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## **Diaspora in Development and Integration**

*The Case of the Chinese and African Diasporas*

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**Li Xing & Paul Opoku-Mensah**

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# **Diaspora in Development and Integration: The Case of the Chinese and African Diasporas**

Li Xing and Paul Opoku-Mensah

## **Introduction**

The era of globalization is characterized by dynamic interactions linking more countries and more people than ever before, resulting in a proliferation of studies on the various driving forces in the process of globalization, such as the state, capital, interesting groups, etc. However, what are less demonstrated in the mainstream literatures of development research and international relations are the consistent and coherent studies of the history and role of Diasporas in connection with the development of their homeland, which is becoming increasingly critical consideration linking with development policy and politics both in a domestic and international context. Albeit the diversities of the historical factors of migration for each country and region are a fact, the current reality is that people are more transnational today than at any other time in history, and successful economic development and integration increasingly depends on human capital crossing borders. Diaspora is inherently transnational, characterized by both opportunities and sufferings in a mixture of paradox of distance and closeness.

The contemporary situation of global migration over the past decades indicates that fact that Diaspora migrants have become progressively involved in political, economic, cultural, educational and social activities in their home countries and regions. This is partly due to the dynamics of globalization which unleashes new opportunities resulting from political and economic opening in their home societies and partly due to the impact of globalization on their homeland which, in return, influences their own status and identities in the host societies.

The fact that Diasporas are connected to their homelands in different ways and at various levels makes it impossible to ignore the impact that those connections have on local economies and communities. Therefore, to take Diasporas into consideration when designing a development strategy is not only justified but necessary because Diasporas define themselves and interact through correlations with the homeland, international entities, and the host societies, thereby influencing a range of relational dynamics, including development.

Although the role of the Diaspora in economic and regional integration has become an issue of policy and theoretical salience, comparative analyses and understanding of the Diaspora and its roles are still in its infancy. This results, in

part, from a lack of comparative empirical information. But equally, perhaps more so, is the lack of a common frame for comparative analysis.

### *The objective and approach*

The objective of this paper is to construct a framework for understanding the role of Diasporas in relation to their homelands in a China-Africa comparative perspective. Using a common analytical template, this paper seeks to provide an understanding of the roles played by the Chinese and African Diaspora. This template builds on three pillars, namely i): the historical evolution—making—of the Diaspora, including its structural location in the host country; ii) its historical and contemporary roles, in particular those related to political and economic integration of the homeland; and finally iii) the homeland state's institutional response to the Diaspora. The essence of this comparative study is aimed at generating the insights regarding a) how history shapes the differences affecting Diaspora's identity and relations with the homeland; b) the ways in which the structural positions of Diaspora in their host country determine not only their own economic status but also the role they can play in relation to their homeland; and finally c) how successful the homeland's systematic capacity for incorporating and institutionalizing the role of Diaspora in its development project. The primary objective of the paper therefore, is *not* to compare China and Africa *per se*. Rather it is to use the case of the Chinese and African Diasporas as an entry point to understand the processes and factors influencing Diaspora's link to the homeland.

The paper is structured as follows: Following this introduction is an analysis of the Chinese Diaspora and its contributions to China's development, using the common analytical template outlined above. This is followed by an analysis of the African Diaspora and its contributions to African development and integration. Building on insights from the previous two sections, the third section discusses the comparative implications of the study. The objective of this comparative assessment is not the transference of experiences *per se*. Rather it is to highlight, analytically, the important variables that are crucial to understanding the Diaspora and its developmental linkages to its homeland.

### **The role Chinese Diaspora in China's development**

The Chinese Diaspora is often and generally named in China as “overseas Chinese”. The term has three language expressions (华侨Huáqiáo, 华裔Huáyì or 海外华人hǎiwài huárén) and their notions refers to people of Chinese birth or descent who live outside the Mainland region, such as 1) those “non-unified” territories of Taiwan administered by the rival governments under the official name the Republic of China (ROC) together with its surrounding islands; 2) the

previous Hong Kong and Macau, before their sovereignty handed over to China;  
3) all countries other than mainland China

### *Early migration*

Chinese Diaspora as it is nowadays results from centuries of waves of migration. The history of early Chinese immigrants moving abroad started at the end of Qing Dynasty when the endless internal and external conflicts following the *Opium War* and the *Taiping Rebellion* triggered the rise of Chinese immigration by the mid 18th century. Most of the early immigrants were from Guangdong and Fujian provinces and they were illiterate or poorly educated peasants who intended to look for a living abroad and earn a surplus to feed their families at homeland. Although they were not like the African slaves brought and sold without any freedom, they became *coolies* (Chinese: 苦力), i.e. hard labor, who were sent or migrated to countries in North America, Australia, Africa, Southeast Asia, and other places. Many of these coolies flocked to America in search of opportunities and worked in heavy labor-intensive mining and railway projects under extreme harsh conditions, such as the development of America's Transcontinental Railroad (Yin, 2001). Life of these coolies was extremely miserable and they had to face serious discrimination. Many of them did not survive to come home. Even so, the early Chinese Diasporas in the United States suffered the Anti-Chinese sentiment legalized by the Chinese Exclusion Act<sup>1</sup>

Today, the population of Chinese Diaspora has reached 35 million, making it the largest migrant group in the world, according to a report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)<sup>2</sup>.

### *The world's most economically successful Diasporas*

According to a leading world economic and management journal - *World Business*, Chinese Diasporas in the East and Southeast Asian region were once labeled by a former king of Thailand as the "Jews of Asia". However, in the view of this journal, Chinese Diasporas have been far more successful in their economic and financial hegemony in many of Southeast Asian economies than the Jews were in Europe in the past history (*World Business*, April 3, 2007). In an article by this journal, it describes the regional economic power of Chinese Diasporas in the following way:

In south-east Asia, they dominate business despite forming only a small minority of the population. Approximately 6% of the combined population of the five main south-east Asian economies (Indonesia, Malaysia, the

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<sup>1</sup> A federal discrimination law of the United States passed on May 6, 1882, which banned Chinese immigration. It was abolished in 1943.

<sup>2</sup> *China daily*, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-02/12/content\\_807738.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-02/12/content_807738.htm).

Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) is ethnically Chinese, but that 6% controlled around 60% of the region's private corporate wealth ..... The dominance is perhaps at its most extreme in Indonesia. Three quarters of the country's top 300 big business groups are either wholly or partly owned by Indonesian Chinese businesspeople - not a bad result for an ethnic group that comprises just 3% of the population.

(*World Business*, April 3, 2007)

Some researchers estimate that overseas Chinese (outside the Mainland China) control more than \$2.5 trillion of wealth and this figure looks awfully big if it compares with Japan's 1995 GNP of \$5.1 trillion, or with United States' 1995 GNP of \$7.2 trillion (Koo, 1995; Kwong, 1996). Today, it is an internationally recognized fact that overseas Chinese enterprises and business networks in East and Southeast Asia have been the driving force behind the region's economic explosion and integration.

### *Historical roles*

During certain periods of China's modern history, overseas Chinese Diasporas had played an important role in shaping the direction of China's internal politics. In many ways they were political and economic pioneers in linking with domestic historical evolution especially with domestic revolutions. Much of the fund supporting China's domestic revolutions or reforms came from the overseas Diasporas.

