

FROM ETHNICALLY-BASED TO MULTIPLE BELONGINGS: SOUTH KOREAN CITIZENSHIP POLICY REFORMS, 1997 TO 2007

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Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, citizens and non-citizens residing in nation-states are struggling to balance their increasingly fluid sense of belonging in and out of territorial and cultural boundaries. Nation-states strive to address these issues with mixed success. South Korean citizenship has evolved from an exclusive, specifically highly ethnicized and politicized form, to a more inclusive policy at least at the legislative level. There are still major challenges to South Korea becoming an inclusive society toward its diversifying population. This research examines the effectiveness of ethnically-based citizenship policies in the contemporary world by focusing on the impact of the legislative changes to South Korean citizenship between 1997 and 2007 on its citizens and non-citizen residents. To explore this, I will provide an overview of the citizenship-related legislation following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, particularly the 1997 and 2005 amendments to Korean Nationality Act¹, 1998 Aliens Land Act, 2002 Domicile Notification Act, and 2005 Overseas Korean Act, and its impact on my case study groups. The two case study groups, the overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*²) and Korean-American (*chaemi kyop'o*) residents of South Korea, though each a very small population, have been specifically chosen for this research because they exemplify the different principles of the *jus sanguinis* (blood-based) versus *jus soli* (birthplace-based) definitions of citizenship in South Korean society.

This paper shows that despite recent changes in legislation, three major obstacles persist to reform. Foremost, while claiming to address the root inequalities in access to citizenship, the government initiatives for reform are motivated by a neo-liberal policy orientation in order to position South Korea to better compete in the global economy. This has resulted in legally unfounded legislation that has been inconsistent in implementation by the national and local government. Secondly, public bias based on ethnic conceptions of citizenship and who is a member predominates. There

continues to be preferential treatment toward co-ethnics, particularly for *chaemi kyop'ŏ* with the privileges of 'quasi-citizenship'³, while the marginalization of the *huaqiao* community and other non-ethnic Koreans persists. Thirdly, immigrant understanding of citizenship increasingly focuses on the material advantages citizenship confers rather than viewing it as an exclusive relation between the individual and the state. Hence, this study shows that while legislative progress has been significant, there is a disconnection within and between government initiatives and public cultural norms. This reality presents a disjuncture between citizenship as an ideal as conceived in law or status and how it is practised by its state, citizens, and non-citizens.

Ethnically-based Citizenship Policies

A series of national and transnational political changes since the 1970s has generated a growing interest in the study of citizenship. Large-scale post-war immigration and the need to integrate a large and often growing resident population of third country nationals created pressure for nationality law reform in many Western countries. The essential liberal-social rights versus civic republican approach to citizenship provides the basic framework for theoretical citizenship debate, particularly on balancing issues of rights and duties. Works on ethnically-based citizenship are more readily available as comparative studies of countries in Europe. These show the evolution of nationalism, nation-state, and citizenship, and that in the past it was common among western liberal states to have based its citizenship on the *jus sanguinis* principle. Today, such states have progressed to a combination of *jus sanguinis*- and *jus soli*-based citizenship. There is an abundance of literature on the emergence of multi-cultural societies, particularly on post-national forms of citizenship, neo-liberal-based theory being particularly relevant to the orientation of this paper (Ong, 2006; Brysk and Shafir, 2004; Delanty, 2000). Citizenship studies specific to South Korea and Asian countries unfortunately are still limited but there exist works on South Korean citizenship by Chulwoo Lee (2005, 2007), Jeong Inseop (2004), Seungsook Moon (2005), and Sungmoon Kim (2007), which have established important groundwork in this field. While this paper focuses on formal citizenship given that it is beyond its scope to discuss both the formal and substantive citizenship aspects in depth, the importance of citizenship as a process and not just an outcome should still be noted. The struggle to gain new rights and to give substance to the existing ones is seen as being as important as the rights themselves.

South Korean migration history shows that it has primarily been an emigration country. With the exception of the *huaqiao*, only since the early 1990s has the demography of South Korea diversified ethnically, with approximately 1.28% non-ethnic Korean foreigners in 2007. In South Korea, ethnicity takes the form of 'territory nationality' through which its citizens view themselves to be an ethnically

