” about how other groups of citizens' perceptions of viewing them were solely by their complexion. Still, this had neglected the connotation of the formerly noted segregation regulations in the earlier section that were implemented on overseas Chinese in the early stage of the apartheid system.

Another noteworthy fact was that how and what the overseas Chinese had done to refine the grey area could be informative in comprehending their changing status inside this country. For instance, the Honorary White was a status for the colored people to quest for not to mention that it was correspondingly a measurement instructed by the South African government to shorten the discrepancies among the colored for its good. To put it another way, if the colored people wanted this social status, they had to fulfill the demands of their host country instead of the home country, which was reasonable to see why overseas Chinese showed obedience to the South African government for their benefit.

Inspecting the interactions among the ROC government, the South African government, and the overseas Chinese, unconcreted stances on these segregation policies had formed this grey area at the governmental level between the ROC and South Africa rather than South Africa's observation of the overseas Chinese. Both the South African government and the overseas Chinese are inclined to economic interests in dealing with these policies. When the overseas Chinese were facing tensing segregation policies and

competition with other colored people, they openly expressed their opinion that the only two options for uplifting the social status: establishing diplomatic relations and trade.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the only thing that the ROC government considered were the consequences of siding too close with South Africa, which might enrage other allies in Africa. The circumstance happened even after the Consulate of Taipei was officially settled. The ROC government its economic relationship with South Africa still insists would not trigger antipathy from other African countries.<sup>22</sup> Undoubtedly, the prior consideration for the ROC government was to earn trust from other diplomatic allies and meanwhile via the powers of overseas Chinese to preserve its relations with South Africa. Even so, its performance of situational identity had raised skepticism from the two and further impacted its relationship with the overseas Chinese.

### 3.4 Whitening Motives, Segregation Policies, and Honorary Whites

Overall, the definition of whiteness in South Africa had never been dichotomization of Europeans and non-Europeans based on distinctions in colors but rather a racial hierarchy that aimed for transforming the non-Europeans to be like and act as the White through the country's whitening process. Several components were decisive during the process, including the implementation of segregation policies and the exemption of social status. The discussion in this chapter, also indicates that the degree of the whitening process will also be determined by how valuable to the country. Whitening occurred when these people brought national welfare to the country. From the primary presence of overseas Chinese as indentured laborers who worked in South Africa, we may be aware that survival had long been the highest concern for the overseas Chinese. As for South Africa, the loyalty and obedience of what the government needed was the exemplification of economic interests.

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<sup>21</sup> “Guanyu yu nanfei qiashang zai woguo sheli zonglingguan shi” [Inquiry of South Africa's Request of Setting Consulate General in ROC]. September 3, 1962. In *Zhu yuehannisibao zonglingshiguan guanwu (1)* [Office affairs of Consulate General in Johannesburg of ROC (1)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-1555.

<sup>22</sup> “Guanyu nanfei gonheguo qia wo jinkuo gaiguo bailandi jiushi” [Republic of South Africa's Inquiry on Exporting Liquor to Republic of China]. December 26, 1968. In *Zongfei (nanfei) maoyi (7)* [ROC-South Africa Trading (7)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-991100-0165.

To ensure loyalty and obedience, applying segregation policies in various aspects of society was the most efficient and applicable method to put everyone in their right place. However, requests for advancing treatments would appear if the colored people were aware that their success was not proportional to their efforts. This is why the birth of Honorary White had been exceptionally substantial. Because in the depth of South Africa's heart, they were aware that the attempt of putting certain colored groups of people into the same group of White was shooting itself in the foot. The better way to control complaints and grievances was to form an extra position for non-Europeans.

With the creation of this social status, overthrowing segregation policies had no longer been the paramount objective for overseas Chinese. Accessing to rights the same as the White was the most assuring to their future. By abiding by the mindset of survival of the fittest of how the Chinese reacted to the Black, the equivalent idea similarly applied the racial competition among the colored people.

