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The Qiaosheng “Problem”

The United States, Great Britain, and the Mobility of Overseas Chinese Youth in the Early Cold War

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ABSTRACT This study explores two examples of British and U.S. responses to the movement of ethnic Chinese youth from Southeast Asia to and from mainland China and to a lesser degree Taiwan. Drawing on multi-archival sources, it examines the travel restrictions imposed by the colonial authorities in British Malaya as well as a U.S.-sponsored education assistance scheme for overseas Chinese students implemented in collaboration with the Republic of China (ROC) and the Asia Foundation. In their implementation, both powers found their influence limited by local forces in the milieu of a decolonizing Southeast Asia. KEYWORDS Cold War, education, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore

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Two women stood weeping at the Singapore harbor: one had dashed there too late to stop her son from boarding the steamer *Tjiluwah* bound for Hong Kong; the other had hoped that her runaway daughter would show up to board the steamer. Such scenes of parents hoping to stop their offspring from leaving for mainland China or of families bidding farewell to their children played out at Southeast Asian ports in the 1950s. A journalist, reporting from Macau, claimed that Communist agents were using sex, money, and the prospect of a “beautiful future” to lure ethnic Chinese youth back to the Chinese mainland.[1]

The movement of ethnic Chinese youth to and from the mainland became a security concern in Southeast Asia in the 1950s when Britain, the United States, and local governments worried about the allegiance of ethnic Chinese communities in the region. A mixed brew of Cold War tensions, decolonization dynamics, and local concerns in late colonial and independent

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[1] *Straits Times* (*ST*), June 26, 1956, 1, “*Gongte yi nüsejinqian yinyu qinnian fangongqu*,” [“Communist agents use sex and money to lure youth back to Communist territory”] *Xingdao ribao* (Hong Kong), September 7, 1953.

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states focused on nation-building turned a private, family matter into one that attracted the official attention of a late colonial power (Britain), a rising hegemon (United States), as well as local politicians and community leaders.

This study explores two examples of Anglo-U.S. responses to the "Chinese problem" in Southeast Asia through a consideration of travel restriction policies and the Overseas Chinese Scholarship Program (OCSP). These cases reveal the transitions taking place in the region in the first fifteen years following World War II. Ethnic Chinese communities in Singapore and Malaya, like those elsewhere in the region, increasingly shifted their focus from their ancestral homeland in mainland China to their countries of domicile as they took advantage of new opportunities to participate in local politics and establish their belonging in those countries.[2] Likewise, local politicians in independent and soon-to-be-independent states increasingly circumscribed the decision-making powers of Britain and the United States.

The emerging Cold War, the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland and its rival, the Republic of China (ROC), on the island of Taiwan transformed the overseas Chinese communities into a contested population, with each side in the Cold War seeking to secure its allegiance and to direct its orientation to the "desired" China.[3] Until the 1970s, the United States extended diplomatic recognition to the ROC, and in the early Cold War years, collaborated with that government to position the ROC as the true motherland for overseas Chinese communities.

In the first decade-and-a-half after the end of World War II, Chinese communities in Southeast Asia adjusted to new political environments as countries in the region gained their independence. Elite Chinese dominated important business sectors such as banking, rice milling, and the tin and rubber trade, while other Chinese engaged in retail and other small business, and still others toiled as part of a laboring class. Newly formed independent governments, concerned about Chinese economic prominence, skeptical about their political loyalties, and eager to build a unified nation, often adopted policies that regulated Chinese education, economic activity, as well

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[2] British Malaya refers to British territories, including Singapore, which came under British control throughout the nineteenth century. The "Malaya" in this article refers only to territories in the peninsula that constituted the Federation of Malaya from 1948 onward, although documents from the postwar period often used the term for both the Federation and Singapore.

[3] The Republic of China (ROC) is used in this article to refer to the regime established by the Nationalist government in Taiwan after 1949.

as citizenship status.[4] A great deal of variation existed across the region. Newly independent Burma, for instance, initially limited Chinese political participation and opportunities for naturalization and citizenship, whereas the Ngo Dinh Diem government in South Vietnam decreed in 1956 that Chinese born in the country be classified as Vietnamese nationals and that Chinese schools were to be "Vietnamized." Almost all Southeast Asian states, however, brought Chinese education under state control, although the restrictions varied across the region. Thailand, which remained nominally free from European colonial control, had had a longer history of assimilating its Chinese population and began bringing Chinese education under state control in the late nineteenth century. By the early post-World War II period, the Thai state abolished Chinese elementary schools and severely limited the hours of Chinese instruction in Chinese secondary schools.[5]

Recent scholarship has challenged the traditional framing of ethnic Chinese communities as homogenous entities acted upon by the state. These studies explore the agency of different groups as they carved out places for themselves and played a role in shaping these new polities.[6]

Unlike most former colonial territories in the region, Malaya and Singapore remained under British control until the mid-1950s, although plans for decolonization were underway. In 1946, the British created a Malayan Union incorporating the nine Malay states on the peninsula, as well as Malacca and Penang that had been part of the British Straits Settlements. Malay opposition resulted in its dissolution and the creation of the Federation of Malaya (Federation). Singapore became a separate crown colony in 1946. While British authorities remained in control, a gradual transfer of power led to increasing numbers of local representatives, either appointed by the chief executive or nominated by organizations they represented, gaining

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[4] Chinese schools, mostly established around the turn of the twentieth century, were funded by community leaders and organizations. The primary language of instruction was generally Mandarin and teachers often relied on teaching materials and curricula imported from mainland China and, after World War II, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the ROC, and Hong Kong.

[5] Chia Ooi Peng, "Chinese Education in Southeast Asia," in *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*, ed. Tan Chee Beng (New York: Routledge, 1973), 417–30.

[6] Wasana Wongsurawat argues that the collaboration between ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs with successive state rulers since the late nineteenth century was one element that facilitated the emergence of the modern Thai nation. Similarly, authors in Siew-Min Sai and Chang-Yau Hoon's edited collection highlight how diverse groups negotiated their Indonesian Chinese identities. Wasana Wongsurawat, *The Crown and the Capitalists: The Ethnic Chinese and the Founding of the Thai Nation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019); Siew-Min Sai and Chang-Yau Hoon, eds., *Indonesian Chinese Reassessed: History, Religion, and Belonging* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

seats in the Legislative Councils (LegCo) in both territories in the first half of the 1950s. The Federation achieved self-government and then independence in 1955 and 1957 respectively, while Singapore gained limited self-government in 1955, and full internal self-government in 1959. Until then, executive authority in the Federation remained vested in the High Commissioner and in Singapore, the Governor, each of whom was advised by an Executive Council.

For the British, the presence of large numbers of ethnic Chinese (39 percent and 78 percent of the population respectively) in both the Federation and Singapore was complicated by the guerrilla war launched in 1948 by the Chinese-dominated Malayan Communist Party. The colonial authorities declared a state of emergency—the Malayan Emergency—that lasted for the next twelve years. Emergency regulations gave the colonial governments and their successors extraordinary powers over civilian populations.[7]

After a brief review of the *qiaosheng* (overseas Chinese students) problem, this article will examine travel restriction policies in Malaya and Singapore and the OCSP launched by the United States. The former, favored by the late colonial state in British Malaya fits into a long-established history of administrative practices and immigration ordinances that regulated the movement of peoples in and out of different parts of the British imperial world. By contrast, the latter, a U.S.-sponsored education assistance program to redirect qiaosheng to the ROC, transcended national borders and represented a form of transnational policy deployed by a rising world power that had resources at its disposal but no formal power in the region.

Juxtaposing these two cases highlights the different positions of Britain and the United States in Southeast Asia during the early Cold War as the region shifted from formal empires to the more informal "empire by invitation" associated with U.S. hegemonic influence.[8] British authorities continued to deploy state-centered solutions while the United States relied

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[7] Population figures are from Memorandum (Memo) on Chinese immigration, September 1948, FCO 141/15621, National Archives, Singapore (NAS). On the Malayan Emergency, see Anthony Short, *Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948–1960* (London: Muller, 1975); and Kumar Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds, 1948–1960* (Surrey: Routledge, 2002).

[8] Wen-Qing Ngoei explores this shift and shows that Britain and the United States, together with local anti-Communist political leaders, solidified an "arc of containment" in Southeast Asia to restrict the spread of Communist influence and ensure a smooth decolonization process that would produce non-Communist post-colonial states. Wen-Qing Ngoei, *Arc of Containment: Britain, the United States, and Anticommunism in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

on assistance programs that rested on the transnational collaboration of several parties. The OCSP was simply part of a range of cultural, educational, and propaganda programs the United States devised as part of what Kenneth Osgood describes as a "total Cold War."[9] In both cases, Southeast Asian governments in different stages of decolonization, the competing interests of their changing ethnic Chinese communities, and in the case of the OCSP, the goals of the ROC shaped the outcomes of British and U.S. policies.

