

The Changing Political Identity of the “Overseas Chinese” in Australia

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Abstract

This paper explores the role played by the Chinese communities in the Australian politics of multicultural democracy from the perspective of political socialisation and re-socialisation. It argues that there is no such a thing as inherent “cultural values” or “national values” that differentiate ‘the Chinese’ politically from the mainstream Australian society. This paper focuses on the Chinese nationalism of Han Chinese migrants in Australia. Within the “new mainland migrants” who have come to Australia directly from the PRC since the 1980s, nationalism is much weaker among the Tiananmen/ June 4 generation who experienced pro-democracy activism during their formative years in the 1980s. Nationalism is much stronger among the Post-Tiananmen Generation who are victims of the “patriotism campaign” in the 1990s when the Chinese Communist party-state sought to replace discredited communism with nationalism as the major ideology for legitimacy.

Although ethnic Chinese account for only 3% of the total population of Australia, Chinese citizens became the largest group of immigrants to Australia in 2009, displacing the traditional sources of Britain and New Zealand (Tatlow 2010). How the Chinese communities play a role in Australian politics is a question of great interest to the academic community as well as the public, especially when the political role of Chinese Australians is complicated by the growing influence of rising China. Equally interesting are the contrasting identities of the Chinese students in Australia, as the democracy fighters and asylum seekers appealing to democratic governments in the West and attacking the Chinese communist regime in 1989, and as fanatical nationalist and zealous Chinese patriots denouncing democratic governments in the West and defending the same Chinese communist regime in 2008. With a focus on the distinctive groups of the “new migrants of mainland China” (*dalu xin yimin*) who have come to Australia directly from the PRC since the 1980s, this paper seeks to shed light on the growing trend of state-sponsored Chinese transnationalism and the ways political beliefs and behaviours of ethnic Chinese in Australia are shaped by their political socialisation back in China.

The term “new migrants of mainland China” was first coined by Chinese migrants in the United States in the 1980s and adopted by the Chinese government, referring to the Chinese immigrants

who are mostly “born and brought up under the Red Flag” after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, and have migrated overseas after the “reform and opening to the outside world” at the end of the 1970s (Huang et al. 1998; Zhu 2006). What is the cultural, ideological or political baggage carried by these “new migrants”? Reflecting cultural determinism, there is a long held view or stereotype which asserts that “the Chinese” carry a special set of “cultural values” or “national values”. Some try to understand this special set of “national values” in terms of deep-rooted “political culture” (Pye 1985), others attribute it to the mysterious “deep structure of Chinese culture” (Sun 1993). It is claimed that the Confucian tradition or other traditions, as handed down from millennia of Chinese history, with their stress on hierarchy and conformity, have prevented the Chinese from developing an independent personality and nurtured paternalistic and despotic government. Assertions of this sort are not supported by empirical evidence, given the fact that the Chinese society in Taiwan has achieved stable liberal democracy, that democratisation with robust civil society and active political citizenry is well underway in the Chinese society in Hong Kong, and that the Overseas Chinese living in democracies in the West have engaged in democratic politics with great enthusiasm. Some scholars have convincingly argued that the alleged political apathy of the Chinese is nothing but psychological and behavioural manifestation contingent on power structure and opportunity structure, springing from the lack of channels for political participation (Lau 1982).

As to the diametrically opposed roles performed by Chinese migrants as democracy fighters and authoritarian regime defenders in Australia, a satisfactory explanation can be sought from their specific political socialisation and circumstances rather than Confucianism or any other Chinese traditions. The concept of political socialisation was devised and widely applied in the 1950s and 1960s, providing a useful framework to understand the process of inheriting political norms, beliefs, ideologies and customs (Parsons and Bales 1956; Chinoy 1961; Clausen 1968). Family, school, mass media and religion are normally identified as major agents or factors of socialisation. However, under the totalitarian regimes, or post-totalitarian regimes as in the case of China today, the successive political campaigns by the party-state play a key role in political socialisation. Through education, mass media, mass campaigns and any other possible means, the Chinese communist party-state has successfully indoctrinated the vast majority of the

population with its discourse on truth, the “laws” governing human societies, the trajectory of Chinese history, and the mission of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