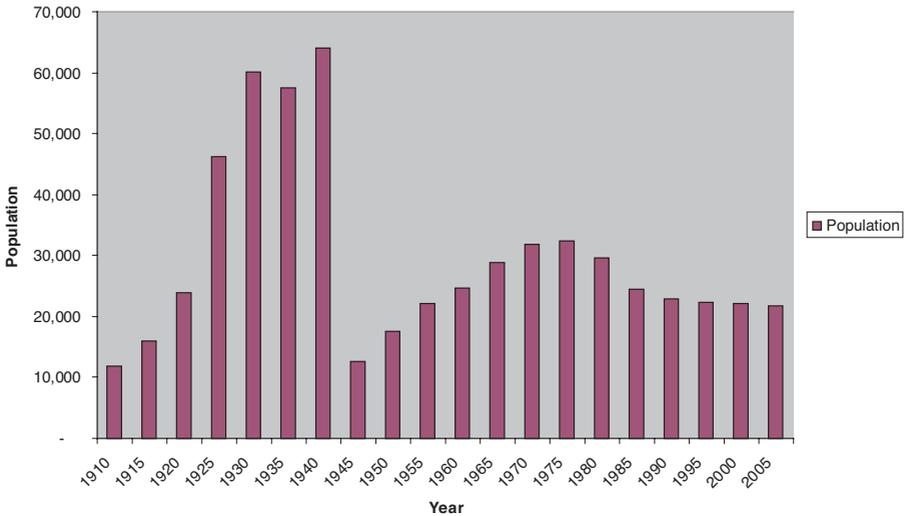
homogeneous population that belongs not simply to a distinct ethnic group, but to a distinct nation or nationality due to historical circumstances (Brubaker 2004:148). It is therefore important to establish an understanding of South Korea's claim to ethnic homogeneity as this has been the premise to its highly exclusive and ethnically-based citizenship policies. While contested amongst scholars, ethnic homogeneity is widely assumed by the general public in both North and South Korea, and most Koreans do not question its validity. Some scholars even insist that Korea is one of the few 'one-ethnic nation-states (*tanil minjok*)' in the world as the Han ethnic group comprises over 98% of its Korean population (Diamond and Kim, 2000:27; Paek Namun in Pang, 1992:124; Lim, 2006:236). Other scholars (Grinker, 2000; Pai, 2000) argue that one cannot assume that Koreans' ethnic composition is so homogeneous. In either case, from a modernist or constructionist approach, Korean national identity based on ethnic homogeneity should be understood, as in the case of other countries that demonstrate this, as a product of particular historical processes and nation-building. Myths of its origins, experience of colonialism, civil wars, and fast industrialization can be some of the historical processes that tie South Korea's conflated sense of 'one race'⁴ to its nationhood (Shin, 2006:3). Whether constructed by the state or driven by the general public's cultural notion of 'one race', the belief in ethnic homogeneity continues to have real social and political significance. This belief has allowed its past closed borders,⁵ and its stringent citizenship and immigration policies are reinforced by the biased perspectives of the general public against non-ethnic Koreans.

The question is then whether South Korea, given that such *jus sanguinis* norms are strengthened by the feeling of territorial nationality based on ethnic homogeneity, will be able to move toward a citizenship policy that is a combination of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* principle. After all, there is a general trend away from ethnically selective toward non-ethnic universalistic immigration policies across Western liberal states (Joppke, 2005) that recognizes and tries to address the socio-economic realities of immigrant populations in their host states. This trend is also emerging in some Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea through significant legislative reforms, given that their market economies cannot be sustained without accepting foreigner workers, both skilled and unskilled (3-D jobs).⁶ However, it is unlikely that South Korea will go to the extent of liberalizing its immigration, citizenship or naturalization laws in order to re-define membership into a more universal form in the near future. To exemplify this struggle, the following sections describe two case study groups, the *huaqiao* residents and *chaemi kyop'o* residents in South Korea, to show the actors and issues that are barriers to the legislative reforms.

Case Study Group I: Overseas Chinese Residents in South Korea (*huaqiao*)

Korea’s rapid development process as a modern state has had a significant impact on the relationship between the *huaqiao* residents and South Korea. There are approximately 40 million overseas Chinese worldwide, estimated at a net earning worth 500 million US dollars, and over half of them reside in Southeast Asia (Pieke, 2004). Known for their strong sense of heritage, many *huaqiao* have identified more strongly as Chinese than with their host state, creating tensions even in multi-cultural societies, particularly evident in Malaysia and Indonesia. It is interesting to note that the *huaqiao* in South Korea are the exception to having the economic power that other *huaqiao* have been able to amass around the world. Hence even before discussing anti-*huaqiao* discrimination within South Korea, it is important to point out that the *huaqiao* of South Korea are in many ways alienated from the rest of the *huaqiao* community throughout Asia. This is primarily due to the fact that amongst the approximately 21,806 *huaqiao* (0.04% of the total population)⁷ in South Korea, a majority are from Shandong (90%), followed by the Jiangsu and Zhejiang regions. Shandong is in the northern region of China and they speak a very different dialect from the more southern region-originating *huaqiao* (Guangdong region among others) who are predominant and closely networked in Asia as well as throughout the

Figure 1: Demographic Change of the Huaqiao in South Korea.



Source: Annual Yearbook of Immigration Office, Ministry of Justice of Republic of Korea (1985–1994), (1995–2005)

world (Jeong Yongrok, 2002).⁸ Given ethnicity is a unifying factor for the network of *huaqiao*, a different language really sets the *huaqiao* of South Korea apart.

