

Comparative Study on Overseas Chinese Policies: A Comparison of Management and Service Mechanisms Between China and Other Countries

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Abstract: This paper conducts a comparative study on the management and service mechanisms for overseas Chinese communities in China and abroad, tracing the historical evolution of China's overseas Chinese policies from ancient times to the present. It analyzes and interprets the overseas Chinese policies of typical countries such as the United States and India, comparing the differences in these mechanisms across three dimensions: policy formulation, rights protection, and resource utilization. The study summarizes the characteristics of overseas Chinese policies under different institutional frameworks and, based on China's actual development context, proposes targeted recommendations to optimize policy formulation, strengthen rights protection, and enhance the utilization of overseas Chinese affairs resources. These findings serve as a reference for further refining China's overseas Chinese policies in the new era and leveraging the advantages of its overseas Chinese affairs resources.

Keywords: Overseas Chinese Policy; Overseas Chinese Affairs Management; Service Mechanism; Comparative Study

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

Against the backdrop of deepening globalization, overseas Chinese communities, as key players in cross-border mobility, are playing an increasingly vital role in national economic and social development. They serve not only as bridges for cultural dissemination but also as significant drivers of economic cooperation and technological innovation. Particularly under global development frameworks such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the number of overseas Chinese continues to grow, with their demographic composition showing a trend toward diversification—including labor migration, technology migration, and family reunification migration. Meanwhile, the complexity of international competition and evolving patterns of global talent mobility pose new challenges and requirements for national overseas Chinese policies. In this context, examining the similarities and differences in overseas Chinese management and service mechanisms between China and other countries holds great significance for refining China's overseas Chinese policies. Comparative analysis not only allows China to draw on successful experiences from other nations in establishing strategic frameworks for overseas Chinese affairs and improving relevant legal systems but also provides theoretical support and practical guidance for further optimizing overseas Chinese service mechanisms and enhancing the effectiveness of overseas Chinese affairs management^[1].

1.2 Research Objectives and Methods

This study aims to explore the similarities and differences among various countries in policy formulation, rights protection, and resource utilization through a comparative analysis of their mechanisms for managing and serving overseas Chinese communities, and to propose recommendations for improving China's overseas Chinese policies. Specifically, the research focuses on the following core questions: First, are there significant differences in the mechanisms for formulating overseas Chinese policies and the entities involved? Second, what measures have countries implemented to protect the political, economic, and cultural rights of overseas Chinese, and how effective have these measures been? Finally, how do different countries leverage overseas Chinese resources to promote their national development, and what are the variations in their effectiveness in attracting investment and fostering technological innovation? To address these questions, the study combines literature review with comparative analysis. On one hand, it systematically reviews relevant domestic and international literature to gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical evolution and current status of overseas Chinese policies worldwide; on the other hand, it employs comparative analysis by selecting typical countries such as the United States and India as case studies for in-depth comparison with China's overseas Chinese policies, thereby revealing their commonalities and differences^[2].

2. The Historical Evolution of China's Overseas Chinese Policy

2.1 Overseas Chinese Administration in Ancient China

The management approach for overseas Chinese in ancient China was profoundly influenced by the political, economic, and cultural environment of the time, with its policy characteristics primarily manifested in a lax regulation and limited protection of emigrants. During the feudal dynasty period, due to constraints in transportation and communication, the government's ability to control emigrants was relatively weak, leading to a more laissez-faire attitude. However, during specific historical periods such as the Tang and Song dynasties, with the prosperity of the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road, the government began to exercise some degree of regulation over merchants and immigrants to safeguard national economic interests and diplomatic relations. For example, the Tang dynasty established the Maritime Trade Office to manage overseas trade and provided legal safeguards for merchants operating at sea. The formation of such policies was influenced not only by the agrarian-dominated social structure but also closely tied to the international relations landscape of the time. Overall, the hallmark of ancient China's overseas Chinese policies was their lack of systematicness; they primarily served national economic needs and diplomatic strategies rather than giving rise to an independent overseas Chinese management system^[3].