This article, by exploring the controls which governed trans-border travel in British Malaya, expands upon current scholarship in migration diplomacy, while examining the U.S.-funded education scheme adds a broadening geographical focus to studies about U.S. Cold War-era state-private-clandestine networks.[10] One of the partners in the OCSP, the Asia Foundation (TAF), functioned as a private organization but was a secret U.S.-funded proprietary of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), thus allowing the U.S. government to camouflage its involvement in myriad Cold War projects in Asia. Another partner was the ROC, which added a transnational as well as intra-Asia dimension to Cold War era efforts to counter perceived Communist influence on a target population. Such collaboration, as this study shows, had its own challenges.[11]

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[9] Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006). Other examples include Sangjoon Lee, *Cinema and the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020); and Eugene Ford, *Cold War Monks: Buddhism and America's Secret Strategy in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

[10] Studies in migration diplomacy include Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Meredith Oyen, *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S.-Chinese Relations in the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); and Taomo Zhou, *Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019). See also Low Choo Chin, "The Repatriation of the Chinese as Counter-insurgency Policy during the Malayan Emergency," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 45, no. 3 (October 2014): 363–92; and "Immigration Control during the Malayan Emergency: Borders, Belonging and Citizenship, 1948–1960," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 89, pt. 1, no. 310 (June 2016): 35–59. For Cold War era state-private networks, see Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[11] Founded as the Committee for Free Asia in 1951 and known as the Asia Foundation from September 1954 onward, TAF was a CIA-funded entity. For TAF programs, see Lee, *Cinema and the Cultural Cold War*; and Shen Shuang, "Empire of Information: The Asia Foundation's Network and Chinese-Language Cultural Production in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (September 2017): 589–610.

THE QIAOSHENG "PROBLEM:" THE MIGRATION OF OVERSEAS CHINESE STUDENTS TO THE MAINLAND IN THE 1950s

The qiaosheng "problem," as perceived by British authorities and the United States, was the creation of Cold War tensions. While mobility was not new, it was new that governments perceived it as troublesome. Indeed, until the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), ethnic Chinese living in Southeast Asia had habitually moved to and from their ancestral homeland in a pattern of "circular migration," one that historian Sunil Amrith describes as a "fundamental feature" of Asian migration until the mid-twentieth century.[12] Moreover, families with means often sent their children to China to receive a traditional Chinese education. Going to the mainland, however, became taboo in the new postwar geopolitical environment as the world divided into Communist and anti-Communist spheres of influence.

The exact number of qiaosheng who went to mainland China in the 1950s is not readily available. Glen Peterson estimated that 60,000 students, mostly from Southeast Asia, went to the mainland during this period. In 1956, the TAF representative in Hong Kong surmised that about 35,000 students, with 6,210 from Southeast Asia, had returned to Communist China since 1949, although he included those from Hong Kong and Macau in the latter tally.[13]

Reports from Singapore and interviews conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s with a group of expatriate Indonesian Chinese in Hong Kong supply anecdotal evidence about the PRC-bound qiaosheng. Zheng Tianren, who "returned" to the PRC in 1957, was a third-generation Indonesia-born ethnic Chinese who considered Bahasa Indonesia to be his native tongue and learned Mandarin only after he entered school. Unlike Zheng, China-born Lin Shuqing was brought to Indonesia when he turned six in 1948. Within four years, his parents and two siblings had returned permanently to mainland China while he remained behind to complete his secondary schooling before leaving for the PRC in 1957.[14] Others simply departed without

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[12] Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 4 and Ch. 1.

[13] Glen Peterson, *Returned Overseas Chinese in the Republic of China* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3, 125; James Ivy to James Stewart, February 18, 1957, Folder: Education: General 1956–60, Box 96, Asia Foundation Records, Hoover Institution Archives (AFR-HIA).

[14] Where possible, Chinese names are transliterated as they were used by individuals themselves. Otherwise, *pinyin* is used in the transliteration. Wang Cangbai, *Huozaibiechu: xianggang*

informing their families. In June 1951, a Singapore Special Branch officer flew to Hong Kong to intercept a group of six runaway schoolgirls, ages fifteen to nineteen. In another case, the parents of eight young schoolboys from the Federation discovered their sons' plans only when they received letters mailed two days before the boys had set sail from Singapore.[15]

Qiaosheng who went to the mainland came from a variety of different backgrounds. For example, Zheng Tianren came from a lower middle-class family, while Guo Hong's more prosperous parents were able to provide her and two of her siblings with RMB10,000 each when they left for China. Of the six young women who ran away from Singapore, Chen Peiying was an orphan who had been living in a temple with a family friend, and Huang Feng Ping was the daughter of a prominent community leader in Singapore and Johore.[16]

The runaway young women from Singapore confessed their desire to seek higher education in Communist China. They believed that the standard of education was higher in the PRC. Their interrogation reports suggest they were questioned repeatedly by Special Branch personnel about the teachers and peers who had influenced or encouraged them to seek out education in the PRC. While they consistently denied any such influence, the schoolgirls clearly had access to an informal information network that showed them how to go about securing passage to China via Hong Kong and provided information about available assistance for newly arrived qiaosheng in the PRC.[17]

Aside from educational opportunities on the mainland, several of the expatriate Indonesian Chinese confessed that they were drawn to the "New China." Motivated by a sense of patriotism, Indonesia-born Qiu Guangda wanted to help build the New China. Pan Zhiqiang, despite being born in Indonesia to a father who was a leader of the pro-Nationalist faction in town, remembered having been swept up in the "return fervor" (*huiguoxuechao*). He suggested that qiaosheng could be classified in two groups: those who

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yinnihuaren koushulishi [*Life Is Elsewhere: Oral Histories of Indonesian Chinese in Hong Kong*] (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 125–53, 105–24. See also Michael R. Godley and Charles A. Coppel, "The Pied Piper and the Prodigal Children: A Report on the Indonesian-Chinese Students who went to Mao's China," *Archipel* 39 (1990): 179–98.

[15] Singapore Police Force Reports, June 20 and 21, 1951, FCO 141/14408, The National Archives, United Kingdom (TNA); "Review of Chinese Affairs—Malaya, Jan 1955," FCO 141/7631, TNA.

[16] Wang, *Huozaibiechu*, 125–53, 155–75; Singapore Police Force Reports, June 20 and 21, 1951, FCO 141/14408, TNA.

[17] Ibid.

loved China and wanted to contribute to building the socialist PRC, and those who wanted to further their education. Pan believed that those who attended "leftist" schools went to the mainland, while those from "rightist" schools left for Taiwan.[18]

A myriad of studies commissioned by government agencies and private organizations reiterated similar reasons for these young people's decisions. Most prominent was the more hospitable environment on the mainland which featured reception centers, preparatory schools, and hostels built to accommodate the influx, as well as the assurance of a job upon graduation, and existing familial ties in mainland China. These contrasted with the less desirable conditions in their countries of residence, particularly anti-Chinese discrimination, and the absence of Chinese-language tertiary institutions. In addition, a sense of "racial nationalism" led some of these ethnic Chinese youth to regard the PRC as an emerging power and the center of Chinese culture. Finally, local pro-Communist individuals and organizations, including family members, peers, and schools they attended, could also influence these young people's decisions.[19]

Those overseas Chinese students who pursued higher education opportunities in Taiwan in the 1950s were generally not perceived as part of the "problem" by British and U.S. authorities.[20] In Southeast Asia, Nationalist Chinese consulates, pro-Kuomintang (KMT/Guomindang) civic organizations, alumni and other groups seem to have formed a network that informed students about opportunities in the ROC. The best example is in the Philippines, where Chien-Wen Kung shows that the KMT, with the cooperation of successive pro-ROC Philippine governments, successfully built a network that nurtured anti-Communist and pro-KMT/ROC sentiment among local Chinese.[21] In Singapore, where the colonial authorities had banned the KMT, organized social gatherings nonetheless allowed prospective students to mingle with those who had returned home from Taiwan on vacation.[22]

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[18] Wang, *Huozaibiechu*, 69–83, 85–104, 105–25.

[19] Studies include a U.S. investigation by Operations Coordinating Board, "Overseas Chinese Students—A Study" attached to Memo, Walter McConaughy and Kenneth Landon to Elmer Staats, January, 1955, Folder: OCB 91.China (File #3)(5), Box 27 White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948–1961 OCB Central File Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library; a Malayan Home Affairs Ministry study, "Traffic of Chinese Students between Malaya and Communist China," July 1954, FCO 141/14597, TNA; and a TAF study, "Higher Education Situation for Overseas Chinese in Asia," December 1953, Folder: Education—General, 1951–1955—Overseas Chinese, Box 96, AFR-HIA.

[20] Less scholarly attention has focused on this group of students. Scholars interested in investigating the background and motivations of these students may want to examine program files located at the principal host institutions in Taiwan.