As with any minority group, the population change of *huaqiao* shows that they were susceptible to the changing economic and political circumstances of the Korean peninsula. The turbulent Korean history can be noted through, for instance, the dramatic fall of *huaqiao* population between 1940 and 1945, from 63,976 to 12,648 when the economic hardships during the Japanese colonization and clashes with Korean people were particularly difficult for the *huaqiao* community and many migrated. Since many *huaqiao* from North Korea migrated to South Korea just before the division of the Korean peninsula in 1953, the numbers increased slightly but decreased again during the beginning of the Rhee Syngman administration (1948–1960) due to its marginalizing policies against this population (Park and Park, 2003:19). It is estimated that there were as many as 82,661 in 1942, however this population has steadily declined, resulting in a decrease of more than fifty percent from the 1940s to 1970s. It is interesting to note that this minority *huaqiao* population decreased despite the overall prosperity that came about during the period of the 1970s and 1980s. Interestingly, though 21,806 are registered as legal aliens in 2005, the immigration office predicts that only 18,000 live in South Korea and the rest are either studying or living in Taiwan or elsewhere and are thought to be a ‘floating population’.⁹

*a. 1997 South Korean Nationality Act*¹⁰

The Nationality Act of 1948 stipulates three conditions to granting South Korean nationality at birth: (1) one whose father is a national of the Republic of Korea; (2) one whose mother is a Korean national, and is him/herself a South Korean national, provided that the person’s father is unidentified or stateless; (3) one who is born in the Republic of Korea, and is a South Korean national provided that both the parents are unidentified or stateless (Lee J.Y., 2007:269). This law was partly amended in 1962, 1963, and 1976. The amendments strengthened the non-recognition of dual citizenship, eased the procedure of citizenship restoration by ethnic Koreans, removed some restrictions on naturalized South Koreans, and specified the child’s right to choose its own citizenship. However, these amendments did not affect the main features of the 1948 Nationality Law, which remained intact until 1997. These *jus sanguinis*, ethnically-based South Korean citizenship provisions indicate that a child born, for instance, to a *huaqiao* father and Korean mother were only granted the father’s nationality. Based on this patriarchal system, even if this child was born in South Korea, he or she could not gain South Korean citizenship unless he or she naturalized.

In 1998, revisions to the South Korean Nationality Law were promulgated, and

Table 1: Acquiring South Korean citizenship.

	Total	Naturalization	Recovery of Citizenship
2001	1,650	724	926
2002	3,883	2,972	911
2003	7,734	5,986	1,748
2004	9,262	7,261	2,001
2005	16,974	12,299	4,675
2006	8,125	7,477	648
2007	10,319	8,536	1,783

Source: Annual Yearbook of Immigration Office, Ministry of Justice of Republic of Korea, 2007

the most significant change brought about was the gender equality applied to the once patriarch-based citizenship. As a result, as long as either of the parents were Korean citizens, the descendant could attain Korean citizenship. Hence even in the case of a child born to a Korean national mother and foreign father, the child is granted South Korean citizenship. As in the case of South Korea, in a growing number of countries the principle of gender equality¹¹ has increasingly been applied to *jus sanguinis* as well, so that the child can be given the citizenship of either parent. Such developments in relation to gender equality under the citizenship law were the main legal mechanism for the expansion of dual citizenship (Faist, 2007:14).

The 1997 reforms also brought about improvements to the long-term foreign residents in South Korea, most significantly allowing them to renew their F-2 visa every five years instead of every two years. The naturalization process also became more lenient. In the past, fewer than 10 foreigners were naturalized every year in South Korea from 1948 to 1985 (Choe, 2006:102). While Table 1 shows a notable increase in the number of people who have either naturalized or recovered their Korean citizenship in the past five years, and most significantly between 2004 and 2005, the *huaqiao* interviewed noted that there are significant bureaucratic hurdles and inconsistencies in processing the paperwork for naturalization. Moreover, since South Korea forbids dual citizenship, the *huaqiao* in South Korea have to give up their Taiwanese citizenship before naturalizing into South Korean citizenship, implications of which will be further addressed in the section on multiple belongings.

b. 1998 Foreigners Property Ownership Rights

Prior to 1968, based on the 1962 Foreigners Property Ownership Law, foreigners were not allowed to own property in South Korea. The 1968 amendments (Foreigners

Property Ownership Law Act 5544) allowed foreigners, including resident aliens such as *huaqiao*, to own only 200 *pyong* (approximately 6,600 square feet) of property for residential purposes, and 50 *pyong* (1,650 square feet) for commercial use. This limited the type and scale of business that the *huaqiao* could engage in. Although this was an improvement from previous restrictions which did not allow foreigners to own any property, the limited amount of property disadvantaged *huaqiao* business owners in ways that did not affect Korean competitors in the same market. Restaurants and small drugstores continued to be the dominating businesses in this community.

In 1998, with the inception of the Kim Dae-jung administration (1998–2003), all major restrictions on foreigner property ownership were lifted. Rather than this resulting from the recognition of *huaqiao* or other long-term foreign residents' rights, the 1998 amendment came about in response to the 1997 Financial Crisis and the need to stabilize its currency and market. The Korean government made a concerted effort to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and to improve trade relations with the growing markets of mainland China. With this opportunity, and the rise of the Chinese economy, *huaqiao* ventured into more businesses including travel agencies and export trade businesses with the PRC. Based on my fieldwork, there is particularly an active *huaqiao* travel agencies' association in South Korea that did not exist prior to 1998. There are 42 members of the Korea Huaqiao Travel Association. The pre-existing travel businesses, including guided tours for Taiwanese, the airline industries and others, had to re-orientate their business to the PRC market after diplomatic relations with the PRC became official in 1992.

c. 2002 Domicile Registration Act

Beginning April 2002, by-laws allowing long-term residents to gain permanent residency (F-5) were enacted, resulting in approximately 8,000 *huaqiao* gaining permanent residency (*Yeongam Ilbo*, 11 November 2007). The *huaqiao* ethnic minority group who had always been known as '100-year guests' could finally be permanent residents in South Korea. However, the idea of permanent residency was not just an issue of immigration policy, since it raised questions of property ownership, medical insurance and social security benefits. In particular, voting rights for permanent residents was a major issue that politically withheld the adoption of this amendment.¹² The 2002 Domicile Registration Act allows *huaqiao* and other non-ethnic Korean residents who are over 19 years old and have had permanent residency for more than three years to participate in local elections beginning with that which was held on 31 May 2006.

