
Reviewed by S. C. M. Paine, U.S. Naval War College

During the years of the formal alliance between the United States and the Republic of China (ROC) from 1943 to 1972, both countries promoted their political goals through policies concerning migration to the United States that affected mainland and Taiwanese nationals. These policies remained a central topic of negotiation and served both as a barometer for the current state of Sino-American relations and as a low-risk avenue to improve relations.

The book is divided into three parts: migration during World War II and the Chinese Civil War (chapters 1–3), migrants as Cold Warriors (chapters 4–6), and migration as a means to defuse the Cold War (chapters 7–8). Each chapter focuses on a core migration topic: (1) repeal of the U.S. Chinese exclusion laws, (2) the use of the Chinese diaspora as a foreign policy instrument, (3) repatriation and migration during the Chinese Civil War, (4) the Cold War revisions to U.S. immigration laws, (5) the ROC competition with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) for overseas remittances, (6) the tidal wave of refugees into Hong Kong, (7) the repatriation negotiations for long-detained foreign nationals, and (8) visa diplomacy over Taiwanese independence activists in the United States.

**Part I:** Despite the ROC-U.S. alliance, the U.S. repeal of the exclusion act, and the end of extraterritoriality all in 1943, the United States retained tight immigration policies that used race not nationality as the essential discriminator. Given the annual quota of only 105 persons of Chinese ethnicity, even the Chinese spouses of U.S. nationals had extreme difficulty immigrating. Nevertheless, during the Second World War, Chinese-Americans provided substantial financial aid to help the ROC fight Japan and also served in the U.S. armed forces.

Those whom the United States called “U.S. citizens of Chinese descent,” the ROC called “overseas Chinese with U.S. citizenship” (p. 76) and made them a subject of foreign policy. The ROC pressured the United States to allow family reunification. For a few years, the U.S. War Brides and War Fiancées acts of 1945 and 1946 allowed large numbers of Chinese women to immigrate. To erode U.S. racial prejudices, the ROC set high educational, professional, and moral standards for its emigrants to the United States. Over the long term, the immigration program was wildly successful. Today not only Chinese but all Asian immigrants are widely assumed to be a “model minority” (p. 5) with the highest levels of educational achievement and above-average income levels.

**Part II:** In the 1950s, as part of the One-China policy, the ROC demanded to represent all nationals of the PRC and the ROC. The PRC facilitated this by expropriating remittances sent home from overseas Chinese, persecuting those receiving them, and writing letters to overseas family members demanding more to prevent
retaliation against their kin. The ROC then damaged its case for being the one China by refusing to accept most refugees from Hong Kong after 1950, despite United Nations recognition of the ROC as the government of China. When the Great Leap Forward sent refugees pouring into Hong Kong, the newly economically stable ROC belatedly seized the propaganda opportunity to welcome them.

Part III: The Sino-U.S. ambassadorial talks in Geneva in 1955 eventually led to the return of long-unrepatriated Americans in the PRC and mainlanders in the United States. The 1965 Hart-Celler Act finally ended de facto Asian exclusion by eliminating national-origin quotas. This led to a significant ROC brain drain as the highly educated immigrated and transformed the United States into a center for the Taiwanese independence movement, increasing the proportion of Chinese-Americans with family roots in Taiwan rather than the mainland. By the 1960s, immigration became a source of U.S.-ROC friction with politically active ROC dissidents in the United States. The ROC responded by clamping down on exit visas for dissidents.

The book is definitive on the topic of ROC-U.S. immigration policies in that it mines all the essential relevant archives of U.S. presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt through Richard Nixon; Taiwan’s key archives at Academia Sinica, Academia Historica, the Kuomintang, and the Foreign Ministry; and China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Number 2 Historical, and Guangdong provincial archives. The research is both original and thorough, covering academic exchanges, deportations, refugees, voluntary exiles, defectors, and dissidents. It examines patterns in migration policy as a foreign policy tool, a form of public diplomacy, and method to shape the Chinese-American community—but the chapters do not align with these important topics. This and a lack of overarching analytical introductory and concluding paragraphs for each chapter (not to mention paragraph topic sentences) make the book hard to read and therefore hard to remember. A thematically organized article summarizing the book’s findings would be assignable to students in a variety of disciplines. The book tells an important story about how a model minority became the model.


Reviewed by Bryan R. Reckard, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Well-argued and thoroughly researched, Joyce Mao’s *Asia First* underscores the significance of the Asia First movement in conservative circles throughout the Cold War. Mao explains how Asia Firsters, those who demanded that U.S. foreign policy emphasize the Pacific as much as (or more than) Europe and the Atlantic, were distinct from the broader China Lobby in seeing China as one possible avenue for pushing conservatism beyond isolationism and into internationalism. In the years following Chiang Kai-shek’s escape from mainland China to Formosa, the Republic of China (ROC)