More importantly, Sun Yat-sen (孙中山, Sūn Zhōngshān, 1866-1925) "father of modern China" and the first revolutionary and political leader, was also a Chinese Diaspora. At the age of thirteen, Sun migrated to Honolulu and lived with his elder brother. Later he became a citizen of the United States and was issued an American passport. He led the first Chinese Revolution 1911-1912<sup>3</sup> leading to the eventual collapse of the imperial Qing Dynasty. He was both the first provisional president of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1912 and one of the co-founders of the nationalist party Kuomintang (KMT) where he served as its first leader. It is important to point out that most of the funding for supporting the Chinese Revolution of 1911 came also from overseas Chinese. His revolution had received strong support and financial contributions from the overseas Chinese.

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<sup>3</sup> It is also known as the *1911 Revolution* or the *Chinese Republic Revolution*, which overthrew the last dynasty - Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and turned China into a republic. It is also called *Xinhai Revolution* in Chinese because the year 1911 was a Xinhai Year in the sexagenary cycle of the Chinese calendar.

During the 1950s and 1960s, due to the internal turmoil of political struggles and the Cultural Revolution, overseas Chinese were seen with suspicion as possible capitalist or counter-revolution infiltrators. The relations with overseas Chinese Diaspora were politicized and embellished with revolutionary lexicon embedded in class-based patriotism and international solidarity.

Since the implementation of the market reforms at the end of 1970s, the attitude of the Chinese party-state toward overseas Chinese changed fundamental. Not anymore being seen with distrust, they were seen as political and economic assets with professional skills and economic capital which could play a vital role in China's industrialization and overall development. During the 1980s and forwards, the Chinese government was actively engaged in courting the support of Chinese Diaspora through, among other things, returning properties that were confiscated since 1949. The late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping regarded tens of millions of Chinese Diaspora as one of the favorable conditions enabling the country to develop faster and as a big valuable asset for China comparing with other countries.

In recent years massive favorable policies are initiated by the Chinese government as an effort to receive the support of the emigrated Chinese since the 1990s. The population of the new overseas Diaspora largely consists of students, scholars and professionals seeking high-level research and education in the West. Apart from providing FDI and financial resources to feed China's economic growth, many Chinese Diasporas are playing leading roles in promoting China's social, cultural, scientific and academic development.

#### *Chinese Diaspora in the economic rise of China*

It is a recognized consensus that the Chinese Diaspora, whose economic power is greater than that of any other Diasporas of any other states, are one of the main economic and financial resources for sustaining China's economic growth since China started its economic reform at the end of 1970s. The overseas remittances sent back home account for a substantial proportion of China's growth as well as the investments contributed by Chinese Diaspora. It is not an exaggeration to claim that Chinese Diasporas are a vital key to China's economic miracle and its sustainable success of the economic reform in the past decades (Constance, et al, 1996).

Since the reform started in the early period, they have played an indispensable role in China's efforts to exchange and cooperate with foreign markets, to introduce international capitals, to enter the global market, and to sell domestic commodities to all over the world. For example, FDI is seen as one of the key driving elements behind China's rapid growth, and by 1993, 69 percent of direct foreign investment in China - \$47.5 billion - came from ethnic Chinese in Hong

Kong; and the investment from Taiwan (still no official direct economic and trade links with mainland China), reached up to \$6.4 billion by 1993, which was 9.3 percent of total foreign investment according to China's statistics (Kwong, 1996). According to *OECD Observer* (No. 237, May 2003) China has since 1996 attracted more FDI than other developing countries; and in 2002 it received a record US\$52.7 billion FDI surpassing all OECD member countries and became one of the largest FDI recipients. What is interesting to notice is that fact that almost half of cumulative realized FDI China received came from the Chinese Diaspora-centred countries and regions, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan.

The first wave of foreign direct investment was primarily from the overseas Chinese who took a pioneering step into China's premature market in face of regulatory uncertainty and political sensitivity towards "capitalism" in the 1970s and 1980s. After the late 1990s and since 2000 there was a rise of flow of FDI from North American and European corporations. Following China's membership of the WTO, China has to reduce the preferential treatment to those overseas Chinese pioneers who were willing to take the risks of the lack of property law and unclear political systems.

Another distinctive feature about the Diaspora capitals is the crucial synergy between overseas Chinese investors and China's local governments, one not found to the same extent or in the same form with non-Chinese FDI (Smart, Alan and Hsu, Jinn-Yuh, 2004). The Diaspora capitals paved the most dynamic linkages established between Diaspora capitalism and entrepreneurship and the booming economies of the towns and villages of the coastal regions (Constance, et al, 1996).

### **China's multiple channels of interaction with its Diaspora**

#### *Comprehensive strategic policies on overseas Diaspora since the economic reform*

Recognizing the fact that the 30 million Chinese Diaspora and their family members are an important force in China's economic development and modernization drive, national reunification and rejuvenation, the Chinese party-state has effectively set up multiple official, semi-official and grass-root mechanisms for incorporating the Chinese Diaspora into the modernization and globalization strategy so as to reach a broad party-state political legitimacy, to serve the interest of China's economic development and to expand China's political influence. The strategy has been designated and implemented under a broad historical bloc around the notion of "Chineseness", i.e. Chinese culture and Chinese nation. Such a strategy is clearly reflected in both the policies and practical implementations of the relevant government institutions and the

organization of the overseas Chinese affairs throughout the central and local governments (see figure 1).

#### *Legal protection of Chinese Diaspora*

In order to legally guarantee the protection of Chinese Diaspora and their overall interests in China, the National People's Congress on September 7, 1990, promulgated by Order No. 33 of the President of the People's Republic of China on September 7, 1990, passed the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Returned Overseas Chinese and the Family Members of Overseas Chinese. This law began to be effective as of January 1, 1991. According to China Daily (November 17, 20004), since 1990, government offices in charge of overseas Chinese affairs at various levels across the country had treated more than 700,000 cases relating to rights and interests protection. This law was further amended in 2001 after it was practiced for a decade. It aimed at create practical and preferential measures in order to provide overseas Chinese investments with efficient and privileged services on such as project approval, business registration, approval of land requisition.