While the adoption of permanent residency has brought about positive changes such as voting rights, this domicile registration system also has its flaws. The identification card issued to permanent residents cannot be used in on-line banking

or to shop on-line, and given how internet-oriented South Korea is, this has proven to be a major inconvenience. Nor can one use this identification when using personal cheques at stores or restaurants. Despite the fact that there are equal opportunities to open up credit cards or financial transfers based on one's financial standing, because bank employees are still suspicious of this identification card (and not a Resident registration card), many *huaqiao* interviewed had experienced discrimination and inconvenience. For instance, according to a 2003 Korean Human Rights Commission report, 79% of the 700 *huaqiao* interviewed felt discrimination when purchasing or registering on-line, 77% when job interviewing, and 58% at banking and other commercial services.¹³

While such citizenship reforms show steady efforts to improve *huaqiao* status in South Korea, the actual pieces of legislation are primarily driven by neo-liberal policies rather than intended to address the culturally-rooted problems of marginalized ethnic minorities. Other examples of this include, for instance, the 8th Overseas Chinese Business Conference¹⁴ and other government-initiated efforts such as the re-building of Chinatowns¹⁵ that have not involved the core of the *huaqiao* community but have commercialized *huaqiao* identity as a mere tourist attraction. In this sense, these are not necessarily initiated to improve their status or include them into mainstream society, but are more based on the government and private corporations trying to benefit from the 'China boom.' To make these Overseas Chinese networks and Chinatown re-building efforts more beneficial to the *huaqiao* in South Korea, this community has to have ownership over the projects.

Also, despite the fact that the South Korean government has tried to highlight the economic opportunities that the *huaqiao* community can bring, little effort has been made to develop the *huaqiao* as individual human resources. The biggest complaint expressed by the *huaqiao* interviewed is that the *huaqiao* curriculum is not recognized in South Korea. While limited, these schools receive financial support from the Taiwan government and follow the Taiwanese curriculum. Many of the *huaqiao* families interviewed felt that for cultural as well as financial reasons they were not able to provide their children the comparative advantage to succeed in the South Korean educational system. Chiang, a male (16) student attending *hangsung* school said:

"In a country like South Korea that emphasizes networks made in schools and educational achievement, attending a school that doesn't even have an accredited curriculum makes me feel like a delinquent student, much less a member of any society." (Interview in Pusan, September 2004)

Yet the root of the problem does not lie solely in the South Korean government policies toward the *huaqiao* community. Some scholars observe that in comparison to *huaqiao* networks abroad, the *huaqiao* in South Korea are a weak community

that lacks unity and organization (Park and Park, 2003; Yang and Lee, 2004). The *huaqiao* have also been criticized for ostracizing themselves, particularly by choosing to remain 'denizens'. Nevertheless, the potential strength of associational networks and active citizenry is available in the *huaqiao* community at least based on the number of associations.¹⁶ With growing interest in foreign migrant workers' rights and minority issues in general in South Korea, the *huaqiao* organizations can take this opportunity to lead the efforts and also become more unified with the common interests of ethnic minority group issues. In this sense, *huaqiao* members of South Korean society also need to see themselves as agents rather than those victimized by historical marginalization. Particularly, with growing numbers of *huaqiao* being descendants of intermarriages, they are better equipped to adapt to Korean culture and assimilate into the host state.

Case Study Group II: Korean-American Residents in South Korea (*chaemi kyop'o*)

With the liberalization of the Korean economy, particularly beginning with the Kim Dae-jung administration, an increased number of ethnic Koreans began to return to South Korea to seek job and investment opportunities. Such entry and economic activity by overseas ethnic Koreans was encouraged by the South Korean government. This period was soon after the 1997 Financial Crisis, and the government was implementing drastic reforms and had favourable policies toward overseas Koreans and foreigners in general to attract their presence. After all, Christian Joppke points out that while it is in the foremost interest of the state to contain and 'integrate' domestically and see the state as a primarily territorial unit, the characteristics of the global age and the population's increased mobility across borders make it also in the interest of states to retain ties with their members, even those who no longer reside in the territory (Joppke, 2005:227). Yet South Korea's past exclusionist immigration policies were not only to limit non-ethnic Korean foreigners, but also to some extent to regulate this diaspora's influence. This was due to the fact that much like other diaspora groups in relations with their kin-state, the Korean diaspora, particularly Korean-Americans, have been influential in the democratization process of their kin-state by pressuring the past Korean military regimes and authoritarian governments.

