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ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0682-3818>**Fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad: role of social organizations**

Amidst the backdrop of war and social upheaval in Ukraine, pursuing education abroad emerges as a natural pathway for young people towards carving out one's destiny and securing a future. However, it's imperative for Ukrainian society to ensure the retention of these young individuals within the Ukrainian cultural sphere, guarding against complete assimilation in their host countries. This serves as a crucial element in facilitating their eventual return to Ukraine. The Chinese government views the maintenance of social cohesion among its youth studying abroad as a key objective in its higher education internationalization policy. It utilizes social organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) to underscore this cohesion, highlighting how they support Chinese students in their overseas endeavors while also managing and mitigating negative assimilative tendencies. The purpose of this article is to present to the scientific community examples of targeted efforts by the government and state of the People's Republic of China to maintain the cohesion of its young citizens studying abroad, ensuring their conscious return to China. These efforts are implemented through various Chinese public and government organizations. In the process of writing this article, the authors employed several general scientific methods, including personal experiences and interviews to examine initiatives facilitated by Chinese embassies abroad, non-governmental organizations, and representative offices of Chinese universities. They also conducted normative document analysis to understand the roles of the PRC embassies, consulates, official representative institutions abroad, and affiliated public organizations. Additionally, content analysis of organizational materials, such as event flyers, social media posts, and newsletters, provided insights into the themes, messages, and strategies used to promote social cohesion. Finally, network analysis was utilized to study the involvement of Chinese students studying abroad with various social organizations. The conclusions made: taking cues from the organizational efforts of various Chinese entities, Ukrainian specialists can glean valuable insights in uniting young Ukrainians studying abroad while preserving their Ukrainian social and ethnic identity, establishing the robust framework for their conscious repatriation to Ukraine.

Keywords: *PR of China, social cohesion, internationalization programs, state management, social support.*

Introduction. In recent years, Chinese students have emerged as the largest cohort studying abroad, actively participating in various internationalization programs. This trend reflects China's growing emphasis on global education and its recognition of the benefits of cross-cultural exchange. However, amidst this surge in overseas education, a pressing concern has arisen: the reluctance of Chinese students to return to their homeland upon completing their studies. The Chinese leadership, while advocating for the internationalization of higher education and acknowledging its myriad advantages, is increasingly troubled by this phenomenon. The reluctance of students to return to China is perceived as a problem that warrants urgent attention and resolution.

Recognizing the complexity of the issue, the Chinese government emphasizes the importance of cultivating a genuine desire among students to return home. It contends that the ultimate influence on the decision to return lies within the individual's conscious motivations. To this end, Chinese organizations abroad are called upon to play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying overseas. Through a

variety of activities and initiatives, these organizations seek to install a sense of belonging and connection to their homeland among students. By creating a supportive network and nurturing a strong sense of community, they aim to cultivate a deeper appreciation for Chinese culture and values, thereby reinforcing the desire to return home.

The aim of this article is to showcase the operational practices of diverse Chinese social organizations operating abroad in bolstering the social unity of Chinese students studying overseas, nurturing their inclination to return to China upon graduation, and cultivating a deep affection for China among overseas Chinese youth (by instilling a love for China, its culture, and society in young people of Chinese descent who have grown up abroad, these organizations strive to facilitate their conscious repatriation to the People's Republic of China). The objective of these activities is twofold: to foster a conscious desire among students to return to China through initiatives such as student meetings, job offers from Chinese employers, and continuous consultations on higher professional opportunities; and to influence young ethnic Chinese born abroad (with citizenship of another country) to consider returning to China.

The specific practical tasks of the study were defined as following:

1. To characterize the problem of non-return and the tendency of Chinese youth to stay abroad as a contemporary educational and social trend in Chinese society, which is a concern for the state government.

2. To examine the role and functions of specific social organizations, such as the Embassy of the PRC, Chinese Student Associations and Clubs, Chinese Alumni Networks and Mentorship Programs, Chinese Community Organizations and Cultural Centres, in promoting the cohesion of Chinese students studying abroad.