#### *Overseas Diaspora as China's "state affairs"*

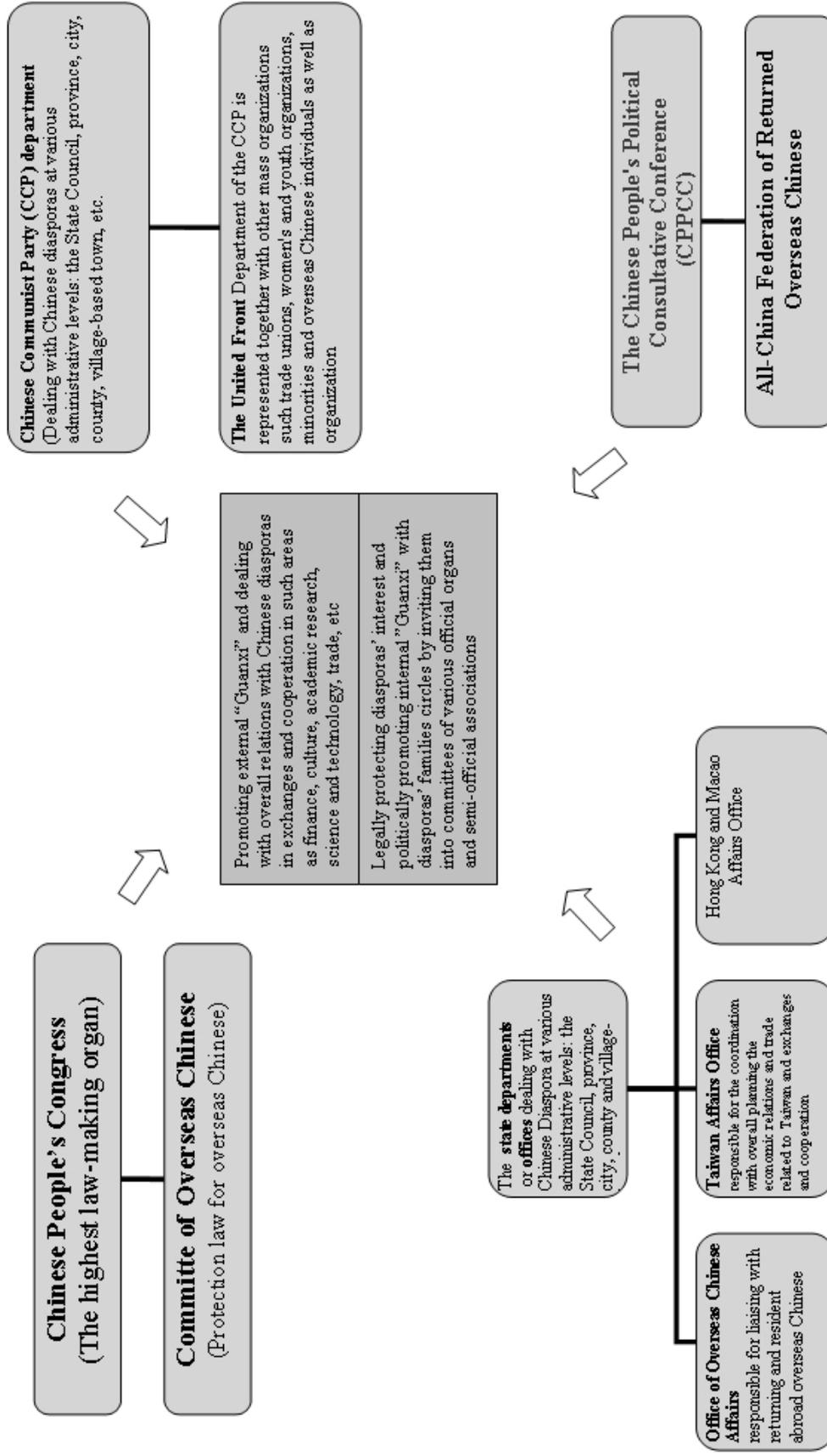
Administratively the affairs of Chinese Diaspora are governed by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. This office is placed at all administrative levels (state council, province, city, county and village-based town). At the highest level - the state council, the main objective of this office is to design and formulate national guidelines, policies and regulations regarding all works in connection with overseas Chinese affairs including supervising and checking the implementation of them at various local administrative levels. The office also conducts researches in studying overseas Chinese affairs both at home and abroad. It provides the information and recommendation to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the government on development plan for overseas Chinese affairs works<sup>5</sup> (see figure 1).

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<sup>4</sup> *China Daily*,  
[http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200011/17/eng20001117\\_55494.html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200011/17/eng20001117_55494.html)

<sup>5</sup> The institutional functions of this office can be accessed in the Chinese website  
<http://www.gqb.gov.cn/node2/node3/node22/node23//index.html>

**Figure 1. China's multiple institutional approaches in promoting and managing relations with its Diaspora**



In concrete terms, the office is to carry out a few practical tasks: 1) assisting the Premier in the administration of the overseas Chinese affairs and reviewing policies which directly concern overseas Chinese affairs initiated relevant ministries or local governments; 2) conducting necessary management and coordination for the overseas Chinese affairs works in connection with other relevant departments and social organizations; 3) protecting the legitimate rights and interests of the overseas Chinese; to enhance the unity and friendship in the overseas Chinese communities; 4) keeping contact with and support overseas Chinese medias and Chinese language schools; To accelerate the cooperation and exchanges of the overseas Chinese with China in terms of economy, science, culture and education (Chinese State Council, 2005).

### *The United-Front strategy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)*

One of the key departments of the Chinese Communist Party is the *United Front Work Department*. The original idea of “united front” was established during the period of the anti-Japanese War and the Civil War. Its strategy of the “mass line”<sup>6</sup> during the Chinese Revolution in the 1930s and 1940s was consistent with what Gramsci describes as the “national-popular” and the “war of position”. The Chinese Communist Party, which assumed the vanguard role of the proletarian class<sup>7</sup>, achieved success in transforming itself into a hegemonic class. This was done by building an alliance with all social forces and combining them into the class struggle to create a collective will to achieve national independence and build a prosperous and equal society.

In the economic reform period, the united front strategy of the Chinese Communist Party after the economic reform is to unite all social forces both domestic and international to serve China’s economic development. When Deng Xiaoping revived the united front activities at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CCP Central Committee in 1978, he emphasized the vital role of the investment of China’s overseas Diaspora would play in bringing capital and technology to its modernization project. Without the economic investment and political support of Chinese Diaspora’s, Deng maintained, China would never be able to live up to its full economic potential. Promotion of a sense of patriotism among overseas Diaspora by the united front strategy can be misread by many

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<sup>6</sup> During the war period, the Chinese Communist Party showed a deep understanding of the possible obstacles to draw peasants’ participation in the communist revolution. Mao also made concrete investigations on this issue. The strategy of the “mass line” was developed in order to overcome the hindrances.

<sup>7</sup> The original power of the Chinese Communist Party came from the peasant’s movements in the countryside rather than from urban-based proletarian struggles, although there were some urban uprisings.

Western powers as a “fifth column”<sup>8</sup> and can be misguided by the suspicions over the potential emergence of a worldwide “Chinese Commonwealth” of entrepreneurial relationships under Chinese patriotism.

#### *Organized civil society networks for Chinese Diaspora*

Under the leadership of The Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPC)<sup>9</sup>, the *All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese* is a mass organization formed by returned overseas Chinese and their relatives. Its main purpose is to function as a bridge linking the CPC and the government with returned overseas Chinese, their relatives and Chinese Diaspora residing abroad. Apart from actively participating in daily political, economic, cultural and social affairs of the country, its main task is to conduct consultation and supervision as a co-player in administration of Diaspora-related matters in order to unleash full potentials of overseas Diaspora to contribute to promoting economic and social development as well as national unity.

In concrete terms, the organization’s practical works also involve in a number of direct areas<sup>10</sup>: 1) strengthening the relationship with the overseas Chinese and their relations and unleashing their enthusiasm for serving China; 2) playing the role of supervision and voicing the concerns and wishes of Diaspora; 3) protecting the interests and rights concerning overseas Diaspora, such as supervising the implementation of Law of the Peoples Republic of China on the protection of the Rights and Interests of Returned or Returned Overseas Chinese and the Family Members of Overseas Chinese as well as improving the service quality; 4) strengthening relationship with new generation of overseas Chinese and their associations, building up strong links with international and regional organizations of overseas Chinese as well as actively participating in the grass-root activities.