[21] Chien-Wen Kung, *Diasporic Cold Warriors: Nationalist China, Anticommunism, and the Philippine Chinese, 1930s–1970s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

A mix of practical and ideological reasons—desire to seek higher education and/or a sense of ethnic nationalism—similarly motivated these ROC-bound students just as it did their counterparts who went to the mainland. Taomo Zhou's examination of "communal battles" for influence between pro-PRC and pro-ROC forces in Indonesia shows that the political orientation of the Chinese schools these students attended influenced their choices. A U.S. Embassy official in Taipei suggested that most qiaosheng graduates who studied in the ROC left with "the generally pro-GRC [government of ROC] attitude they had when they arrived," while a small group returned "tremendously impressed" with Taiwan and "almost fanatically devoted" to the ROC. Nevertheless, as this study shows, the travel restrictions adopted by Southeast Asian countries, while not necessarily directed against this group, also hampered their plans to study in Taiwan.[23]

THE LATE COLONIAL STATE: REGULATING THE MOVEMENT OF CHINESE YOUTH IN BRITISH MALAYA

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, British authorities devised policies to avert the possibility, however remote, that students could return after a period of indoctrination in mainland schools and serve as the mouthpieces of the Chinese Communist Party. High Commissioner Henry Gurney likened Communist indoctrination to a "disease" and recommended preventing their re-entry unless the authorities could be satisfied that they did not "carry the infection."[24]

Curbing the return of Chinese youth was part of a larger policy to restrict immigration to Malaya and Singapore during the Malayan Emergency and beyond. Discussions among British officials reveal the economic, political, and security concerns underlying the issue of immigration. Meeting with

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[22] *Nanyang shangbao*, July 30, 1957, 6.

[23] Zhou, *Migration in the Time of Revolution*, esp. 89–96; U.S. Embassy/Taipei to Department of State (DOS), September 3, 1958, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1958–1959, Box 224, Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961 Deputy Director for Operations Office of Far Eastern Operations China (Taiwan) Subject Files, 1948–1959, RG 469, National Archives–College Park (NACP).

[24] Henry Gurney to Franklin Gimson (Governor of Singapore), February 12, 1951, FCO 141/14406, TNA.

British colonial officials in August 1948, MacDonald repeatedly stressed that Chinese immigration ought to be "very firmly restricted." He echoed the recommendation of the British Defense Coordinating Committee (Far East) (BDCC-FE) to stem "further infiltration of Chinese" into British territories in Asia.[25] A few months later, he reiterated the position of the BDCC-FE that there were "already too many Chinese" in these territories. Although both the Federation and Singapore governments had already limited the categories of migrants allowed to disembark and remain in their territories, the authorities agreed to reduce further the numbers admitted in each category.[26]

In July 1950, the Singapore Intelligence Committee (SIC) reviewed options for handling local-born and foreign-born students. It dismissed attempts to deprive the former of their right of return. Committee members also found a system of exit permits to be both "politically undesirable" and "cumbersome." While the SIC pointed out that the only "real solution" lay in expanding local educational opportunities, its immediate proposals focused on travel restrictions. One was to demand stringent proof of local birth before issuing a passport to any prospective traveler. Another was to use the Emergency Regulations to refuse entry/landing permits to China-born aliens, to deport those who made it back to the shores of the colony, and to cancel any Certificates of Admission previously issued to such persons. Many alien Chinese did not travel with a passport, relying instead on a Certificate of Admission, issued since the 1933 Aliens Ordinance, for re-entry. The SIC recommendations became the interim policy concerning the alien-born even though the Colonial Secretary doubted whether the Emergency Regulations and the Alien Ordinance could be used to justify those measures.[27] Eventually, the CO instructed the Commissioner-General to pursue an amendment to the 1948 Emergency (Travel Restrictions) Regulations that would require all travelers to possess an entry/landing permit in order to be admitted to the Federation or to Singapore.[28]

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25. Minutes of the 5th Commissioner-General's Conference, August 7 and 8, 1948, FCO 141/15617, NAS.

26. Minutes of the 9th Commissioner-General's Conference, January 22 and 23, 1949, FCO 141/15626, NAS; Memo on Chinese Immigration, September 1948, FCO 141/15621, NAS.

27. "Recommendations of the Singapore Intelligence Committee to Deal with Chinese Communist Indoctrination of Malayan Students," July 13, 1950, and note of Emergency Meeting held at Government House, August 30, 1950, FCO 141/14406, TNA.

28. Secretary of State for the Colonies to Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, December 6, 1950, FO 371/83545, TNA.

By 1953, both Singapore and the Federation had tightened administrative measures and permanently amended laws governing travel of the foreign-born. Among the latter were the Passport (Amendment) Regulations, introduced in October 1950, which required non-British residents to secure a re-entry permit/visa before their return. Valid for a three-month period, such permits were good for only a single journey; those who made numerous journeys for business reasons could apply for a multiple-use entry visa valid for six months. These regulations added another layer of bureaucratic control and, in the eyes of some Chinese community leaders, additional hardship.[29]

Colonial authorities, however, could not unilaterally decide policy. Vocal opposition from Chinese community leaders, most clearly expressed in petitions to the Governor and to London, led to concessions. Those who had left before the new regulation took effect could return using their Certificates of Admission if they did so prior to June 30, 1951. Eventually, the Select Committee working on new comprehensive immigration regulations also allowed residents who had lived in British Malaya for fifteen out of the preceding twenty years to apply for Certificates of Residence that would obviate the need for re-entry visas.[30]

The local-born who left for China remained a problem. Until the mid-1950s, the PRC continued to accept the *jus sanguinis* ("right of blood") principle of nationality law. As dual nationals considered Chinese by the PRC, these Chinese did not require passports to enter the PRC, thus limiting British options in their attempts to prevent local-born Chinese from traveling to the mainland. British colonial authorities particularly worried about a group of 7,000 to 8,000 local-born children who had been sent to China prior to 1949 and would likely have spent a few years in Communist schools by the time they sought re-entry to the region. Since their families had submitted proof of local birth to the appropriate immigration authorities prior to their departure, they could not be barred from returning.[31]

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[29] Low, "Immigration Control," 44–47; *ST*, October 5, 1950, 1; *Indian Daily Mail*, October 19, 1950, 4.

[30] *ST*, October 14, 1950, 7; December 23, 1950, 8; February 28, 1951, 5. See *ST*, March 15, 1951, 6 for the petition, and Low, "Immigration Control during the Malayan Emergency," 50–54 for the new Immigration (Restriction) Ordinance that took effect in early 1953.

[31] On PRC legislation relating to overseas Chinese, see Mao Qixiong and Lin Xiaodong, eds., *Zhongguo huaqiao zhengce gaishu* [*Overview of China's Overseas Chinese Policy*] (Beijing: *Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe,* 1993). See also Secretary for Chinese Affairs (SCA) (Singapore), "Dual Nationality," September 12, 1950, and Minutes of the 8th meeting of the Immigration Advisory Committee, May 8, 1950, FCO 141/14406, TNA.

One way to prevent the return of local-born Chinese from the mainland was by amending the 1949 British Nationality Act to strip British status from those dual nationals who displayed "superior loyalty" to their other nationality. British officials, however, conceded this measure would involve a long and cumbersome process. Further discussions in Singapore yielded other suggestions which included the deportation of those who demonstrated "superior loyalty" to the PRC, or withholding passports from or limiting the validity of passports and ultimately, new legislation that would include a "public security" exclusion order for specific individuals.[32]

Differences appeared between the Federation and Singapore in their approaches to the problem. The former, wary of the return of China-educated students during the Malayan Emergency, appeared eager to deploy extraordinary measures to prevent this eventuality. The latter, concerned about the implications any draconian policy could have for relations with its majority ethnic Chinese community, hesitated to adopt harsher restrictions. Despite Commissioner-General Malcolm MacDonald's efforts, Singapore remained leery of any regulation that would prevent local-born persons from returning. The Colonial Secretary expected that the entire local-born community, not just the Chinese, would oppose such a measure.[33] Foot-dragging on the part of the Singapore authorities angered Malayan High Commissioner Henry Gurney, who attributed the delay to "a few people" in Singapore who "cannot be expected to understand the real dangers."[34]

An investigative committee comprising the Secretary for Chinese Affairs (SCA), J.P. Biddulph, Director of Immigration, S.E. King, and two members of the Singapore LegCo, Tan Chin Tuan and C.C. Tan, met in 1951 to explore the issue. Members of what became known as the Biddulph Committee affirmed the "fundamental principle" of British subjects' right to return to the region. Any added burden imposed on the locally born, they believed, would not only upset the community, but would discourage the foreign-born from seeking naturalization. Consequently, the committee settled on the threat of possible detention as a deterrent. It proposed warning those traveling to Communist nations, particularly those who could be of age

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[32] Acting Commissioner-General (Southeast Asia) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, September 23, 1950, FCO 141/14464, TNA.

