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Behind the Ties that Bind: Diaspora-making and Nation-building in China and India in Historical Perspective, 1850s-2010s

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Introduction: “Chindia” and Comparative Diaspora Studies

In recent years, the rise of China and India and the increasing economic and diplomatic cooperation between them have spurred comparative “Chindia” studies. In 2005, the Indian economist and politician Jairam Ramesh (2005) popularised the notion of “Chindia” in his *Making Sense of Chindia: Reflections on China and India*. Referring to an “Asian Age” or an “Asian Century” of collaboration between China and India, Ramesh also included their history of cultural and intellectual exchange as reflected in the trajectory of Buddhism and the Silk Road. More than a decade later, even though the rise of a new “Asian bloc” seems dubious, the Chinese government has resorted to the rhetoric of the “New Silk Road” as it intensifies connectivity between Asia, Africa and Europe.

Comparative studies on China and India have focused, not surprisingly, on the economic development trajectories of the two countries. Aspects commonly discussed concern the different economic structure of the countries – the “hardware” versus “software” powerhouses (Dhar, 2012) – or Foreign Direct Investment rates (FDI) (Bajpai & Dasgupta, 2004). Other research concentrates on the evolving diplomatic ties between the two countries, including elements of both competition and cooperation, giving rise to the popular metaphor of a “tango” between the “dragon” and the “elephant” (Meredith, 2007; Smith, 2007). Some studies have looked at China–India relations in a broader and more historical perspective, including early cultural interactions and Cold War disengagement (India International Centre, 2009–2010).

The “Chindia” phenomenon has also been institutionalised. Featuring the slogan “Silk Roads and More”, the “Chindia Chamber of Commerce and Industry” in New Delhi has had the mission since 2012 of advancing trade, improving bilateral relations and promoting education, culture and development (<http://en.ccei.org.in>). Research institutes on China and India such as the “India China Institute” of the New School in New York, which was founded in 2004, reflect academic institutionalisation. Jinan University in Guangzhou, one of the universities the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) administers, set up the China-India Comparative Research Institute in 2008 (<http://zybj.jnu.edu.cn>).

Although the concern of scholars with bilateral ties between China and India supports a nation-state framework, its institutionalisation within academia also partially deconstructs this framework through its focus on long-term cultural and intellectual interactions between “East Asia” and “South Asia”. This deconstruction also follows criticism of area studies as artificial constructs rooted in Orientalism and Cold War politics (Harootunian, 2002; Liu, 2001). The latter has gone hand in hand

with the debunking of nation-state approaches that have suppressed alternative histories (Duara, 1995). In this environment, the study of diasporas and how their presence challenges or reinforces nation-states has boomed. This development is especially relevant for China and India because they are the countries with the largest diasporas worldwide, with an estimated 60 million Chinese overseas in 2014 (Zhang, 2014) and more than 28 million Indians overseas in January 2015 (moia.gov.in).

Comparative research on Chinese and Indian diasporas nevertheless remains relatively limited. Geithner, Chen, and Johnson (2005) is a collection of articles on diaspora philanthropy in Chinese American and Indian American communities and its effect on the economic and social development of the homelands. Comparative studies worth mentioning written in Chinese include a 2007 volume edited by Jia Haitao, the head of the China–India Research Institute at Jinan University, which is mostly concerned with the international influence of both diasporas in various areas. Other studies look at the influence of both diasporas on developments in the homeland, including foreign policy, such as Zhu (2007). Li and Skop (2010) provides a historical overview of Chinese and Indian diasporas in the United States, paying much attention to the role of changing policies in shaping migration trends. Tsai (2010) discusses both diasporas from the perspective of Chinese FDI and Indian remittances.

A limited number of studies consider Chinese and Indian diasporas prior to contemporary times and outside the United States. Lai (1993) analyses Chinese and Indian indentured labour in the British West Indies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Another historical approach to the topic is Wong (2004), a collection of articles in which authors make critical notes relevant to a comparison between the Chinese and Indian diasporas, addressing such issues as the different roles of caste, class, language, colonialism and religion in each community. An edited volume by Bhattacharya and Kripalani (2015) includes articles on the Chinese in Southeast Asia, Chinese in India and Indians in China, and on both communities globally.

Some studies employ a comparative approach to diaspora policies in China and India, the area of research this article addresses. Diaspora engagement policies are “policy initiatives aimed at fostering and managing relationships with a diaspora” (Chen, Racine, & Collins, 2015, p. 371). At the level of policy-making, interest in diaspora engagement has manifested itself globally in the rise of consultancy agencies, the involvement of governmental organisations in the form of “global fora”, and the publication of “handbooks” for diaspora engagement by non-governmental organisations.¹ Following the increasing interest of policy-makers and institutions in this area, academic research on the topic of diaspora engagement policies has grown in recent years, especially after the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) in 2006 (2015).

