

**The influence of international educational experience on the formation of
hybrid identity, promotion of democracy and liberal values**

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Abstract

This research serves as an empirical case study for proponents of the liberal international order, particularly Fukuyama, who believes that a new generation of elite in authoritarian countries is more inclined to accept liberal democracy because of its exposure to the benefits of globalization. This paper, particularly, explores whether the hybridization effect of globalization can overcome the side effects of liberal democracy promotion such as resistance and nationalism by creating a new type of elite in authoritarian countries through the intercultural experience that they were exposed to during their international educational exchange program. For the purpose of this research, online interviews were conducted with ten Chinese citizens who spent at least one semester of their studies abroad. The assumption was that if the new generation elite in China, the most powerful competitor of the United States in the international arena, is indeed hybridized and more prone to liberal democracy, then the liberal international order has potential to remain in power. The empirical results have indicated at least some form of hybridization among all interviewees and their aspiration for certain elements of the liberal culture. The most popular elements of liberal culture were development of critical thinking, aspiration for work-life balance, exposure to other sources of media, setting personal boundaries and becoming “green”. However, due to multiplexity of the hybridization process, the analysis of the empirical data reflected various and sometimes contradicting scenarios for possible implications on the liberal international order.

Keywords: liberal international order, hybridization, globalization, Chinese identity, identity formation, promotion of democracy, liberal values, nationalism.

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Introduction

States are less able to perform their traditional functions. Global factors increasingly impinge on all decisions made by governments. Identity patterns are becoming more complex, as people assert local loyalties but want to share in global values and lifestyles.

Ken Booth¹

Despite the economic rise of authoritarian countries, proponents of liberal democracy are still optimistic about the future of the international liberal order.² Some scholars believe that authoritarian countries are already deeply interconnected with other countries within the international liberal institutions and significantly benefit from their membership there, therefore it is not in their interest to change the order.³ Others predict that with a rise in economy, there will be a rise in the proportion share of the middle-class within authoritarian countries as well, which may change the nature of those governments towards liberal democracy.⁴ And there are also scholars who believe that a new generation of elite in authoritarian countries will be more open towards liberal democracy because of their exposure to the benefits of globalization.⁵

This research focuses on the last aspect, the effect of globalization on the identity formation of the new generation elite in authoritarian countries. Despite the interest of the Western world in keeping the liberal international order and thus the importance of this topic within Western scholarship, most scholars mainly focus on either the economic impact of globalization and its effect on the redistribution of political power among the states or the social impact of globalization like the adaptation of immigrants in a new country through hybridization.⁶ This research, however,

¹ Ken Booth, "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 67, no. 3 (1991): 542.

² John G. Ikenberry, "The End of Liberal International Order?," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 23.

³ Richard Maher, "The Elusive EU-China Strategic Partnership," *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 974.

⁴ An Chen, "Capitalist Development, Entrepreneurial Class, and Democratization in China," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (2002): 421.

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 11.

⁶ Anat Shoshani et al., "Home and Away: Hybrid Perspective on Identity Formation in 1.5 and Second Generation Adolescent Immigrants in Israel," *Glocalism: Journal of Culture* 2013, no. 1 (2013): 2.

is an attempt to link the hybridization effect of globalization to international relations by evaluating whether this phenomenon is a threat or an opportunity to the liberal international order.

If the new generation elite in the People's Republic of China, the most powerful competitor of the United States of America in the international arena, is indeed hybridized and more prone to liberal democracy, then the liberal international order has potential to remain in power. Among the four key pillars of the liberal international order such as free trade, multilateral institutions, promotion of democracy and liberal values, the last two are probably affected the most by whether people in the target state are inclined to accept the ideology or not. For example, spreading liberal democracy around the world is an important aspect of the liberal order, however, this task is not only extremely difficult, but also negatively impacts the relations with other countries and sometimes can lead to a war, where one of the main obstacles to the promotion of democracy is nationalism within the target state.⁷ This paper explores whether the hybridization effect of globalization can overcome the side effects of liberal democracy promotion such as resistance and nationalism by creating a new type of elite in authoritarian countries through the intercultural experience that they were exposed to during their international educational exchange program.

Within this research, Chinese students who studied at least one semester abroad were interviewed with the purpose to understand whether the international educational experience has hybridization effect on students, whether this effect is in place or they expect it to be in place upon their return back to China, and what elements of a new culture they are more willing to incorporate in their new identity. Considering that the interlocutors studied in Europe, they were exposed to liberal democracy and liberal values. Tracing what liberal values interviewees have adopted and would like to keep in their lives in China can possibly indicate the extent and modality of hybridization. Despite its small scale, this research serves as an empirical case study for proponents

⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 8.

of the liberal international order, particularly Fukuyama, who believes that a new generation of elite in authoritarian countries is more inclined to accept liberal democracy because of its exposure to the benefits of globalization.⁸ This research examines only one aspect of globalization, specifically, hybridization through international educational experience, tests the viability of Fukuyama's proposition, indicates potential areas for future research and argues that due to the complex nature of the hybridization process, the direct relationship between hybridization and the ability of liberal countries to overcome resistance from the population in the target country while promoting liberal democracy and liberal values around the world cannot be established.

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 11.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

The influence of globalization on culture and identity can be summarized in three major paradigms such as homogenization, polarization and hybridization.⁹ Homogenization theory refers to global cultural convergence toward common features and customs as a product of globalization.¹⁰ It is also often called “McDonaldization”, which indicates belief of some scholars that global culture follows global economy and hence is equivalent of Westernization and sometimes even Americanization.¹¹ Polarization theory refers to cultural oppositions between Western led globalization and the rest of the world.¹² According to this paradigm, the West is a “universal civilization” and “the Rest” is trying to modernize without westernization, while the cultural differences between two civilizations lead to rivalry and conflict or as the proponents of this paradigm would say, it leads to “clash of civilizations.”¹³ Hybridization theory argues that cultures borrow and adopt various cultural elements from each other through different forms of intercultural exchange.¹⁴ This paradigm gives a better account for the depth and continuity of global interactions by covering more multidimensional components of global culture, therefore the aim of this research was to explore hybridization effect of globalization on the formation of Chinese identity and its possible implications on the interactions of China and the countries of liberal order.

But first, let us clarify the term identity and determine how it is different from the hybrid identity. An identity can be described as an attribute to a “particular group, ideology, religion, social role or career”.¹⁵ While the term “hybrid identity” also known as “bicultural or integrated

⁹ Robert Holton, “Globalization's Cultural Consequences,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 570, no. 1 (2000): 141.

¹⁰ Robert Holton, “Globalization's Cultural Consequences,” 140.

¹¹ Ibid, 142.

¹² Jan N. Pieterse, “Globalisation and Culture: Three Paradigms,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 23 (1996): 1389.

¹³ Jan N. Pieterse, “Globalisation and Culture: Three Paradigms,” 1389.

¹⁴ Robert Holton, “Globalization's Cultural Consequences,” 148.