[33] Minute by the Governor (Singapore), December 22, 1950; Brief Notes of a Meeting in the Colonial Secretary's office, December 22, 1950; Note by the Colonial Secretary, Singapore, February 5, 1951; Notes of a Meeting at Government House, February 15, 1951, FCO 141/14406, TNA.

[34] Henry Gurney to Franklin Gimson, February 12, 1951, ibid.

to attend a school or university, that they could be detained under Emergency Regulations if they had been "indoctrinated" and chose to return to Singapore or the Federation. Detainees could appeal their cases to an Advisory Committee. While the Singapore Colonial Secretary, the Commissioner-General, and the Federation authorities remained partial to amending the Emergency Regulations, they eventually endorsed the Biddulph Committee's suggestions. Both the Federation and Singapore governments duly issued the proposed warning.[35]

In theory, detention upon arrival allowed the authorities to isolate individuals deemed to be security risks, but the practical steps of policy implementation proved more complicated. How would authorities identify those who had been "indoctrinated"? Soon after the policy went into effect, the Assistant Commissioner of Special Branch in Singapore suggested that perhaps "age" (i.e., school-going age) or "long period of residence in China" were sufficient indicators of indoctrination. In practice, possession of "Communist" material—books, a songbook, or a photograph—could become evidence of indoctrination and result in detention. A Federation-born Chinese man, who had been resident in Singapore, was detained because a photograph showed him "fraternizing" with Communist Chinese soldiers. SCA Webb, however, predicted that the man would be released once the Advisory Committee heard his appeal. Only three individuals were subject to prolonged detention between May 1951 and January 1952. A shortage of segregated facilities for different categories of detainees in Singapore also led officials to worry about the possibility that a detainee could potentially become a Communist after exposure to subversive ideas in the detention facility on St. John's Island, then a penal settlement to the south of Singapore island. Not quite six months after the public warning recommended by the Biddulph Committee was issued, the Singapore authorities called for the committee to review the implementation of its recommendations.[36]

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[35] Biddulph Committee to Governor of Singapore, March 20, 1951; Director of Immigration (King) to Secretary for Defense and Internal Security, June 15, 1951; Henry Gurney to Frank Gimson, April 4, 1951; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, May 11, 1951, FCO 141/14406, TNA. A copy of the warning issued to the press, dated May 24, 1951, is in the same folder.

[36] The case of the Federation-born man was discussed at the November SIC meeting. The SIC agreed to reconvene the Biddulph committee at its January 1952 meeting. Extract from Minutes of Emergency Meeting held at Government House, Items 3 and 4, June 13, 1951, FCO 141/14406, TNA; Minutes of the 38th Meeting of the SIC, January 14, 1952; SCA (Webb) to Deputy Secretary

Exchanges among British colonial officials reveal the anticipatory nature of their fears about the return of indoctrinated Chinese youth. SCA Webb, for instance, believed that returning students were likely to attend Chinese schools and could "strengthen . . . any China patriotic feeling, and any frankly Communist leanings" in those schools, but also pointed out that very few of those students were returning to British territories. Should those numbers increase, he suggested organizing some form of "re-indoctrination class" for the returning students, although he admitted that "this would be going a long way towards a police state." Preemptive actions, then, were meant to prevent, rather than solve, an existing problem. Indeed, it was because of such preventative measures that J. F. Brewis, an official in the Commissioner-General's Office, felt the problem was "worth watching" but should not "cause very much concern." He claimed that "everything was being done" to prevent such Chinese youth who had spent time in China from returning to British territories.[37]

The colonial authorities resorted to other measures to curb the movement of local-born Chinese youth. In mid-1953, the British Government reversed its original stance by giving colonial governments greater leeway in exercising their authority to issue and endorse passports. Two years earlier, the Biddulph Committee's recommendation to withhold passports from those traveling to a Communist country had prompted the then Attorney-General to declare that "H.M.G. [Her Majesty's Government] would not listen to this; passports must be issued." By July 1953, the Foreign Office informed colonial authorities that they could use their discretion to reject passport applications from those traveling to a Communist country on the grounds that "Communist indoctrination of their citizens" represented "a danger to national security. . . . " Later in that year, J.F. Brewis observed that passports valid for Hong Kong and the PRC were "practically never issued" to Chinese between the ages of sixteen and thirty.[38]

In early 1954, Federation authorities, spooked by an increase in the number of those leaving for China, once again raised the alarm about the return

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for Defense (Phillips), June 6, 1952; and Minutes of SIC meeting, November 1, 1951, FCO 141/14407, TNA.

[37] SCA (Webb) to Deputy Secretary for Defense (Phillips), June 6, 1952, FCO 141/14407, TNA; J. F. Brewis (Commissioner-General's Office) to J.M. Addis (FO), November 18, 1953, FO 371/105340, TNA.

[38] Extract from FO Despatch No. 267, July 6, 1953, FCO 141/14407, TNA; J. F. Brewis (Commissioner-General's Office) to J.M. Addis (FO), November 18, 1953, FO 371/105340, TNA.

of indoctrinated students. Of the estimated 12,000 Chinese who had left for China in 1953, 1,468 were in the student age group. Federation authorities believed that none of them had the necessary documentation to facilitate their return to Malaya, therefore making the traffic largely "one way." Focusing on the fact that 100 persons of school-going age had returned from China, Home Affairs Member Dato Onn bin Jaafer expected the problem to grow in another few years. His office initially suggested re-issuing a joint warning to those who left for Communist China, but the Director of Special Branch (A. E. G. Blades) and the Acting Colonial Secretary (W. C. Taylor) in Singapore both discounted its efficacy. The authorities on both sides formed another committee to explore the matter, and over the next three years, tried intermittently to find a mutually agreeable solution.[39]

Onn bin Jaafer's office acknowledged that the warning issued in May 1951 had had little deterrent impact, a conclusion Singapore officials had already arrived at six months after that policy took effect. Exit permits remained a less attractive choice. Again, the Home Affairs office settled on amending the Emergency (Travel Restrictions) Regulations to prevent local-born persons with dual nationality from returning to the place of their birth should they travel without valid documents issued by the local governments or the British government or if their documents were no longer valid.[40]

Representatives from both territories considered potential solutions to the return migration issue in late August. Two of the four options discussed related to travel restrictions: a system of exit permits to make it difficult to travel to China and a system of entry permits that would cover persons born in British Malaya who wished to return from China. The latter proved to be contentious. While representatives from the Federation unanimously supported this measure, two LegCo members from Singapore objected to it. C. C. Tan, who had rejected a similar proposal in 1950, adamantly opposed any measure that would interfere with a local-born person's right

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[39] Office of the Member for Home Affairs, F/M, to the Colonial Secretary, Singapore, February 11, 1954; Singapore Acting Colonial Secretary to Office of the Member for Home Affairs, F/M, March 31, 1954; Director of Special Branch to Secretary for Defense and Internal Security, February 23, 1954; and Office of the Member for Home Affairs to Colonial Secretary, May 14, 1954, FCO 141/14407, TNA.

[40] Secretary to Member for Home Affairs to Private Secretary to the High Commissioner, F/M, July 6, 1954, FCO 141/7482, TNA. Attached to this was a proposed amendment to the Emergency Regulations for the Federation, July 1954. See also a similar memo prepared by the Defense Branch in Singapore, July 21, 1954, FCO 141/7482, TNA.

to return to Singapore or the Federation. High Commissioner MacGillivray later attributed Tan's stance to "local political reasons."[41]

MacGillivray pushed for a quick resolution to prevent the entry of what he described as "a Trojan horse." Even though the numbers of departing students in the last quarter of 1954 had declined, he framed the matter as a "very serious threat" to "future security." The Federation was eager to adopt new exit regulations that would, in effect, bar from re-entry those under the age of thirty who traveled to China without a locally issued travel document or an exit permit. In addition, it supported proposed amendments to the Emergency (Travel Restrictions) Regulations that would make it difficult for British subjects and Federal citizens who were dual nationals to return to Malaya.[42]

Once again, Singapore thwarted the desire of the Federation authorities. A small committee, comprising the Colonial Secretary (William Goode), and three others (Tan Chin Tuan, C. C. Tan, and M. J. Namazie), decided to fall back on administrative changes rather than comply with the Federation's preference. Committee members also rejected a system of exit permits by claiming that it was up to the "the parents and not the two Governments" to dissuade their children from leaving; they saw no value in forcing these young people to remain.[43]

The two sides remained divided on whether a government could deprive British subjects and Federal citizens of their right to return to the country of their birth. For some members in the LegCo, this was a fundamental right that should not be abrogated. Of course, the Chinese members were likely also swayed by the interests of the Chinese community they represented. For those in the Federation Government, this right could be overridden by security concerns. As Onn bin Jaafer pointed out, if such individuals persisted in their actions despite being warned of the consequences, they would have no grounds for complaint.[44] In anticipation of a new political landscape after

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41. Aide-Memoire on Meeting at Government House, August 27 1954, FCO 141/14597, TNA; MacGillivray to A.M. MacKintosh (CO), October 23, 1954, FCO 141/14427, TNA.