A handful of articles discuss both Chinese and Indian diaspora engagement policies. Xiang (2007) is concerned with skilled migration policies in China and India. Wiesbrock (2008) focuses on existing return migration policies of the Chinese and Indian governments, and Das (2010) outlines diaspora engagement policies in China and India and places them in historical perspective. Lum (2012) looks at engagement policies in China and India since economic restructuring in 1978 and 1991 respectively. This paper builds on this last set of articles, but it does so from the angle of what diaspora engagement tells us about changing conceptions of the nation. As such, it aims to offer a more historical perspective on the relation between diaspora engagement policies, nation-building and transnational linkages, and to set up a

dialogue between literature on institutional engagement and literature on ethnic and cultural designations of diaspora. To do so, the article combines secondary sources on diaspora engagement and nationalism with data gathered from official websites of diaspora institutions in China and India, legal documents, and policy and historical documents obtained at Jinan University (Guangzhou) and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (New Delhi).

Diaspora-making and Nation-building

In debates on nationalism, primordialists, ethno-symbolists and modernists differ over the origin and nature of nations as old, modern, natural, constructed or a combination of these (Smith, 2000). In spite of these differences, however, in the “classic” literature on the topic, nations are thought of as tied to defined territories under the influence of the Westphalian system of nation-states. Already during the early modern period, some authors stripped nations of their cultural and historical content and treated them synonymous with states (Cobban, 1994, p. 245).

Under the influence of changing migration patterns in recent decades, scholars have questioned the association between nations, states, and fixed territories. In their groundbreaking work *Nations Unbound* (1994), Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc outlined the tensions involved in the construction of “deterritorialized nation-states” in which states increasingly reached out to citizens outside of the geographic boundaries of the state. The notion of the “deterritorialized nation-state,” they claimed, implies that “there is no longer a diaspora because wherever its people go, their state goes too” (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 293).

While the term diaspora initially referred to the spread of the Jews and Armenians outside ancestral homelands and connoted suffering and discrimination, its use has become broader (Safran, 1991). As McKeown (1999) notes, apart from this older use of “diaspora-as-exile”, scholars have also employed the term to celebrate diversity and heterogeneity because diasporas challenge boundaries and static categories. There is, however, a third use of the term, and it is in this sense that the term is applied in this article. In line with the creation of deterritorialized nation-states, states have engaged in the making and unmaking of diasporas, using the term “diaspora” as a form of symbolic capital.

Hence, Brubaker (2005) argues that the term is a “category of practice” that serves “to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties” (p. 12). States “actively constitute diasporas as national subjects” (Mani & Varadarajan, 2005, p. 48). Building on this scholarship of diaspora-making and unmaking by states, this article is concerned with diaspora engagement from the angle of nation-building. Whereas some scholars have discussed the interrelated themes of nation-building, transnationalism and citizenship for either China or India (Barabantseva, 2011; Duara, 1997; Ong, 1999; Raj, 2015; Roy, 2010; Varadarajan, 2010), the article uses a comparative and historical angle to look at diaspora-making and nation-building in the two countries. This article does not refer to citizenship in the narrow legal sense of rights and duties of members of a political community. Instead, it refers to citizenship as state membership regulated by nationality laws and, in a wider sense, to citizenship as cultural and social inclusion (Joppke, 2010). Hence, citizenship as state membership and as collective identity relates to the question of nation-building and diaspora-making at the centre of this article.

For several reasons, comparing China and India is useful. In addition to obvious commonalities such as large populations and large diasporas, both countries have re-

engaged with diaspora populations in the context of economic readjustment policies during the late twentieth century. As Smith (2003) has argued, states reconsider their relation with diaspora populations when a “major reconfiguration” in how states relate to the global system occurs, and when this leads to a “domestic political crisis in national identity” (p. 2). In this respect, India has also referred to China’s thoroughly systematised diaspora policy as a successful example, which it attributes to both economic reform and attractive policies (HLCID, 2001, p. xvi).

Moving beyond policies and into the realm of nationalism, both China and India are “nationless states” *par excellence* (Aloysius, 1997; Fitzgerald, 1995) – vast territories in which specific ethnic demands compete with inclusive civic nationalism, challenging political and cultural unity. These attributes shape the states’ response to extraterritorial nations. Both the Chinese and Indian diasporas are marked by diversity – or even by what Vertovec (2007) has called “super-diversity” – with the range of countries of destination, sociocultural differences and migration channels increasing. One of the tensions involved in the construction of deterritorialised nation-states concerns the tension between the claimed unity of diasporic populations and differences in class, race and religion within this population (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 237, p. 293). The task of reconciling attempts at homogenisation of extraterritorial nations with the recognition of this diversity is daunting.

A comparison is also useful because the two countries have differing nationality laws. Historically, China’s nationality law was based on *jus sanguinis* or blood right; India’s was based on *jus soli* or right of the soil. While one might assume a more inclusive policy towards the diaspora on the part of China given its reliance on *jus sanguinis*, this article demonstrates that these laws themselves have also changed and reflect the co-existence of various conceptions of the nation. Comparing China and India confirms some of Gamlen’s (2006) findings that diaspora engagement policies do not necessarily take place in “poor” states, and that they are not necessarily only present or more developed in countries with nationality laws based on *jus sanguinis*.