3. To analyze specific examples and forms of activities that contribute to the cohesion of modern Chinese students during their stay within academic mobility programs abroad.

Methodology. Studying the role of social organizations in fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad was approached through various scientific methods, including:

– **Personal experiences and interviews:** through active participation in internationalization programs and personal experience of studying abroad, the authors of this article have engaged with various initiatives facilitated by Chinese Embassies abroad, non-governmental organizations, and representative offices of Chinese universities. These initiatives include organizing events aimed at fostering unity among Chinese students studying in the same country, promoting communication among them, and continuously monitoring their post-graduation intentions and plans. These efforts often involve offering employment opportunities in China, assisting with document legalization, and providing other forms of support to facilitate their transition back to China;

– **Normative documents analysis** pertaining to the roles of PRC embassies, consulates, official representative institutions abroad, and affiliated public organizations enabled the authors to delineate the functions, tasks, and responsibilities mandated by the state for these entities concerning students abroad participating in internationalization programs and overseas Chinese populations;

– **Content analysis:** analyzing the content of organizational materials, such as event flyers, social media posts, and newsletters, provided insights into the themes, messages, and strategies employed to promote social cohesion;

– **Network analysis:** utilizing network analysis techniques, researchers mapped the social networks and connections among Chinese students studying abroad and their involvement with social organizations.

By employing a combination of these scientific methods, researchers gained a comprehensive understanding of the role of social organizations in fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad.

Discussion.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the phenomenon of Chinese students studying abroad has become not only widespread but also strategically significant. As China continues to expand its global influence and participate actively in international affairs, the presence of Chinese students in foreign universities plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions, fostering diplomacy, and advancing the nation's interests on the global stage. However, amidst the opportunities and challenges that come with studying abroad, it is imperative for the Chinese government to prioritize the fostering of social cohesion among its students.

Fostering social cohesion among Chinese students abroad is essential for preserving and strengthening national identity. When Chinese students venture overseas for their studies, they are exposed to diverse cultures, ideologies, and lifestyles that may challenge their sense of belonging and identity. By promoting social cohesion, the Chinese government can ensure that these students maintain a strong connection to their Chinese heritage, values, and traditions. (Chen, 2020). This not only instills a sense of pride and cultural confidence but also contributes to the preservation of China's rich cultural heritage in the global arena. Such social cohesion among Chinese students abroad is instrumental in promoting positive diplomatic relations

between China and other countries. Chinese students serve as cultural ambassadors, representing their nation to the world. Their interactions with foreign peers and communities shape international perceptions of China and its people. (Guy, 2018). By fostering social cohesion and facilitating meaningful cross-cultural exchanges, the Chinese government can bridge cultural divides, dispel stereotypes, and build trust and understanding between nations. This not only enhances China's soft power but also lays the groundwork for stronger diplomatic ties and cooperation on a global scale.

The Chinese society as well sees social cohesion among Chinese students abroad as the essential factor for ensuring their academic success and well-being. Studying in a foreign country can be a daunting experience, characterized by academic challenges, cultural differences, and social isolation. By fostering social cohesion, the Chinese government can create a supportive community for its students, providing them with the necessary resources, mentorship, and peer networks to navigate the complexities of studying abroad successfully (Chen, 2020). This not only improves their academic performance but also enhances their overall well-being and mental health, ensuring that they make the most of their international educational experience.

The government of the country also considers social cohesion among Chinese students abroad to be critical for safeguarding national interests and protecting the safety and security of Chinese citizens overseas. In an increasingly uncertain geopolitical landscape, Chinese students may face risks ranging from discrimination and harassment to espionage and political unrest (Ma, 2018). By fostering social cohesion and promoting solidarity among its students, the Chinese government can better protect their interests and ensure their safety in foreign countries. This includes providing them with access to support services, legal assistance, and emergency response mechanisms, as well as collaborating with host countries and international organizations to address common challenges and threats (Jiang, Altinyelken, 2022). Usually, for fostering social cohesion among Chinese students abroad the Chinese government uses various agents that are delegated by Government and the state to provide the students with the activities appropriate. Among them, there are student associations and clubs, alumni networks, mentorship programs, local community organizations, virtual communities, etc.