Another side-effect of this granted status is that it had shaken the feeling of the overseas Chinese reacted to their home country. Although the ROC seemed to provide constant diplomatic assistance to overseas Chinese for dealing with *qiaowu*, its hesitant attitude due to political concerns towards the South African government had become the biggest resistance to slow down the pace of improving treatments for their people. Upholding an economic-oriented mentality, the overseas Chinese surely did not want to offend South Africa and made up their mind siding with Pretoria. Throughout the whitening process, we noticed how the relationship between overseas Chinese and South Africa had developed. Simultaneously, under the changing status of overseas Chinese along with its interactions with the South African government, our investigation will go one step further to interpret overseas Chinese' relationship with their home country in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4 Functions and Values: Overseas Chinese and Republic of China

The relationship between overseas Chinese in South Africa and ROC falls into an interesting discussion that the essence of interactions is very interest-oriented. From the statements in the previous chapters, the way of conducting economic activities with South Africa turned out to be the best way that both overseas Chinese and ROC governments consented. Furthermore, the loyal performance of overseas Chinese has been favored by the local government compared to the ROC. With the gap of fourteen-year differences in acquiring the status of Honorary White, the achievements of the overseas Chinese should be regarded as an indispensable role in the bilateral relations of the two countries. Moreover, their contributions to overseas Chinese affairs have become potential sources for the domestic media.

### 4.1 Economic Incentives

The function of overseas Chinese to its government was not simply about the network for delivering messages or communicating on local affairs but could be valued as a type of economic source to their home government. The similar circumstance of overseas Chinese as an indication for a country to pursue economic purposes could date back to the late Qing dynasty when the Chinese emigrants flowed mostly into Southeast Asian countries.

Early in the 1870s, the imperial government no longer saw these people as traitors to the country and decided to assign them as the imperial representatives with some of them could offer protection to other migrants, In the 1890s, overseas Chinese became an important asset financially to the government (Mckeown 1999, 323). Weakening capacity of imperial China since the early 1900s and with its retreat to Taiwan, trading coolies (*kuli*) had become the tendency of how overseas Chinese operated in other host countries (Poston and Mei 1990, 481). Therefore, this might explain why there were such a high amount of indentured Chinese laborers appearing in South Africa during the same time. In the initial discussion of colored people facing segregation policies in South Africa, overseas Chinese's focus had constantly been economic-oriented judgment.



Respective incidents had occurred in the 1960s when a series of intensive segregation policies were implemented on the overseas Chinese that made them suspicious of their home government. Since the South African government kindly reached out to the ROC government by offering suggestions such as exchanging envoys, settling consulate, or establishing diplomatic relations, ROC had its reservations on every single issue. The Consulate General of ROC in Johannesburg had begun paving the way for closer relations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC in the mid-1950s, suggested to the government that sending trade missions to South Africa would not only establish a commercial relationship with the South African government like other countries did but also would be beneficial for developing overseas community affairs.<sup>23</sup> In the process of facing unequal treatment during the peak of segregation policies, the chief diplomat of the ROC in South Africa had already reckoned the prominence of commerce.

However, the ROC government did not make a further approach on this issue simply because of its political consideration. Additionally, ROC had yet to renounce the prestige of South African Chinese not until the early 1970s when the government finally had that willing spirit to concentrate on this issue. With all these combined factors, the South African government held a grudge against the ROC worried the overseas Chinese inside the country. Although the ROC government had augmented its interactions with both overseas Chinese and South Africa after its expulsion from the UN, the previous experiences of how the ROC government placed its national interests over the ones of their people had disappointed these overseas Chinese to again fully rely on their government psychologically.