According to this discourse, Marxism-Leninism embodies the highest form of truth and knowledge showing the correct way to follow the exorable law on the march to the ideal society of communism. Other key aspects include “Mao Zedong Thought”, “Deng Xiaoping Theory” and the “Theory of Three Represents”, products of creatively combining Marxist theory with Chinese practice. There are also a series of historical claims: that the Chinese have a unique civilisation with a glorious history for 5000 years but have been humiliated by Western powers for more than a century; that the CCP has provided leadership to liberate the Chinese nation from endless miseries; and that only under the leadership of the CCP can the Chinese nation stand up to the Western hegemony, maintain unity and stability, pursue China's modernisation, and ensure economic prosperity and harmonious society for the people. From this perspective, liberal democracy which “merely” institutionalises regular elections, independent judiciary and political and civil rights “in form” is actually bourgeois dictatorship, whereas the “proletarian dictatorship” (or “people’s democratic dictatorship”) under the leadership of the Party is “genuine democracy” as the Party represents the interest of “the people” and “serves the people” (Lenin 1918; Mao 1949). The Party also lays emphasis on different themes during different periods. In the “reform era” since 1978, “socialist democracy” has been expanded to include “socialist legality” promoting the concepts of human rights and the rule of law, but in the meantime maintaining the supremacy of the Party (Ogden 1989). After the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the early 1990s, efforts have been made by the CCP to put increasing emphasis on patriotism and the theory of “building socialism with Chinese characteristics” while obscuring the tenets of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought on the themes of class struggle and communist ideal. The ideological indoctrination of CCP propaganda has deeply shaped the worldviews of PRC citizens and the patterns of their political behaviour. It requires an extraordinary, and sometimes painful, process of re-socialisation for them to break away from the communist mode of thinking and embrace liberal democracy.

Democratic Aspirations of the Generation of the Cultural Revolution and Its Impact on Chinese Migrants in Australia

The generation of Cultural Revolution, who were mostly born in the 1950s and drawn into the Cultural Revolution in the period of 1966-1976, experienced several despairs and subsequent profound crises of belief. Paradoxically, the Cultural Revolution was a nightmare associated with terror, persecution, deception and destruction, but it also taught millions of young Chinese self-organisation, political mobilisation and the duty to contest the immoral exercise of power. The initial stage of the Cultural Revolution was characterised by rebellions answering to the calls of the Great Leader Mao Zedong against the authorities and the sending of university and high school students all over China to establish extensive ties, but this eventually degenerated into endless political persecution and infighting. After the end of the Cultural Revolution this generation of Chinese was variously identified as the “lost generation” whose ideals and sense of direction were destroyed by ten years of catastrophe, chaos and betrayal. They were the “cynical generation” who were plunged into confusion, cynicism and nihilism; and the “rebellious generation” or “thinking generation” who reflected on their years of youth with intense pain and quested for truth and a new meaning of life (Feng and Benton 1992). Among those lucky ones within this generation who were accepted to universities and colleges resumed after the Cultural Revolution, or even joined in the “tide of going abroad” to study at the universities in developed countries, at least some have experienced spiritual regeneration. They categorically rejected the official ideology as cheap idealism, shallow optimism and abject docility; developed scepticism and critical thinking; and even found new beliefs in equality, individualism, human rights, the rule of law, and constitutional democracy.

The campaign by the Chinese students in Australia to support the pro-democracy movement in China in 1989 and the campaign by them to achieve permanent residency in Australia in the early 1990s gave full play to the democratic aspirations and communication skills of the Cultural Revolution generation. As Chinese students studying abroad in other parts of the world, thousands of Chinese students in major cities of Australia took part in rallies and demonstrations in May 1989 to support Chinese students on hunger strike at Tiananmen Square, as well as rallies and demonstrations in June 1989 to protest against the Chinese government after the June 4 Massacre, which fundamentally changed the life of tens of thousands of Chinese students

arriving in Australia around the time (Cherrington 1991; Goldman 1994). The June 4 Massacre, the subsequent harsh crackdown on pro-democracy movement leaders, and the extensive purge of liberal elements from the apparatus of the Party and state generated immense fear of persecution and massive alienation from the Chinese communist regime among Chinese students studying abroad. Under such extraordinary circumstances democratic countries such as Canada and the United States offered permanent residency to the Chinese students right away, but the Australian government was originally only prepared to offer permanent residency to the Chinese arriving in Australia before the June 4 Massacre and other individual students who could establish refugee status through political screening on a case by case basis, exposing the Chinese students to political risks and uncertainty.