The concern with diaspora engagement policies in the last decade as discussed above seems to suggest that these policies are a recent invention. The article argues that a more historical approach to diaspora engagement in China and India is required. The boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of diasporic populations have largely coincided in China and India since engagement commenced. Both countries faced similar global restructuring patterns – namely, the threat of Western intrusion and colonialism during the late nineteenth century, the challenge of decolonisation and the Cold War during the mid-twentieth century, and economic restructuring under neoliberalism during the late twentieth century. Nationality laws changed in tandem with these global conditions.

During each period, the homogenising rhetoric of the state was also coupled with conflicting definitions of the nation in ethnic, cultural and territorial terms, which reflects the limits of deterritorialised nationalism. The “ties that bind” in the title hence refers to the tension between these ties as a uniting and a restricting force. To bind is to unite in the sense that states seek to create a connection with “their” diasporas. However, to bind is also to restrict in two ways. Firstly, the “ties” of the international order restricted diaspora engagement options and led China and India to similar choices in the time periods discussed in this article. Secondly, to bind is to restrict in that certain groups were privileged over others in this process, thereby reinstating dividing lines such as those of class, religion and ethnicity within diasporas.

Imperialism and War (1850s to 1940s): Brothers in Arms

In the mid-nineteenth century, a taboo on emigration existed in both China and India. In Qing China, not only did Confucianism incorporate a distrust of merchants, but rulers were also mostly inward looking because of their dependence on land taxation for income and their fear of coastal piracy (Kuhn, 2008, p. 17, p. 21; Wang, 1994, p. 286). Under the British Raj (1858–1947) in India, the Hindu Shastras prohibited emigration, even though this only applied to upper-caste Hindus. Travelling along the *kala pani* or “dark waters”, it was believed, challenged both ritual and caste restrictions in the journey that bonded fellow travellers into “ship brothers/sisters” (*jahaji-bhai/jahaji-bhain*) (Kabir, 2013, p. 395).

Between the late nineteenth century and the 1940s, European imperialism and the dispersion of capitalism throughout Asia connected China and India more closely with Southeast Asia (Kaur, 2014, p. 167). After the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in the 1830s, and in other empires in the decades that followed, the indentured labour system emerged to provide a new labour force for plantations in the colonies. Both the Chinese and Indian governments signed agreements with foreign powers regarding labour migration in this context, and the question of the protection of these labourers led to a more direct engagement with populations abroad.

The emigration of Qing subjects became legally possible with the Beijing Treaty of 1860 (Shao, 2009, p. 9). Additional treaties with foreign powers were signed in the ensuing decades to protect Chinese overseas and regulate labour migration (Mao & Lin, 1993, p. 46). During this period, both consulates and Chambers of Commerce arose in Southeast Asia to limit coolie abuse and provide other protections for Chinese overseas, including that of property rights. The Qing government, through its newly established consulates abroad, also set up Chinese language schools in Southeast Asia and North America (Godley, 1975; Mao & Lin, 1993, pp. 46–49).

During the early twentieth century, the KMT (Kuomintang) designed policies to liaise with the Chinese overseas in the context of their importance for its revolutionary project. Sun Yatsen (1866–1925), the leader of the KMT, solicited support from the Chinese overseas in the United States and Southeast Asia for the 1911 revolution that would end the monarchy. Sun was also concerned with the fate of the Chinese coolies. Under the Beijing-based Beiyang government (1912–27), the interests of Chinese workers who had supported World War I efforts in Europe were a major impetus for the founding of an Overseas Chinese Work Affairs Office (*Qiaogong shuwuju*) under the State Council (Mao & Lin, 1993, p. 51, p. 54).

The KMT legally recognised all Chinese living outside China and those who had returned as “overseas Chinese citizens” (*qiaomin*) entitled to protection. In 1927, when China was united under Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT set up an administrative system for overseas Chinese affairs, and the Central Overseas Chinese Work Commission (*Guomindang zhongyang haiwai gongzuo weiyuanhui*), which contained an Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (*Qiaowehui*). Under the Japanese occupation in the 1930s, policies of the KMT encouraged education, the protection of rights, and activities and investment to support the war effort (Mao & Lin, 1993, p. 55, pp. 58–63). In 1942, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) set up an Overseas Work Commission (*Haiwai gongzuo weiyuanhui*) to gain support from the Chinese overseas (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 3).

India’s taboo on emigration ended a few decades before China’s, with the first Emigration Act in 1837 (*The Times of India Directory and Yearbook*, 1929, p. 449). Under the indentured labour system, Asians, Africans and Pacific Islanders went to

the Americas, islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Australia, and Eastern and Southern Africa. It was the Indian government's responsibility to guarantee the well-being of Indians who had emigrated (Thomas, 1985, p. 1). The Indian National Congress's concern increased in the early twentieth century, and they passed several resolutions on the question of the restriction and denial of British citizenship rights to Indian nationals in the British colonies and dominions especially in East Africa and South Africa. A government examination led India to announce the abolition of indentured labour in 1916, followed by the regulation of emigration to approved countries only with the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 (Rajkumar, 1951, pp. 47–57; Zaidi & Zaidi, 1980, pp. 680–681).