¹⁵ Kamala E. Nayar, “Identity: Group and Personal,” in *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 13.

identity” refers to “an individual who retains a strong ethnic identity while also identifying with the new society”.¹⁶ The scope of the term “hybrid identity” and the attitude towards it changed through time. For example, in the nineteenth-century social discourse, hybridity had a negative connotation, which was similar to threat to the biological purity, authenticity, wholeness, cultural and racial superiority.¹⁷ However, in the twentieth century after the development of Mendelian genetics and the positive impacts of cross-breeding and polygenic inheritance on the enrichment of gene pools were discovered, progress in natural sciences influenced the discourse of hybridity in social sciences as well.¹⁸ Hybridization is a comprehensive paradigm that centers cross cultural relations and incorporation of diverse cultures.¹⁹ When people are exposed to a new culture, they first choose specific elements of it. Then they substitute or mix those elements with their former cultural background, which creates a new form of cultural experience with features that reflect hybridization effect.²⁰

Considering the economic rise of China and its increasing power in international politics, this research explores the effects of hybridization paradigm on the example of China and evaluates its possible implications on international liberal order. Particularly, the research focused on the next generation of Chinese elite that had exposure to intercultural experience by spending at least one semester of their university years abroad. The research question is: what does it mean to spend formative university years abroad on the formation of Chinese national identity? The purpose was to explore whether the interviewees would hybridize as a result of their international educational experience in Europe and if yes, then based on the empirical results to formulate propositions on

¹⁶ Jean S. Phinney et al., “Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective,” *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 3 (2001): pp. 495.

¹⁷ Jan N. Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” *Sociology of Globalization* 9, no. 2 (1994): 170-171.

¹⁸ Jan N. Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” 171.

¹⁹ Robert Holton, “Globalization's Cultural Consequences,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 570, no. 1 (2000): 147.

²⁰ Robert Holton, “Globalization's Cultural Consequences,” 147.

possible implications of such hybridization on the liberal order, including the proposition on whether the hybridization of identity may overcome nationalism and resistance.

The empirical results have indicated the signs of hybridization among Chinese students who studied in Europe. They incorporated some elements of liberal culture in their views and behavior. It was more challenging, however, to formulate any propositions on the possible implications of such hybridization on the future liberal order. On the one hand, as suggested by Fukuyama, the empirical results have indicated interviewees' aspirations for liberal lifestyle after their international educational experience. On the other, interviewees have started questioning the equal treatment of countries in the Western-led international order as well as they agreed that the expected transformations in China may take long period of time and are subject to a number of conditions and events.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Online interviews were conducted with ten Chinese citizens who spent at least one semester of their studies abroad. The respondents were selected among CEU students from China, their friends, and Chinese friends of other CEU students. Upon familiarizing themselves with the informed consent form (Appendix A), interlocutors gave a verbal consent for participation in the interview and permission to use their stories for this research.

The main purpose of the interview was to understand whether an educational experience abroad had any impact on the identity of students and if yes, then whether the effect was still there after they came back to their home environment or whether they expect it to be in effect upon their return back home. Considering the purpose of the interview, nondirective type of interviewing was selected for this research. Sample questions were used as a starting point for conversation (Appendix B), however, interviewees were not limited in their choice of stories and experiences, but rather encouraged to relate their own educational and intercultural experience, to describe whatever events seemed important for them, and to provide their own interpretations and explanations. Closer attention was paid to replies that contained “us” versus “them” comparison, where interviewees indicated the difference between them and Chinese people who have never studied abroad. It was also important to understand whether there were changes in their behavior, habits and qualities that would resemble those of Western people and what they expect Chinese society to look like in the future. The plan was to start the research with ten interviewees and increase the number until their answers become homogeneous, however, it was possible to reach homogeneity in most answers without increasing the initial number of respondents.

Interviews were conducted online via Zoom and WeChat. There are number of benefits in using such platforms when conducting interviews. Hanna and Mwale indicated five advantages of

online interviewing over physical meetings²¹ that were useful in this research as well. First, it was easy to arrange an interview with people from different countries in different time zones.²² The world outbreak of coronavirus in 2020, closure of international borders and self-isolation requirements would negatively impact the research if there were no such platforms as Skype, Zoom and WeChat. And even without a pandemic, arranging physical meeting with people from different countries could be costly as well as scheduling the interview would be less flexible if each country was visited for a day or two only. Therefore, having a video calling option significantly helped the interview arrangement process. Second, even though the participants live in other countries, both Zoom and WeChat have a video calling option, which helped to build a connection with interviewees and gave cues like their facial expressions to react and adjust the interview questions.²³ Third, both platforms have audio and video recording options that made the data processing exercise comparatively easy.²⁴ Fourth, taking into account the sensitivity of the research topic, interviewing in public space would probably limit the interviewees' ability to share their opinion openly and describe their experience fully.²⁵ At the same time, interviewees could also feel uncomfortable with inviting the researcher to their home. Zoom and WeChat, however, allowed participants to have an open conversation in their private space in the environment comfortable for them. Fifth, interviewees had control over the call.²⁶ For example, they could decide whether they want to use video or not and if they wanted to end the conversation it was easier to do so on such platform than in real life.²⁷ To sum up, using video calling platforms greatly benefited this research.

²¹ Paul Hanna and Shadreck Mwale. "I'm Not with You, Yet I Am ...'." In *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide to Textual, Media and Virtual Techniques*, edited by Virginia Braun, Victoria Clarke, and Debra Gray, 259-261. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

²² Paul Hanna and Shadreck Mwale. "I'm Not with You, Yet I Am ...'," 259-261

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

All interviews were conducted in English, which did not limit the interviewees' abilities to express their thoughts. However, two limitations should be acknowledged with regards to the results of this research. First, Central European University has a very clear identity in line with the Open Society values, therefore CEU students are more likely to be liberal and pro-democratic from the very beginning, and their close friends are also likely to share similar values. Considering that all interviewees were selected among CEU students and their friends, selection bias can be present in the research. Second, students who are liberal and pro-democratic are more likely to spend their university years overseas and therefore there is a possibility for a reverse causation.

Chapter 3: Empirical results

For the purpose of this research, ten citizens of China were interviewed: six women and four men. One interviewee was representing ethnic minority group, while other interlocutors were Han Chinese. Their age ranged from 24 to 30. All interlocutors had or were in a process of getting either their master's or PhD degree in a foreign country, therefore all interviewees spent at least one semester abroad. Respondents have studied in Austria, Germany, Hungary (CEU), Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Interviewees were asked to share their opinion about their host countries, local people there, their classmates and compare them to China.

In spite of the small sample size and wide-ranging open questions, it was possible to attain homogeneity in most answers. All interviewees have shown aspirations for some aspects of the liberal culture and indications of hybridization, as the latter was stated by one of the interviewees:

Maybe I have changed a lot because last month I have met a friend. He is also from China, from Beijing. And we discussed a little about this coronavirus and about lockdown of the city and university and I told him my ideas and he said "Oh you are quite European now. You are not like Chinese... I really dislike this kind of expressions like "well, you are Chinese" and "you are European". I don't think it is good to describe a person like that, because people just have different opinions. And then I thought if he said so, then maybe I was European in Chinese men's eyes, but in my European friends' eyes I am still Chinese. It is quite strange, because sometimes I don't know what I am or who I am, because my Chinese friends maybe also think that "you are now European, you have stayed there for two years now and you talk and you think and you eat and you act like people in Europe and you don't belong to us anymore", but not for people here, especially in Austria, because sometimes I feel like people here are very conservative and it is very hard for them to accept you as one of them. It is okay to talk to them, but it is very difficult to be friend with people here. And I just feel like maybe they think "well, you are still Asian" and "Chinese girl thinks like Asian students". So, for me it is crazy, because you are split up and both parts will not accept you anymore and sometimes, I do feel lost.