As of 2005 there is an estimate of 18,409 Korean-Americans residing in South Korea (South Korean Immigration Office Yearbook, 2005). Other sources estimate that there are as many as 22,000 Korean-American dual citizens (due to US citizenship attained at birth) in South Korea (Jeong, 2004:31 from *Chosun Ilbo*, 21 March 2003). Despite these estimated numbers of Korean-Americans in South Korea, their presence is fairly new and tracing a history of this population is difficult. In this case study

group, the distinction should be made between overseas Korean nationals (*jaeoe gungmin*) and Koreans of foreign nationality (*oeguk gukjeok dongpo*). Overseas Korean nationals are those who have permanent resident status in a foreign state or live in a foreign state with a view towards permanent residence. They may still retain Korean citizenship, but have been removed from Korea's Resident Register (Lee, 2007b:105). In comparison, Koreans of foreign nationality are or have been abroad on a short- or long-term basis but may well continue to hold residency and culturally remain closely tied to South Korea, thus maintaining *de facto* dual citizenship. There is a growing number of Koreans with foreign nationality residing and essentially rooted in South Korea but having foreign citizenship for the material advantages conferred through such multiple belongings. The Overseas Koreans Act is intended to apply to those who return to South Korea for short-term professional or personal reasons, rather than to the Koreans with foreign nationality of the latter group mentioned above. Yet from a legal standpoint, there is no difference between the two groups of Koreans in terms of their legal status as Korean-Americans. However, the cultural backgrounds of these two groups vary and thus the intentions and experience of their residence in South Korea also differ. The Overseas Koreans Act as addressed below is often criticized for simultaneously addressing these two groups despite such qualitative differences between them (*ibid.*).

a. 2005 Overseas Koreans Act

In August 1999, the bill for the Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans was passed by the Korean National Assembly. This Act provided a special immigration status for particular members of the Korean diaspora, and treated them preferentially compared to other foreigners with regard to some economic and social interests (*ibid.*:97). Of the overseas Koreans who return to South Korea to reside for varying lengths of time, those from countries such as the U.S. and Japan were given preferential treatment, while more restrictions would be applied to overseas Koreans from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This was due to the fact that the application of this law to overseas Koreans was limited to those who went abroad after 1948, when South Korea was established as an independent country, as the Republic of Korea. For instance, ethnic Koreans from China were excluded because the majority of them are descendants of those who moved to mainland China to protest Japan's colonization between 1910 and 1945, or those who fled widespread famine in the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, the latter group, which comprises 50% of all co-ethnics, were not counted as overseas Koreans until the early 1990s because South Korea did not normalize its diplomatic relations with these countries till then. As a result, the main beneficiaries of the law were Korean-Americans, the majority of whom left the

country after liberalization. While unintended, such historical circumstances and the cut-off year of 1948 created a hierarchical categorization of overseas Koreans, not only bringing about criticism of discrimination among them but also raising questions about the definitions of rights and duties of Korea's own citizens as well as foreign nationals residing in Korea. A constitutional complaint was filed even before the law was promulgated, and the Constitutional Court ordered the National Assembly to take legislative measures to rectify this constitutional flaw by the end of 2003 (*ibid.*). In November 2003, the National Assembly rejected the amendments to the bill and decided that the Overseas Koreans Act should be applicable to all overseas Koreans and not made specific to the 1948 cut-off date.

Some Korean government officials and law experts indicated that the problem was not simply resolvable by granting all overseas Koreans the same status. The debate on the definition of those covered by the Overseas Koreans Act exemplified the different perspectives of the various national government branches. The Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Labor were proponents of the bill, with an interest in having stricter control of ethnic Koreans from the PRC entering South Korea. However, on a diplomatic level, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) warned that without revisions to the Act, South Korea would appear 'narrow-minded' and 'overly nationalistic'. MOFAT was particularly careful not to cause friction with the PRC, which maintains a tight grip over minority groups and specifically requested Korea to exclude ethnic Koreans with Chinese citizenship while the country was contemplating the 1999 change to its Overseas Koreans Act. The fact of the matter being, as Sung Nak-in, Professor of Constitutional Law at Seoul National University reiterated Chinese Ambassador Lao Bin's words, "these people are foremost Chinese citizens, before being ethnic Koreans" (*Digital Korea Herald*, September 2003) and they should not be treated any differently from other Chinese people in Korea.

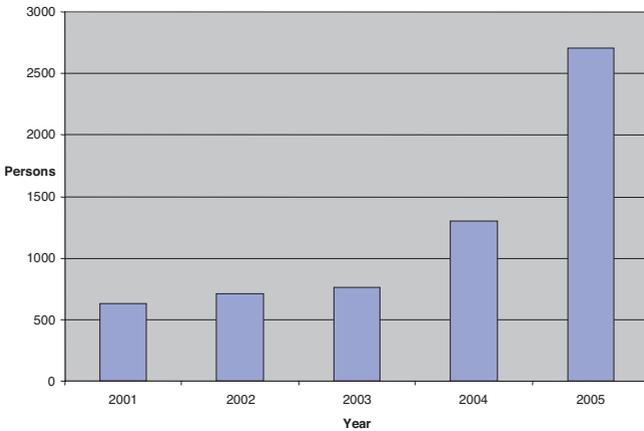
In terms of the general public's view on this issue, based on a National Survey conducted in 2003 on the revisions to the Overseas Koreans Act, a majority of the Korean population surveyed agreed (77.4%) that CIS- and China-based ethnic Koreans should be included in this Act, although when questioned on the Overseas Koreans Law, only 15.3% knew of the specific revisions and the issues in the debate.¹⁷ Confirming this, while there was active debate on the Overseas Koreans Act amongst policymakers and scholars and significant coverage of the topic in the media, the fieldwork interview participants showed a lack of familiarity with the actual provisions of the Act.