2.2 The Development of Modern China's Overseas Chinese Policy

The modern Chinese overseas Chinese policy underwent a process from initial formation to gradual refinement, with its evolution closely tied to the nation's destiny and societal development needs across different historical periods. Since the Opium War, Chinese society faced internal turmoil and external threats, prompting large numbers of people to migrate overseas due to warfare and poverty, forming a substantial overseas Chinese community. Against this backdrop, Dr. Sun Yat-sen placed great emphasis on overseas Chinese affairs, viewing them as a crucial force for national rejuvenation. By leveraging the role of overseas Chinese, strengthening leadership among them, and safeguarding their interests, he laid the foundation for modern Chinese overseas Chinese policies. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Communist Party of China further integrated overseas Chinese affairs into the national united front strategy, advocating the principle of "equal treatment with appropriate consideration" to protect overseas Chinese rights while mobilizing their support for national development. Following the reform and opening-up, amid shifting international circumstances and rising domestic development needs, Chinese overseas Chinese policies entered a new phase, placing greater emphasis on nurturing overseas Chinese resources and promoting the concept of "jointly realizing and sharing the Chinese Dream." These policy adjustments reflect China's historical journey from striving for national independence to achieving national prosperity, while also demonstrating the distinct missions undertaken by overseas Chinese affairs at different historical stages^[4].

2.3 The Formation and Refinement of Contemporary China's Overseas Chinese Policy

Contemporary China's overseas Chinese policies, building upon historical experience and aligning with the developmental needs of the new era, have gradually formed a systematic policy framework centered on serving national development

strategies. The policies encompass multiple aspects such as rights protection, resource utilization, and cultural exchange, demonstrating distinct contemporary characteristics and strategic significance. In terms of rights protection, China has enacted and refined relevant laws and regulations—such as the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Returned Overseas Chinese and Their Family Members” —to effectively safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese and returned overseas Chinese, while also strengthening consular protection to ensure their safety and well-being abroad. Regarding resource utilization, the Chinese government actively establishes cooperation platforms and organizes events like the “China Overseas Chinese Innovation Summit” to engage overseas Chinese in the nation’s economic development, playing a pivotal role particularly in attracting foreign investment, promoting trade, and advancing technological innovation. Additionally, contemporary China’s overseas Chinese policies emphasize promoting Chinese culture to enhance overseas Chinese’s cultural identity and sense of belonging, thereby further consolidating the consciousness of the Chinese national community. These policy measures not only reflect the Chinese government’s high prioritization of overseas Chinese affairs but also provide crucial support for achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, fully highlighting the unique value of overseas Chinese affairs within the national development strategy.

3. Analysis of Typical Overseas Nationality Policies in Foreign Countries

3.1 U.S. Immigration Policy

As the world’s largest destination for immigrants, the United States’ immigration policies trace their origins back to the nation’s founding era. In its early developmental phase, U.S. immigration policies primarily focused on attracting European immigrants, providing citizenship pathways through legal frameworks like the Naturalization Act, thereby gradually establishing a multicultural society. With the acceleration of globalization, American immigration policies have evolved from mere migration management to more comprehensive strategic frameworks, particularly excelling in attracting overseas investment and fostering cultural exchanges. For instance, the U.S. government established specialized agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) to offer investment support and incentives, effectively facilitating capital repatriation and technology transfer. Additionally, initiatives like the International Visitor Program (IVP) strengthen ties with overseas immigrant communities, further consolidating America’s global soft power. These measures have not only enhanced the United States’ influence in the international community but also provided sustained momentum for its economic development^[5].