Interviewee #4

Hybridization is a complex continuous process that incorporates different intercultural and interpersonal experiences that people were exposed to, but surprisingly interviewees who studied in the different countries have selected similar elements that they decided to incorporate in their new lifestyle. Therefore, the data section will first cover most popular elements of European culture among respondents, then indicate conditions that are important for successful incorporation of those elements in China and finally discuss potential obstacles to this incorporation.

3.1. Selecting elements of European culture

Interviewees selected the elements of European liberal culture that could be implemented on their individual level with minimum opposition by Chinese society, but which will have a greater implication on the future generations.

3.1.1. Development of critical thinking

All interlocutors were students, therefore, one of their first observations was the difference between the teaching style in their host and home countries. Most interlocutors noted that professors in Europe view students as equals, motivate or even demand class participation, and expect students to read more and develop critical thinking. While in China there is a clear hierarchy between a professor and a student, arguing with or interrupting the teacher is not acceptable, and students, in general, read less for the class than their fellows in Europe, because it is common for teachers in China to inform their students on the contents of the exam.²⁸

As there were a number of teachers among respondents, the additional question was asked on whether they would like to apply the European approach of teaching in their future practice in China. All of them agreed that they would rather prefer to have a combination of European and

²⁸ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.5.

Note: Some empirical data were previously used in the final assignment for "Europe in Crises" course to develop an argument on the influence of intercultural experience on the hybridization of identity and its possible implications on European integration.

Chinese practices. They clarified that they want to keep hierarchy in teacher-student relations, for example in formal teacher-student communication. But some interviewees said that they may eliminate the requirement for students to stand up when they ask question or want to express their point of view. At the same time, interviewees plan to force class participation, promote critical thinking, be open and available for feedback, discussion, and different views, as well as to approach students as friends outside of the class. The main aspect they would like to incorporate from the practice of their Western colleagues is the development of critical thinking among students, as mentioned by one of the interviewees:

Before [referring to teaching experience before international exchange] I would ask students to read news and help students to understand some difficult paragraphs by mainly focusing on the language aspects, but afterwards I will teach this class more openly, I will let students make comments on news and create their own opinions towards some news events, not only focusing on their language skills, but their opinion and their creativity also need to be developed.

Interviewee #1

Development of critical thinking and encouragement of participation among students may result in students' further request for freedom of speech. It is logical that if the current educational system and social norms are built around hierarchy and full acceptance of seniority then there is no place for individual thinking. Some interviewees pointed that from the early age people live up to their parents' expectations, they go to school and university, where the teacher is right and unquestionable, then they work in a similar environment, which may suggest that there is no place for creativity, individualism and personal choice. Authoritarianism was the only form of organization and leadership they were exposed to during their entire life, hence in their viewpoint it is normal. By contrast, Chinese people who studied abroad were exposed to the liberal values where people have the right to express their viewpoint, that is, to freedom of speech. The adherence of Western people to liberal values is also socially constructed first within the family and then by

the educational system. Therefore, by merely changing their teaching style, interviewees are making changes to the whole system. If interviewees encourage student participation and create a learning environment where students are not afraid to share their thoughts, they may create a new generation that will be more willing to share their opinion and as a result may require more freedom of speech.

Requiring their students to read more, to not limit themselves to the pages and books that are assigned by the interviewees as professors and to explore different sources of information can also encourage changes outside of educational system. When teachers are not the only source of information, students are encouraged to check diverse sources, they are exposed to different interpretations and have more data to form their own understanding. The habit of not taking the information from a single source “as it is” can help them in other parts of their future life as well, because they will be less likely manipulated by state propaganda and controlled media.

Acceptance of diversity emerged as another key element of European culture that the interviewees decided to incorporate in their identity, as pointed out by one of the interviewees:

I think the thing that changed the most is that I have more tolerance for diversity. Maybe sometimes I see some phenomenon and maybe before I studied a foreign language I would have a lot of prejudice upon this phenomenon, but now I am being more tolerant upon all difference and diversity, because I think if it exists, it is justified, I think they have their reason. Because we are all from different cultural and social context, there are something that for Chinese is really strange and difficult, but in Italy it is very normal, but I think we have to have more tolerance. I think this helped me a lot because I don't judge someone or something so easily. You can be more critical in different situations, they can't brainwash you so easily, you have more critical mind.

Interviewee #6²⁹

Acceptance of diversity is a recognition of individual rights of other people, which is one of the main liberal values that interviewees referred to. Many respondents called Chinese society

²⁹ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.6.

“traditional” and “hierarchical” and expressed their aspiration for it to be more accepting of diverging views and lifestyles. As the interviewee has correctly pointed out, exposure to different cultures, diverse social norms and various sources of information develop critical thinking and influence people to be more tolerant towards diversity and respectful of others’ individual choices.

To sum up, Chinese students who studied in Europe are more likely to get information from different sources, critically evaluate it, be more open to express their views and accept diverse forms of lifestyle. Such changes in their ways of thinking indicate that they have more in common with the liberal world after their international education experience and they are less likely to be manipulated by nationalistic propaganda. However, despite the many benefits of these features for the proponents of the liberal world order, the same features have a reverse effect as well. People may apply critical thinking not only towards their domestic issues but may also question the Western dominance and their “civilized” ways of behavior and the lifestyle that the West has taken for granted for a long time.

Thus, interviewee #9 raised her concern about the common practice in China to have a second English name to make it easier for foreigners from the West to pronounce their names. She questioned the need for such practice as there are many difficult names in each country and if they do not change their names, then Chinese people should not do that as well. She also mentioned that the “civilized” way of eating should be reconsidered, because the norms are different in every country and it is unfair that the whole world should have one way of eating food. For example, in China and other Asian countries it is common to slurp the noodles and they do not have to adjust their eating habits to produce less noise to be called “civilized”. And lastly, she questioned the Western expectations of China to adopt the current Western social and legal norms in a short time. She noted that European countries accumulated their wealth through colonialism, and it took them

a long time and many people's sacrifices to adopt existing rules and regulations, so why would they expect China to do it fast and in the most respectful manner?

The interviewee's last argument supports Ayoob's explanation of the tensions between the hegemonic and subaltern perspectives of international order, which refers to the difference in the phase of their state-making. The countries of Western Europe and North America have successfully completed the processes of state formation and nation-building over the last four or five hundred years, and therefore, their authority in the eyes of local population is legitimized, they have less internal threats, and take the domestic order for granted. Their primary security concerns are external in nature.³⁰ On the other hand, subaltern or post-colonial states are still in the process of the state formation, and compared to the countries in the West that had a number of centuries to do so, they are supposed to accomplish the same task within few decades, which causes their structures and political institutions to be fragile and their regimes to be unstable, and thus make them more exposed to the internal threats and more concerned with the order within the states.³¹ Some of the interviewees also agreed with the argument above.

Based on the data highlighted in this subsection, this thesis suggests that incorporation of such elements of the liberal culture as the development of critical thinking and acceptance of diversity in the identity of interviewees may possibly lead to their lesser nationalistic attitude towards other phenomena, including liberal democracy and their potential aspiration for freedom of speech, however, it can also result in their understanding of the injustice within the Western led liberal international order and have the opposite effect.