b. 2005 South Korean Nationality Act

The revision of the 2005 South Korean Nationality Act came after the Grand National Party (*Uridang*, conservative) had for some time lobbied to introduce more

stringent screening measures that would disadvantage those people who forfeit their South Korean citizenship just to avoid military service. Based on the revised bill that took effect in May 2005, a male with more than two nationalities is not allowed to give up his Korean citizenship unless he finishes the obligatory military service. This goes to show that in legal status, dual citizenship does not exist for Korean nationals. Even if one attempts to evade military conscription by acquiring foreign visas, green cards, and foreign citizenship(s), he is still subject to certain restrictions under the Korean Military Laws, which often supersede all other Korean laws. This revision was introduced not to discuss the matter from a legal and long term policy perspective, but to blanket this topic with nationalist sentiments¹⁸ that could cool down the public's criticism over the issue. The passing of the bill sparked an explosion of people renouncing their South Korean citizenship in the weeks before it became a law. During the two week grace period, 1,820 Korean male nationals gave up their citizenship (*Munhwa Ilbo*, 11 May 2005). Faced with the question to be or not to be Korean, a growing number of co-ethnics with dual citizenship opted for the latter, renouncing their Korean citizenship.

In order to understand the changes of the 2005 South Korean Nationality Act in relation to the *chemi kyop'o*, and to some extent, the *huaqiao* case study group, it is important to examine how the South Korean legal system and policies address dual citizenship. Dual citizenship is part of a trend of porous boundaries of national citizenship in liberal democracies (Hansen and Weil, 2002:34) and in emigration countries (Faist, 2007:20). Worldwide, there is a general trend toward dual citizenship, particularly as the growing network of diaspora is able to have a multiple sense of belonging between home and host states. While global trends show increasing acceptance of dual citizenship, allowed in approximately 90 countries, South Korea does not recognize it (Jeong Inseop, 2004:144). While security concerns in relation to North Korea may present the legal and political settings for why it is not recognized, the reasons for not allowing dual citizenship for South Korean nationals is also culturally rooted on two broad levels. First of all, membership in South Korean society is still largely dominated by ethnically-based definitions, and bias against those who are non-ethnic Korean citizens still persists (Choi et al, 2004; Shin, 2006; Kim, 2007). Secondly, the debates and changes regarding South Korean citizenship¹⁹ revolve around societal problems that have arisen due to those who seek dual citizenship or forfeit South Korean citizenship in order to avoid military service. The reasons for such criticism stem from the fact that the general public regards the chance to gain or forfeit dual citizenship as primarily based on socio-economic class differences, resulting as the privilege of the wealthy and influential. While this may be true to some extent, such emotionally driven reasons against dual citizenship actually perpetuate the misunderstandings of it. My Gallup Survey on the general public's attitude toward dual citizenship shows that a significant number of those

Figure 2: Forfeiting of Korean Citizenship by U.S. Residents or Citizens.

Source: Annual Yearbook of Immigration Office, Ministry of Justice of Republic of Korea, 2005

questioned feel that this government policy, set to discourage those who try to forfeit their South Korean citizenship to avoid military service, is justified (59.3%).²⁰

It is interesting to note the renunciation and forfeiting of South Korean citizenship by those who hold residency or citizenship with U.S. citizenship, where the numbers close to doubled between 2004 and 2005 when the laws were revised. Of those who applied to forfeit South Korean citizenship, 159 (41.1%) of their parents were academics and the remainder were children of parents employed in international firms. Also, 374 (96.8%) persons were ‘dual citizens’ of Korea and the U.S., 7 of Korea and Canada, and 5 of Korea and other countries (www.hani.co.kr, 17 May 2005). One interview participant, Mr. Y (43, Korean, academic with U.S. residency, balancing life in Korea and the U.S. to realize opportunities of education and careers for his children), states:

My son was born in the U.S. while I was studying for my doctorate, and I would like for him to choose his US citizenship over Korean when he is older. It is not just about avoiding military service, but to have the option of better education and job opportunities in this global age. I do not know any parent who would not want to give his child that opportunity.

Overall, according to Dr. Lee Chulwoo of Yonsei University, this May 2005 revision of the South Korean Nationality Act is full of loopholes and requires a rational reassessment. The motive behind the revision is, as mentioned earlier, emotionally driven, and aimed at preventing the avoiding of military service by

those who have dual citizenship, but it is legally unfounded. Moreover, because of the emphasis placed on military service, women are excluded from the citizenship debate because they do not have to serve in the military.²¹ Also, foreigners who have naturalized into Korean citizens and other minority groups are excused from military service. On a broader level, other forms and meanings of citizenship, including that of those who do not have to fulfil military service, tend to be given less significance because of the fact that military service dominates the citizenship debate. Another problematic aspect to the revisions is the fact that parents are making the decision for their children on the matter of citizenship because technically 21 is the legal adult age in South Korea, when in fact military service can begin at age 18. However, there is little debate among politicians and the media over the age limit, reflecting Korean society's willingness to allow parents to make decisions for their children who should be independent citizens (Lee, 2005).