#### **The making of the African Diaspora: a tale of two boats**

One of the remarkable features of the global institutional landscape is the presence of Africans all over the world, resulting in what is increasingly called a global Africa. The roots of this spread of Africans lies in two historically distinct movements, or two boats-- one involuntary the other voluntary-- that left

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<sup>8</sup> The concept derived from Spanish Civil War (1936-39). It refers to any clandestine group or faction of subversive agents who attempt to undermine a nation's solidarity.

<sup>9</sup> The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference is a united front organization under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and an organ for various other political parties, mass organizations and personages of various social circles to play an active consultative role in state affairs. See the website of the Central People’s Government of People’s Republic of China. <http://english.gov.cn/links/cppcc.htm>

<sup>10</sup> See the introductory article on “All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese”, available at <http://knows.jongo.com/res/article/3595>

Africa at distinct historical periods. The first of these two boats, and the major cause of the making of the African Diaspora, is the result of the transatlantic slave trade. As Prah argues:

Except for the migration, mainly to Europe and North America which have taken place over the last century, in almost all these parts of the world where Africans find themselves today, they have, for the most part, been taken there in bondage and pain. During the era of the Atlantic slave trade, so many Africans were taken out of the continent that by 1850, about a third of the people of African descent lived outside Africa. For almost four and half centuries (1441-1888) the transatlantic slave trade created an African Diaspora of about 15-20 million people, from many parts of Africa, particularly the West coast.

(Prah, 2006:232-233)

This Atlantic slave ensured that the African Diaspora today is spread and can be found in diverse places as Brazil, Peru, Colombia, the whole of Middle America, Mexico, the United States, Canada and the whole of the West Indies. Similarly others have ended up in Western Asia, with a “steady trickle” finding its way into India, Central Asia, the Balkans and beyond (Prah 1996:232). This first boat, largely involuntary, movement of Africans represents the old Diaspora, whose presence outside Africa laid the foundation for what can now be legitimately described as Global Africa.

While the Diaspora forged out of the slave trade represents the first Diaspora, a recent movement of Africans, particularly since the 1970s --- the second boat --- has resulted in Africa’s second or postcolonial Diaspora. This second movement of Africans, largely voluntary --- but sometimes involuntary in the sense of resulting from dislocation of wars and political upheavals on the continent --- is a post slave trade phenomenon, and has become the bedrock of the remaking of the African Diaspora. This voluntary migration more so is to Europe as well as North America. Explaining the making of this second Diaspora in North America, Zeleza argues that after the staggered abolitions of the European and American slave trades and the end of African forced migration, only small numbers of Africans left the continent to settle in North America as compared to other immigrant groups. Indeed data covering the period 1850 to 1990 shows that the number of African born migrants in the US population rose from 2,538 in 1900, climbing to 18,326 in 1930, 35,355 in 1960, and 363,819 in 1990, an indication that more than three-quarters of the African migrants in 1990 entered the US since 1970 (Zeleza, 2002. See also El-Nur, 2002; Harris 2003).

African post slave trade migration to Europe also followed the same pattern. In terms of destination these migrations reflected the colonial ties, making the UK and France the popular destinations for African migrants. This pattern, however

changed with the inclusion of other European destinations like Germany and the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, which had until the 1970s themselves been countries of emigration (ibid).

Together the first and second movement of Africans has ensured that there is a Global Africa, spread across the face of the world, in varying sizes and with diverse crosscutting linkages with the continent. For definitional purposes, this spread of Africans, or the African Diaspora, is conceptualized as consisting of the following:

The global dispersion (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans throughout history; the emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition; and the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa. Thus viewed, the African Diaspora assumes the character of a dynamic, continuous, and complex phenomenon stretching across time, geography, class, and gender.

(Alpers, 2001:8)

In statistical terms, this global Africa is said to be made up of nearly 800 million Africans on the continent and up to another 100 million persons of African descent living in other parts of world, most in the United States but with significant communities in Brazil, the Caribbean, Canada, and parts of Western Europe (Bridgwater, 2003). For instance according to the 2000 United States census, there are 34, 658, 190 African-Americans in the United States. Of the 35 million people that claimed Hispanic heritage in the 2000 US census, at least one third are likely to have African ancestry. Nearly 1.8 million people from the Caribbean lived in the United States in 2000. About 0.6% of all people living in United States (1,781,877) identified themselves as Sub-Saharan Africans. Conservatively, in the United States alone, at least 50 million individuals have African ancestry. Most people in the Caribbean and significant proportions of individuals in Latin America have African ancestry. The International Office of Migration (IOM), a United Nations agency, estimates that the African Diaspora population in France is 1,633,142 and another 1.5 million Diaspora Africans live in other European countries.

The IOM also provides a picture of an affluent diasporan Africans. About 22 per cent of diasporan Africans are in the teaching, education and research professions; 20 per cent in finance, investments and economics; 20 per cent in public health; 15 per cent in engineering; per cent in agriculture; 5 per cent in information technology; 5 per cent in legal sciences; 3 per cent in administration, and; 1 per cent in natural sciences. The 2000 US census indicates that foreign-born Sub-Saharan Africans (recent immigrants) have the highest proportion of foreign-born individuals 25 years and over who have bachelors

degrees (49.3 per cent) compared to Europe (32.9 per cent) and Asia (44.9 per cent). At least 38.2 per cent of Sub-Saharan householders in the US own their own homes. The average median household income of foreign-born households headed by Sub-Saharan Africans was \$36,371, according to the 2000 US census. For the period 2000 through 2002, the median household income for African Americans was \$29,483 according to the US Census. Home-ownership for African Americans was 48% in 2003. Black-owned business in 1997, the latest period for which data is available, employed 718,300 persons and generated US\$71 billion in revenues, according to the US Census (cited in Opoku-Mensah, 2006).

### **The African Diaspora in African development and integration**

The roles of the African Diaspora largely conflate with the nature of its evolution and structural location in the host countries. The recent upsurge and popularity of the discourse is premised on the assumption of that the African Diaspora has immense capacities, indeed it is a historical resource that can be mobilized in the service of African integration and development (Mbeki 2003; World Bank, 2007; Asante, 2004). How has the African Diaspora responded to this twin call, and with what effect?

#### *The African Diaspora and African political integration*

An analysis of the African unification project indicates the critical role of the African Diaspora. Indeed in an exercise historicizing the political integration project, Kwesi Prah argues that the very notion of African unity and integration is a Diaspora construct:

*The roots of the idea of African Unity are buried in the mid-nineteenth century. Together and enmeshed with the related ideas of nationalism and pan-Africanism, they emerged as the articulate response of people of African descent in Africa and its diaspora to the continuing experience of western domination and exploitation.*

(Prah, 2000:2)

He is emphatic that the primary reason for the emergence of the idea of African integration was and the Diaspora inspiration forged out of the alienation from the continent, the detribalization and homogenization of Africans taken across the Atlantic, and their longing and reference for what is captured in spirit by Aimé Césaire's extended poem (1939) called Notes on a Return to the Native Country (ibid).