The Chinese Embassy serves as a key source of support, guidance, and advocacy for students navigating life in foreign countries. Through various initiatives and programs, Chinese embassies around the world actively promote the well-being, integration, and cultural exchange of Chinese students studying abroad. One significant example is the provision of consular services and assistance to Chinese students facing challenges or emergencies overseas. Chinese embassies often collaborate with local Chinese Student Associations and Clubs (CSACs) to organise cultural events, educational workshops, and networking opportunities for Chinese students studying abroad. These initiatives aim to promote cross-cultural understanding, celebrate Chinese culture and heritage, and foster friendships among Chinese students and their international peers. For example, the Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom frequently sponsors cultural festivals, film screenings, and art exhibitions, showcasing the richness and diversity of Chinese culture. Moreover, the embassies play a vital role in promoting academic and professional opportunities for Chinese students studying abroad (Ambassador to Madagascar Yang Xiaorong accepted an exclusive interview with China-Africa Daily, 2020). Through partnerships with universities, companies, and government agencies, Chinese embassies facilitate internships, scholarships, and job placement programs that help Chinese students gain valuable experience and advance their careers internationally. For instance, the Chinese Embassy in Australia collaborates with Australian universities and businesses to offer internship opportunities for Chinese students in various industries, including technology, finance, and healthcare. In addition to these initiatives, Chinese embassies also engage in public diplomacy efforts to promote positive perceptions of China and its people among the international community to avoid humiliation and separation of the Chinese students during their study abroad period (The Chinese Embassy in Portugal once again distributes "Psychological health packages" to Chinese students in Portugal, 2020).

Chinese Student Associations and Clubs (CSACs) play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad, offering them a sense of community, support, and cultural connection. Several CSACs around the world exemplify this role through various activities and initiatives tailored to the needs and interests of Chinese students. One notable example is the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA), which is present in numerous universities worldwide. CSSA chapters organize a wide range of events and programs aimed at promoting cultural exchange and fostering friendships among Chinese students and the broader university community (Zhao, Ding, Kalashnyk, & Luhova, 2020). For instance, the CSSA at the University of California, Berkeley, hosts an annual Lunar New Year Gala featuring traditional performances, music, and food, attracting hundreds of students from different cultural backgrounds. Another prominent CSAC is the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) at the University of Melbourne in Australia. This association offers academic support services such as study groups, tutoring sessions, and career development workshops to help Chinese students excel in their studies and prepare for their future

careers in China. The Chinese Student Union (CSU) at King's College London in the United Kingdom is known for its advocacy and community engagement efforts (Wang, Cheng, Peng, Zhang, & Wang, 2023). The CSU collaborates with university authorities and local organizations to address issues affecting Chinese students, such as accommodation, visa regulations, and mental health support. Furthermore, the CSU organizes cultural awareness campaigns, intercultural dialogues, and volunteer initiatives to promote cross-cultural understanding and foster a sense of belonging among Chinese students studying abroad. In Canada, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) at the University of Toronto is renowned for its diverse array of cultural, educational, and recreational activities: language exchange programs, Chinese art exhibitions, Chinese students' community service projects. The CSSA offers Chinese students a plethora of opportunities to connect with their peers, explore new interests, and engage with the local Chinese community (Ma, 2018).