3.2 India’s Overseas Chinese Policy

As the world’s largest source of international migrants, India’s diaspora policy exhibits distinctive characteristics, particularly in leveraging diaspora resources to drive economic development and technological innovation. While its diaspora policies originated during the colonial era, they were fully institutionalized after the Cold War, especially following the economic reforms of the 1990s. The Indian government has strengthened emotional ties with overseas Indians through annual events like “Pravasi Bharatiya Divas” and implemented preferential policies to attract investment and entrepreneurship among diaspora members. For instance, the Overseas Indian Citizen (OCI) program grants non-resident Indians near-citizen rights, significantly enhancing their sense of belonging and engagement with their homeland. Additionally, India has established specialized investment funds and technology parks to support diaspora entrepreneurs, fostering a global network of high-tech talent centered on information technology. These policy frameworks have not only fueled India’s rapid economic growth but also laid a solid foundation for enhancing its technological innovation capabilities.

3.3 Overview of Other Typical National Overseas Chinese Policies

Beyond the United States and India, the diaspora policies of countries like Ireland and Poland also deserve attention, each demonstrating distinct characteristics and effectiveness. As a small open economy, Ireland’s diaspora policy centers on maintaining connections with overseas communities through linguistic and cultural bonds. For instance, the Irish government’s Global Irish Network initiative brings together Irish nationals worldwide, forming a robust transnational support system that not only promotes Irish cultural dissemination but also attracts substantial foreign investment and high-caliber talent to boost economic development. In contrast, Poland’s diaspora policy focuses more on encouraging overseas compatriots to return home. Post-Cold War, Poland implemented multi-tiered measures—including language education,

social welfare programs, and political participation incentives—to encourage Polish expatriates to return. Despite challenges such as inefficient administrative systems, these policies have alleviated domestic labor shortages and injected new vitality into economic growth. These examples demonstrate that diaspora policies tailored to national contexts can yield positive outcomes in specific domains, offering valuable insights for managing diaspora communities in a globalized world.

4. Comparison of Management and Service Mechanisms for Chinese Residents Abroad and Overseas Chinese

4.1 Policy Development Level

In the process of formulating diaspora policies, there are significant differences between Chinese and foreign countries in terms of decision-making mechanisms and participating entities. The formulation of China's diaspora policies is highly centralized and strategic, with a government-led decision-making mechanism that emphasizes top-level design and comprehensive planning. For example, over its century-long evolution, the Communist Party of China has gradually developed a multi-stage policy framework ranging from “mobilizing overseas Chinese resources” to “protecting overseas Chinese interests” and finally to “cultivating overseas Chinese affairs resources,” fully reflecting the influence of national development strategies on diaspora policies. In contrast, U.S. diaspora policy-making places greater emphasis on the participation of diverse stakeholders—including the federal government, state governments, non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations—all of which jointly shape policy directions. This decentralized decision-making mechanism endows policies with greater flexibility and adaptability.

However, the differences in policy-making models between China and other countries also bring their respective advantages and disadvantages. China's centralized decision-making mechanism can effectively integrate resources and respond swiftly to national development needs, but it may face challenges in ensuring proper implementation at the local level. In contrast, the decentralized decision-making mechanism in the United States better reflects the needs of diverse interest groups, yet it may lead to policy fragmentation or even conflicts. Additionally, India's diaspora policy-making falls between the two approaches: it emphasizes unified leadership by the central government while also incorporating feedback from local institutions and overseas Chinese organizations, thereby balancing policy consistency with flexibility to some extent. This demonstrates that different countries' policy-making models each have distinct characteristics, and their choices are often shaped by a combination of historical traditions, political systems, and social structures.

4.2 Rights and Interests Protection

In safeguarding the rights and interests of overseas Chinese, countries around the world have adopted diverse measures with varying degrees of effectiveness. China has provided comprehensive protection for the political, economic, and cultural rights of overseas Chinese by improving its legal framework governing overseas Chinese affairs and establishing a multi-tiered service mechanism. For instance, the “Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Returnees and Their Family Members” clearly defines the fundamental rights of overseas Chinese within the country, while governments at all levels have established specialized overseas Chinese affairs departments to coordinate solutions to their practical difficulties. Additionally, China has leveraged international cooperation platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative to offer greater development opportunities for overseas Chinese, further expanding the scope of rights protection.