A direct route of the Diaspora to African Integration, and the inauguration of the African Union in July 2002, is given by Thabo Mbeki, who in an address at the

University of the West Indies argues that the stirrings and fermentation of the notions of decolonization and freedom on the African continent were significantly inspired by the courageous pioneers of African freedom in the Diaspora:

It was in the year 1900 when the Trinidadian barrister Henry Sylvester Williams initiated the first Pan-African conference, in London. That conference was seminal to the political and philosophical movement of Pan-Africanism throughout the world, the catalyst that has ultimately led to the formation of the African Union, at the beginning of the 21st century.

(Mbeki, 2003:4)

This initiative of the Diaspora, and the inspiration it gave to the freedom fighters on the continent, he argues, was the decisive factor in the final onslaught against colonial domination on the African continent. He remains convinced that the 1945 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England which featured anti-colonial thinkers and activists such as George Padmore and W.E.B. Du Bois, again impacted on the young African freedom fighters and intellectuals such as Kwame Nkrumah, and gave sustenance to the struggles which finally saw the realization of the process of African independence and freedom that started with the liberation of Ghana (ibid. See also Drake, 2003).

In sum, to the effect that the African political integration is concerned the Diaspora has provided the ideological and motivational basis for the project. Yet its role(s) in the practical realization of this ideal has, until recently, not been recognized. Indeed the Organization of African Unity (OAU), established in 1963 as the institutional architecture and framework for promoting African integration adopted a continental approach, conceiving African integration in purely geographic terms, largely conflating it with the integration of Africa states, excluding the Diaspora (Opoku-Mensah, 2006; 2007). The establishment of the African Union (AU) in 2002 has significantly shifted the terms of debating Africa's integration, with the process conceived as one involving Africa and its Diaspora. This shift in conception was given practical expression in a change to the constitutive act of the African Union (AU) in February 2003 to include the participation of the African Diaspora in the activities of the AU, and in the processes of African integration. As will be explained later, this has resulted in the legitimization of the role of the Diaspora in the unification project, its exact roles remains to be largely gauged and accessed.

#### *The African Diaspora and African economic integration*

Discussions on the African Diaspora and the continent's development, which has gained momentum in recent years, takes place against the backdrop of recent

efforts to highlight the increasing economic power of the Diaspora. In this the African Diaspora is said to have significant human and economic resources to commit to the improvement of the African continent. For instance, and focusing on the US, the former US Assistant Secretary for State for African Affairs (and now US Ambassador to Ghana) Pamela Bridgewater, argues that

There are now roughly 35 million citizens of African descent in the U.S. with a collective purchasing power of about \$450 billion per annum -- a sum that if represented by a single country would make it one of the 15 largest economies in the world.

(Bridgewater, 2003)

Thus with this yearly spending power of about \$500 billion, African Americans are exhorted to expand their cultural linkages to Africa into economic linkages (Veney, 2002). Similar sentiments are raised for the African Diaspora in Europe, whose increasing economic purchasing power and contributions to African development is touted. In general the African Diaspora, like other Diaspora groups, is said to contribute to African Development in various ways including the provision of financial support to family and communities, establishing small businesses building private transportation system, stimulating new home constructions and artisan enterprise development, serving as cultural ambassadors, helping to extend and maintain public infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, and through their networks are beginning to delivering services in the health and education sectors in particular (World Bank, 2007:16).

While there are increasing attempts to tap into this Diaspora economic resource through the establishment of African Diaspora investment forums, there is a lack of concrete data on how much of the growing economic part of the African Diaspora actually finds its way into Africa as investment capital. Anecdotal evidence of these contributions abound, although empirical verification is lacking. What are increasingly documented are remittances, which the World Bank argues amounted to \$4 billion for Sub-Saharan Africa alone, surpassing the official development assistance received by these countries (World Bank, 2007). According to the IOM, Nigerians in the Diaspora remitted US\$1.3 billion in 1999, equivalent to 3.7 per cent of the country's GDP and 55 per cent of overseas development assistance. Remittances from African Diasporas that identify Eritrea as their country of origin, accounted for 19.7 per cent of the country's GDP and 85.8 per cent of the overseas development assistance. It is important to note that these remittances do not include informal transactions that may be higher than data in official records (Opoku-Mensah, 2006).

For a continent that depends mostly on foreign aid, these contributions by the Diaspora are critically important for African countries. However, from a

comparative perspective, more specifically in a comparison with the Chinese Diaspora, the economic roles of the African Diaspora raises questions as to the extent to which these remittances can constitute the type of foreign investment necessary for African development. To be sure, remittances provide much-needed finances for ensuring household security and alleviating poverty. Remittances also help siblings, kin, and friends to start or expand businesses; build houses, and undertake self-financed projects and investments (World Bank, 2007).

Yet these are far from the massive investments that are fuelling China's rapid economic growth and development. In general the contributions of the African Diaspora, while substantive and still increasing, have hardly concentrated on long-term investment projects. This has implications for the discussions on the role of the African Diaspora and its contribution to African development. These discussions have often been divorced from a discussion of the actual capacity and contributions the Diaspora can make. Akin to discussions on NGOs in the early 1990s, the African Diaspora is increasingly perceived as a "magic bullet", able and willing to contribute to the development integration of the African continent. Yet the available, or rather unavailable data, points to the limits of the African Diaspora's potential in African development.

This limitation, more so, is related to the structural location of the African Diaspora in the host countries. In deed, one distinctive character of African Diasporas, wherever they are found, is that they share national and social marginalities in the global racialized hierarchies of power and privilege. Nowhere does the African Diaspora, both the historical and contemporary, dominate economic life as the Chinese Diaspora does. Indeed in Brazil, which is reputed to have the highest concentration of Africans outside the continent, Brazilian Africans are said to be the "invincible citizens" in economic life. This is true for most parts of the Western hemisphere with large concentrations of Africans. Haiti for instance remains *one of the poorest and most wretched counties in the Western hemisphere* (Prah, 2006:253).

A notable exception might be the case of African Americans, who have witnessed some remarkable changes to their structural position in American society. This relates in particular to the arts and sports where names like Gillespie, Armstrong, Coltrane, Michael Jackson and Mohammed Ali, Jesse Owens respective are global households names. Their growing economic clout, as well as their entry into the high echelons of American political power notably exemplified by the fact that there has been African American US secretaries of State in succession---Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice --- is adequate indication of a change in their structural location. Yet, even here; *there are still enormous discrepancies and difficulties, and they remain an under class in American society* (Prah, 2006:265).

Despite incremental changes, the African Diaspora occupies a similar place in Europe. In fact in the European case, one author argues that the Europeanization project has created a transnational space where migrants and African migrants in particular are particularly marginalized, and on the lower rungs of the society (Zezeza, 2002:7). This is not to discount, or even downplay, the contributions of the African Diaspora to African economic development, but to locate it within its limits, and perhaps to refocus it in areas where it can and have the capacity to make a difference, as in the case of higher education (Opoku-Mensah, 2006; 2007).

In sum, despite some progress, both the first and second African Diasporas remain politically and economically fragile. Discussions on their roles must therefore be tempered by this reality of their structural location in their host countries.

### **The African Diaspora and the African State**

Historically the relation between the African state and the Diaspora has gone from ad-hoc communion, through indifference and outright hostility to the current period of rapprochement and organized institutionalized relations. But overall institutionalized relations between the African Diaspora and African governments remain weak:

Although African Governments have begun to recognize the potential contributions of their Diasporas to home country development, serious efforts on the part of government in terms of strategies and instruments to harness these potentials are lacking, beyond the use of catchphrases (Africa news media are replete with phrases such as “turning brain drain to brain gain”) or creating ministerial positions in cabinet or within the Presidency to be responsible for Diaspora affairs but without strategies that engage the Diaspora. As a result, institutional relationships between home country and Diasporas are weak.