³⁰ Mohammed Ayoob, "Making Sense of Global Tensions: Dominant and Subaltern Conceptions of Order and Justice in the International System," *International Studies* 47, no. 2-4 (2010): pp. 130-131.

³¹ Mohammed Ayoob, "Making Sense of Global Tensions: Dominant and Subaltern Conceptions of Order and Justice in the International System," *International Studies* 47, no. 2-4 (2010): pp. 131.

3.1.2. Aspiration for work-life balance

According to the interviewees, Europeans are free to choose what they want to pursue in their life, they have better work-life balance and good social benefits at work, which makes their life less stressful and allows them to enjoy it more. Also, some interviewees added that people in Europe are easy going and do not normally expect other people to keep formalities during conversations, which make them more approachable. Based on interviewees' understanding, people in their host countries "can afford this lifestyle", because they have favorable environment and conditions.³²

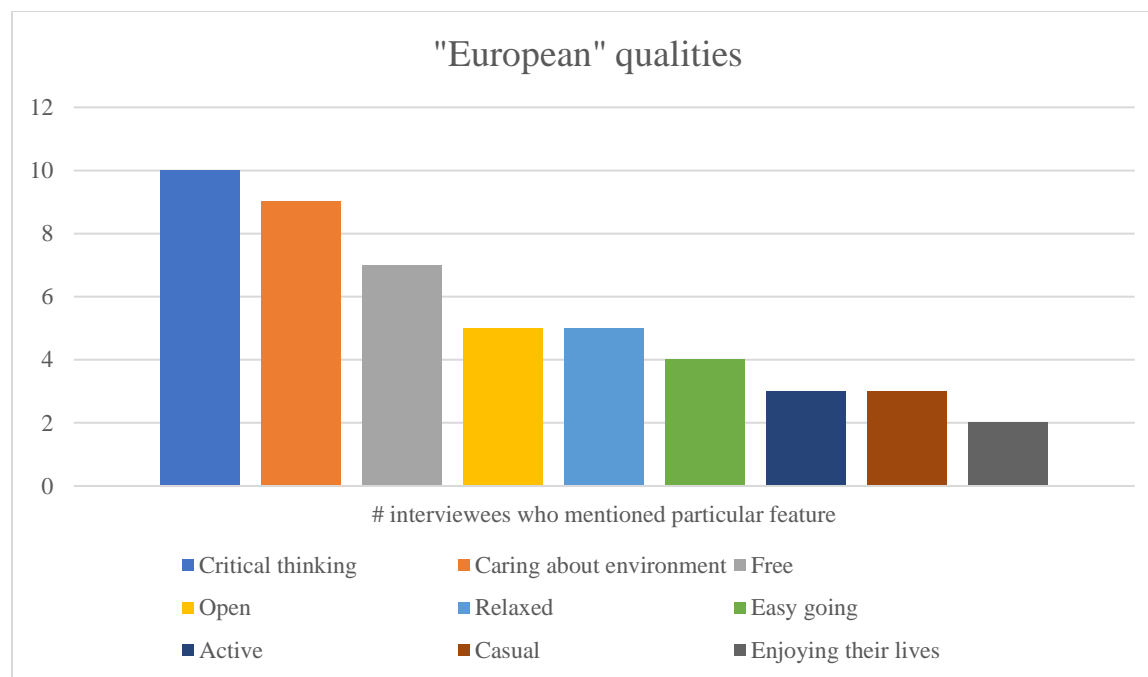


Figure 1 The most common words interviewees used to describe Europeans

By contrast, the interviewees perceive competition among young Chinese students and professionals stronger due to high population density in China, especially in the big cities like Beijing and Shanghai. An endless competition, employers' anticipation of employees' willingness to work overtime and of high performance create stressful working environment for the young

³² Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.4-5.

Chinese professionals. Most of them have also emphasized the importance of a healthy work-life balance and would opt out for a flexible working schedule in a smaller city in a less competitive environment. They also do not want to become traditional Chinese parents meaning that they would not set any professional and personal life expectations for their children. They would like their children to make their own choices in important matters.³³

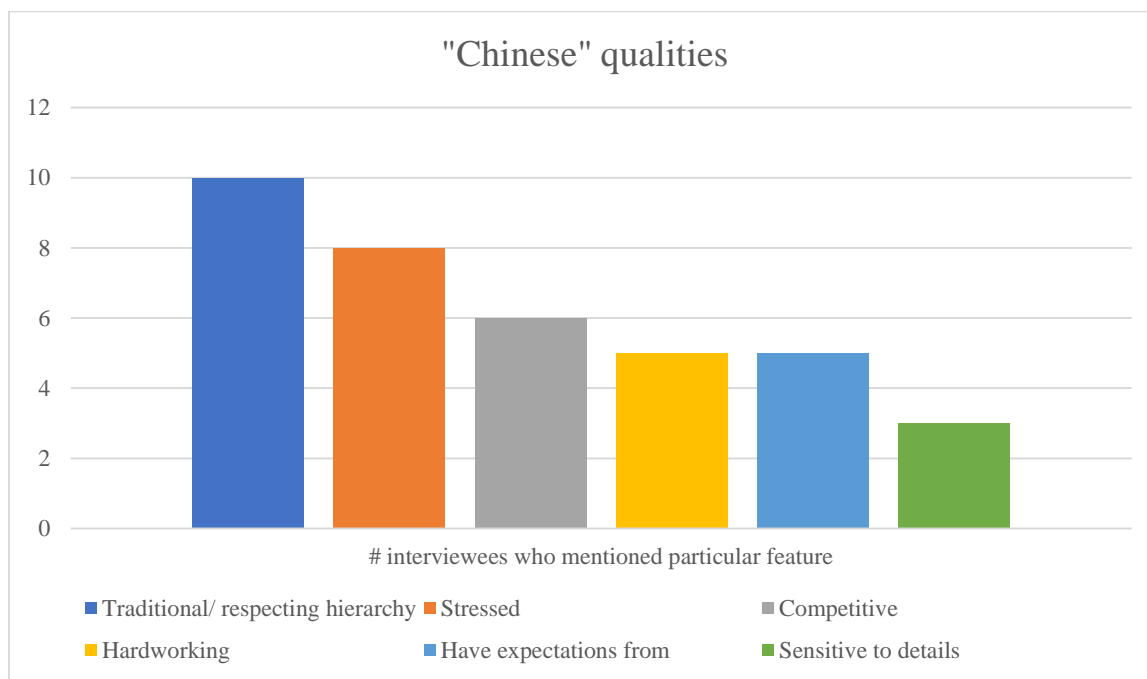


Figure 2 The most common words interviewees used to describe Chinese

The availability of cheap labor force and weak labor laws were among the main reasons why many multinational companies decided to move their production facilities to China. With the country's economic development, people started enjoying higher salaries, better infrastructure, their children are getting better education, they can travel abroad and enjoy other benefits that come with the stronger economy. So, aspirations for a better work-life balance can be explained by economic development, interviewees intercultural experience in Europe where people value work-life balance and by the difference in values between generations. The interviewees are

³³ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.4-5.

representatives of generation Y and Z who are known for their strive for their dream jobs, urge for work-life balance, ability to learn at work and who prefer to be unemployed than unhappy at their workplace. Whether it is the influence of intercultural experience, difference in generations or the product of the economic development, the interviewees as representatives of the younger generation in China are in line with the global tendency among people of their age to value their work-life balance more than financial perspectives. The interviewees' nontraditional attitude to work suggests the hybridization of Chinese students who studied abroad, but it might also indicate that Chinese people have more in common with people in the West, which can potentially help to overcome nationalism.