In contrast, the United States places greater emphasis on market mechanisms to protect the rights of its expatriates, using economic incentives such as tax benefits and investment incentives to encourage them to return home or contribute to domestic development. It has also established a comprehensive immigration legal framework that ensures equal rights for expatriates in employment, education, and healthcare. India's approach, however, focuses more on leveraging emotional bonds and cultural identity to strengthen expatriates' sense of belonging to their homeland. Measures like the Overseas Citizen Identity Card (OCI) grant expatriates long-term residency and certain civil rights, thereby indirectly fostering their economic participation and cultural exchange.

Although countries adopt different specific approaches to rights protection, their common goal is to enhance the well-being and sense of belonging of overseas Chinese, thereby promoting their contributions to their home countries. A comparison of domestic and international practices reveals that China, while strengthening legal frameworks and innovating service

mechanisms, can appropriately draw on the experiences of other countries in leveraging market mechanisms and cultural identity to further elevate the overall level of rights protection.

4.3 From the Perspective of Resource Utilization

In leveraging overseas Chinese resources to promote national development, countries around the world have adopted diverse strategies tailored to their respective characteristics and needs, achieving varying degrees of success in attracting investment, boosting trade, and advancing technological innovation. As the world's second-largest economy, China boasts abundant and widely distributed overseas Chinese communities. In recent years, through implementing the "Attracting Investment and Talent" initiative and optimizing its business environment, China has successfully attracted substantial foreign capital into high-tech industries and modern service sectors. For instance, the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative has not only enhanced economic and trade cooperation between participating countries and China but also provided extensive development opportunities for overseas Chinese, making them a vital bridge connecting China with the world.

In contrast, India places greater emphasis on leveraging its high-caliber technical talent when utilizing overseas resources. Capitalizing on its extensive Indian diaspora community—particularly the significant presence of Indian professionals in high-tech hubs like Silicon Valley—the Indian government has established specialized agencies and funds to encourage these talents to return home for entrepreneurship or collaborate with domestic enterprises. This talent-centric approach has not only introduced advanced technologies and management expertise to India but also significantly enhanced its position within the global technology supply chain.

Other exemplary countries such as Ireland and Poland have effectively promoted the development and utilization of diaspora resources by establishing international cooperation platforms and optimizing policy environments. For instance, the Irish government has attracted substantial overseas investments in emerging industries like information technology and biomedicine through low tax rates and an efficient public service system, fostering distinctive industrial cluster effects. Poland, leveraging cross-border cooperation projects under the EU framework, encourages Polish expatriates to participate in their homeland's development, playing a significant role particularly in infrastructure construction and social welfare initiatives.

Overall, practices across countries in utilizing overseas Chinese resources demonstrate that only by tailoring highly targeted and feasible policy measures to their respective national conditions and development needs can the potential of these resources be maximized. In future policy optimization, China can further draw on successful international experiences and explore more diversified approaches to resource utilization, thereby injecting new momentum into achieving high-quality development.

5. Recommendations for improving China's policies toward overseas Chinese

5.1 Policy Formulation Optimization

Based on a comparative analysis of policies toward overseas Chinese communities in China and other countries, China's overseas Chinese policies still have room for further optimization in their formulation mechanisms. First, the scientific rigor and systematic approach to policy-making need to be strengthened to ensure that policies can adapt to the complex and volatile international environment and domestic development needs in the context of globalization. For example, China could draw on the experience of countries like India in establishing strategic frameworks for overseas Chinese affairs and, tailored to its own circumstances, develop a more comprehensive policy system. Second, democratic participation in the policy-making process should be enhanced by widely soliciting input from overseas Chinese communities, academic institutions, and relevant social organizations to improve the representativeness and practicality of policies. Additionally, foresight and flexibility in policies are equally crucial; existing policies should be regularly evaluated and adjusted to address challenges and opportunities arising from new circumstances. For instance, changes in the overseas Chinese landscape along the Belt and Road Initiative demonstrate that only timely policy adjustments can better serve national development strategies.