(World Bank, 2007:17)

This notwithstanding some evidence of a desire for institutionalized mechanisms for relating is emerging at the regional level. In deed the establishment of the African Union in 2002 ha set in motion a number of efforts to institutionalize relations with the African Diaspora. Concrete initiatives in this respect have been established, beginning with the inclusion of Diaspora representatives in two major OAU-Civil Society Conferences on 11-14 June 2001 and 11-15 June 2002 respectively as part of the process of transforming the OAU into the AU. Indeed the genesis of the current efforts at incorporating the Diaspora took place at the second Conference in 2002, which focused on the contribution of the Civil Society to the establishment of the African Union, and which included Diaspora

representatives. That Conference also elected a Provisional Working Group to work with the AU Commission on a continuous basis in between larger assemblies to be held on bi-annual basis. The Diaspora was given two representatives on this working Group - one for Europe and one for the Western Hemisphere including the US and other parts of the Americas.

Following its formal inauguration the AU has sought to establish a framework through which the African Diaspora would be mainstreamed in the activities of the new AU. For instance, the AU Commission made plans to launch AU Diaspora Forums in Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Consequently, the First AU-Western Hemisphere Diaspora Forum was convened in Washington DC from 17-19 December 2002. The Forum began the process of institutional links between the African Diaspora and Continental Africans in an effort to establish the Union project as a truly global African effort. As a result of this initial meeting, a Western Hemisphere Diaspora Network (WHADN) was established to interface with the AU Commission in this regard and the Network set up permanent working groups made up of Experts and Resource persons in each area. The Working Group has put up proposals for effective collaboration in each of these domains. These proposals have been refined by the Commission in consultation with the nascent WHADN Secretariat to allow for effective program support and to feed into the policy demands of the Commission. The Network has also decided on the establishment of an AU Education Endowment Fund and an AU Trade and Economic Development Forum for the US Diaspora and agreed on a series of measures for contribution to these funds including elements of salary deductions.

By far the most important and far reaching measure taken by the AU on the incorporation of the Diaspora took place at the Extra-Ordinary Summit of the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on February 3, 2003 to deliberate on proposed amendments to the Constitutive Act. At the meeting of the Executive Council that preceded the Summit, Senegal proposed an amendment to formally integrate the Diaspora in the policy framework of the Union. The proposed amendment was refined and adopted by the Summit in a new Article 3 (q) that would “invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building of the African Union”. The amendment constitutes a milestone in the bid to incorporate the Diaspora into the policy making and policy support processes of the AU. In a further demonstration of commitment, the AU has allocated the Diaspora representation in the Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). Of a total of 150 civil society organizations allocated representation, 20 of these must come from the African Diaspora.

Finally there is a series of regional consultative meetings being organized across the globe in preparation for an Africa Union-African Diaspora summit in South Africa in 2008. The Summit, whose theme: “Towards the realization of a united and integrated Africa and its Diaspora: A shared vision for sustainable development to address common challenges,” ultimately seeks to produce a practical program of action for institutionalized co-operation between Africa and its Diaspora.

Similar efforts are being undertaken at the national level where Ministries for Diaspora affairs are being established, as is the case of Ghana and Nigeria. In the Ghanaian case, for instance, a concerted effort is being made by the state to establish institutionalized links with the Ghanaian Diaspora through the establishment of a Ministry for Diaspora relations; the passing of a law for dual citizenship; as well as a law paving the way for the Diaspora to vote. Similarly, in a proactive bid to reach out to the historical or first Diaspora, the Ghanaian government has established a so-called Joseph project --- a reference to the biblical story of Joseph --- to encourage the return of the historical Diaspora to the continent. For this purpose, it has introduced a permanent Diaspora visa that allows descendants of the historical Diaspora to visit Ghana without visas after their first visit. Similarly, and the only African country to do so, it has supported the establishment of a Diaspora Africa Forum in Ghana, the first diplomatic mission established by the African Union to deal with Diaspora issues.

Since 2001, an annual “homecoming summit” has also been organized for the Ghanaian government, private sector and civil society to interact with members of the Ghanaian Diaspora. In effect, while institutionalized relations between have been non-existent the past few years have seen activities to establish these mechanisms. It is too early, however, to assess the extent to which this will lead to a better structuring of the relations between African and her Diasporas.

### **The Chinese and African Diaspora in comparative perspective**

#### *Awareness of the limits of comparative methodology*

As a methodological approach in social sciences especially in the areas of development research, cross-country comparison, a method which is largely inspired by the modernization school of thought, becomes a tradition to apply a country or region as a contrasting model in comparing with other countries or regions that differ profoundly in history, tradition, values, and organization.

Very often problems of conceptualization and measurement followed by causal theorizing and causal conclusion are not taken into serious consideration in many development literatures influenced by the modernization paradigm. For

example, it is a fashion in development research to compare the economic success of East Asia with the underdevelopment of Africa, and often the conclusion goes: most Asian dragons were at the same level as Kenya among other African countries including Ghana in the 1960s, and the factors that East Asia has developed into a developed semi-core status whereas African countries are now among the poorest of the poor are due to the fact that East Asia has shown superior performance in some key areas, such as the role of the state, cultural values, government policies, democratic politics, and issues of governance (Evans, 1995; Jones, 1980; Tu, 1989; Wade, 1990; World Bank 1993, etc.) However, what is neglected is the international political economy of East Asian dynamism (Borthwick 1992; Deyo, 1988).

Without taking into consideration the extent of the capitalist world system especially American historical, political and economic influence in the region, it would be meaningless to discuss about the economic success and the historical development path of East Asia (Hersh, 1993; Li, 2007) The post-war United States as the dominant political, economic and military power in the international system played a significant part in structuring post-war world development. This fear of Communism due to the deep sentiment of the “loss of China” made America take part in two perhaps entirely avoidable wars in Korean Peninsula and Southeast Asia. The “loss of China” also attributed to the political economy of the emergence of East Asian developmental states under the American parenthood in terms of market access, military and financial aid as well as national security. Before generating any conclusion when comparing East Asia with Africa, these important external factors cannot be ignored!

Another comparison in a dichotomy of East Asia/China versus Africa is within the lines of discussion of norms and values promoted by the culturalist approach. Today, the East Asian and Chinese economic success is portrayed as a model for the development world, and the Chinese Confucian tradition is considered by the culturalist interpretation as having made a contribution in terms of its emphasis on knowledge, education, diligence, self-sacrifice and delayed gratification to social stability as well as its acceptance of bureaucratic governance at both governmental and enterprise levels. However, it should not be forgotten that the relative decline of China in the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was, seen by the culturalist school, attributable to its cultural stagnation. Hegel, for example, at a time when the Western consciousness of the world created revolutionary history, saw China in the “Childhood” of history (Engels in Dirlik & Meisner, 1989: 17); and Marx, whose theories and insight inspired the Chinese revolution, described China as a society “vegetating in the teeth of time” and saw in the Great Wall of China a metaphor for the universal resistance of non-European societies to change (Marx in Dirlik & Meisner, *ibid.*: 17). Their views were understandable because these perceptions of China, although

premature, were a product of a comparison between the immobility of non-Western cultures and the revolutionary Europe. What was behind the viewpoint was to establish an European model for other cultures to follow. To put China in the framework of the Weberian explanation, the failure of China's transition to the stage of capitalism is due to the fact that Chinese Confucian cultural values are not receptive to the development of capitalism in terms of creativity, competition and entrepreneurship.