Still and all, they were on the same page to some degree by putting economic incentives at the core of the bilateral relationship with South Africa. Chapter 3, mentions that the ROC government designated some overseas Chinese community councils to lead financial activities can also tell its prominence of it. The ROC government claimed that they would like to launch trade relations with South Africa and the Chief Minister Wei Yu-

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<sup>23</sup> “Wei jianyi wo yi pai maoyituan laifei fangwen yiu” [Suggestion of Sending Trade Mission to South Africa]. August 24, 1956. In *Zongfei (nanfei) maoyi (1)* [ROC-South Africa Trading (1)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-991100-0159.

sun of the Consulate General of ROC in Johannesburg also said that: “from now on, the best way to improve the overseas Chinese treatment was to strengthen bilateral relations economically”.<sup>24</sup> As implied in the last chapter, our finding stated that the overseas Chinese pointed assumed “trade” had played a critical role in sustaining a good relationship with South Africa that might help them to receive mitigation on treatments.

This suggestion was practical and realistic in a way because these overseas Chinese had always apprehended the key point of being “useful” as a necessary criterion for the ROC government taking seriously on their efforts. While the term “useful” could be explained as the quantity of assessment that they had made, and to what profits could be brought to the government, which was the essence more than anything else. Both the ROC government and the overseas Chinese had acknowledged the meaningful function of economic incentives in this diplomatic relationship. As more overseas Chinese had attained, these accomplishments mainly by the overseas Chinese were widely spread in the domestic newspaper and had taken as prosperous deeds achieved by our government. By viewing this, we could argue that overseas Chinese was not only a diplomatic tool to engage with South Africa in accumulating successes for the country’s diplomatic affairs but also, they acted as a persuasive part of the internal propaganda inside ROC.

## 4.2 Internal Propaganda

Other than being valued as economic incentives, internal propaganda was another component in managing the affiliation of overseas Chinese and the ROC. Before the discussion, the meaning of “propaganda” should be first clearly defined here. Usually, it is demarcated as a sort of discourse that the argument engrossed the mass appeal for reaching certain commitment through an emotional approach (Walton 1997, 404). This is why some scholars argued that propaganda itself involves the characteristics of persuasion (Jewett and O’Donnell 2018; Walton 1997), since its implementation may shift the dialogues among the mass by making people believe what they have to believe. As for internal

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<sup>24</sup> “Wei fazhan zhongfei maoyi shi” [Affairs of Establishing Trade between ROC and South Africa]. May 15, 1963. In *Nanfei huaqiao diwei ji qiaoping (1)* [Social Status and Affairs of Overseas Chinese in South Africa (1)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032104-0008.

propaganda, its idea is akin to the concept and normally used as a tool to express what the government wants the public to comprehend and accept on particular topics sometimes containing irrational sentiment.

Besides the traits, what type of function it could offer and how overseas Chinese work as an instrument of internal propaganda will be discussed in this section. Some argued that propaganda is to secure peace and maintain stability (Johnson 2011; Gadsden 1986). Therefore, the usage of propaganda had often been practiced back in wartime. At the time of the American Civil War, propaganda had become an emerging force politically and economically (Jewett and O'Donnell 2018, 89-92). Interestingly, similar things happened in the other parts of the world back in their wartime, which makes this concept of wartime propaganda universal. For instance, during China's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the role of propaganda had been utilized as a way of strengthening a nation's competence internally (Johnson 2011, 317-318). During the Second World War, the Information Office in Kenya, which was directly operated by the British government, was playing a crucial role in increasing obedience from the citizens and silencing rumors inside the domestic society (Gadsden 1986, 409).

If the mentioned concept relates to the ROC's application of its propaganda toward South Africa and the overseas Chinese, everything seems to be logical and rationale to explain the situation. Particularly in the wartime of ideological competition, ROC government fighting against Communism, warfare on people's consciousness had been a decisive goal to keep faith inside country domestically and to spread information to other allies externally. In a sense, it could also be quite useful in halting excessive behaviors from the host countries.

Three leading media of ROC perceived as governmental newspapers such as *Chinatimes*, *United Daily News*, and *Central Daily News* had been effective media sources in carrying discourses to the public. As continuously discussed in the former sections, the 1960s and 1970s was the most complicated decade for these three actors, which made internal propaganda a might for the ROC government to secure faith domestically and internationally. In the first half of the 1960s, the focus of these newspapers was on the

condemnation of the UN towards South Africa in terms of its segregation policies. An article in *Central Daily News* reported that the Representative of ROC to the United Nations Liu Kai (劉鏞) hoped that the international organization could put more pressure on South Africa (*Central Daily News*, August 7, 1963).