The rise of nationalism in India led to a change in the perception of indentured labour from “free” labour to a system of exploitation. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's (1869–1948) concern with the rights of Indians in South Africa exemplified this shift (Northrup, 1995, pp. 144–145). Officials at the Imperial Conferences of 1917, 1918, 1921 and 1923 discussed the question of the political and civil rights of Indians in the British colonies and dominions, but Indians in most places of settlement would not feel the effects of equal political and civil rights until much later (*The Times of India Directory and Yearbook*, 1929, pp. 452–453).

Through the 1920s, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, continued to press for both better treatment of Indians in the British Commonwealth and further integration into their host societies. In 1929, the Indian National Congress set up an overseas department in order to better connect with Indians outside India, focusing primarily on Indians in Britain and the United States (Thomas, 1985, pp. 13–14). In 1941, a new Department of Indians Overseas was set up in the Foreign Department, which in 1944 was renamed the Department of Commonwealth Relations (Kondapi, 1951, pp. 451–452). Its mandate was to address problems Indians overseas faced and to be prepared to evacuate them in wartime (*The Times of India Directory and Yearbook*, 1942–1943, p. 967).

The increase in diaspora engagement intersected with the question of the position of the overseas populations in relation to the homeland. As all Indians were British subjects, in India, this question took the form of the citizenship rights of Indian nationals in the British colonies and dominions. This was linked to the question of the return of former indentured labourers to India during the 1930s, which was officially discouraged (Raj, 2015). In late Qing China, the first mention of the nationality question appeared eight years after the Beijing Treaty of 1860, in the 1868 Burlingame Treaty between China and the United States. The treaty reiterated that all Chinese in the United States remained Qing subjects (Shao, 2009, p. 9). Migration increased over the ensuing four decades, leading to the nationality law of 1909, which addressed the question of the nationality of the Chinese in Southeast Asia.² This law was based on *jus sanguinis* or right of blood: every child with a Chinese father, regardless of place of birth, was a Chinese national. The law was reinstated in 1929, under the Republic.

While the *jus sanguinis* law appears to be a sign of an ethnic understanding of the nation (*Zhonghua minzu*), as Shao (2009) has convincingly argued, the law was instated in the context of colonial rule in Southeast Asia and hence served to protect the sovereignty of the Qing. The objective was to preserve the loyalty of the *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese), in a context in which they were claimed as colonial subjects by European powers in Southeast Asia. Politically, the term *huaqiao* implied allegiance to China and the Qing; legally, it implied protection of all Chinese outside China; ideologically, it implied nationalism and revolution (Wang, 1991, p. 5, p. 7). As such,

conflicting notions of “China” as a culture with a “Sinic core”, as a territorial unit, and as an ethnically defined unit already co-existed in Qing China (Leibold, 2008). At the same time, Indian diasporic groups had already put forward Hindu notions of the Indian nation that equally existed in tension with India as territorially defined under the British Raj (Duara, 1999, pp. 648–650, p. 668).

The Cold War and Decolonisation (1950s to 1970s): Dangerous Liaisons

As Shao (2009) notes, successions in statehood naturally affect delineations of the nation and nationality laws. The foundation of the Republic of China in 1949 and the Republic of India in 1947 also had a great impact on relations with overseas populations, as did external conditions, international relations and changing foreign policies. There was a strong emphasis on self-reliance and territorial sovereignty in both countries, which affected relations with Chinese and Indians abroad.

The CCP continued to liaise with the Chinese overseas after 1949, setting up the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAC, *huaqiao shiwu weiyuanhui*), which served to protect the interests of the Chinese overseas and to manage overseas Chinese affairs (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 3). The OCAC became integrated into the governmental structure. Liao Chengzhi (1908–1983), himself an overseas Chinese from Hawai’i, oversaw the agency during the early years of the PRC, when local offices were set up in provinces and prefectures. Chinese overseas representatives were already included in the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in 1949 and attended the first National People’s Congress (NPC) in 1954 (Yin & Lan, 2004, pp. 80–81).

During the 1950s, however, a policy of disengagement commenced in the context of decolonisation in Southeast Asia, with the Chinese considered exporters of the Communist Revolution. In 1958, the CCP introduced the so-called “three good” policy, which referred to the policy on dual nationality of 1955, the clear instruction that Chinese abroad should refrain from political activities, and resettlement plans (Fitzgerald, 1970, p. 19, pp. 22–23). The 1955 Treaty on the Issue of Dual Nationality between the Government of the PRC and the Government of Indonesia (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu he Indunixiya zhengfu guanyu shuangchong guoji wenti de tiaoyue*) ended dual nationality and required Chinese overseas to choose between Chinese nationality and local nationality, encouraging the latter (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 205).