Not denying the value of making comparative studies between Chinese and African Diaspora, the awareness of its limit is also imperative in order to avoid any misinterpretation and misconceptualization. Similarly, it needs to be stressed from the outset that the aim of this comparison is not a wholesale transference of the Chinese experience to Africa, or vice versa. Rather the objective of the comparison is to understand some of the major determinants of the nature and strength of Diaspora links and contributions to the homeland.

With this caveat in mind, the discussions so far indicate that both the Chinese and African Diasporas maintain active links with the homeland, playing various roles in the development and integration of the homeland. Indeed both the Chinese and the African Diasporas have played varying roles in the quest for regional unity, with different effect. Yet these roles, and the effectiveness with which they are played, are critically mediated by a number of factors, which are discussed below. These factors relate to the role of history, the contemporary structural location of the Diaspora, and the nature of state response. Specifically, the analyses indicate that the roles(s) of the Diaspora are a function of its historical evolution; composition and structural location in the host land; and the institutional response of the homeland. These are discussed below:

#### *History and nation matters!*

Understanding the historicity behind our comparative studies, the paper intends to point out the fact that the discussions on the Diaspora and their contributions to the homeland have often been divorced from the historical making of various Diasporas. These discussions have often been normative and adopted a prescriptive posture, with the Diaspora called upon to support the development of the homeland. Yet despite these increasing calls, the comparative evidence however does not support a one-to-one correlation between the existence of a Diaspora and its support for the homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2004).

In the African discussions, for instance, the African Diaspora is admonished to aid the development of the continent in similar terms as the Chinese contributions to China's development (Zezeza, 2002; World Bank, 2007). Our analyses indicate that such discussions are problematic because they fail to place these roles in the context of the historical evolution, and making, of specific

Diasporas. For instance, the history of the Chinese historical dispersion and its relations to a single homeland makes the relations of the overseas Chinese to the homeland straightforward. On the other hand the African historical Diaspora deterritorialized and without links to a specific African country influences its ability to link to a homeland, which more or less is simply imagined. Similarly, the historical circumstances under which those who left with Africa's second boat --- whether they left under economic or political 'persecution'—will determine the *dominant nature* of their links to the homeland.

Analytically this raises questions about the validity of this homogenizing discourse on the roles of the Diaspora which brands disparate Diasporas together. In this frame, the African Diaspora is challenged to live up to the Chinese and the Jewish Diaspora, and their economic contributions too China and Israel respectively. A historicization of the process of Diaspora formation might caution against such prescriptive discussions, as the roles of the African Diaspora must be a function of its history. This argument supports Robin Cohen's analytical schema that distinguishes among various diasporas, such as the "victim Diasporas" (Africans and Armenians), "labor Diasporas" (Indians), "imperial Diasporas" (British), "trade Diasporas" (Chinese and Lebanese), or "cultural Diasporas" (the Caribbean) (Cohen, 1997: 26). Although this schema has been criticized, among others, on the grounds that these Diasporas are not mutually exclusive, it nevertheless lends credence to this need for historical origins as a first step to understanding the nature of the Diasporas links to the homeland. Seen in this light, the dominance of cultural relations in the links between Africa's historic first Diaspora and the continent can be understood as a function of its cultural dislocation from the continent. Similarly, the dominance of economic relations in overseas Chinese links to the homeland makes sense in the light of its historical evolution as a laboring or trading Diaspora. This is not to generalize, or essentialize across the board, but to stress that history does matter in understanding the Diaspora and its links to the homeland.

In a sense, the centrality of differences in understanding the role of Chinese and African Diaspora and their linkage to the homeland is the "haves" and have-nots" of national identity. The concept of Diaspora implies those people who live outside their "home country" and their reflective identity cannot be separate from their roots of origin. Identity is understood to be a process based on positive identifications with a number of ingredients of self-formation at different levels, such as nation, language, family, ethnicity, gender, class, etc. Often, sentimental feelings like "nostalgia", "melancholy" are closely associated with Diaspora's cultural identity which is central to the construction of subjectivity, the formation of self-image, and the delineation of social boundaries. Therefore, national identity is often equated with cultural identity, and a nation-state is the precondition for articulating a coherent and independent

cultural identity. The relationship between history, nation-state and cultural identity is dynamic because rapid and dramatic transformation can generate a dislocation of identity and problems of identity fragmentation.

Within the last century China has undergone more transformative changes than any other country in the world. This history of Chinese overseas migration was closely connected with these transformations. The Chinese state and society transformed from an imperial monarchy to a short-lived republic, and from a weak and decentralized warlord authoritarianism to a centralized revolutionary socialist state; economically it went from a state-led industrialization based on planned economy and socialist egalitarianism to an all-round structural reform based on market mechanisms, and its economy underwent repeated shift from crisis and failure to very rapid growth and modernization; politically Chinese society and people experienced imperialism and warlordism as well as dictatorship and class struggle; ideologically Chinese value systems underwent transformations from feudalism to socialism and from collectivism to individualism. In recent decades economic growth has torn down much of the physical symbols of China's cultural history, but Chinese people still remain an intensely historical nation with strong and popular *nationalism*. Chinese nationalism connotes a cohesive history, a united people and a shared cultural tradition under a unified country known as China. To Chinese Diaspora, regardless of which historical period when they left China, homeland identity is always significant to their own identity. The homeland's political fate and international status has profound implications to the Diaspora. The rise of China in recent decades has without doubt a positive impact on the position and role of Chinese Diaspora communities.

On the contrary, the memory of early generations of African Diaspora is the one associated with slavery, and the history of African Diaspora is a history of racial conflict without any national embodiment and without any cultural, linguistic and social reference for the formation of the Diaspora identity. The identity of African Diaspora is not historically embedded and needs to be created and negotiated in a continuous process of defining the Diaspora themselves and negotiating their identity and belonging.

#### *Structural location matters!*

The analyses shows that if history is important to understand the evolution and composition and Diaspora attitudes to the homeland, their present structural location in the host country provides an indication to the *ability* and *capacity* with which the Diaspora can be a resource for the development of the homeland. The logic is rather straightforward. A Chinese Diaspora that controls 60% of the private economy of a country like Indonesia is more likely to play meaningful economic roles in the homeland than the African Diaspora whose members

remain at the bottom of the economic ladder of their host countries. The Chinese Diaspora is a powerful economic force anywhere it is located. The African Diaspora remains a fragile actor in almost all the places where it is located. Even in the United States where the African Diaspora is most wealthy, as a group it still remains an underclass. This has implications for the roles they can play in African development. To be sure, this does not mean they do not play any roles at all, as the evidence indicates multiple and sustained roles. What is stressed is that, based on their current structural locations, both the historical and the current Diaspora, although actively involved in Africa, nevertheless cannot be expected to be a major source of investment capital. On the hand, it does have the potential to play other roles, including knowledge transfer and political mobilization.