42. MacGillivray to John Nicoll (Governor of Singapore), October 27, 1954, FCO 141/14427, TNA. A draft copy of the Emergency (Exit) Regulations, 1954 is in FCO 141/14597. See also Memo for Singapore Executive Council, November 8, 1954, FCO 141/14427.

43. Record of Discussion, "The Problem of Chinese Students who Proceed to China for Further Education," November 19, 1954, FCO 141/14427, TNA.

44. Colonial Secretary (Goode), Singapore to Member for Home Affairs, F/M, November 27, 1954, FCO 141/14427, TNA; and a draft of the latter's reply, n.d., FCO 141/7482, TNA.

the election of 1955 in Singapore, the Controller of Immigration suggested postponing any new decisions until a Council of Ministers was assembled.[45]

The new Singapore Chief Minister in 1955, David Marshall, favored permanent changes to the Immigration Ordinance to prevent the local-born from returning. He professed a willingness to weather any "political storm" that resulted from such action, a stance surely welcomed by the Federation Chief Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. But nothing seems to have come of David Marshall's bravado. The Singapore government drafted and then abandoned a corresponding bill to amend the Immigration Ordinance. After Marshall's resignation in June 1956, the Singapore Government now believed that it was "politically unwise" to move forward with changes but urged the Federation to pass its own amending legislation, which it did the following year. Prompted by the fact that the 1956 school-age (fifteen- to twenty-five-year-old) returnees from China exceeded the departures, the Singapore Controller of Immigration recommended parallel legislation in Singapore, but no action resulted.[46]

In both Singapore and the Federation, British colonial authorities turned to a familiar tool to manage young people's travel to and from the PRC. Local Chinese leaders, however, tried to moderate those measures to protect the rights of their community. In Singapore, the two Chinese LegCo members' consistent opposition to draconian measures that effectively targeted the Chinese community underscores the extent to which local community leaders and politicians were now part of the colonial decision-making process. Born into local Straits Chinese families and educated in English-medium schools, their professions as lawyer (C.C. Tan) and banker (Tan Chin Tuan) placed them among the local elite which favored a more conciliatory attitude towards the colonial authorities. Yet these men consistently opposed new travel restrictions that affected the Chinese community. C.C. Tan won an

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[45] Controller of Immigration to Secretary of Defense and Internal Security, February 14, 1955, FCO 141/14427, TNA. A primarily elected unicameral Legislative Assembly, with the leader of the majority party assuming the role of chief minister, emerged from the 1955 elections. A Council of Ministers, presided over by the governor, functioned as a cabinet, with three members appointed by the governor and six chosen from elected Assembly members. See Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore, 1945–1955* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973), 58–61.

[46] Brief for the Minister for Labor and Welfare (Lim Yew Hock), September 30, 1955; Notes on Informal Discussion held in the Chief Minister's Office, Singapore, October 1, 1955; Memo from Chief Minister, F/M, to Joint Conference of Ministers, July 10, 1956; Minutes, Joint Conference of Ministers, July 13, 1956; and Controller of Immigration (Compton), Singapore, February 4, 1957, FCO 141/14427, TNA.

elected seat in the LegCo (1948–1955), whereas Tan Chin Tuan, as Vice President (1948–1950) of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce (SCCC), gained one of three seats reserved for representatives chosen by each of the chambers of commerce. For Tan Chin Tuan especially, both elite business interests and those of the wider Chinese community likely shaped his stance.[47]

Developments through the mid-1950s in Singapore highlight the active political engagement of the Chinese community as it increasingly focused on local developments, while elite-oriented politics gave way to mass-based participation. G. Sikko Visscher's study shows that the SCCC, despite internal dissent between moderate elements who favored cooperation with the British and more radical voices who believed in mobilizing mass participation to secure greater local political control, was a vocal representative of the Chinese community in the political arena. Through the 1950s, it involved itself in issues such as franchise rights, local citizenship, and Chinese-language education as policies governing such issues took shape. The SCCC was joined by labor and student activists as the mid-1950s heralded the emergence of mass politics. In May and June 1954, for instance, Chinese middle school students protested a newly enacted National Service Ordinance, resulting in a clash with police and a subsequent "sit-in" in two Chinese high schools.[48] Such developments likely explain the government's reluctance to introduce additional immigration controls that could fuel additional "public controversy."[49]

Similar dynamics were at work in the Federation as ethnic Chinese increasingly focused on local social and political developments, but the reality of a counterinsurgency against the Malayan Communist Party reduced the flexibility of British authorities and elite Malay leaders in the matter of immigration controls. Low Choo Chin has detailed the fierce opposition from ethnic Chinese in the Federation, led by the Malayan Chinese Association and its leader Tan Cheng Lock (Chen Zhenlu) in the Federal LegCo, to immigration ordinances that prevented the re-entry of alien residents. Elite

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[47] Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary* Vol. I (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 1065–67, 1060–62; Sikko Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity: A History of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007), 46.

[48] Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity*, Ch. 3; Yeo, *Political Development in Singapore*, 135–72, 190–95.

[49] Colonial Secretary (Goode), Singapore to Member for Home Affairs, F/M, November 27, 1954, FCO 141/14427, TNA.

Straits-born and English-speaking Chinese leaders such as Tan and China-born leaders connected to the Chinese speaking masses such as Lim Lian Geok (Lin Lianyu) defended ethnic Chinese interests in citizenship, language, and education policies. The United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA or *jiaozhong*), under Lim's leadership, became a "loud and irrepressible critic" of Federation education policies and pushed to defend Chinese interests in a Malayan nation that he envisioned would embrace its "multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural characteristics."[50]

THE UNITED STATES STEPS IN: RE-DIRECTING THE QIAOSHENG

If the Federation and Singapore governments focused on travel restrictions to manage the qiaosheng problem, the United States and the ROC tried to manage the transnational mobility of overseas Chinese youth by re-directing them to Taiwan.[51] This second example differs from the state-centered policies of the British colonial authorities. Instead, it represents the type of transnational programs that the United States initiated to achieve its goals in both Europe and Asia in the early Cold War.

In November 1953, during his tour of Asia, U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon expressed dismay that overseas Chinese students were flocking to the mainland. Nixon claimed that the Chinese Communists "were playing a long-range game" since these educated young people could eventually return to fill important civil service positions. To counter this, he suggested that the United States set up a student exchange program. Ward Smith, TAF representative in Taipei, reported to his superiors that the Vice President's executive assistant, Christian Herter, expressed "a strong, and to me, unexpected interest in the question of overseas Chinese education."[52]

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[50] Low, "Immigration Control," 50–54; James P. Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia, 1946–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), Chs. 3 and 4; and Tan Liok Ee, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945–1961* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997), especially Ch. 4, quotes on p. 96.

[51] For the workings of the U.S.-sponsored program in Taiwan, see Ting-hong Wong, "College Admissions, International Competition, and the Cold War in Asia: The Case of Overseas Chinese Students in Taiwan in the 1950s," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (May 2016): 331–57. See also Meredith Oyen, "Communism, Containment and the Chinese Overseas," in *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, eds. Zheng Yangwen, Hong Liu, and Michael Szonyi (Boston: Brill, 2010), esp. 83–87.

[52] Memcon of meeting with Vice President Nixon, January 8, 1954, *Declassified Documents Reference System*, CK#3100126097; Ward Smith to President CFA, December 2, 1953, Folder: Education Chinese (Overseas) Taiwan 1953/1954, Box 53, AFR-HIA.

While the Vice President's interest may have been a catalyst, PRC efforts in the early 1950s to exploit the presence of Chinese overseas also prompted increased U.S. and Taiwanese ROC efforts to reach this target population. U.S. and ROC officials noted changes in PRC election law that provided for representation in the National People's Congress for Chinese nationals living abroad. Repeated stories of shiploads of students taken to the PRC to attend college also contributed to growing concern.[53]

Official U.S. interest, which Smith described as essentially reaching "a fever pitch," proved a boon to TAF. Since the early 1950s, TAF officials had been cobbling together a program to influence overseas Chinese. One way was to provide an alternative to the mainland for those Southeast Asian students who wanted to pursue a Chinese-language tertiary education. In January 1953, Smith recommended support for the expansion of dormitory and classroom space in a select number of universities and colleges in Taiwan. When U.S. agencies began to intensify their work related to overseas Chinese, TAF was well-positioned to help.[54]

For the ROC, U.S. interest could not have come at a better time. Qiaosheng education had been a mainstay of government policy since the Republican era. From 1951, the government, through the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAC), implemented plans to encourage Chinese students overseas to seek higher education in Taiwan. This effort remained modest in the beginning; only sixty overseas Chinese students were admitted to tertiary institutions in the 1951–1952 school year.[55] President Chiang Kai-shek raised the matter with Vice President Nixon during his visit.[56]

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[53] CIA Information Report, "Propaganda among Chinese Abroad," February 9, 1954, CIA-RDP80-00809A000500800078-5, Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/, (FOIAERR). PRC activities to encourage overseas Chinese students to go to the mainland are discussed in Xia Chenghua, *Minguoyilai de qiaowu yu qiaojiao yanjiu* [*Study of Overseas Chinese Affairs and Overseas Chinese Education since the Republican Era*] (Xinzhushi: Xuanzhuang daxue, 2005), 289–92.