Between 1949 and 1961, around 500,000 ethnic Chinese returned to China as part of resettlement plans and in the context of tensions in Southeast Asian countries (Fitzgerald, 1970, pp. 24–25). In 1965–66, following the killings of communists and ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, thousands of ethnic Chinese left Indonesia for the PRC (Wang, Wong, & Sun, 2006, pp. 302–303). Because the PRC relied on the remittances of the overseas Chinese, returnees and their dependants for its Cold War efforts, it put in place preferential policies for these groups. However, as class struggle was reinvigorated during the 1960s, it became increasingly difficult for returnees to preserve transnational ties. By the early 1960s, party theorists depicted the overseas Chinese as an exploitative class (Chan, 2014, pp. 231–233). Consequently, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), ties with the Chinese overseas were cut off and their relatives persecuted. The OCAC was dismantled in 1969, which further reflects this disengagement (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 4).

India equally disengaged from the Indians abroad during this period, in the context of decolonisation and the Cold War. As noted above, however, the roots of disengagement go back to the 1930s, when the return of former indentured labourers

to India was already discouraged (Raj, 2015). When the new Constitution came into effect in 1950, the Indian government further encouraged Indian nationals to take up local citizenship in places of settlement. It disallowed dual nationality for Indians who voluntarily sought citizenship in places of settlement outside India (Kondapi, 1951, p. 515). Although many Indians took up the citizenship of the United Kingdom and its colonies, those in East Africa and Malaya registered as Indian citizens (Thomas, 1985, p. 21). In a 1957 speech, Nehru famously said that it was up to the Indians abroad to decide whether to take up Indian or local nationality, thereby clearly reversing the earlier policy of treating Indians abroad as partners in the struggle for independence. Varadarajan (2010) has referred to this twist as a shift from “colonial transnationalism” to “postcolonial nationalism” (p. 51).

Disengagement during this period overlapped in China and India in spite of different nationality laws. According to the Citizenship Act of 1955, all those born in India on or after 26 January 1950 were Indian citizens by birth (Citizenship Act, 1955). India’s nationality law was hence based on *jus soli* or right of soil, the territorial nature of which suggests a more limited inclusion of extraterritorial populations than a nationality law based on *jus sanguinis* would. In practice, however, the newly established states of China and India both disengaged from their extraterritorial populations because of broader global and regional political restructuring.

The disengagement from extraterritorial populations in both China and India at this time also needs to be understood in relation to their international relations strategies. Nehru opted for Non-Alignment, whereas Zhou Enlai adhered to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. After the CCP gained victory in China, interference in any political situation in which ethnic Chinese were involved was not an option in the context of the fear of the “export of the revolution”. The CCP continued its policy of disengagement from the ethnic Chinese in the context of the Malayan Emergency (1948–60) by the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party and the 30 September Movement (1965) in Indonesia, where a failed coup was followed by an anti-communist purge that also targeted ethnic Chinese.

Official discourse in both China and India also reflects this international relations strategy of non-interference, and hence disengagement from extraterritorial populations. In China, the clear separation between *huaqiao*, “Chinese citizens living abroad”, and *waiji huaren*, or ethnic Chinese with foreign nationality who were “not Chinese citizens any more”, was a central aspect of 1950s policies (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 12, p. 26). In India, in the context of disengagement since independence, similarly, a clear distinction was made between those “of Indian origin” and “nationals”. A 1963 note by Lakshmi Menon, then Minister of State, mentions “two categories of Indians Overseas” – namely, the “persons of Indian origin” who were descendants of Indian nationals who had emigrated, and the “Indian nationals” who had emigrated either temporarily or permanently (Menon, 1963, p. 107). Indians overseas became “Indians abroad” (*pravasis*) or “overseas Indians” who were politically loyal to their countries of residence.

In sum, with the foundation of the PRC in 1949 and the Republic of India in 1947, both China and India placed traditional concerns of territorial sovereignty over transnational ties with extraterritorial populations. This shift to a territorially-based demarcation of the nation took place in spite of different nationality laws: China’s nationality law continued to be based on *jus sanguinis*, albeit in a more restricted way after 1955, whereas India’s nationality after independence was based on *jus soli* or right of soil. But China’s diaspora engagement was no less exclusive than that of

India, cutting ties with the ethnic diaspora, because of domestic and international changes that resulted from broader global restructuring processes of decolonisation and the Cold War.

The “Imagined Economy” (post-1970s): Stakeholders in Success

The 1970s were a significant turning point for both countries. China’s re-engagement with the Chinese overseas can be traced back to the start of the “reform and opening up” (*gaige kaifang*) policy instituted in 1978. India’s re-engagement with the diaspora is usually only situated after the economic restructuring in 1991, but it likewise goes back to the 1970s, with the oil boom and emigration to the Gulf (Xavier, 2008). For example, already in 1977, the Indian Minister of External Affairs stated that “the subject of overseas Indians is one which is very dear to our hearts”, and that India would “never disown” its “sons and daughters” abroad (HLCID, 2001, p. v). The rise of the Hindu right in India, however, also played a role in shaping India’s policy towards the Indian diaspora. The ascendance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the early 1990s and its connection with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation that goes back to the early twentieth century, contributed to the gradual institutionalisation of policies.