However, the Chinese students turned the table around and almost all of them succeeded in securing permanent residency by 1993 through impressive campaigns and lobbying (Gao 2009). After the mid-1980s, when Australia set up the scheme of English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students to export its English language education on the international market, Chinese citizens, mainly from the Cultural Revolution generation, had taken the opportunity to come to Australia in large numbers, with some 20,000 of them arriving in Australia before June 4 and approximately 25,000 arriving in Australia between June 4 and 1 November 1993. Some technical issues added concerns to the Australian immigration regime, as more than 70% of those among both cohorts were “language students” and less than 30% of them were “degree students”, with more than half of them no longer holding a valid visa when they lodged the application for asylum. The reluctance of the Australian government to grant permanent residency to the Chinese students was best demonstrated by the fact that the Migration Act of Australia was amended 11 times between 1989 and 1992 to tighten the border control and abandon the onshore humanitarian program (Cronin 1993). Fortunately the successful campaigns of Chinese students persuaded the Australian authorities to join other Western democracies in providing protection of PRC nationals onshore and allowing about 45,000 Chinese migrants to become permanent residents in Australia, as reflected in the decision made by the Labour government on 1 November 1993 and the decision made by the Coalition government on 13 June 1997.

Looking back on the campaigns of the Chinese students for democratic China and permanent residency in Australia, the connections between their behaviour abroad and their previous political experience and ideological journey back in China are readily visible, such as the connections between the formation of their identity as democracy fighters and their new found democratic aspirations during the 1980s; between the establishment of the Chinese Association for Safeguarding Human Rights and the Working Group for the Investigation of the Basic Human Rights of PRC Citizens in Australia and their yearning for human rights since the late 1970s; between their extensive networking locally and internationally and their previous “massive exchange of revolutionary experience through networking” (*da chuanlian*); and between their skilful use of news media in both Chinese and English and their previous expertise in managing big-character posters and tabloids (Yin 2009). It is worth mentioning that both the democratic aspirations and the individualism developed among the Cultural Revolution generation represent neither the mainstream nor an irreversible trend in Chinese society in spite of reform and opening to the outside world.

Patriotic Education Campaign in China and the Nationalist “Angry Youth” of the Post-Tiananmen Generation

In a scene unprecedented in history and probably unrepeatable in the future, the Australian capital Canberra was overwhelmed by “a sea of red flags and placards” carried by thousands of Chinese nationals, mostly university students, during the Beijing Olympic Torch Relay on 24 April 2008 (English and Linnell 2008). About twenty thousand Chinese nationals carrying more than ten thousand Chinese national flags were there to “protect the Olympic Torch” from the presumed “sabotage” by the Tibetans, a designated “minority nationality” of China. Only two thousand of them were from Canberra and most of them came from Melbourne and Sydney by more than one hundred coaches overnight. There were also participants taking flights from Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Perth and even New Zealand. Actually, two weeks earlier, as in many other major cities in the world, thousands of the Chinese students and other Chinese nationals in Melbourne and Sydney rallied and marched on 13 April 2008 in protest against “the Western media’s dishonest reports” on the March 14 Riot in Tibet (CCTV 2008). On the mid-night prior to the torch relay, Chinese students had already occupied all of the “strategic

positions” of the starting point, the finish point and along the line, in order to exclude Tibetans and their supporters (Xinhua 2008). During the torch relay, the Chinese students shouted patriotic slogans, sang patriotic songs and repeatedly used violence against the Tibetans and their supporters. (Laohu 2008). One activist proudly reflected in the on-the-spot report published on the Internet that if the Australian police had acted as French police during the torch relay in Paris the number of the Chinese students arrested would be 50 rather than 5, and without the deliberate protection by the Australian police none of those “poisonous Tibetans” would be able to safely return home (Laohu 2008).

Chinese nationalism has been on the rise in China and among the Overseas Chinese around the world since the mid-1990s. Millions of Chinese nationalists are wild with joy, but the phenomenon of rising Chinese nationalism has also caused great concerns and has been well researched and debated by the academic community (Unger 1996; Zheng 1999; Zhao 2004; Giles 2004; Hugh 2006). The upsurge of Chinese nationalism can be partly attributed to the rise of nationalism in the world after the end of the Cold War, the rise of China’s economic and military power and the reaction to the conflicts with Japan, the United States and other Western powers. However, from the perspective of politics in China, the spectacular display of nationalism by Chinese students around the world in recent years is a bumper harvest that had been seeded and cultivated by the Chinese government through the nationwide “patriotic education campaign” (Feng 2009).