Regarding ROC's diplomatic accomplishment, it was suggested that the government is going to develop better bilateral interactions and elevate diplomatic relations between the two to the ambassadorial level (*United Daily News*, May 20, 1962). Yet, this appears to be incorrect information because of the two following reasons: firstly, ROC and South Africa had waited until 1976 to upgrade their bond legitimately; secondly, the evidence of national archives also indicated that ROC did not show intention to further any interaction with South Africa. When South African Ambassador to Australia Herbert Hans Woodward inquired about ROC's aspiration of promoting consulate to the embassy in 1962, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied that: "since most of their attitude was unfavorable to South Africa, we should postpone our consideration on this in order not to enrage Third World countries."<sup>25</sup>

Within the context of the news article, the inquiry from the Ambassador of South Africa had become a useful writing source for the newspaper to conduct internal propaganda and made the nationals consider that ROC was a good friend to the world. Based on this mentality, overseas Chinese likewise was a perfect piece that had been frequently reported or quoted by these newspapers regarding their treatment under the apartheid system. When the Japanese officially received the status of Honorary Whites in 1960, both *Central Daily News* and *United Daily News* wrote an article and attacked this issue. One argued that some overseas Chinese claimed that Chinese culture was one of the most ancient cultures and they were whiter than our Japanese friends by appearance (*Central Daily News*, December 2, 1961), while the other quarreled that not giving this status to the overseas Chinese was an insult to the entire group of Chinese (*United Daily News*, November 28, 1961).

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<sup>25</sup> "Zhonghuaminguo zhu aodaliyaguo dashiguan daidian" [Counseling of Embassy of Republic of China in Australia]. August 8, 1962. In *Nanfei zhengqing (13)* [Political Circumstances in South Africa (13)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-990600-0730.

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, these news articles combined overseas Chinese and economic progress in the same domain. From trading corn to purchasing estates, anything that was relevant to the two had been the center of focus. In these articles, promoting trade was favorably correlated to the rising status of overseas Chinese (Chinatimes, April 29, 1967; United Daily News, March 29, 1969; Central Daily News, July 7, 1975). Following years after ROC's expulsion from the UN till the 1980s, the presence of overseas Chinese itself had been described as the force behind the scene for ROC's glued friendship with South Africa. With the characteristic of being loyal and compliant, overseas Chinese had been highly appraised by both sides of government.

The sequential process of internal propaganda grew inside the country, it reflected how the interactions among overseas Chinese, ROC, and South Africa could shape the discourse of domestic media. In the language of internal propaganda, it came across as when overseas Chinese were favored by Pretoria, these achievements should also be perceived as the ones for the ROC. Although the debated issues were slightly diverse, the function of overseas Chinese behind ROC's propaganda was consistent. With all the glories granted by South Africa and the successes of overseas Chinese, which begs the question: who should take the credit?

#### **4.3 Credit Goes to Whom: Overseas Chinese or Republic of China?**

Reviewing the functions and values of overseas Chinese, economic purposes and being a source for publicity were co-existed in their presence. Economic incentives were the primary determinants for affecting behaviors at both governmental and societal levels. As for internal propaganda, on some occasions, they were conducted incoherently to the events and overseas Chinese was a credible source to the ROC government.

Even though ROC claimed that the government had been dedicated to supporting overseas Chinese affairs, their statements towards South Africa as well as to the overseas Chinese residing in the country had been situational and inconsistent. As previously mentioned, the factors such as political concerns with other African allies, changes in the

international system, and human rights advocacy were the upholding principles for ROC in dealing with foreign affairs with South Africa before its expulsion from the UN.