In both China and India, the “imagined economy”, a term coined in reference to the famous “imagined communities” of Benedict Anderson (1991), played an important role in the re-envisioning of “Chineseness” and “Indianness” and the re-engagement with diaspora communities in the context of economic development (Wyatt, 2009). As Wyatt (2009, p. 62) notes, the “imagined economy” is performative in multiple respects: it assists in the framing of nationalism and creates a sense of citizenship. The loosening of emigration restrictions goes back to 1983 in India and 1985 in China. Members of the Chinese and Indian diasporas were now addressed as possible stakeholders in the state’s economic success rather than as brothers in arms to fight common enemies in the interests of a weak state.

In China, Deng Xiaoping saw the potential of the Chinese overseas for economic progress; he encouraged them to contribute to China’s economic development. Returnees and their dependants were rehabilitated and granted special social, economic and political privileges. For “overseas Chinese affairs work” (*huaqiao shiwu gongzuo*), the system of five interrelated governmental institutions was expanded and perfected. Often referred to as the “five overseas organs” (*wuqiao*), these five institutions worked together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries to formulate and implement policies towards the Chinese overseas. The five main institutions were the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) of the State Council, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the National People’s Congress, the Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan Compatriots and Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the CPPCC, the China Zhigong Party, and the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC) (www.gqb.gov.cn).

In spite of this renewed engagement with the Chinese overseas, the limits imposed on China’s *jus sanguinis* law during the 1950s were reaffirmed during the 1980s. A new Nationality Law took effect in China in 1980. The law continued the principle of the non-recognition of dual nationality as outlined in the 1955 Treaty between China and Indonesia. Article V of the law stated that having at least one parent who was a Chinese national made a child a Chinese national, regardless of the place of birth, unless at least one parent had “settled” (*dingju*) abroad and had renounced Chinese nationality. In this case, being born abroad would not make the child a Chinese national (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojifa [PRC Nationality Law], 1980).

Both official discourse and diaspora engagement practices, however, moved further towards inclusion from the 1980s. By the late 1980s, because the effects of existing policies on investment had been limited, China began to increase its appeal to ethnic Chinese and those who had left China after 1978. As part of this shift, China intensified efforts to reunite with Taiwan, which also reached out to ethnic Chinese and which had continued the *jus sanguinis* policy of the 1909 and 1929 nationality laws. In the 1990s, the Chinese state's interest in economic development guided diaspora engagement policy more than anything else, as heightened interest in Chinese overseas in industrialised countries reflects. The term "new migrants" (*xin yimin*), which encompassed businesspeople and students-turned-immigrants, but also irregular migrants who had left China after 1978, emerged in official discourse (Thunø, 2001).

India did not create a centralised policy apparatus to engage with its diaspora in the 1970s, but it did embrace a more inclusive policy. Between 1973 and 1994, the remittances of Indian workers in the Gulf contributed to changes in India's financial and fiscal policies. Already during the 1970s, the Indian government had set up schemes specifically for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), with incentives such as high interest rates for deposits made in foreign currencies (Lall, 2001, p. 2, p. 182). During the 1980s, the Indian government also established a Consultative Committee for Non-Resident Indians. Official discourse of the 1980s also reveals that the importance of the Indian diaspora was acknowledged. The Reference Annual of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (1987) stated: "It is being increasingly appreciated that overseas Indians can provide a bridge of understanding in the efforts to strengthen friendly relations between India and the countries of their residence" (p. 614, p. 664). The government also set up an Overseas Indian Division to spread information to "Overseas Indians" through the Indian Missions (140 at the time) and to deal with NRI affairs (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1991, p. 847). After 1991, with economic restructuring, the Indian government encouraged Indian nationals abroad to contribute to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (HLCID, 2001, pp. vi–vii; Hercog & Siegel, 2013, pp. 87–88).

Together with this renewed engagement with the Indian diaspora, India inserted *jus sanguinis* elements in its nationality law with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 1986. This extended citizenship to the children of citizens as well as anyone born in India, thereby adding the element of descent to territoriality. There was a further shift towards *jus sanguinis* in the late 1990s, and the 2003 Amendment Act restricted citizenship by birth to persons born in India and with at least one citizen parent, so long as the other parent was not an illegal migrant at the time of birth (Extracts from the Citizenship Act, 1955). Important to note here, however, is that the first move towards deterritorialisation of nationality took place during the 1980s.

Overall, both China and India moved towards deeper engagement with their diasporas in both practice and discourse during the 1980s. Furthermore, the nationality laws of both countries converged to some extent during this period as China affirmed a nationality law based on a restrictive *jus sanguinis* and as India now included *jus sanguinis* elements in its nationality law.

"Emotional Citizenship" (Post-2000): Networks, Skills and Symbolism

After 2000, both the Chinese and Indian governments directed efforts in diaspora engagement at creating business and knowledge networks and attracting skilled diaspora members. This was accompanied by an official rhetoric in which the important role of the diaspora in economic development was reiterated. Both

governments made a special effort to emphasise symbolic belonging through common ethnic and cultural ties. Lum (2012, p. 2) has referred to these efforts as “emotional citizenship”.