On the other hand, China gained its economic power because of cheap labor, therefore having higher labor protecting regulations may not only negatively impact the Chinese economy, but the global economy. China is the second largest economy at the moment and its difficulties will not go unnoticed for the other countries. Taking into account that it is Western multinational companies that have their production facilities in China, any positive changes in the Chinese labor protecting regulations will increase labor cost and investments into working facilities, which will decrease their profit, hence decrease the tax base of the Western countries where companies' headquarters are registered in.

Therefore, this research suggests that the interviewees' aspiration for work-life balance may reflect hybridization effect, global tendencies among their generations, and the economic development of the country. In any case, it shows that the respondents share common values with the West. However, such aspirations may not be in the best interests of China and the West.

3.1.3. *Choosing sources of media*

Many interviewees noted the role of the media on the formation of people's attitude towards different countries, people and certain phenomena. Some interviewees mentioned that the difference between Chinese people who travelled abroad and those that have never left China is that the latter have more nationalists among them, because they can easily be influenced by the media that has anti-US and anti-West sentiments. Taking into account that media is controlled in China, people see and read what they have to see and read. The interviewees revealed that Chinese people especially youngsters widely use VPNs to get access to Western media and a mixed source of Chinese and Western media helps them to have a balanced view. In this regards, it seems the interviewees are contradicting themselves by saying that those who have never been abroad and are influenced by local media are more inclined to be nationalistic sentiments and then saying that Chinese people have access to the Western media and have the full picture of world events. They may have been referring to the elderly generation or the population in rural areas with no internet access, so the only media that they are exposed to is local television which is censored. With regards to Chinese people who have been abroad, the interviewees described them as those who have less nationalist sentiments, because they have been able to form their own world views based on their personal experience and communication with Westerners. However, even for those who have been abroad and even studied there, media can play a crucial role on their identity formation and manipulation of their attitudes.

A lot of Chinese people though they are studying abroad, they get information from Chinese media and they only like to read Chinese articles, so even if they are staying abroad most of their friends are Chinese. It is also true for me. Most of my friends are still Chinese people, but I read more English articles and more from outside, like English media and Dutch media, but a lot of Chinese people still be friends with just Chinese people, they just eat Chinese food, they just read Chinese articles from WeChat and from Weibo, Chinese Twitter, so even if they are abroad they are still pure Chinese, they only speak English and have a foreign friend in class and after class they are still as Chinese people as before.

Other interviewees have also emphasized the role of the media and the assigned readings of their university courses in shaping their identity. Most interviewees stated that they are not limited to only Chinese media, but they have not directly attributed this phenomenon to their exchange experience. But taking into account that they referred to people who have never been abroad as those who mainly follow Chinese media, it can be assumed that there is some level of hybridization among those that had an international educational experience. On one hand, it could be interpreted as an indicator that the liberal international order may potentially overcome nationalism through more international educational programs and initiatives such as Freedom House, which have local media representations at the “nations in transit” and can give alternative perspectives of the events in that country. On the other hand, the interviewees have agreed that it is important to have independent media, but they have questioned whether the Western media can be considered as independent. The difference between the Western and Chinese governments is in the way they control the media, as highlighted by one of the interviewees:

I think it is not that China has restrictions or guidance or regulations about social media and information. In China maybe they used standard method and standard channels, so that they control the media in a standard way like “ok, you cannot read this” or “we drop this”, but in Western society it looks like free society, but in the end it is not. The media is controlled by two-three families and they also have not very strict, but soft way to control it, but they have way to guide it and they are also self-aware of guiding public opinions... The whole control or whole guidance are quite smart in the West, so that people don't feel they are stopped from seeking facts, but at the same time their views are shaped. Even my friends think that they are independent thinkers, they are quite proud of themselves. But in Germany, the UK and the US I feel like their views are very much influenced by their media and sometimes they themselves realizes that.

Therefore, availability of other sources of media in China will probably increase the chances of countries from the liberal world to share their views and values with the Chinese population, but

it does not automatically mean that people will become liberal or pro-democratic. People will still be influenced by the local media that is highly controlled. However, as indicated in the interviews, people who studied abroad and young generations are more likely to have exposure to other sources of media.

To sum up, due to development of technologies like VPNs, Chinese youngsters are exposed to the Western media and can observe the disparities between those and the local censored sources of information. The interviewees pointed out that the truth is usually somewhere in between, therefore it is impossible to establish whether the access to the Western media influences the nationalistic sentiments of the local population.

3.1.4. Setting personal boundaries

Many interviewees have noticed that they became less shy as well as more independent from their family financially and in their views, and more likely to express their opinion after their international educational experience. However, in general, the interviewees noted that in addition to professional expectations, Chinese youngsters have to deal with the social pressure from their family, relatives, and the society in general. For example, almost all women mentioned that people would question their marital status, and if a woman is not married, they will ask whether she has boyfriend and if yes, when they plan to get marry, if no, then why she is still unmarried.³⁴

Interviewee #1 added that the achievements of a successful woman in a white collar job may be questioned by her fellow colleagues, who may attribute her success to an affair with the boss or to compensating for the absence of a personal life. Personal questions could be asked by family, friends, relatives, colleagues, and other people without respecting the boundaries, which cause women to feel the social pressure to get married. There is even a term “leftover women” that

³⁴ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.5-6.

is used for unmarried women in their late twenties in China. At the same time, men shared that they also feel pressured to achieve financial stability at their early age, because men's success is measured by apartment or car ownership, high salary or the potential to be the main breadwinner and are also usually used as a precondition for men to marry. Most interlocutors described Chinese society as traditional and family-oriented, while they noted that people in Europe, in contrary, value self-realization, therefore their questions are normally about career, interests, trips, social activity and other rather than personal or family-related ones. The interlocutors do not think that Chinese society will become less traditional and people will stop asking personal questions, because it is a long-term process that will take more than few decades and they do not feel in a position and power to change anything about it.³⁵

However, the fact that they appreciated European society for setting the personal boundaries and despite their pessimistic view on the perspectives of changing this aspect in Chinese society, their aspiration for it indicates some form of hybridization in their identity. Also, many interviewees mentioned that they do not want to set any expectation for their children in terms of career and personal life and behave more like European parents, so even if they do not expect any changes among their generations, they may contribute to the changes in the next generations.

Given the above, it appears that the rise of personal boundaries and the growth of individuality may potentially affect the traditional aspect of Chinese society in the sense that social pressure may act as a less powerful tool to manage people, however, such changes, if any, will not have an impact on the current generation but rather on the next generations of China.

³⁵ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.5.