After being expelled from the UN in 1971, it appeared that the ROC government aimed for better relations with the local government and emphasized the value of “cooperation” between the two countries. However, the meaning of cooperation was constrained only to technical, economic, and military agreements, not to racial matters. As the performance report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC in 1978 had stated, it explicitly pointed out that the key to handling foreign affairs with South Africa should center on “practical” cooperation and should act low key of not involving segregation policies.<sup>26</sup>

Another concern at this moment for the ROC was paying more attention to the interactions between overseas Chinese and South Africa. As these overseas Chinese were more inclined toward the local government with the alleviation of segregation policies, the less nationalistic they had become towards the ROC government. Thus, the focus of the government on overseas community affairs had been encouraging solidarity of the overseas Chinese in the late 1970s. For instance, the concept of cultivation of overseas Chinese education was no longer about entering European schools; instead, encouraging mandarin education was the objective.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, the ROC government had formed this contradictory mentality of whether or not to help these overseas Chinese acquire the same treatment as the Europeans. On the one hand, alleviating unequal treatment of overseas Chinese could be beneficial in exploiting economic chances. On the other hand, ROC argued that it was not a wise move for these overseas Chinese to continue their pursuit of sharing equal status as the White to prevent the rotation of the Black regime in the future.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “Zhu nanfei gongheguo dashiguan liushiqi nian gongzuo jihua jiantao fenxi baogao” [Analysis about Performance Report Embassy of Republic of China in South Africa in 1978]. September 1, 1978. In *Nanfei zajuan (2) [Conglomerate Volumes of South African Affairs (2)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032199-0002.

<sup>27</sup> “Zhu nanfei gongheguo dashiguan gongzuo jihua” [Performance Report of Embassy of Republic of China in South Africa]. June 1, 1976. In *Nanfei zajuan (1) [Conglomerate Volumes of South African Affairs (1)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032199-0001.

<sup>28</sup> “Zhu nanfei gongheguo dashiguan jianbao jilu” [Record of Embassy of Republic of China in South Africa]. August 3, 1976. In *Nanfei zajuan (1) [Conglomerate Volumes of South African Affairs (1)]*. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032199-0001.

In the early 1980s, the concern of ROC towards overseas Chinese had increased when Prime Minister Pieter Willem Botha launched a new revolutionary plan on South Africa's domestic constitution. His new blueprint had not only offered more local authorities to the non-whites but he also divided the Congress into three state departments including the White, the Colored, and the Indians.<sup>29</sup> From a general perspective, this had been a piece of great news to the non-white citizens. Regardless, the ROC government was getting anxious about overseas Chinese not being listed specifically in the categorization.

However, the overseas Chinese did not express too much anxiety on this matter since they already received and perceived themselves as the White with all the prior accomplishments. As for the ROC, the worriedness derived from South Africa was not offering any political promise to them after they changed their mind in 1971. The fact that ROC had continuously underlined "cooperation" not "friendship" within the bilateral discussion or on every occasion had let the South African government down many times. Hence, it was not surprising that South Africa had been willing to remain cooperative in economic purposes because from the bottom of their heart they knew that ROC was not an authentic friend to them.

Toppling the established argument by stating that the home country would be the main actor guiding external affairs, overseas Chinese were in a very distinct position where they handled overseas community affairs strategically. Therefore, in reply to the question of "who should take the credit for reaching successes back in the apartheid era?" The greater credit should go to the overseas Chinese. As the record of the Motion of No Confidence between Prime Minister Botha and his opposition party noted, any success of policymaking in South Africa should not neglect the effort of nationalism and the minority groups inside the country.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Zhengqing baogao" [Report of Political Circumstance in South Africa]. August 20, 1982. In *Nanfei zajuan (5)* [Conglomerate Volumes of South African Affairs (5)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032199-0005.

<sup>30</sup> "Nanfei bota zongli dui guohui fanduidang suo ti buxinrenan zhi dabian" [Performance Report of Embassy of Republic of China in South Africa]. August 13, 1981. In *Nanfei zhengqing (4)* [Political Circumstances in South Africa (4)]. Academia Historica Digital File Number 020-032101-0007.

