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Qiaowu yu waijiao guanxi yanjiu: Zhongguo fangqi
"shuangchong guoji" de huigu yu fansi (review)

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Book Reviews

侨务与外交关系研究：中国放弃“双重国籍”的回顾与反思 *Qiaowu yu waijiao guanxi yanjiu: Zhongguo fangqi “shuangchong guoji” de huigu yu fansi* (*Overseas Chinese Affairs and Diplomatic Relations: Retrospect on China's Abandoning of its Policy of “Dual Nationality”*). By CHENG Xi 程希. Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2005. 301 pp.

AS THE TITLE OF CHENG Xi's NEW BOOK clearly indicates, the development of contemporary Chinese foreign policy, the Chinese government's management of overseas Chinese affairs, and the government's policies toward the issue of dual nationality, are the three main themes that give this work unity. As a researcher and professional who “has been involved in overseas Chinese affairs for many years,” as the author introduces herself, Cheng shows an unmistakable passion and deep interest in these subjects. Essentially Cheng sets out to prove that overseas Chinese affairs is subsumed within the country's overall strategic planning in foreign policy, yet it can also significantly enhance China's diplomatic prowess by providing supplementary aid when necessary (p. 27). China's policies toward dual nationality, especially the decision of the Chinese Communist Party to abandon dual nationality in the mid-1950s, is used as a case study for hypothesis testing in this work. Over different periods of the 20th century, the author argues, policies toward dual nationality signified important moves of the Chinese government in the big chess game of strategic diplomacy. They serve as an indicator of China's adjustments to the ever-changing power balance in international politics, as well as a tool for Chinese politicians to achieve such a goal. Dual nationality was adopted by the Qing government to curb the outflow of population and resources in an effort to resist and delay its own decline in world politics. The policy was terminated by the PRC government in order to withdraw Chinese influence that had taken root in some other Asian countries for generations, as part of China's endeavor to better its relations with these countries at a time when it was floundering in deep isolation engineered by the two world superpowers.

To substantiate her arguments, Cheng skillfully weaves together a wide range of materials including media reports, memoirs and writings of politicians, and mainly scholarly studies on these three themes over an era of 50 years that witnessed drastic, oceanic changes in world politics. Cheng's original research, which consists of probing interviews with people involved in overseas Chinese affairs in the 1950s and examinations of archives recently released by the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, makes up roughly a fifth of the whole work, providing valuable analyses of scholarly opinions and archival information for those who are interested in overseas Chinese affairs and especially issues related to dual nationality. Owing to its obvious focus on overseas Chinese affairs, however, the work does not provide sufficient new information or analysis on international relations and Chinese foreign policy for scholars with an interest in these areas. Nevertheless, with the inclusion of a large number of archival photographs and written in a lucid, narrative style, the book is a welcome introduction for general readers interested in the history of Chinese foreign policy and the role dual nationality has played in it.

Although the author makes the point convincingly that abandoning dual nationality was a major issue of overseas Chinese affairs in the early 1950s in the bigger context of China's foreign policy of the time, her argument regarding the importance of overseas Chinese affairs to diplomacy lacks comparable strength. The author discusses the several waves in which China established foreign relations with developing countries around the world in the late 1950s and 1960s, and China's admission into the UN as two possible diplomatic consequences of its management of overseas Chinese affairs, yet one wonders how much of the launch of the "new diplomatic era" (*waijiao xin geju*) can be attributed to the abandoning of dual nationality. More specifically, the author cites the flow of "remittance from overseas Chinese" (*qiaohui*) as a major contribution of overseas Chinese affairs. While most of the evidence points to the correlation of this inflow of foreign currency and China's urgent needs in economic development, no convincing, logical linkage between this undeniably important financial aid and foreign policy of the time is established in the book.

The lack of necessary — sometimes essential — historical detail makes the reading difficult at times. Some of the novel arguments would have been much more convincing if they had been made with elaboration. The reasons why the Indonesian government changed its attitude and policy toward overseas Chinese from "attracting" to "abandoning" them in the late 1960s (p. 60), the relations between China's abandoning of dual nationality and Singapore's attainment of independence (p. 106), the exact "diplomatic advantage" that the Qing government gained over the Western powers by adopting dual nationality (the author actually focuses on the Qing government's policy of adopting the "blood lineage" principle (*xuetong zhuyi yuanze*) and forbidding the renouncement of Chinese nationality, but does not explicitly discuss its adoption of dual nationality) (p. 117), and how dual nationality became an excuse (for whom?) for racial and ethnic discrimination (p. 130), are not issues about which the author can make sense to the readers in one or two sentences. From time to time, the author hints at the "special significance" (*teshu xing*), complexity (*fuza xing*), and mysteriousness (*shenmi xing*) of overseas Chinese affairs which successfully arouses, but does not

satisfy, the reader's curiosity. Elaboration with insights on these matters are exactly what readers would look for from an experienced scholar in the field, and here is where the author can surely make her unique contributions. Dual nationality during the Qing dynasty and the Republican period, although mentioned, is inadequately discussed and analyzed, which further prevents a meticulous and seamless account of dual nationality from emerging.

On the other hand, parts of the discussion are overly lengthy. It is perfectly understandable that the author would want to stress the importance of overseas Chinese affairs, yet its development after 1949 (pp. 50–59) would have been much better integrated into the work if it had been discussed in association with dual nationality or foreign policy. The lengthy discussion of the basics of international politics and China's foreign policy in the early Cold War era is unnecessary as readers of this book would be reasonably well equipped with the background knowledge.

Stylistically, the more than 80 picture-inserts ranging from the mega shopping mall owned by overseas Chinese in the Philippines to the famous “laughing countenance” of then Minister of Foreign Affairs Qiao Guanhua surely add to the vividness of the book. On the other hand, they make one wonder about the relevance of such anecdotal detail in an academic work. Photographs of students from India hanging out in the Retreat Center for Asian Students in the suburb of Beijing (it is not clear when the pictures were taken) do not say much about China's diplomatic effort in establishing friendly relations with other Asian countries in the 1950s (p. 95). Similarly, data taken from the website of United Nations Population Division on the growth of immigrants — in general, not exclusively Chinese immigrants — in major population areas worldwide from 1990 to 2000 seem to be irrelevant to the main themes of the work (p. 7). A more selective offering of these photos with pertinence to the text would have enhanced their illustrative function substantially.

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