3.1.5. *Becoming “green”*

The respondents have also indicated the environmentally friendly habits of people in Europe: they reuse, recycle, donate and motivate others to donate clothes to the needy, and even become vegetarians. All interviewees expressed their willingness to be part of this movement upon their return back to China. As with other aspects, people do not plan to initiate any programs and green movements in China but would like to change their own recycling habits and sometimes even eating habits instead. For example, three interviewees noted that the experience of living in the host country affected their eating habits. Interviewees #3 and #4 became vegetarians in order to be more environmentally friendly and interviewee #8 started consuming more sweets, because based on his observations it is common in Europe to finish the meal with dessert. Interviewee #9 noticed some positive changes in environmental direction in China, for example, the recycling initiative in Shanghai, which in case of success will be further adopted by other cities in China.³⁶ The fact that almost all interviewees mentioned their interest in environmental changes supports Acharya’s argument that in a multiplex world the environmental cooperation can serve as a common ground for the great powers.³⁷

Therefore, we can assume that the interviewees eager to implement recycling habits can possibly indicate that environmental problems that our generations are facing today are universal in nature and can potentially lead to a closer cooperation of countries with the different ideologies for a common good.

3.2. Conditions for transformation

3.2.1. *Social environment and governmental support*

³⁶ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.5-6.

³⁷ Amitav Acharya, "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order," *Ethics & International Affairs* 31, no. 3 (2017): 280.

Almost all interviewees mentioned the importance of the social environment and governmental support as main conditions for the societal transformations. However, none of the interviewees showed an interest in pioneering or leading those changes. According to some, you can be considered as somebody weird or even “out of control” if you do so.

There should be conditions that will allow us to change, especially in terms of social habits. When we were in that society [referring to the society of the host country], there was an environment for change. When we are back in China, the whole social environment is Chinese and I think if you behave differently, people will perceive you as weird. So, changes are possible, but there should be also conditions.

Interviewee #9³⁸

Interviewee #1 stated that there are still gender discrimination practices present in China today and instead of fighting them, the government of China is imposing them. For example, there are governmental vacancies that are advertised for men only. Following the government’s example, private companies also discriminate against women by offering recently married ones fewer career opportunities to avoid potential maternity leaves. Her statement is in line with the Human Rights Watch observation, which states that 11 percent of 2020 national civil service vacancy postings were discriminatory in nature, where 6 percent identified preference for male job seekers and 5 percent were advertised exclusively for men.³⁹ Even though gender discrimination in hiring practices violates Chinese law, it still exists in the country that placed it on 106th among the 153 countries in 2019 World Economic Forum gender parity ranking.⁴⁰ Gender equality is one of the principles of liberalism and female interviewees have indicated their aspiration for it, but taking into account the current situation in China, they do not see possible change without the political will of the government.

³⁸ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.2.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *China: Gender Discrimination in Hiring Persists*, April 29, 2020, p.1, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/30/china-gender-discrimination-hiring-persists>

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, *China: Gender Discrimination in Hiring Persists*, April 29, 2020, p.1, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/30/china-gender-discrimination-hiring-persists>

The situation is similar with respect to recycling. Even though the interviewees understand the importance of environmental programs, they are still dependent on the availability of recycling infrastructure in the country. They are implementing environmentally friendly habits on a smaller scale but are limited in their desire to produce substantial improvements.

3.2.2. Economy, technology, and infrastructure

Among other conditions that influence people's behaviors and interactions, the respondents have indicated the development of technologies, economy, and infrastructure. The development of technologies has already changed the interactions between people. Until recently people could not imagine that they would be able to video chat with people from other countries, that the internet would become the main source of information and many activities like shopping and banking would move online. Today people are impelled to video record anything unusual, suspicious, entertaining, or important they see, and they upload it to their social networks within a few seconds, so it is more difficult for the governments to manipulate the news. People share their thoughts about music, movies, groups, social and political events online, so it is more costly and time consuming for governments to control people.

The development of economy and infrastructure shape people's behaviors and interactions, as highlighted by one interviewee:

30 years ago, even I had to use toilet that was outside of the house. It is not like people did not have a habit to use the toilet, but people in the village did not have conditions to cultivate their habit to use it... Conditions can change people's behavior and change culture. For example, if nowadays you see someone in China peeing next to the wall, people will be very angry, because everyone have toilet at home.

Interviewee #9

None of the interviewees have noticed any significant differences between China and their host country except for architecture and food. This phenomenon can be explained by the rapid

economic growth of China. The development of economy is normally followed by the development of infrastructure and the purchasing power strengthening of the local population. According to McKinsey report, more than three quarters of China's urban workforce will earn from \$9,000 to \$34,000 a year, the range that was available to only 4 percent of the same population in 2000 and which in purchasing-power-parity terms is between such countries as Brazil and Italy³². Therefore, the middle class in Chinese metropolises today have similar lifestyle that in the West. The interviewees were representatives of a middle class with good education, prestigious workplaces in China and who travelled abroad before, therefore they did not experience culture shock when they first came to Europe. This is not the case for rural population and those who earn less, however, it is worth to mention that positive changes in China's economy and infrastructure may bring its next generations closer to the West.

3.2.3. *Time*

Almost all respondents have many relatives and friends in China, who previously studied abroad, however, they still do not expect any major changes in the society in the foreseeable future. They expressed a similar view that significant societal transformations require more time and their generation will not amend the pattern, but will rather be absorbed by it, therefore they need to adapt accordingly.⁴¹ Transformation process requires time, as summarized by one interviewee:

Hope there will be good changes. Government is trying, but it takes time. Big cities' societies are changing, becoming more international, young generations will be more open.

Interviewee #8

The interviewees also noted that Western countries have started their development centuries ago, used colonial practices to accumulate their wealth and even their female citizens were not granted

⁴¹ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.7.

voting rights until the twentieth's century. Therefore, it is idealistic to expect the present China to be on the same developmental stage with European countries.

3.2.4. Influence of other forms of globalization

According to the interviewees, the biggest intercultural experience they were exposed to was at their host university, since they spent most of their time studying. Therefore, the next logical question relates to the difference in intercultural exposure between those who studied abroad and Chinese tourists in Europe. The question was raised to understand whether any type of intercultural experience such as travelling abroad can hybridize identity. Most interviewees, however, said that they do not think that people travelling to Europe for vacation have any intercultural exposure. The degree of their exposure was summarized by one of the interviewees as follows:

Tourists abroad just take pictures and do sightseeing. They don't have much understanding of the culture. I think nothing could change them. Maybe they will appreciate the good weather and good food. Maybe they will go to museum, most of them visit, but this is very superficial experience, it is not a real exposure to the society.

Interviewee #1

The interlocutors explained further that tourists cannot have deep understanding of the culture in the crowded touristic areas, which do not represent the real country. Even though the hybridization can be a result of any type of intercultural experience, including travelling abroad as a tourist, the arguments of interviewees sound reasonable. However, it is also worth to mention that despite denying tourists' exposure to a foreign culture, the interviewees have agreed that there is a difference between their compatriots who have travelled abroad and those who did not. Particularly, a few interviewees commented on nationalist attitude of people who have never visited the US and Europe, which, they believe, disappears after having traveled there.

3.3. Obstacles

Assuming that liberalism has magnetic power and “countries and foreign policy decisions are attracted to the liberal order like iron filings to a magnet” is a myth.⁴² States understand that they do not have equal rights in the liberal order, hence they do not feel accountable for and restrained by it.⁴³ China may be part of many liberal international institutions, but it does not follow the liberal agenda. The same sentiments were indicated during the interviews. The interlocutors showed their aspiration for liberal values and the life in Europe, but their relatively short experience in another country could not fully change their identity.