Patriotic education has always been a dominant theme of political socialisation in the PRC, although the theme was somehow balanced by the interlude of the “Chinese New Enlightenment” (*xin qimeng*) during the decade of 1978-1988, the most exciting period of intellectual history in the PRC. The enlightenment project during the period was a new one which benefited the Cultural Revolution generation greatly by promoting humanist values and critical thinking, just as the Chinese Enlightenment in the 1910s benefited the May 4 generation and subsequent generations. After the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in 1989, the following collapse of communist regimes around the world and the official communist ideology’s consequent loss of credibility, the communist regime in China faced a serious crisis of legitimacy. It was the upgrading of patriotic education, as well as rapid economic development,

that provided the new “performance legitimacy” to the one-party rule of the CCP in China, turning the attention from internal evils to external threat and turning the vast number of young Chinese away from liberal values and toward fanatic nationalism. The new “Patriotic Education Campaign” was initiated right after the Tiananmen Incident and formally launched in 1991, mobilising all of the available resources including the state education system, the public media, arts, museums, popular entertainment, and the “Red Tourism Scenic Spots” (Zhao 1998; Wang 2008).

Three features of this campaign are readily discernable in comparison with political education during previous periods in the PRC history. Firstly, nationalism replaced communist ideology as the most important legitimisation device. The class-struggle narrative targeting the domestic “people’s enemy” of exploited classes gave way to the patriotic narrative targeting “foreign hostile forces” which allegedly conspired to keep China down or even destroy China; the revolution narrative depicting the CCP as a revolutionary force to eliminate class domination and class exploitation was changed into the ruling party narrative describing the CCP as the only leading force to unite the Chinese nation, safeguard the sovereignty of China, stand up to the West, end national humiliation and achieve wealth and power for China; the social foundation of the CCP was expanded to coopt the new rich for building national unity and “harmonious society”; old rigid tenets of *ma-lie-mao* (Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought) prioritising class-struggle were superseded by the new pragmatic theories of *deng-san-ke* (Deng Xiaoping Theory, Theory of Three Represents and the Concept of Scientific Development) prioritising social and political stability; and the communist ideal of classless society was abandoned for the national goal of “relative prosperity (*xiaokang*)” (Hughes 2006).

Secondly, national humiliation and historical grievances moved to the centre of political education, in which the anti-Western discourse prevailed over the modernisation discourse or rejuvenation discourse (*zhenxing zhonghua*). The “Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism” campaign was combined with the “Anti-Peaceful Evolution” campaign, in which liberal values or Enlightenment values were no longer assumed as an intrinsic part of Chinese modernity but denounced as part of the Western conspiracy to split up the Chinese and maintain the Western hegemony over China; the suffering of the Chinese and the backwardness of China in the

modern times were interpreted in terms of victimisation and humiliation of China by the West; disputes with democratic countries on human rights issues or commerce were identified as “conspiracy of the West” (Wang 2008). Thirdly, the post-June 4 generation, who received education after 1989, became the primary target and victim of the campaign aiming to change their attitude toward the Western powers and the communist one-party rule. Students from kindergartens to universities were fed with the “approved truth” and “approved knowledge” of foreign invasions and oppression and kept away from the inconvenient records of the crimes committed by the CCP, such as persecution and murder of millions of innocent citizens in successive political purges and campaigns; achievements of the Party were highlighted and exaggerated whereas access to the information of disasters brought about by the Party such as the famine during the Great Leap Forward and democratic challenges such as Democracy Wall Movement and Pro-democracy Movement in 1989 were blocked; those singing the praises of the Party or Chinese culture were treated as faithful friends of the Chinese whereas criticism made by Chinese compatriots of the Party or shortcomings of Chinese culture were condemned as unpatriotic; denunciation of the West and liberal values became the most convenient way to demonstrate political loyalty and accumulate political capital, whereas expression of liberal values became a serious political liability (Feng 2007).