Multiple Belongings

As noted in earlier sections, an increasing number of South Korean citizens, denizens, and immigrants are seeking to balance their multiple belongings without necessarily seeking full membership in one country, some due to necessity and others based on choice. Such exercise of citizenship is defined in terms of citizen to citizen relations based on association in and across borders, rather than that based solely on legal status to membership of a particular nation-state. As a consequence, traditional ties between citizen and the state will increasingly wither and become replaced by more fragmented loyalties that explain lifestyle politics (Lagos, 2002:4). Despite the legal opportunities for naturalization, both *chaemi kyop'o* and *huaqiao* residents of South Korea seek to be maximal rights-based residents rather than fully-fledged citizens. These aspects can be best observed through the issues of educational opportunities and military dodging that underscore decisions on renunciation or naturalization of South Korean citizenship.

Harsh economic realities in a globally competitive market have resulted in increasingly neo-liberal attitudes toward citizenship which are prevalent among both privileged and marginalized citizens. Citizenship of certain countries, usually those of western liberal democratic states, are seen as more advantageous while others limit life opportunities. This shows how changes to ethnically-based citizenship policy are not merely a minority rights issue in which policies should be improved to benefit the non-ethnic Korean residents who are unjustly marginalized, but challenged by the fact that an increasing number of people—both privileged and marginalized—no longer equate their sense of belonging with citizenship. Aiwha Ong uses 'flexible citizenship' to refer especially to the strategies and effects of professionals seeking to both circumvent and benefit from nation-state regimes by selecting different sites

for investments, work and family relocation (Ong, 1999:112). However, such opting to gain or give up citizenship based on neo-liberal and calculated socio-economic reasons often times strays from the civic and substantive aspects of citizenship. The danger of such exploitation of citizenship is that without the sense of belonging to the political community and its needs for an active, engaged and committed citizenry, citizenship becomes merely a tool, undermining its foundations that are essential to democracy and development. This also widens the citizenship gap in horizontal inequalities between citizens, as well as weakening the vertical relations between the state and its members (Shafir, 1998). This gap in understanding between state and citizen, as well as the citizenship gap between socio-economic classes, will persist unless the substantive aspects of citizenship are properly addressed.

Methodology

The selected time frame of 1987 to 2007 coincides with the democratization process of Korea (the military regime ending in 1986), and with special focus on the beginning of several significant citizenship-related legislative reforms during the post-Asian Financial Crisis years starting with the 1997 Korean Nationality Act. This decade-based study shows how historical circumstances have had consequences for the evolution of ethnically-based citizenship policies in South Korea, particularly with the emergence of universal or other inclusive forms of citizenship. The fieldwork was based on two visits to South Korea between 2005 and 2006, and continuous document analysis. Document analysis of legislation and immigration data provided important background information on the past and current situation. Updating analysis on media polls and surveys relevant to the research topic also provided important background observations. A qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews was then employed to comprehend working-level approaches from ministry officials and national assemblymen. Scholars both at universities and research institutes were consulted to gain more understanding of the theoretical and legal perspectives to citizenship issues in South Korea. Activists from a number of advocacy groups that promote the interest of *huaqiao* and *chaemi kyop'o* including their small business network organizations, semi-government agencies, and selective NGOs that advocate legislative reforms were consulted to provide greater insight into the working level issues of citizenship.

Thirty *huaqiao* found primarily through the Overseas Chinese Association, twenty-five *chaemi kyop'o* residents in South Korea located through the American Chamber of Commerce, and two Korean-American churches were interviewed. Some of these participants were interviewed on more than one occasion. Five focus groups where the participants discussed more specified citizenship-related topics were then conducted as a follow up to these interviews. In October 2007, through Gallup

Korea, a phone survey comprised of ten objective and one subjective questions that I devised was conducted to 200 Korean citizens between the ages of 21–59. ASCII data and Cross-tabulation quantitative data analysis method was used to analyse this material. This survey was useful in furthering my understanding of public opinion on citizenship issues. All these fieldwork methods had their limitations because the people selected for interview reflected only a small percentage of the case study population and the sample was therefore not representative, but was still helpful in addressing my overall research questions.

Conclusion

Various works on citizenship studies indicate the general trends of liberal democratic states abandoning ethnically-based policies and moving toward more residence-based inclusive or universal notions of citizenship. However, the explorations of this research on South Korean citizenship show how difficult but necessary change can be in newly industrialized countries such as South Korea which is still largely ethnically homogeneous, historically patriarchal, and in the process of establishing its democratic systems and practices. This thesis shows the tension between South Korean evolving ethnically-based citizenship policy and the reality of today's state and citizens' shared as well as conflicting ways of understanding and exercising citizenship.