Chinese Alumni Networks and Mentorship Programs are extremely important in fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad, offering them guidance, support, and a sense of community through connections with alumni who have previously navigated similar experiences (The official site of US China Exchange Center, 2024). One notable example of a Chinese Alumni Network is the Tsinghua University Alumni Association, which boasts a global network of alumni chapters and affiliates across various countries and regions. Through its mentorship programs, the Tsinghua Alumni Association connects current students with alumni mentors who offer guidance, advice, and career support. For instance, the Tsinghua Alumni Association in the United States organises networking events, professional development workshops, and mentorship matching programs that pair Chinese students with alumni working in their fields of interest mainly in China and official Chinese institutions / companies abroad, fostering meaningful connections and opportunities for personal and professional growth (Dang, 2020). Similarly, the Peking University Alumni Association operates a range of mentorship programs designed to support Chinese students studying abroad. The association organizes alumni networking events, industry panels, and skill-building workshops that facilitate connections and knowledge sharing between students and alumni. For example, the Peking University Alumni Association in Canada hosts an annual Chinese career fair where Chinese students can meet with alumni working in various industries and explore internship. Moreover, independent mentorship programs such as the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) Mentorship Program provide valuable support and guidance to Chinese students studying abroad. The CEAIE Mentorship Program pairs Chinese students with mentors who are experienced professionals in their respective fields, offering career advice, networking opportunities and professional insights (Jiang, Altinyelken, 2022).

Chinese Community Organizations and Cultural Centres play a significant role in fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad, serving as hubs for cultural exchange, support, and community engagement. These organizations and centres offer a wide range of programs and services tailored to the needs and interests of Chinese students, providing them with opportunities to connect, learn, and celebrate their cultural heritage while navigating life in foreign countries (Mei, 2023). One prominent example of a Chinese Community Organization is the Chinese Association for Science and Technology (CAST), which operates chapters in major cities worldwide. CAST offers a variety of programs and events aimed at promoting academic and professional development among Chinese students studying abroad. For instance, CAST chapters host career fairs, workshops, and seminars featuring guest speakers and industry experts, providing Chinese students with valuable insights and networking opportunities in their fields of study. Additionally, CAST organizes cultural activities, social gatherings, and volunteer projects that allow Chinese students to connect with their peers, build friendships, and engage with the local Chinese community (Spencer-Oatey, Dauber, Jing, & Wan, 2017). Similarly, Chinese Cultural Centres such as the Confucius Institutes and Chinese Language Schools see the overseas Chinese as their target audience and offer Chinese language courses, cultural workshops, and educational programs that promote Chinese values and aim to make the overseas Chinese feel themselves attached to China, its success and power (Zhao, 2024).

Chinese Online Platforms and Virtual Communities foster social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad by providing them with a digital space to connect, share experiences, and access resources and support. These platforms and communities offer a wide range of features and functionalities that cater to the diverse needs and interests of Chinese students (Tan, 2022). WeChat is a widely used messaging and social networking app with over a billion monthly active users. Also, WeChat hosts a plethora of public accounts, groups, and communities dedicated to topics such as education, travel, and lifestyle, where Chinese students can find information, advice, and support. Another popular Chinese Online Platform is Zhihu, a question-and-answer website, where users can ask questions, share knowledge, and engage in discussions on various topics. Zhihu hosts a vibrant community of users, including Chinese students studying abroad, who share their experiences, insights, and advice on navigating life in foreign countries (Mei, 2023). Moreover, virtual communities such as online forums, social media groups, and virtual clubs play a crucial role in fostering social

cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad. For instance, the “Chinese Students Abroad” subreddit on Reddit is a community where Chinese students share their experiences, ask questions, and offer support to one another. Similarly, Facebook groups such as “Chinese Students in [Host Country]” and “International Students Association” provide platforms for Chinese students to connect with their peers, organize events, and share resources and information (Zhao, 2024).

The Chinese government, through various social agents such as embassies, student associations and clubs, alumni networks, mentorship programs, local community organizations, virtual communities, and more, is actively fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad while simultaneously presenting them with career and work opportunities, ultimately aiming to encourage their return to China. [4]. The endeavor of such agencies’ “working for the future” entails an ongoing engagement within the student sphere, characterized not by a push for the integration of Chinese students into foreign environments, but rather by a deliberate soft distinction, fostering their immersion in a meticulously crafted social milieu aligned with Chinese traditions. This encompasses, to some extent, a structured calendar, incorporating the steadfast stance of Chinese embassies across various nations mandating Chinese students’ participation in the observance of public holidays of the People’s Republic of China, including the extensive celebration of the Chinese New Year (Spencer-Oatey, Dauber, Jing, Wan, 2017). Furthermore, the continual presentation of employment prospects and career pathways in China serves to effectively foster a robust sense of social cohesion among Chinese students throughout their tenure abroad, ultimately culminating in a conscientious return to China upon completion of their studies.