Being an economic class armed with capital and technology overseas Chinese commercial capitalism operates on a form of social interaction that is built through kinship network and ethnic relationship (social capital with national reference and cultural root originated and connected with the homeland) making it independent from the local system of political economy. The organization of business transactions through cultural affinitive networks gives Chinese Diaspora entrepreneurs a comparative advantage in which economic calculation is well combined cultural trust, thus reducing the transaction cost. Ethnic Chinese are the prime sources of capital and entrepreneurship not only in mainland China but also in most of the Southeast Asian countries. The spill-over effect of the regional network-based capitalism driven by the Chinese Diaspora can be partly illustrated by the role of the hundreds of successful ethnic Chinese family business and networks connecting and interlocking medium-sized businesses in many countries in the region. Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs, business executives, traders and financiers are the major players linking local economies with that of the region.

The lack of the development of such an economic class prevents the kinds of organised structured interventions in the economies of Africa. Although there is gradual development of African Diaspora investment forums in Europe and North America, these remain fragile, and to date there is a lack of documentation on what exactly concrete contributions have been to African economies.

*It's the state response, stupid!*

Beyond history and structural location, the response of the home country is the final indicator of the ability of the Diaspora to make meaningful contributions. Ultimately the efficacy with which the Diaspora can play developmental roles in the homeland is fundamentally related to the response of the homeland state. The extensive and multiple institutional responses of the Chinese state to its

Diaspora contrast sharply with the undeveloped institutionalized mechanisms for Africa's relations with its Diaspora. Indeed the activist and proactive role of Chinese state towards its Diaspora contrasts to the lackadaisical, and in some instances almost non-existent, institutional mechanism for Africa's relations it's Diasporas. This in turn, determines the effectiveness with which the Chinese Diaspora, the so-called Overseas Chinese, have participated in China's development over the years. The corollary is that the state becomes the anchor around which the transnational activities of the Diaspora can be made effective. This brings the state into the transnational discussions on the Diaspora --- once again!

Since the late 1970s, China had a new overseas Chinese policy in place aiming at actively supporting overseas Chinese abroad as well as creating mechanisms for incorporating the Chinese into China's modernization strategy. This strategy is clearly inbuilt in the organisation of Chinese Diaspora, which is clearly reflected in the work and the practices of the relevant party, legislation, government institutions including civil society-based associations (see Fig. 1). The new development strategy raises the overseas Chinese affairs to such a high level that they have come to be regarded as a matter of Chinese national interests, and as one scholar observes, this demonstrates that "the PRC's authorities make considerable efforts to win the loyalty of the overseas Chinese and to organise them in a strong and loyal ethnically conscious and politically sympathetic pro-Beijing front of Chinese people who are concentrated outside the sovereignty of the PRC" (Barabantseva, 2005:27). The Chinese state seems to understand Chinese Diaspora as a uniting factor and an indispensable intermediate to pursue China's national interests and exercise Beijing's logocentric and ideological presence in transnational localities. Reviewing the evolution of China's Diaspora policy, it can be argued that overseas Chinese Diasporas are current not only identified by the Chinese state and government as an integral part of Chinese patriotic nationalism, but also increasingly incorporated in line with the current Chinese national project of modernization (Nyíri 2001 and 2002). As a result, Chinese Diasporas have actually become a "national asset" enjoying an active support from the state both politically, legislatively and economically.

At both the continental and country levels, African countries are gradually waking up to the need to harness the resources of their Diaspora. Thus incentives and institutional mechanisms are being put in place. At the continental level, the recognition of the Diaspora as the sixth region, and the establishment of a Directorate for Diaspora affairs, provides the motivational and institutional platform for Diaspora-Africa relations. Indeed this represents by far the most significant response of the African state to the need for a collective African response to its Diaspora. At the country level, various African

states are also enacting policies, providing incentives and enabling environments for harnessing the potential of their Diasporas. This has taken the form of dual citizenship laws, and in some countries, like Ghana, the granting of voting rights to the Diaspora. One of such laws has been a Diaspora visa introduced by the Ghana to the historical Diaspora. This is part of a so-called Joseph Project being spearheaded by Ghana, on behalf of for Africa, to bring back the descendants of Africans taken out of the continent during the slave trade, and who have no links to a particular African country. This has led to a constant flow of Diaspora visitors to the country resulting in the establishment of a Diaspora Africa Forum (DAF) in Accra, the first official mission established by the African Union to formalise its relations with the African Diaspora.

Together these developments show the increasing proactive role of the state, and its recognition of the strategic importance of the Diaspora. The extent to which these developments can be sustained as part of long term institutionalised links is difficult to tell.

What is certain, however, is that the increasing attention by both the Chinese and African states to their Diasporas is, *ipso facto*, an indication of the growing importance of the Diaspora in an era characterised by transnational flows and linkages.

### **Conclusion: implication for regional integration**

The current discussions on the roles of the Diaspora rest on a homogenizing narrative that prevents an understanding of the diversity that characterizes the global Diaspora experiences, or the capabilities of different Diaspora groups. This paper's comparative analyses of the Chinese and African Diaspora show the need for incorporating this diversity in the analyses. Practically, the analyses indicate that the response of the state --- or its lack of response --- is crucial to structuring, and ultimately determining the effectiveness of the Diaspora and its contributions.

The analyses of this paper also give a strong implication to the understanding of the roles of Diaspora in regional economic integration. The fact that the Chinese Diaspora communities have become the driving force in East Asian economic integration is well reflected through the paper's analyses. The most important factor must attribute to the socio-historical foundations of Chinese Diaspora which are organically connected with the homeland, where their ties with the homeland's cultural bond have never been broken even after centuries of family settlement elsewhere. The rise of China in the recent decades and the capital of Chinese Diasporas become mutually supportive reinforcement, rowing like two sides of the same coin.

The intense historical and national identity together with the Confucian family culture provided Chinese Diaspora a basis for cooperation and solidarity in foreign lands and under hostile environments. This gradually generated distinctive Chinese Diaspora capitalism as a dynamic form of social institution characterized by entrepreneurial spirit and wealth creation mentality around family and social networks. Throughout a long historical evolution, the network-based Chinese Diaspora capitalism has been able to become an independent social, political and economic force which does not necessarily depend on the vicissitudes of external political constraints. In recent years the East Asian regional economic integration has been truly driven by overseas Chinese business networks linking the region with the economic growth and market expansion of mainland China.

Similarly, the African Diaspora has been instrumental to the integration project of Africa. In part because of their disconnection with the homeland, and the desire for a reconnection with this imagined homeland, the African Diaspora provided the motivational basis, and the ideas for the African unification. Indeed and as was established, the very idea of African unity and integration was, and is, a Diaspora construct.

Unlike the Chinese Diaspora, however, the lack of an organic connection to a physical homeland means that the historical Diaspora could not play any central part in the concrete efforts at integration with the establishment of the Organization of African Unity in 1963. Similarly, this same lack of organic connection, coupled with their structural location in the host country prevented any substantive role in the economic integration of the African continent. The recent attempt by the African Union to link and the growth of the second Diaspora, which unlike the historical Diaspora has organic links to the African continent potentially, provides a new impetus and opportunities for a more concerted Diaspora involvement in the African integration project.

In the final analysis, however, and as we show in this paper, their ability to do so will be fundamentally dependent on improvements in their structural position, and equally, on the response by African states.

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