[54] Ward Smith to President CFA, March 8, 1954 and Ward Smith to President CFA, "Proposed Project for Expanding Overseas Chinese Educational Opportunities in Taiwan," January 29, 1953, Folder: Education Chinese (Overseas) 1953/54, Box 53, AFR-HIA.

[55] OCAC, ed., *Qiaowu Wushi Nian* [*Fifty Years of Overseas Chinese Affairs*] (Taipei: OCAC, 1982), 244–59. Wong, "College Admissions," points out that only twenty-seven of the sixty students who were admitted actually enrolled.

[56] Record of the fourth interview between President Chiang Kai-shek and Vice President Richard M. Nixon, November 10, 1953, Folder: Trip File: 1953 Far East RN [Trip File 1953 Far East], PPS 325 (1953) Box 1, Richard Nixon Pre-Presidential Materials (Laguna Niguel), Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, Calif.

Within two months of Nixon's trip, ROC Premier Chen Cheng (Chen Cheng) assembled top ROC and U.S. representatives to follow up on the vice president's suggestion to counter Beijing's action. A working committee, consisting of, among others, the Minister of Education Cheng Tien-fong (Cheng Tianfang) and OCAC Chair Zheng Yanfen on the Chinese side, as well as Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) and Embassy representatives on the U.S. side, assembled to make recommendations. The TAF representative later joined this committee at U.S. Ambassador Karl Rankin's request. The OCSP emerged from this collaboration.[57]

From the outset, the ROC capitalized on U.S. interest in order to position Taiwan as a regional center of influence among the overseas Chinese. Foreign Minister George Yeh (Ye Gongchao) believed the ROC could assist overseas Chinese with "community education problems."[58] His government hoped to secure U.S. support for its own efforts to reach overseas Chinese communities. Its wish list included a separate university and middle school in Taiwan for overseas Chinese students, teacher training and educational materials for Chinese schools overseas, as well as myriad educational and informational activities in overseas Chinese communities.[59]

U.S. officials tried to rein in the ambitions of the MOE and OCAC. Instead of a separate university in Taiwan for overseas Chinese students, they convinced their Chinese counterparts to expand facilities in existing institutions. Then they persuaded ROC officials to offer travel and maintenance aid only to those overseas Chinese students with demonstrable need. They also managed to defer discussion of cultural work in Southeast Asian countries by arguing that local governments would not respond well to such initiatives.[60] Dorothy Whipple, a USIS official in Taipei, found some of the Chinese suggestions to be of "dubious value." Among themselves, U.S. officials characterized the ROC proposals as "lacking any understanding" of the different situations in Southeast Asian countries. The U.S. Embassy in Taipei cautioned against involvement in any program that appeared to be an "intervention in the local affairs of a sovereign country in which the Chinese are one of the peoples. . . ."[61]

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[57] Joseph Brent (FOA/Taipei) to Frank Turner (FOA), February 10, 1954 and U.S. Embassy/Taipei to DOS, April 12, 1954, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1954, Box 224, Deputy Director for Operations Office of Far Eastern Operations China (Taiwan) Subject Files, 1948–1959, (DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files), RG 469, NACP.

[58] Zheng Yanfen to George Yeh, December 14, 1953, 020-019908-0005-0004a to 0006a, AH, Taipei. For Yeh's comments, see Joseph Brent (FOA/Taipei) to Frank Turner (FOA), February 10, 1954 and U.S. Embassy/Taipei to DOS, April 12, 1954, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1954, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

[59] Appendices II and III attached to Ward Smith to President CFA, February 23, 1954, Folder: Education Chinese (Overseas) Taiwan 1953/1954, Box 53, AFR-HIA.

[60] Minutes of the working committee's second to fifth meetings, ibid.

Between 1954 and 1965, a joint U.S.-ROC Overseas Students Advisory Committee assumed oversight of the OCSP, although both TAF and the U.S. government tried not to publicize their involvement. U.S. aid came from two sources: TAF as well as FOA and its successor agencies, the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) and the Agency for International Development (USAID). In the first year, TAF provided support for building additional facilities to accommodate the projected additional five hundred students at the University of Taiwan. From fiscal year 1955 onwards, ICA funds financed the construction of needed facilities, whereas TAF funds supported maintenance and travel grants for students. The ROC assumed the costs for administering the program. Responsibilities for day-to-day operation fell to the MOE and the OCAC. The former oversaw the admission of students to various institutions, construction of facilities, and counseling and other education-related services. The latter publicized the program overseas and supervised the selection of suitable recipients of travel and maintenance grants.[62]

At its inception, the OCSP aimed primarily to bring overseas Chinese students from Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia to Taiwan for post-secondary education. In 1956, after some debate, the program included a limited number of students seeking admission to senior middle schools. An exception was made for some students from Thailand who gained admission to junior middle schools because schools in Thailand did not offer Chinese-medium education beyond the elementary level.[63]

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[61] Dorothy Whipple to Joseph Brent, March 4, 1954, Folder: Education—Overseas Chinese, Box 64, Mission to China Office of the Chief of Mission Subject Files (Central Files), 1950–1954, RG 469, NACP; U.S. Embassy Taipei to DOS, Apr 12, 1954, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1954, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP. Minutes of a separate meeting between the U.S. members of the working committee and Ambassador Rankin, March 8, 1954, are in Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1954, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

[62] Allen W. Dulles to Richard Nixon, April 8, 1954, CIA-Doc 0000481167, FOIAERR, accessed July 1, 2020; and Xia, *Minguoyilai de qiaowu yu qiaojiao yanjiu*, 293.

[63] Chinese middle schools refer to secondary schools, which usually had six grades. ICA Taipei to ICA, November 23, 1956, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

To be admitted to institutions in Taiwan, qiaosheng from Southeast Asia had to receive recommendations from the ROC legation or consulate, or in countries with no diplomatic ties with Taiwan, from any local "loyal overseas Chinese school." In 1951, other requirements included an average scholastic record of 80 percent and an A grade for conduct. By 1953, academic qualifications were lowered to an average of 70 percent, and conduct to grade B, with an additional emphasis on "right thinking" [*xixiangzhengque*]. That last criterion likely involved some expression of anti-Communist sentiment and/or loyalty to the ROC.[64]

The operation of the OCSP highlights the complexities in administering a transnational multi-agency program that singled out the ethnic Chinese in newly independent or soon-to-be independent states in Southeast Asia. U.S. sponsors had to consider not only their own goals, but also the interests of the overseas Chinese students themselves, the goals of the multiple partners, and more importantly, the preferences and sensitivities of governments in Southeast Asia.

The students themselves lodged the usual complaints about facilities and excessive coursework, but they also criticized the "attitudes and behavior" of the comparatively large group of students from Hong Kong and Macau, who tended to stick to themselves and organize their own activities. Others complained about the delay, likely caused by bureaucratic inertia, in getting travel permits to Taiwan. In one instance, an ROC consulate officer in Thailand reported that a number of students had abandoned plans for traveling to Taiwan and gone to the PRC instead because of the delay in securing the necessary travel documents.[65]

The smaller numbers of students from Southeast Asia who went to Taiwan in the early years of the program led U.S. Embassy and USIS officials in Taipei to question its fundamental purpose and target population. Students from Hong Kong and Macau constituted the majority of those who received support in 1954–55 and of those admitted for 1955–56. Since the OCSP was

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[64] "*Sishiniandu shuqi baosong huaqiaoxuesheng shengxue zhuyishixiang,*" [*Considerations for Recommending Overseas Chinese Students, 1951*], Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MOFA], 020-049910-0061-0028 and 020-049910-0061-0032, Academia Historica (AH), Taipei. For 1953, see 020-049910-0061-0109.