Conclusions. The importance of fostering social cohesion among Chinese students studying abroad cannot be overstated. From preserving national identity and promoting diplomacy to ensuring academic success and safeguarding national interests, the benefits of this endeavor are manifold and far-reaching. As China continues to expand its presence on the global stage, the Chinese government must prioritize the well-being and integration of its students in foreign countries, recognizing them as valuable assets in advancing the nation’s goals of internationalization and global cooperation. Chinese social organizations play a vital role in maintaining social cohesion among students during their studies abroad, providing support, fostering community, and enhancing cross-cultural understanding. Conscious repatriation of Ukrainian youth is essential for harnessing the full potential of foreign education and ensuring Ukraine’s continued progress and prosperity. By supporting social cohesion during students’ stay abroad and leveraging the role of various social organizations in this process, Ukraine can effectively nurture a generation of global citizens who are deeply connected to their homeland and equipped to drive positive change in their communities and beyond. Similar to their Chinese counterparts, Ukrainian organizations abroad can organize cultural events, language exchange programs, and networking opportunities to facilitate interaction and collaboration among students. They can serve as liaisons between students and their homeland, offering resources and assistance to facilitate a smooth transition back to Ukraine. These organizations can provide career development support, facilitate professional networks, and promote opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation, thereby empowering returning students to contribute meaningfully to Ukraine’s development.

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Стимулювання соціальної згуртованості китайських студентів, які навчаються за кордоном: роль громадських організацій

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На тлі війни та соціальних потрясінь в Україні здобування освіти за кордоном постає для молодих людей шляхом до викрощування власної долі та забезпечення майбутнього. Проте українському суспільству вкрай необхідно зберегти цих молодих людей в українському культурному просторі, захищаючи їх від повної асиміляції в країнах їхнього перебування. Це є вирішальним елементом для полегшення їхнього можливого повернення в Україну. Уряд Китаю розглядає підтримку соціальної єдності серед своєї молоді, яка навчається за кордоном, як ключову мету своєї політики інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти. Він використовує громадські організації (як урядові, так і неурядові) для підвищення цієї згуртованості, підтримуючи китайських студентів у їхніх закордонних починаннях і пом'якшуючи негативні асиміляційні тенденції. Мета цієї статті – представити науковому співтовариству приклади цілеспрямованих зусиль уряду та держави КНР для підтримки згуртованості молодих громадян, які навчаються за кордоном, та забезпечення їх свідомого повернення до Китаю. Ці зусилля реалізуються через різні китайські громадські організації (урядові та неурядові). У процесі написання цієї статті автори використовували низку загальнонаукових методів, включаючи особистий досвід та інтерв'ю для дослідження ініціатив, які відтворюються китайськими посольствами за кордоном, неурядовими організаціями та представництвами китайських університетів. Вони також провели аналіз нормативних документів, щоб зрозуміти роль посольств, консульств КНР, офіційних представницьких установ за кордоном і афілійованих громадських організацій. Крім

того, аналіз вмісту організаційних матеріалів, таких як рекламні листівки для заходів, публікації у соціальних мережах та інформаційні бюлетені, дав уявлення про теми, повідомлення та стратегії, які використовуються для сприяння соціальній згуртованості. Нарешті, мережевий аналіз був використаний для вивчення участі китайських студентів, які навчаються за кордоном, у різних соціальних організаціях. Зроблені висновки: беручи приклад з організаційних зусиль різних китайських структур, українські спеціалісти можуть отримати цінні ідеї щодо об'єднання молодих українців, які навчаються за кордоном, зберігаючи їхню українську соціальну та етнічну ідентичність, створюючи міцну основу для їх свідомої репатріації в Україну.

Ключові слова: КНР, соціальна згуртованість, програми інтернаціоналізації, державне управління, соціальна підтримка.

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