There is little wonder that many of the Chinese students socialised with this kind of worldview have become “angry youth” (*fen qing*) captivated by fanatic nationalism and eager to demonstrate their patriotic credentials in showing their support for the Chinese communist regime and joining in the anti-West protests, even if they are living in democratic countries beyond the control of the Party, provided with free access to knowledge and surrounded by the international media. The “angry youth” among the Overseas Chinese are fighting in the forefront against the “Western conspiracy”. They vied with one another to join the demonstrations around the world against the West during the Beijing Olympics Torch Relay in 2008 as they were so angry with the international media criticising the Chinese government in favour of the Tibetans. Accepting what they had learned from the “Patriotic Education Campaign”, they believed that the behaviour of the international media on the Tibet issue represented an anti-China conspiracy dating back to 1900 when the “Allied Troops of Eight Nations” (*ba guo lianjun*) drove the Qing

government out of Beijing and thoroughly looted the capital after putting down the “Boxer Rebellion”.

These positions are reflected in this quote from Internet article by a former Chinese student living in Canada:

“a new strategic step of the anti-China conspiracy by the Western powers has finally emerged: they used the Tibetan separatists to create a violent incident in Tibet, then manufactured the public opinion by the Western media about the ‘crackdown’ on the minority nationality of the Tibetans by the ‘despotic’ Chinese government and, taking the Beijing Olympics Torch Relay around the world as an opportunity, aroused an anti-China agitation around the world and in the West in particular. All Western powers joined together to express their ‘concern’ and ‘condemnation’, and reserved the right to take further action of ‘sanction’ against China. The Western powers are attempting to cook up a situation similar to the ‘June 4’ and force the Chinese government to the corner prior to the Beijing Olympics, using the boycott of the Beijing Olympics as a stake to blackmail the Chinese government for concessions, such as the ‘return and restoration’ of the Dalai Lama, and paving the way to split up and subvert China. After the invasion of China by the joint forces of Britain and France in the 19th Century, after the invasion of China by the Allied Troops of Eight Nations in the early 20th Century, and after the attempt made by the United Nations troops consisting of the troops from 16 countries under the leadership of the United States to intimidate and invade China in the mid-20th Century, the Western powers have joined together again to launch a new round of siege and attack on China at the beginning of the 21st Century. This is yet another collective attempt by the Western powers to form the new ‘Allied Troops of Eight Nations’ and interfere the internal affairs of China” (Zhao 2008).

The State-sponsored Chinese Transnationalism in Australia and Re-socialisation of Chinese Migrants under Multicultural Democracy

Transnationalism emerges as one of the central theories in the study of immigration and refers primarily to the contemporary phenomenon that immigrants “forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch 2003). These multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states can take many forms. In the study of multiculturalism and ethnic identity, the concept of transnationalism also takes on the dimension of identity construction to understand the complexities of multilevel and multipolar bargaining of identities in the multicultural context of the host society in the age of globalisation. This is similar to the concept of “long distance

nationalism” coined by Benedict Anderson to characterise a new set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographical locations to the territory of their “ancestral home” (Anderson 1992). Some scholars have cautioned against the tendency within the notion of transnationalism to homogenise ethnic groups or diasporic groups with vast internal class, regional, sub-ethnic and political diversity (Benton 2003).

In connection to socialisation of Chinese migrants in Australia, attention should to be paid to the role played by the Chinese communist party-state in the development of Chinese transnationalism in the last two to three decades. Transnationalism in this sense is an extension of state nationalism with the invention of transnational solidarity beyond national boundaries and the creation of new expressions of belonging and political engagement. The state-sponsored Chinese transnationalism does not challenge the Chinese nation-state but on the contrary enables it to engage with globalization through economic, cultural, political, and diplomatic united-front strategy. The party-state adapts to the new environment of globalisation, imagines itself as a transnational actor and becomes the driving force of Chinese transnationalism, coordinating the “shared” interests between the Overseas Chinese and the “ancestral homeland” (*Zuji Guo*).

There have been numerous changes in the relationship between the Overseas Chinese and the Chinese states since the modern times, as well as after the CCP’s rise to power in 1949. After the 16th Century when Europeans began their projects to establish colonies in the Far East, the land-based and agrarian-centred regimes of the Ming and Qing empires were hostile to the Overseas Chinese communities of sojourners living abroad in South-east Asia and beyond (Wang 1991). More often than not the Ming and Qing governments exercised a strict ban on the sea trade and saw the Overseas Chinese as traitors or as “abandoned subjects of the heavenly dynasty”, until the early 1840s when the Qing government was forced through the Opium Wars to open China to the outside world and join the modern world. In confirming the fear of the Qing government, the Overseas Chinese did become a subversive force playing an important role in the Reform Movement with an end to establish the system of constitutional monarchy during the 1890s, culminating in the 1911 Revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty (Wang 1991).