3.3.1 *Keeping ties with compatriots*

Most interviewees spent their free from university time with other students from China. Only few made friends with locals and those locals were primarily first- or second-generation immigrants in the host country. The interlocutors also remained active users of Chinese social and media platform WeChat to keep in touch with their friends and relatives in China. Even though, the empirical results have shown the identity hybridization of interviewees, the depth of this transformation could potentially be more substantial if interlocutors spent more time with the new local and international friends.

3.3.2 *Promotion of nationalism through media*

When asked whether the respondents would like add anything at the end of the interview, three interlocutors revealed that in spite of countless positive experiences in the West, they still think that the democracy is not the best form of government. They argued that the world outbreak of the coronavirus in 2020 is a good case to illustrate that authoritarian countries are more efficient when responding to various types of crises. According to the respondents, the incapability of the West to control the situation, while the government of China has not only managed to do so in

⁴² Barma et al., “The Mythical Liberal Order,” *The National Interest*, no. 124 (2013): 58.

⁴³ Barma et al., “The Mythical Liberal Order,” 58.

their home country, but also helped many developed countries, influenced their attitude to it. The situation has also impacted the views of the elder generation, who have visited Europe as tourists and wished that their children would get European education and live there afterwards, but observing the response to the coronavirus pandemic their views have also changed. Few interlocutors have also spotted nationalist messages in domestic media, which used this chance to show the United States and its allies in a bad light, while fostering the Chinese image of strong and capable state.⁴⁴

At the same time, some Western officials, in particular, the US President Donald Trump referred to the coronavirus as “the Chinese virus” and the governor of the Veneto region of Italy publicly stated that Italians would handle the pandemic better than China because of the former’s “culturally strong attention to hygiene, washing hands, taking showers, whereas we have all seen the Chinese eating mice alive.”⁴⁵ Such statements could have provoked racist attacks. For example, interviewees #1 and #2 have personally experienced verbal racist attacks shortly after the outbreak of the pandemic, while friends of interviewee #1 were even physically harmed.

Despite the overall positive experience from their studies in Europe and their willingness to stay in the host country, the interviewees consider nationalism, racism and unacceptance of local population as the main reasons why they would prefer going back to their authoritarian country over staying in the liberal Europe. For example, all ethnically Chinese men and only two out of six women shared their plans to live in China in the long run citing care responsibilities towards their parents. However, they also added that if they had siblings to look after their parents and experienced less racial discrimination in Europe, they would be happy to stay in their host country

⁴⁴ Assiya Yermukhametova, "European identity" (final assignment, Europe in Crises: Integration under International and Internal Threat, Central European University, 2020), p.8.

⁴⁵ The Human Rights Watch, *Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide*, May 12, 2020, p.1 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>

instead of going back to China. Promotion of nationalism and racism negatively impacts the promotion of liberal values.

3.3.3. State political education

According to interviewee #10, national education program in China includes compulsory political education throughout the whole studying period. The following is an extract from the conversation with the interviewee which illustrates how serious the Chinese government is about their citizens' political education:

Interviewee #10	Interviewer
If I want to do Master studies of History in China, I have to pass three exams. One is about history... also English and Politics. You know the Politics is not about the real Politics, it is only about Marxist ideology.	But do you have Politics exam for every major or only for related subjects like History, International Relations and Law?
No-no, that's the problem. For every subject you have to pass Politics exam. Politics is always compulsory in China.	So, even if you want to be an English teacher, you have to know politics?
Yes, another thing is that even if students want to study, for example, Chinese literature, they still have to pass English exam.	But what if you know politics, but you disagree with it? Will you pass the exam?
You know the exam is only for recital and memory. They don't ask you to critique. You have to recite and pass the exam, that's all.	What if you learn it by heart, but you do not understand it?
That's a problem. At least for me. In China I think from middle school to PhD, I mean for students from 12 years old, you have to learn such subject. It is called politics. But the politics is not to analyze whether you agree or disagree. The only thing is to recite and memory and you don't have an opportunity to say whether you agree or disagree. And for all of the students in China from middle school, senior school, Bachelor, Master and even PhD. All of students have to take such kind of courses in every stage of your studies.	But do you learn about other politics as well? For example, about liberalism? Or do you just study politics of China?
Here I have to explain what this politics mean. It is not about real Chinese politics. It is about ideology basically.	Could you please expand on this?
This Politics course is basically based on Marxism. For Chinese bachelor students, we have to pass four courses related to politics. In the first semester, as a Bachelor student you have to learn Marxism Politics and Economy theory, in the second semester Mao Zedong thought, third Deng Xiaoping theory and fourth semester is about Chinese contemporary history. So, these four courses are compulsory for every Bachelor student. So, the entrance exam to the Master's studies [includes] politics. Politics exam covers these four books.	What about your entrance exam to the bachelor's degree? You mentioned that you study politics since you were 12 years old, so you have some knowledge before bachelor's degree, right?
Yes, you can say like that. In the second year of your high school studies, you can choose social science or natural science. If you choose social science, for the final exam you have to take six courses. First is Chinese, mathematics, English, and then there is another test for politics, history and geography. If	So, you study these four books when you are bachelor's degree student, but what do you study

you choose natural science, then Chinese, mathematics and English are the same and another three subjects are physics, biology and chemistry.	related to politics when you are a school student?
In senior high school we have three books related to politics. One book per year. In the first year of senior school, the politics is about economics theory, but not all of them are Marxism economic theory, but most of them are. The second year is about real politics, something about Chinese politics. In the third year something about philosophy, but most of them are from Marxism philosophy.	So, you basically study Marxism in school, in university, then during master's degree.
And also PhD!	Oh, is it obligatory there as well?
Yes, on every stage, from middle school to PhD.	What about other ideologies? Are you exposed to them at all? Or they create a space, where you don't know about other ideologies?
I think it is basically like this.	

Figure 3 Extract from interview related to political education in China

The political orientation of its citizens plays an important role in China, therefore any Western conventional method of promotion of democracy may result in a conflict between China and the West. Also, although the interviewees have higher chances of employment in China after their international educational experience, they are less likely to get positions in the government. The interviewee stated that there are “no external people in the government” referring to party’s preference to hire people with degrees obtained in China, who build their career from the lowest positions in the rural areas and throughout their life showed their commitment to the party.

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to understand whether the international educational experience had hybridization effect on the formation of identity. Compared to similar researches in the fields of sociology and psychology, this paper was an attempt to link the hybridization effect of globalization to international relations by evaluating whether this phenomenon is a threat or an opportunity to the liberal international order. For the purpose of this research, online interviews were conducted with ten Chinese citizens who spent at least one semester of their studies abroad. The assumption was that if the new generation elite in China, the most powerful competitor of the United States in the international arena, is indeed hybridized and more prone to liberal democracy, then the liberal international order has potential to remain in power.

Few limitations were acknowledged with regards to the results of this research. First, all interviewees were selected among CEU students and their friends. Taking into account that CEU has a very clear identity in line with the Open Society values, the interlocutors were more likely to be liberal and pro-democratic from the very beginning, therefore, selection bias can be present in the research. Second, students who are liberal and pro-democratic are more likely to spend their university years overseas and therefore there is a possibility for a reverse causation.