[65] "Most Persistent Criticisms of Present Program made by Overseas Chinese Students," July 13, 1955 and Joint Embassy/USOM despatch to DOS, November 9, 1955, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1954, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP; and Telegram, ROC Embassy (Bangkok) to MOFA, September 29, 1956, MOFA, 020000003028A, AH, Xindian.

meant as a "political move" to prevent young Chinese students from going to the mainland and "not as an educational program," these officials argued, it should focus on students from the "critical areas"; i.e., Southeast Asia. In their view, students from the Hong Kong/Macau region, many of whom were children of refugees from the mainland, were not likely to go to the PRC and did not constitute the target group.[66]

The goals of local Southeast Asian governments and their sensitivity to perceived outside interference also surfaced in the disagreements among U.S. officials. U.S. embassy officials in Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, and Singapore warned that overt U.S. involvement in the OCSP risked "arousing the animosity" of local governments.[67] While these governments may not have lodged specific complaints about the OCSP, U.S. officials had reason to worry that local governments would frown upon Chinese programs. Regarding its operations in the Malay Federation, the TAF president referred to complaints about the Chinese-run Malayan Public Library Association, a TAF project. Apparently, the "Malays were fearful" that the MPLA "might try to occupy a predominant role in Malay activities." In a similar vein, the TAF representative in Singapore cautioned against a proposed scholarship program for graduates of the newly established Nanyang University as "[b]oth governments, Singapore and Malaya, are talking integrating and [TAF] gives a grant entirely to Chinese???"[68] In Indonesia, TAF found itself operating in an increasingly hostile environment. Left-leaning ministers pushed for its "immediate expulsion" at a Cabinet meeting. CIA handlers instructed TAF to withdraw its operations before it could be expelled.[69]

Embassy and USIS officials in Taipei believed there was "no justification" for "drawing students from their home community" and "violating the policy of assimilation" in those countries that offered opportunities for Chinese

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[66] U.S. Embassy Taipei, Joint Emb/USOM despatch to DOS, November 9, 1955, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1956, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

[67] "Report on the visit of Mr. Payne Templeton in February 1956 to the Southeast Asia Countries for the Purpose of Studying the Various Phases of the Problems of Overseas Chinese Education," n.d., appended to ICA Taipei to ICA, April 23, 1956, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1956, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

[68] Memo for the Record, 18 February, 1958, Folder: Budget 1958/59 Malaya/Singapore Program, Box 134; and William Fleming to Blum, January 12, 1960, Folder: Education Scholarships & Fellowships I 1959/March 1960 Singapore Graduate Scholars, Box 133, AFR-HIA.

[69] PP/OPS/C/PR [name redacted] to Chief Psychological and Paramilitary Staff, Feb 21, 1958, FOIAERR, DTPILLAR Vol. 2, 0008, accessed July 2021.

secondary education. To them, wooing a small number of these students to Taiwan was not worth the risk of alienating Southeast Asian governments.[70]

Among U.S. officials, those in ICA-Taipei initially sympathized more with the challenges facing the OCAC and wanted to give their Chinese counterparts more time to produce results. They also detected a contradiction in their embassy and USIS colleagues' arguments. "To recruit students of any level," ICA-Taipei argued, "is to interfere in some degree with the process of assimilation of Chinese with local peoples." Whether these were middle school or college students made little difference.[71] ICA-Taipei officials' attitudes seemed to have changed by 1957. TAF representative Earl Swisher detected an eagerness on the part of ICA-Taipei to remove itself from the project as "they feel that they were more or less dragged into this . . . and would like to hand it back to us."[72]

The other partner in this project, TAF, appears initially to have sided with the ICA and the ROC. Its Taipei representative, David Rowe, complained in 1955 that Dorothy Whipple of USIS risked "water[ing] down the program" by lobbying the U.S. government to limit it only to college-age students, and to those outside the Hong Kong-Macau area. Without any sense of irony, Rowe complained that excluding those from the Hong Kong/Macau area would reduce the OCSP to one of "sheer expediency and political consideration."[73] But the TAF could not escape the new realities in Southeast Asia either. In their internal debates about their overall overseas Chinese program, TAF officials consistently returned to two questions. By singling out the ethnic Chinese as a group, was the program hampering their integration into local societies, and did the program risk damaging TAF relations with local governments?[74]

Like their British counterparts, U.S. officials and TAF personnel found that growing nationalism and independence movements in Southeast Asian countries throughout the 1950s, together with changes taking place within the most populous ethnic Chinese communities, created new realities for their policies and programs. To begin with, many countries designed new travel restrictions that inadvertently hampered recruitment efforts. For instance, Burma, Thailand, and South Vietnam required students to return home each year to renew their visas. Students from Indonesia who did not travel on Indonesian passports also had to renew their re-entry permit annually, while those from Singapore and Malaya had to do so every six months.[75]

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[70] U.S. Embassy Taipei, Joint Emb/USOM despatch to DOS, November 9, 1955 and ICA to ICA/Taipei, April 3, 1956, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1956, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

[71] ICA views are in U.S. Embassy Taipei, Joint Emb/USOM dispatch to DOS, November 9, 1955, Folder: China–Education (Overseas Chinese), 1956, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP.

[72] Earl Swisher to Robert Blum, March 12, 1957, Folder: Reports (Corres.—comments) 1957, Box 53, AFR-HIA.

[73] Memo for the Record, September 19, 1955, Folder: Taiwan General 1954–57, Box 54, AFR-HIA.

[74] See, for example, R. J. Coughlin to Robert Blum, July 24, 1957, Folder: General (Hong Kong Policy) Overseas Chinese Program, Box 97, AFR-HIA.

Under such circumstances, a program that singled out the ethnic Chinese and directed them toward the other China became far less relevant by the early 1960s, especially since the PRC was no longer actively recruiting those students. U.S. diplomats stationed in Southeast Asia pointed out that any shrinking of the OCSP would not push overseas Chinese students toward mainland China or result in "notable enhancement of Communist influence" among Southeast Asian Chinese communities. U.S. attention, they felt, should focus on encouraging those groups to identify with their countries of residence. Consequently, U.S. officials in Taipei recommended that the program be "sharply curtailed" and suggested that only five hundred college students should be admitted annually while ending the secondary school program. They reasoned that there was no longer "a contest" with the PRC for students.[76] TAF followed suit by phasing out support for travel grants and maintenance support. Between June 1954 and June 1958, TAF contributed $215,000 to the program, with a supplementary grant of $4,000 in July 1958. In later years, TAF contributions were reduced. C.C. Yin, its Chinese Program officer, worried that Taipei would accuse the organization of acting "under ICA pressure or [on] U.S. government direction."[77]

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[75] "Reference Materials Prepared by the OCAC concerning Ambassador Rankin's Suggested Items for Discussion on the South East Asian Overseas Ch Education Program," n.d., [probably 1955 or after] MOFA, 020-019908-0005-0130ff, AH, Taipei.

[76] ICA, MSM/China, to ICA, September 1, 1959 and U.S. Embassy to DOS, November 2, 1959, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1958–1959, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP. See also Minutes of a meeting between the Vice Chair of the OCAC with ICA representatives, September 24, 1959, MOFA, 020000011760A, AH, Xindian.

[77] John F. Sullivan to TAF Representative in Taiwan, August 18, 1958; Letter of Agreement, October 1958, attached to Laurence Thompson (TAF Representative Taiwan) to President TAF October 22, 1958; and C. C. Yin to James Stewart, January 18, 1960, Folder: Education Chinese—Overseas Chinese Student Advisory Committee Maintenance, Taiwan Program 104 1801 (Taiwan Program 104 1801), Box 228, AFR-HIA.

Of the three major partners, ROC officials appear to have been slowest, or perhaps just the least willing, to recognize the new realities in Southeast Asia. For instance, the ROC routinely expected resident overseas Chinese students in Taiwan to take part in paramilitary-style camps during the winter vacation that appear designed to nurture a sense of Chinese (ROC) nationalism. They organized similar activities for non-resident qiaosheng invited to Taiwan. Even the pro-ROC government in the Philippines objected to such activity.[78]

TAF and ROC sources reveal that Chinese officials overseeing the program made some adjustments based on the criticisms received. By the late 1950s, they had reduced the number of students admitted from Hong Kong/ Macau. According to a 1958 report, students from that region made up 35.6 percent of the total. They also improved selection criteria to ensure a better caliber of students. But tinkering with individual aspects of the program could not allay U.S. concerns about the priorities of Southeast Asian governments.[79]

In general, ROC officials felt that their American colleagues were unwilling to wait long enough for the program to produce results. They also understood that any substantial cuts in official U.S. and TAF funding would severely limit their ability to sponsor the education of overseas Chinese youth in Taiwan, which could in turn reduce the prestige of Free China in overseas Chinese communities. Li Pu-sheng, vice chair of the OCAC, pointed out that ICA and TAF withdrawal from the project would make it "extremely difficult to carry on the job we have already started. . . ." He stressed that the program was now beginning to show results, since the first two graduating classes had only recently returned home.[80] OCAC officials urged their own Ministry of Foreign Affairs to intervene with the Americans in this matter.