5.2 Strengthening Rights Protection

Strengthening the protection of overseas Chinese rights and interests is a crucial component in refining China's policies for overseas Chinese. On one hand, efforts should be accelerated to establish and improve laws and regulations concerning

overseas Chinese affairs, providing them with more comprehensive and specific legal support. For instance, lessons can be drawn from the United States' experience in safeguarding the political rights of overseas Chinese, by enacting legislation to explicitly protect their legitimate rights and interests in their home countries and establishing specialized agencies to handle overseas Chinese-related matters. On the other hand, the optimization of relevant service mechanisms should not be overlooked. It is recommended to establish and enhance a network of overseas Chinese service centers that offer integrated services—including legal consultation, emergency assistance, and cultural adaptation—to meet the diverse needs of overseas Chinese. Additionally, oversight and evaluation of efforts to protect overseas Chinese rights and interests should be strengthened to ensure that policy measures are effectively implemented and yield tangible results. These measures will not only enhance overseas Chinese's sense of belonging and identity but also mobilize greater momentum for national development.

5.3 Resource Utilization Improvement

More effective utilization of overseas Chinese resources is a crucial pathway to advancing China's economic and technological development. First, more cooperation platforms should be established to facilitate overseas Chinese participation in the development of their ancestral homeland. For instance, international forums or exhibitions can be organized to attract high-caliber talents such as overseas Chinese entrepreneurs and scientists to return for exchange and collaboration. Second, optimizing the investment environment is equally vital. It is recommended to further streamline administrative approval procedures, lower the entry barriers for enterprises with overseas Chinese investment, and introduce additional incentive measures to encourage overseas Chinese to invest and start businesses in high-tech sectors. Additionally, emphasis should be placed on leveraging the bridging role of overseas Chinese in promoting international trade and cultural exchanges by establishing cross-border cooperation projects to foster deeper integration of Chinese and foreign technologies, economies, and cultures. These measures will not only enhance the efficiency of utilizing overseas Chinese resources but also inject new vitality into the nation's sustainable socio-economic development^[6].

6. Conclusion

Through a comparative analysis of the management and service mechanisms for overseas Chinese communities between China and other countries, this study systematically examines the similarities and differences between China and typical nations in terms of overseas Chinese policy formulation, rights protection, and resource utilization, while summarizing the distinctive features and advantages of China's overseas Chinese policies. First, at the policy-making level, China emphasizes the integration of top-level design with grassroots participation, establishing a decision-making mechanism centered on the Party and the state with coordinated efforts across multiple departments—a model that demonstrates strong adaptability and flexibility in addressing the complex and evolving international landscape. In contrast, Western countries such as the United States tend to attract overseas Chinese resources through legislation and market-based approaches, though their policy implementation often faces coordination challenges due to the division of federal and local authority. Second, in rights protection, China has continuously improved its legal framework and service networks for overseas Chinese, providing comprehensive support, particularly in political participation, economic rights protection, and cultural identity, achieving notable results. For instance, the principle of “equal treatment with appropriate consideration” not only reflects care for China's overseas Chinese community but also offers valuable insights for overseas Chinese affairs within the global governance framework. Furthermore, in resource utilization, China has successfully integrated overseas Chinese resources into national development through its strategy of “cultivating overseas Chinese resources to jointly realize the China Dream,” playing a pivotal role in the Belt and Road Initiative. This state-driven overseas Chinese policy is more systematic and forward-looking compared to traditional immigrant-reliant nations like India, which depend solely on remittances or sector-specific cooperation.

In summary, China's overseas Chinese policy has gradually developed a unique theoretical framework and practical approach throughout its historical evolution. Its core lies in recognizing overseas Chinese as a vital force driving national modernization, achieving win-win development through institutional innovation and resource integration. This policy model not only aligns with China's national conditions but also offers valuable lessons for other developing countries.

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