During this period, China prioritised scientific and technological development and the contribution of high-skilled diaspora members both from abroad and through return policies. In addition, the OCAO sent delegations to Chinese voluntary organisations abroad and invited them back to China to liaise more directly and regularly with the Chinese overseas. In terms of symbolic nation-building, it made increasing efforts to promote Chinese language education (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 6; Thunø, 2001). It also organised study and exchange programs for young Chinese overseas. An example is the “China Root Seeking Journey”, which attracted nearly 10,000 ethnic Chinese per year and which emphasised cultural immersion (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 35; To, 2014).

As for the creation of policy and business networks, in 2005, the Overseas Expert Advisory Committee of the OCAO was founded. This committee consisted of prominent overseas Chinese entrepreneurs, scientists and scholars invited to make recommendations on overseas Chinese policies (Liu & van Dongen, 2016). The Chinese state also progressively tapped the transnational, and increasingly institutionalised, networks of Chinese overseas. An example is the bi-yearly World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (WCEC) that was first organised in Singapore in 1991. In addition, the Chinese state made use of dialect and regional organisations that had become globalised and that held their own global conventions on a regular basis. Examples are the Cantonese World Convention, the Hakka International Reunion and the Fujian World Convention, which witnessed rapid transformation during the 1990s (Liu, 1998).

In India, policies became more thoroughly institutionalised in the 2000s. In 2001, the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, appointed by the Ministry of External Affairs in September 2000, delivered a detailed report on the Indian diaspora as a basis for engagement policies. Following the report, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs or MOIA was set up in 2004. MOIA had four main divisions that served the main agendas of networking, the protection of emigrants, and the promotion of trade and overseas Indian investment (moia.gov.in). The policy organisation included financial set-ups, such as the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) – founded in 2007 and operating as a private–public partnership between the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and MOIA – to promote employment regulation and investment. In January 2016, MOIA was integrated into the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) with the stated goal of “minimising government and maximising governance” (“Government to Merge Overseas Indian Affairs Ministry with MEA”, 2016).

Together with the creation of institutions, official rhetoric turned more inclusive. The report defined the terms “Diaspora”, “NRIs” and “PIOs”, which were used throughout. Whereas “Diaspora” denoted Indians who had migrated but had “generally maintained their Indian identity”, NRIs or Non Resident Indians referred to “Indian citizens” “residing abroad for an indefinite period.” Finally, a PIO or Person of Indian Origin was defined as “a foreign citizen of Indian origin or descent” (HLCID, 2001, p. viii). The report made it clear that the term “Diaspora” included both NRIs and PIOs, which was a clear move away from the earlier focus on Indian nationals in fiscal and financial policies.

An example of the emphasis on networking is the Global India Network of Knowledge (Global-INK), a virtual platform managed by the OIFC for the exchange

of knowledge and skills in the areas of environment, healthcare, innovation and science and technology (Hercog & Siegel, 2013). At a higher level, the first meeting of the Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of People of Indian Origin, consisting of "eminent" community members, took place in 2010. The role of the Advisory Council, which was suspended in 2015, was to offer a platform for the prime minister to develop diaspora engagement in terms of skills, knowledge, investment, and institution and capacity building (moia.gov.in).

An important outreach mechanism to promote business networking and emotional belonging specifically was the so-called yearly Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), a meeting held annually since 2003 around the symbolic date of 9 January, the day Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1915, and attended by high-level officials. In addition, MOIA set up engagement programs such as scholarship programs, the "Know India Program" (from 2004) and the "Study India Program" (from 2012) to target diasporic youth. For example, the latter was aimed at youth aged between 18 and 26 for short courses "in the nature of summer schools" comprised of cultural, academic and economic components (moia.gov.in).

In brief, the 2000s saw the continuation of the move towards greater inclusion of diasporic populations initiated during the previous period in both China and India. More attention was paid to programs to connect the ethnic diasporas with the motherland, and to the creation of valuable overseas knowledge and business networks. Even though this suggests that deterritorialised nationalism was triumphant in both cases, the limits of diasporic inclusion will be explored in the next section.

The Limits of Deterritorialised Nationalism

With economic restructuring in China and India, in both cases, the diaspora was defined more broadly and came to include both nationals and the ethnic diaspora. Underneath this homogenisation and expansion of the diasporic nation, however, was a layered and limited inclusion in which territorial definitions of the nation constrained the move towards deterritorialisation.

On a discursive level, the metaphor of the family as an ethnic marker of nationhood was prominent in both Chinese and Indian discourses. In both cases, ethnic conceptions of the nation were intertwined with cultural definitions. For example, Chinese rhetoric stated that "the longstanding Chinese culture" was the "root" and "soul" of "maintaining the flesh and blood relationship between the overseas compatriots and the motherland" (Guowuyuan qiaoban, 2006, p. 35). Similarly, a 2008 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas "theme paper" noted that "overseas Indians have always had a strong umbilical attachment to their country of origin... [L]anguages, cultures and traditions ... reflect [this] umbilical attachment" (Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, 2008, p. 1). This ethno-cultural definition of the nation served to spur identification with the motherland.