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[78] U.S. Embassy/Taipei to DOS, Oct 6, 1959, USIS Taipei to USIA, Feb 24, 1955, Folder: China—Education (Overseas Chinese), 1958–1959, Box 224, DDO-OFEO China (Taiwan) Subject Files, RG 469, NACP. See the March 1, March 11, and April 21, 1956 issues of *Qiaosheng tongxun*, a newsletter printed for overseas Chinese students, for feature articles about students' experiences in these camps.

[79] "Review of Developments in the Overseas Chinese Education Program," attached to Richard Miller to President TAF, December 30, 1959, Folder: Education Chinese—Overseas Chinese Student Advisory Committee Maintenance, Taiwan Program 104 1801 (Taiwan Program 104 1801), Box 228, AFR-HIA and "*Qiaosheng huiguoshengxue gaishu*" ["An Overview of Overseas Students Returning to Pursue Higher Education"], October 21,1959, MOFA, 020-05209-0078-0126a, AH, Taipei.

[80] Li Pusheng to President, TAF, November 4, 1959; memcon, Li Pusheng and Richard Miller, November 18, 1959; and Taiwan Field Report for period ending June 1, 1960, Folder: Taiwan Program 104 1801 Box 228, AFR-HIA.

From 1959 onwards, Chinese officials repeatedly tried to persuade TAF not to reduce or end funding. Despite these efforts, TAF reduced funding to $30,000 in 1960, and in 1965 officially withdrew from the project.[81]

By the early 1960s, under pressure from their American counterparts and perhaps worried about losing the substantial U.S. financial assistance, ROC officials showed an "evolution in their thinking" about the overseas Chinese. OCAC Chair Chow Shu-kai agreed that the original goal of preventing young overseas Chinese from returning to the mainland was less pressing. Instead, he suggested that Taiwan tailor the education of Southeast Asian students to meet the needs of their countries. Likewise, TAF noted that some OCAC officials appeared more inclined to emphasize training "foreign students of Chinese ancestry" to contribute to the development of their countries of residence. In 1960, Li Pu-sheng suggested limiting preference for admission to those college students who were already citizens in their host countries.[82] The TAF representative in Taiwan observed a new trend of stressing "local assimilation" in contrast to the old practice of encouraging the overseas Chinese to remain tied to their "motherland." Such reappraisals may have been too little, too late. One TAF officer in the head office doubted that the sporadic evidence reflected any "substantive evolution towards a more 'liberal' attitude." He found Chow's views "inadequate to meet the changing situation in Southeast Asia," and pointed out that even those views still met with resistance among OCAC officials.[83]

Ting-Hong Wong estimates that between 1954 and 1965, the OCSP created places in ROC educational facilities for 26,828 students, with 18,950 of them eventually enrolling in various programs. By 1967, about 70 percent of the 10,164 graduates had returned to their countries of origin. In 1960, the OCAC collected 600 responses to questionnaires sent to over a thousand of these graduates. Most of the students, the OCAC reported, had found "good jobs," and were placed in "key positions." Within these limits, the OCSP had succeeded in its original goal of ensuring that overseas Chinese youth were educated in "Free China." How many of these young people would otherwise have gone to mainland China is impossible to ascertain. Undeniably, the program groomed a group of educated young people who returned to their countries of domicile, where their talents may have supported nation-building and other development efforts. As Wong points out, the program "helped plant many Taiwan-educated alumni in various professional fields" across Asia. L.Z. Yuan (Yuan Lunren) of TAF also stressed that one of the program's achievements was "the new generation of non-leftist teachers for Chinese schools in Asia." Although conceived with a political, not educational goal, the latter is a key achievement of the OCSP.[84]

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[81] Minutes of Meeting to discuss U.S. aid to OCSP, November 13, 1959, and "*mei yuan kuochong huaqiao jiaoyu sheshi ji hua gaishu*" ["Overview of U.S. Aid Expansion to Overseas Chinese Education Facilities"], attached to a November 10, 1959 note from OCAC to MOFA, MOFA, 020000011760A, AH, Xindian. See also W. Mallory-Browne (TAF Taiwan Representative) to President TAF, February 26, 1965, Folder: Education—Chinese—Overseas Chinese Student Advisory Committee II Taiwan Program, Box 303, AFR-HIA.

[82] L. Z. Yuan (TAF Chinese Program Officer) to President TAF, April 18, 1960; Taiwan Field Report for the period ending June 1, 1960, Folder: Taiwan Program 104 1801, Box 228, AFR-HIA.

[83] Edgar Pike (TAF Rep) to President TAF, February 22, 1961; Stephen Uhalley (TAF officer in San Francisco) to Edgar Pike, March 6, 1961, Folder: Education Chinese General Taiwan Programs, Box 228, AFR-HIA.

This consideration of the OCSP reveals the problems inherent in this type of transnational project and the difficulties associated with programs that privileged a specific ethnic group in multiethnic societies. As this study has shown, the priorities of the U.S. government and those of the ROC were not always aligned. Repeatedly, U.S. officials found that their Chinese counterparts were more interested in securing the loyalty of the larger overseas Chinese communities, despite the preferences of the host countries.

CONCLUSION

Existing studies about overseas ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asia during this period highlight the changes that accompanied their transition from a China-focused identity to one associated with their local countries of domicile. The aforementioned work of Visscher shows that the SCCC, rather than remaining focused on the PRC or ROC, astutely maneuvered through the minefields of local debates about socio-political developments in Southeast Asia. More broadly, Liu Hong and Wong Sin Keong have examined how ethnic Chinese organizations in Singapore, from voluntary associations (*huiguan*) and Chinese schools to student groups and labor organizations, stepped forward to debate policies that would affect their futures in the new city-state. Tan Lark Sye (Chen Liushi), yet another foreign-born ethnic Chinese businessman active in the SCCC and myriad Chinese civic associations, led the drive to establish Nanyang University

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[84] Wong, "College Admissions," pp. 355–56; Taiwan Field Report for the period ending June 1, 1960, Folder: Taiwan Program 104 1801, Box 228, AFR-HIA.

(*Nantah*) for students educated in Chinese schools. In the Federation, Tan Cheng Lock's political leadership and Lim Lian Geok's activism on behalf of Chinese education show ethnic Chinese leaders leading their communities in carving out a place for themselves in emerging Southeast Asian nations. Taken together, such actions show that while they wanted to preserve their ethnic Chinese cultural identity, these communities increasingly identified with their respective Southeast Asian states. Ironically, both Tan Lark Sye and Lim Lian Geok would be rendered stateless when their respective governments stripped them of their naturalized status.[85]

The changes in ethnic Chinese communities paralleled government policies to integrate the Chinese with other groups in Southeast Asian societies. In particular, new education policies, although controversial and often contested by segments of the Chinese population, incrementally absorbed previously independent Chinese schools into national systems or created new bodies to regulate such schools. In Thailand, for instance, the government closed Chinese secondary schools and absorbed primary schools into a national school system, although it kept the teaching of Chinese language in those schools. Indonesia restricted the number of Chinese schools from 1957 and barred those who had opted for local citizenship from attending these "alien" schools, whereas Burma severely limited the hours devoted to teaching in Chinese even in Chinese schools. Singapore and Malaya too adopted measures to nurture a Malayan identity, and both governments increasingly brought Chinese schools under state supervision.[86]

British and U.S. measures to manage the transnational mobility of overseas Chinese youth were products of a particular geopolitical moment. With hindsight, such measures appear as a stopgap to what the United States and its allies considered a nefarious PRC strategy to lure young ethnic Chinese back to the mainland. Although working through different channels, both powers found that activist community leaders and the agendas of more

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[85] Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity*; and Hong Liu and Sin-Kiong Wong, *Singapore Chinese Society in Transition: Business, Politics & Socio-Economic Change, 1945–1965* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). Also see Fujio Hara, *Malayan Chinese and China: Conversion in Identity Consciousness, 1945–1957* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003).

[86] Chia, "Chinese Education in Southeast Asia," 454; Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China: A Study of Perceptions and Policies* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005), 136–39; Tan Liok Ee, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Chs. 2 & 3, Ting-Hong Wong and Michael Apple, "Rethinking the Education/State Formation Connection: Pedagogic Reform in Singapore, 1945–1965," *Comparative Education Review* 46, vol. 2 (May 2002): 182–210.

assertive local governments affected their decision-making processes and, in the case of the OCSP, its implementation and outcome. By the late 1950s, that geopolitical moment had passed. The PRC, faced with mounting problems associated with the Great Leap Forward, no longer posed an attractive destination for overseas Chinese students seeking an education.[87] By then, Southeast Asian governments had established themselves and adopted policies to facilitate their nation-building projects. Ethnic Chinese communities too adapted to the new political realities and increasingly identified with these new nations instead of their ancestral homeland. Programs such as the OCSP became far less relevant and more difficult to justify.

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[87] An exception is the exodus of ethnic Chinese from Indonesia following draconian anti-Chinese legislation in late 1959 and early 1960. See Taomo Zhou, *Migration in the Time of Revolution*, Ch. 6.