The legislative reforms since 1997 aptly describe the changes the state has made, necessitated by the realities of South Korea's diversifying population and economic motives. However, this study finds that major barriers stand against the implementation of such reforms at the institutional level, ethnically based public perception, and understanding of citizenship by its immigrants. Examining the two case study groups, *hwaqiao* and *chaemi kyop'o* residents, exemplifies the various challenges facing South Korean society as their legal status has become more equal, but their practice of citizenship becomes more variegated. As South Korean society becomes increasingly ethnically diverse as well as comprised of more interest groups with different agendas, South Korea will have to face its consequential socio-economic impacts by reframing its notions of nationality, citizenship and sense of belonging to be better suited in the contemporary world. Closing the gap in the understanding and exercise of citizenship between the state and citizens, and the legal and cultural notions of Korean citizenship will be integral to this process.

Notes

1. The current citizenship legislation promulgated on 24 May 2005 reflects the 7th round of reforms, with 20 amendments since its first proclamation in December 1948. Four major changes have been made, including citizenship legislation that reflects gender equality, a child's right to choose his/her own citizenship, prevention of dual citizenship, and amendments for more specific naturalization processes.
2. Although the romanized version is *hwagyo* in Korean, or described as *hanhwa* by some scholars, I will refer to the overseas Chinese under the anglicized version *huaqiao*.
3. Quasi-citizenship describes a legal status generally of permanent residents who have the same rights as a full citizen, such as security of residence, equal rights in all aspects of social life, and a right to return after a prolonged stay abroad. The exception to rights of full citizenship is usually participation in elections and military service.
4. Similar to the German meaning of nation *Volk* or *Volkschaft*, the racial self-image of the Korean nation invoked a sense that Koreans were members of an extended family.
5. The Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) forbade trade except in the government-controlled seasonal markets that were held in border areas, and those who crossed borders without permission were arrested and beheaded until the nineteenth century. (Lee, 1999 in Choe, 2006:93).
6. 3-D jobs refers to 'dangerous, dirty, difficult' jobs often performed by migrant workers.
7. This population, also referred to the 'old' *huaqiao*, needs to be distinguished from the 'new' *huaqiao*. The 'old' *huaqiao* are 2nd- or 3rd-generation overseas Chinese and hold Taiwanese citizenship, and do not include the PRC citizens who have come to South Korea since the 1997 immigration policy reforms. Also to note is that this case study group does not include the *chosŏnjok* (ethnic Koreans from the PRC), though there is some debate as to whether they should be included in the 'new' *huaqiao* category.
8. Although it is difficult to categorize the overseas Chinese population, there are primarily five groups based on place of origin, dialect or trade: Cantonese (Guangdong Province), Hokkien (Fujian Province), Hakka (Guangdong and Fujian coastal areas who then moved to other countries), Hainanese (Hainan Island), Teochiu (Guangdong Province but with sub-dialect), and Yunnanese (jade trade, near the Burmese border).
9. An example of a 'floating population' as popularized by Aihwa Ong is the 5–700 members of Yantei Huaqiao Association who move back and forth between their retirement homes in the Shandong Yantei region and South Korea. Compared to their denizen status without full healthcare in South Korea, the cheaper cost in living and homeland culture in Yantei are attractive reasons to split their time between the two places.
10. Korean Nationality Law 2-1-1, Act 5431. When referring to citizenship law, most South Korean legal documents refer to it as nationality law rather than citizenship law. Therefore, despite the distinction between citizenship and nationality, I refer to legal acts as nationality law.
11. In 1957, the New York Protocol revised the status of women, thereby allowing them the right to retain their own citizenship, independent of their husbands.
12. The various legal rights demanded for the *zainichi* by the Kim Dae-jung administration

(1998–2003) in bilateral meetings with Japan could not move forward without discussing the voting status of the *huaqiao*, and helped bring about the amendments to voting rights promulgated in July 2004.

13. Korean Human Rights Commission Report, 2003. ‘Human Rights Status of Hwakyō Residents in South Korea’ (in Korean) conducted by Park Kyung-tae et al., Sung Gong Hwe University.
14. The 8th Overseas Chinese Business Conference was held in October 2005 in Seoul and was organized by business leaders and strongly supported by the Korean government. With approximately 2,500 Chinese and 500 Korean business people involved, the main goal of the conference was to examine opportunities to link the overseas Chinese financial and trade network with Korean companies that have technologically advanced products and educated human resources.
15. Chinatowns in Inch’ōn, Taegu, Pusan, and Seoul are in the process of being revived, along with the creation of another in Ilsan (a major suburban town of Korea).
16. There are approximately 100 *huaqiao* community organizations, relatively large in numbers. *Hwakyō hyōphoe* (Overseas Chinese Association) is the most important of these, through which the network of *huaqiao* in South Korea are able to get administrative support.
17. National Survey by Hangil Research & Consulting (11 November 2003) on the revisions to Overseas Koreans Act (*Chaeoe tongp’obōp kaejōng kwallyōn chōn’guk min yōron chosa pogosō*).
18. National Assemblyman Hong Joon-pyo led the November 2004 bill with restrictions on the renunciation of South Korean citizenship without having fulfilled military service.
19. Korean Nationality Act No. 6523 amended December 2001; Immigration Control Act No. 4592 amended December 1993. Ministry of Justice, www.moj.go.kr
20. A Gallup Korea Poll Survey on citizenship issues was conducted in October 2007 with questions devised by the author. (Refer to the section on Methodology for greater details.)
21. Refer to Seungsook Moon’s *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (2005) which discusses the specific forms of military recruitment, because the form of recruitment shapes the relationship between the nation state and its gendered citizens.

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