In practice, however, the distinction between nationals and ethnic diaspora members was upheld as territorial elements confined the ethno-cultural definition of the nation in discourse. In China, as already noted, the 1980 Nationality Law included the limitation of "settlement" (*dingju*) of at least one parent abroad. For India, an example that comes to mind concerns the Persons of Indian Origin or PIO Scheme that was launched in 1999. This scheme excluded residents of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, although it defined "origin" along ethnic lines (up to the fourth generation of descent) (PIO Scheme, 1999). Similarly, the 2003 and 2005 Citizenship (Amendment) Acts created the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Scheme for PIOs, which, in spite of resembling a

passport and including the term “citizen”, did not come with the political rights of citizenship (moia.gov.in). In addition, it was only available for up to the third generation of descent and contained territorial exceptions: it excluded citizens and former citizens of Pakistan and Bangladesh. In January 2015, the PIO Scheme was discontinued and merged with the OCI Scheme, which continued to exclude political rights (Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2015; Bureau of Immigration, 2016).

In addition, the state-led discourse on “success” prioritised the “new diaspora” and imposed a state-based and geographically defined understanding of the nation onto the broader ethnic and cultural definition of it. Chinese officials frequently appealed to the diaspora as stakeholders in the state’s success at the bi-yearly World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention. In 2001, for example, Li Ruihuan took the opportunity “to pay high respects and express hearty thanks to all the overseas Chinese communities that have made a contribution to China’s development” (Li, 2001). Similarly, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, praising the Indian diaspora on behalf of the Indian state, told attendees at a 2015 community event in Malaysia that “[y]our achievements have done us proud” (Modi, 2015). This “state-centric national identity”, as Gamlen has called it, includes symbolic gestures, such as the award of prizes; history and cultural programs and events; and the organisation of conferences and conventions (Gamlen, 2006). As discussed above, both China and India have invested in such programs and conferences.

With the state’s emphasis on the success of the “new diaspora” members came a disregard for those members of older diasporas and those segments of the “new diaspora” of lower socioeconomic background. At PBD events, PIOs criticised the neglect of the indentured diaspora and its descendants. In response, the Indian government took to actions such as the inauguration of a Kolkata Memorial to indentured labourers, and the organization of “mini-PBDs” and “regional PBDs” outside India (“Key ministry focus”, 2011). In contrast, in China, the ethnic Chinese had a long history of trading in Southeast Asia and the majority of them were not descendants of indentured labourers. However, class intersected with other factors such as ethnicity and religion, given that ethnic minorities were not visible in the official “success” discourse.

In both cases, then, the diaspora-making discourse reflects inequalities that already exist within domestic nation-building, masked by pretensions of inclusion. In this context, Roy has described the move towards *jus sanguinis* in the 2003 Citizenship Amendment Act in India and the emphasis on descent in the OCI as “the deception of de-territoriality” (Roy, 2010, p. 137). In both China and India, in spite of the emphasis on ethnic and cultural markers that suggests that all are members of the “family” that is the nation, territorial and state-centric markers continue to intersect with these markers and define the limits of the deterritorialized nation.

Concluding Remarks: Ties of Unity and Restriction

Using a historical approach to diaspora engagement in China and India, this article has argued that a similar pattern of engagement and disengagement existed for both in the context of broader global restructuring patterns. In this sense, it was the international system and the changing position of China and India in this system that “bound” or restricted decisions regarding diaspora engagement. Both countries manifested a more inclusive delineation of the nation in the context of colonial expansion and nationalist independence struggles between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. This changed for both countries during the 1950s, after India’s independence and the foundation of the PRC. In the context of decolonisation

and the Cold War, the emphasis in both countries was on territorial sovereignty, and accordingly they encouraged their overseas populations to identify with their host societies. A third major shift occurred for both countries during the 1970s, with global economic restructuring, leading to a return to more inclusive policies.

The similarity in the engagement and disengagement patterns of the two countries occurred in spite of different nationality laws. As such, diaspora engagement is not restricted to or more extensive per se in countries with *jus sanguinis* nationality laws; it is determined by broader domestic, regional and global restructuring patterns. Also, these laws themselves are subject to change as countries reposition themselves in the global system and redefine national identities in response. Following economic adjustment during the 1970s, the two countries' nationality laws began to align in the 1980s in the sense that China adopted a restrictive *jus sanguinis* in its 1980 Nationality Law, and India included elements of *jus sanguinis* in its 1986 Citizenship Act, which had previously been more based on *jus soli*.

The ties between both nation-states and their diasporas are also "bound" or restricted because the state privileges certain groups over others. Even though we find a more inclusive and homogenising rhetoric since economic restructuring in both China and India, thereby including the ethnic diaspora, both territorial limitations and the state-led emphasis on economic "success" limit de facto inclusion. The relative neglect of descendants of indentured labourers outside rich and developed countries, as well as of less privileged members of the "new diaspora", reinstates divisions of class, race, and religion. As such, the ties that bind are not just the ties that unite; they are also the ties that restrain.

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Notes

¹ “Global fora” include the Global Forum on Migration and Development, founded in 2007, and the Global Diaspora Forum, founded in 2011. An example of a “handbook” is Agunias and Newland (2012).

² More specifically, it was a response to efforts at the naturalisation of Qing subjects in Dutch Java. See Shao (2009) and To (2014).