Along the way since the preliminary phase of emigrating to this country as contractual laborers, their mindset had continually been the pursuit of presence-orientation. Even facing inequality of treatment before the apartheid era and endured with almost a half-century of segregation policies, overseas Chinese pitches survival and economic opportunities as the aim of dealing with both ROC and the South African government. Even with the negligence towards their home government, its exertions on the contrary were mainly based on political concerns that had been somewhat counterproductive in assuaging treatment of disparate policies on racial groups.

Equipping with the theorem and mentality of situational identity, ROC had become relatively untrustworthy to both overseas Chinese and South Africa due to its discourses shifting back and forth. The overseas Chinese had become the biggest winner in the game, as they expand the scope and influence of overseas Chinese community councils in South Africa. Another insight they had brought about was taking the initiative in the lead foreign affairs in South Africa, in particular, the economic activities. Therefore, it is doubtless to say that overseas Chinese deserve these successful outcomes of what they had earned and should be granted with more appreciation for their attempt within this friendship.



## Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the saying of the ROC used to have a strong friendship with South Africa during the apartheid era is incompatible with the historical evidence. According to the national archives, our analysis has proved that this conventional wisdom is discrepant and inconsistent with the authentic interactions of the bilateral relationship. In short, it is overseas Chinese who made efforts while the ROC government just took all the credits for itself.

Due to several concerns in the post-World War II era such as ideological confrontation, advocacy of human rights, and decolonization under the evolution of international structure, ROC has to be careful in making decisions regarding its foreign policies towards countries that are controversial, and South Africa is one of them. Meanwhile, these racial segregation policies piloted in South Africa violated every upholding value from the international society. Therefore, the ROC government did not offer much of these practical commitments and promises to South Africa during this period until the expulsion of the ROC from the UN.

In 1971, the expulsion of member states from the UN is undoubtedly the breakpoint that changes ROC's attitude and its guiding principles toward South Africa. With more economic activities and political communications, the government has finally turned into an ally of South Africa. However, the stances of ROC at certain moments are still situational and its wavering stances are mainly because of its country's self-interests. In response to this, the South African government treats ROC and overseas Chinese differently.

As for the overseas Chinese, survival has prevailed over the interactions of international politics between the two countries. As suggested by the concept of the Chinese diaspora, this migration flow is a functional approach that is not strictly bound by its geographical location but rather a strategy decided by economic, temporal, and spatial intermediaries. With these overseas Chinese facing the segregation policies under the

apartheid era, this racist system has bred the guarded mindset of non-white racial groups for almost forty years.

Overseas Chinese have recognized the prominence of being the same as the White in South Africa and thus have begun their constant quest and negotiation with the local government for the social status of Honorary White. From the beginning to the end, overseas Chinese have been playing the active ones in tackling issues with the South African government, which makes them a perfect pretext to disguise ROC's contradictory diplomatic behavior towards South Africa. Also, their characteristics of being loyal and knowing their places have made them much favored by the local government.

Issues on overseas community affairs and nationals living abroad have always been perceived as diplomatic tools for the home country. As time goes by, the increasing accomplishments and values of the overseas Chinese have led to a situation where the ROC government takes these achievements as its diplomatic successes. The role of overseas Chinese in the friendship between ROC and South Africa has been vastly imperative. Not only do they convert these into economic opportunities, but also turn into an instrument for the government's publicity internally.

Nevertheless, the investigation shows that the ROC government is reacting anxiously to overseas China's bonded relationship with South Africa in the late period of the apartheid era. It also indicates a strong life instinct of overseas Chinese that has uplifted the entire process of fighting against these segregation policies and has made them trustworthy friends to the South African government.

From these findings, I argue that there is a brand-new comprehension of this topic reconstructing our understanding of this nominal rock-steady friendship between the two countries. Chronologically, the development of overseas Chinese in South Africa has provided us some enlightenment for studying overseas community affairs, not their Chinese identity nor the Chineseness that has altered their perceptions and behaviors. Their self-centered and interest-oriented mindset has made them indispensable in this

relationship, which has likewise constructed their strategies of survival under segregation policies in South Africa.



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