Subsequently, the relationship between the Overseas Chinese and the PRC has passed through several stages. For the first three decades after the establishment of the PRC, the Chinese communist regime had an uneasy relationship with the Overseas Chinese, although the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office was set up at both central and local levels to look after the Overseas Chinese affairs. Initially the regime welcomed the return of the Overseas Chinese to take part in the construction of “socialist mother land” and support the revolutionary activities of the Overseas Chinese in South-east Asia (Cheung 2005). However, the Overseas Chinese eventually fell out of favour and the connection with the Overseas Chinese communities became a political liability for PRC citizens, who were banned from going abroad for private purposes and killed on the spot or sentenced to prison if they tried to leave the country.

Since 1978, when China engaged in reform and opening to the outside world, the Chinese communist government has changed its attitude again and re-defined the Overseas Chinese as a key force for the project of China’s modernisation. The “new migrants”, the students in particular, were originally sent by the party-state to study abroad with the expectation that they would “return to serve the motherland” with badly needed expertise after completing their programs. By 2003 the number of the “new migrants” had reached 4.2 million (Guo 2004), but the party-state was not particularly happy when most of these students chose to stay in the developed democratic countries rather than returning to China. Encountering the extreme difficulty of attracting those students back to China, especially in the unfavourable post-Tiananmen situation, the party-state changed the policy of asking the Chinese students to “return and serve the country” (*hui guo fuwu*) to the policy of encouraging the Chinese students to “stay but serve the country” (*weiguo fuwu*), coinciding with the grand national strategy of “marching toward the world” (*zou xiang shijie*) (Miao 2010).

Since the 1990s this version of Chinese transnationalism has been consciously developed by the party-state with the close cooperation of the Overseas Chinese as a whole and particularly the “new migrants”, who are believed to be bound to China not only by ties of blood but by sharing the modernisation project of the party-state. A directive with the title *Guanyu kaizhan xinyimin gongzuo de yijian* [Opinion on Unfolding the New Migrant Work] issued by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of PRC in 1996 stated that:

“Strengthening new migrant work has important practical meaning and deep-going, far-reaching significance for promoting our country’s construction of modernisation, implementing the unification of the motherland, expanding our country’s influence and developing our country’s relations with the countries of residence” (Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of the PRC 1996).

With sponsorship by the party-state, Chinese transnationalism has advanced on both ideological and institutional fronts, linking the Overseas Chinese institutionally and emotionally to the Chinese government. On the ideological front, a new culture was nurtured by the party-state, imagining Chinese migrants as part of the Chinese economy and polity and celebrating migration as a patriotic and modern act. In this process “the nature of emigration has turned from treacherous, to tolerated but ideologically suspect, to patriotic” (Nyiri 2001, p.637). The “ideological work” of the Party is so successful that all of the current Chinese community newspapers in Australia adopt the pro-China position, except for *The Epoch Times* published by Falun Gong and *The Tiananmen Times* published by a Chinese democracy movement organization. Although living in Australia, the “new migrants” from China are still surrounded by the Chinese media dominated by the Chinese government views and narratives.

On the institutional front, the party-state has established or encouraged the Overseas Chinese to establish Chinese transnational corporations, associations, exchange programs, a variety of networks, and cultural and professional linkages around the world, cultivating a new army of Chinese migrant elites close to China. In Australia, the Chinese state agencies, including the Chinese Embassy in Canberra and the General Consulates in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, are assigned the tasks to identify and coordinate with the patriotic Overseas Chinese leaders (*aiguo qiaoling*) in organising the Chinese communities for the service of the Chinese modernisation and unification projects. The traditional Chinese migrant organisations such as the native-place associations (*tongxiang hui*) remain important but they are no longer up to the new tasks of mobilising the well-educated, modern and cosmopolitan Chinese migrants to “serve the homeland” as the native-place associations focus on charity and liaison functions for the benefit of fellow-townsmen. Professional associations and political associations, which focus on social, cultural and political issues of transnational or international significance, and conduct their business in Mandarin or English rather than native dialects of Chinese localities, have emerged

as the dominant form of associational life among Chinese migrant communities. Some of them are overtly political, such as Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China, Australian Chinese Culture Promotion Society and Australian Council of Chinese Organisations. In addition, many of them are professional, such as Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars, Federation of Chinese Scholars in Australia, Australian Chinese Science and Technology Society, Australian Chinese Engineers Association, Australian Chinese Information Communication Technology Professional Society, Australia Chinese Association for Biomedical Sciences, Society of Chinese Australian Academics in New South Wales, Victoria Association of Chinese PhD Students and Scholars, Queensland Chinese Association of Scientists and Engineers, South Australia Chinese Professionals Association, Canberra Society of Chinese Scholars, Western Australia Chinese Scientists Association, and Northern Territory Chinese Professional Association. According to one estimate, the Chinese migrants have established more than 300 associations in New South Wales alone (Tian 2003).