However, despite the small sample size, very broad open questions and limitations outlined above, it was possible to reach homogeneity in most interlocutors' answers. The empirical results have indicated at least some form of hybridization among all interviewees and their aspiration for certain elements of the liberal culture. The most popular elements of liberal culture were development of critical thinking, aspiration for work-life balance, exposure to other sources of media, setting personal boundaries and becoming "green". The implication of each element selected by interviewees was evaluated in more detail, however, due to the small scale of the

research and the complexity of the issue, the results of the research were in the form of potential propositions rather than hypotheses and conclusions. This does not diminish the value of the research as even based on the results of the small sample it was possible to observe some tendencies and identify possible areas for further research.

The empirical results reflected the multiplexity of the hybridization process by outlining various and sometimes contradicting scenarios for possible implications on the liberal international order. First, embodiment of such element of the liberal culture as the development of critical thinking may possibly lead to the lesser nationalistic sentiments towards various phenomena, including the liberal democracy, however, it can also result in their understanding of the injustice within the Western led liberal international order and have the opposite effect. Second, the interviewees' aspiration for work-life balance indicates that they share common values with the West. However, such aspirations may not be in the best economic interests of either China or the West. Third, the exposure of Chinese youngsters to Western media did not lead to their preference of Western media over local. The interviewees believe that the truth is usually somewhere in between, therefore, it is impossible to establish whether the access to the Western media will influence the nationalistic sentiments of the local population. Fourth, rise of personal boundaries and the growth of individuality may potentially affect the traditional aspect of Chinese society in the sense that social pressure may act as a less powerful tool to manage people, however, such changes, if any, will not have an impact on the current generation but rather on the next generations of China. And fifth, the interviewees' enthusiasm to implement recycling habits can possibly indicate that the environmental problems that our generations are facing today are rather universal in nature and therefore can serve as a common ground for future cooperation of the great powers.

Interviewees have also stressed the importance of necessary conditions for transformation, namely, governmental support and the state of economy as well as potential obstacles for transformation such as the promotion of nationalism in media and Chinese political education. Despite the uncertainty of the propositions, the necessity of certain conditions and the presence of obstacles for potential transformations, the research has contributed to the debate around the future of liberal international order by offering an empirical case study of the hybridization effect as a result of Western educational experience on the Chinese identity and by identifying main elements that represented particular interest to Chinese students, which can be used as a starting point for the future research. Also, taking into account that many interviewees have emphasized the importance of media on the identity formation as well as the fact that nationalist propaganda in the Chinese media during the outbreak of coronavirus could significantly impact the views and attitudes of students who were already living in Europe for at least one semester, showed indications of hybridization and could witness the events in real life, represent an interesting case for the future research.

The research results are also consistent with the historical analogies of paternalism⁴⁶, where politics of education was part of imperial administration. Particularly, the concept of hybridization through education with the intention to use this effect for the further benefit of a particular state is not completely new in the area of international relations. European colonial powers were also guided by the similar motive when establishing educational institutions in Africa and Asia, and by educating local elites in the imperial education institutions. Indigenous people of the target states, mainly elite, were trained under colonial educational system to become the foundation of colonial bureaucracy. The aim of such practices was summarized by the British liberal philosopher and an official of the East India Company, Lord Macaulay, as follows:

⁴⁶ Michael Barnett, "International paternalism and humanitarian governance," *Global Constitutionalism* 1, no.3 (2012): 493.

To form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern – a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”.

Lord Macaulay⁴⁷

Colonizers have genuinely believed that their presence is helping the colonized population to “develop the mental capacities and social institutions to become free-thinking, reasoning people who were capable of self-governance.”⁴⁸ It is fascinating how similar the modern U.S. narratives and justifications for interventions are to those that were used by the British Empire. But if in one case, people mainly support the promotion of “the universal good” to the target states, in another case, people agree that colonialism is one of the darkest spots in human’s history. But if the historical evidence is juxtaposed with the findings of this research, then one may argue that nothing has substantially changed in the world ordering. The great powers may change, their actions may be called differently, but the nature of the relations between states remains the same. The great powers always try to extend their power and influence over other states by any means, including hybridization of “other”. However, the research results have shown that such aspirations are both overly optimistic but also continuously paternalistic, and even students who voluntarily chose to study in Europe have still shown the indications of resistance in the form of questioning some aspects of the liberal world order and its culture.

⁴⁷ Abdullah Al-Ahsan, “Elite-Formation Under Colonial Rule: Capable Administrators or Loyal Servants? A General Survey of Colonial Rule in Muslim Countries,” *Islamic Studies* 37, no.1 (1998): 46.

⁴⁸ Michael Barnett, “International paternalism and humanitarian governance,” *Global Constitutionalism* 1, no.3 (2012): 493.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in an interview conducted by Assiya Yermukhametova, for master thesis at Central European University to investigate the globalization effect on the formation of Chinese hybrid identity.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary at all time. You can choose not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. Regardless of your decision, there will be no effect on your relationship with the researcher or any other consequences.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a citizen of People's Republic of China, who had an educational experience outside of your home country for at least one semester.

If you are agreeing to participate, you will be invited to take part in an online interview, which will last around one hour.

What you answer during this interview will remain anonymous and cannot be linked to you in any way. No identifying information about you will be collected at any point during the study. Once your interview is over, there will be no way to withdraw your response from the study because the interview will contain no identifying information.

Study data will be kept in an encrypted format on the researcher's computer. Access to the data will be protected by the researcher. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data.

There are no risks associated with this study. If you agree to participate, you will not receive any monetary and non-monetary compensation.

If you have any questions regarding to the interview or this research project in general, please contact the principal researcher, Assiya Yermukhametova, at 36-70-677-2087 or via e-mail at yermukhametova_assiy@student.ceu.edu or her supervisor, Xymena Kurowska, at +36-30-372-99-27 or via e-mail at kurowskax@ceu.edu.

Before taking part in this interview, please provide an oral or written consent to participate in the interview and allow the interviewer to use your story for her research.

Assiya Yermukhametova

Master student in International Relations

Central European University

Yermukhametova_assiy@student.ceu.edu

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Section 1 – Introduction

- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What is your occupation?
- What is the highest educational degree you possess?
- What area are you working/studying in?

Section 2 – Intercultural experience

- What kind of international educational exchange have you had?
- What was the duration of your international educational experience?
- Where was your international educational exchange?
- What was your first impression of the country and local people? And did it change afterwards?
- What aspects of the host country you considered to be different compare to your home country at first, but then you adjusted to it and now you want your home country to have it as well?
- Have you made any local and/or international friends during your exchange program?
- Among your new friends who influenced you the most and why?
- What exactly has changed in your personality/world outlook since you met your new friends?
- What are the differences and similarities between your friends in your home country and in the host country?
- What are the differences and similarities between students in your home country and in the host country in general?
- Is there any difference between you and other Chinese students who have never been abroad (even as tourists) and why? And those who travelled, but did not study abroad?

Section 3 – Expectations

- What it was/will be like to be back home after international educational experience?
- What did/will change in your daily routine (habits/behavior) once you get back home?
- What did/will change in your attitude towards work, family, friends and society once you get back home?
- What did/will change in your attitude/actions towards international community once you get back home?
- Approximately what percentage of Chinese citizens have had at least some international exposure and how do you think their experience will change Chinese society in the future?

Concluding remarks

- Is there anything you would like to add that hasn't been discussed?
- Do you have any questions for me?