Most of these organisations have established and maintained a close relationship with the Chinese state agencies in Australia. Through the Chinese state agencies, these Overseas Chinese organisations have also established and maintained connections with many institutions in China. Usually there is a clause of “enhancing Sino-Australian understanding and friendship” in their constitution and their leaders are usually eager to demonstrate their loyalty to China and seek guidance from the Chinese authorities. They organise the celebration of major Chinese festivals, the reception of PRC leaders and other delegations from China, the recruitment of experts and investors for China, business negotiations involving China, the performance of Chinese culture and arts, and a variety of tours to China. The service of these patriotic Overseas Chinese leaders is rewarded by the Party with economic benefits and political recognition. The economic benefits include profitable projects in China and other preferential treatments in business. Political recognition may take the forms of appointments to positions in the united front organisation such as the Political Consultative Conference, invitations to join the Chinese leaders on the rostrum of Tiananmen or at the People’s Great Hall on the occasions of national ceremonies, and the opportunity to meet and take photos with high-ranking Chinese officials during their visits to Australia. These symbolic political awards may enhance their position in the Overseas Chinese communities and business operations.

It is unclear how state-sponsored Chinese transnationalism has shaped the engagement of Chinese “new migrants” in Australian multicultural democracy, which provides institutional opportunities for political participation of minority ethnic groups. A multicultural democracy is defined as deepening of liberal democracy that promotes equality among all ethnocultural groups, respects cultural diversity and protects the rights of non-dominant ethnocultural groups (indigenous peoples, sub-state national minorities and minority groups of migrants) to keep their cultural practices and traditions, compatible with the universal human rights (Kymlicka 1995, 2007; United Nations Development Programme 2004). Benefiting from the “human rights revolution” since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, multicultural democracy is based on liberal multiculturalism that promotes the policies and practices of recognising and accommodating ethnic diversity with the aspiration to deepen democracy, expand human freedom and eliminate ethnic and racial hierarchies. In violation of these norms, state-sponsored Chinese transnationalism may have delayed the process of political re-socialisation of Chinese “new migrants” in Australia. Many of them continue to maintain an authoritarian stance, as demonstrated in their eagerness to suppress the basic human rights of Tibetans during the Olympic Torch Relay in 2008, and their consent to or support for Chinese government in its crackdown on the Chinese democracy movement and the Falun Gong both at home and abroad (Liu 2001; Liu 2011).

Conclusion

The development of multicultural democracy and cosmopolitanism in Australia has created a favourable environment for political participation by Chinese communities, who practice dual loyalty, taking part in Australian political process while engaging in the “politics of homeland”. However, the participation of Chinese “new migrants” in Australian politics since the 1980s has also been conditioned by their world view formed through their socialisation back in China and the rising Chinese transnationalism sponsored by the Chinese government. The illiberal thinking and strong Chinese nationalism and transnationalism have prevented many of them from integrating into the host society and establishing harmonious relationships with fellow citizens of other ethnocultural groups.

In recent years there has been a new emphasis on a closer attention to the affairs of the host society and the social, cultural and political representation of the Overseas Chinese communities. In a report issued by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of PRC in December 2009, the associations of the Overseas Chinese were criticised for unhealthy practices such as indifference to the affairs of the host society including the welfare of ordinary members, abuses of leadership positions for personal gain or even illegal activities, and the in-fighting and unethical competition within an association and among associations (Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of the PRC 2009). More and more Chinese “new migrants” have accomplished political re-socialisation and internalised universal liberal-democratic values to become qualified democratic citizens. Great efforts have been made by them to not only contribute to the politics of multicultural democracy as active and responsible citizens, but also enrich Australian culture by maintaining and expressing their distinctive identities and practices. There are good prospects for them to develop a multicultural citizenship that embraces and celebrates minority rights in line with the shared liberal values of freedom, democracy and equality.

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