Federal State Budgetary
educational institution of higher education
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND PUBLIC SERVICE
UNDER THE PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

North-West Institute of Management

Manuscript copyright

ZHOU YOUDI

IDENTITY OF MIGRANTS FROM CHINA IN EU COUNTRIES: FEATURES OF INTEGRATION AND ADAPTATION (THE CASES OF FRANCE AND GERMANY)

Specialty: 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies

Abstract of the dissertation
for the degree of
Candidate of Political Sciences

Academic Supervisor:
Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor
Natalia V. Eremina

St Petersburg
2026

Relevance of the research topic. In the twenty-first century, international migration has become a persistent factor in global development, affecting not only the internal situation of states but also the nature of their interaction. Increased population mobility, disparities in levels of economic development, conditions in the international labour market, and political crises contribute to maintaining a high level of international migration. According to the International Organization for Migration, by mid-2025 the number of international migrants had reached approximately 304 million people, or about 3.7 per cent of the world's population.

Contemporary migration processes have not only economic but also social, political, and cultural dimensions. Growing cultural diversity and intercultural interaction are accompanied by issues of migrants' adaptation, their integration into receiving societies, the preservation of cultural identity, and the formation of new forms of social belonging. Migration is therefore a complex process whose outcomes largely depend on institutional conditions, the nature of integration policies, and migrants' interaction with receiving societies.

The People's Republic of China is one of the major countries of origin of international migrants. The expansion of the international mobility of Chinese citizens is associated with the deepening of China's economic, educational, and professional ties with foreign countries. The development of external economic relations, international education, and transnational business contacts contributes to the further diversification of Chinese migration destinations, including the countries of the European Union.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the number of Chinese emigrants worldwide exceeds 10 million. At the same time, the Chinese migrant presence in the European Union has been growing steadily. According to Eurostat, in 2010 approximately 350,000–400,000 Chinese citizens holding valid residence permits lived in EU Member States, whereas by 2024–2025 their number had exceeded 700,000. The largest concentrations of Chinese migrants

are found in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, with France and Germany consistently ranking among the principal receiving countries.

The study of Chinese migration in France and Germany is of particular relevance. Both countries are important destinations for Chinese migrants and have well-established Chinese diasporas, yet they differ in their migration and integration policies, social environments, and mechanisms for incorporating migrants into receiving societies. Comparing the French and German experiences makes it possible to identify how different institutional and sociocultural conditions affect the adaptation of Chinese migrants, the nature of their integration, and the preservation of ethnocultural identity.

The relevance of the study is also determined by the growth in the size and territorial concentration of Chinese migrant communities in Europe and the gradual formation of stable Chinese diasporas. Chinese communities in France and Germany participate in the economic, educational, and public life of the receiving states while maintaining close social, cultural, and transnational ties with their country of origin. This necessitates a comprehensive examination of integration and adaptation processes as well as transformations in the identity of Chinese migrants.

The significance of this problem is further related to substantial differences between Chinese and European sociocultural environments. Migration to European countries requires Chinese migrants to adapt to different systems of social norms, forms of everyday communication, and features of social organisation. Interaction with the receiving society is combined with the preservation of language, cultural traditions, diaspora ties, and elements of national identity. The study of Chinese migration in France and Germany therefore makes it possible to examine not only the economic and demographic aspects of migration but also the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of migrants' adaptation in the European space.

The aim of the research is to identify the distinctive aspects and problems of the identity of Chinese migrants in the context of the formation of the Chinese diaspora in Europe, using France and Germany as case studies.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were set:

1. To examine the theoretical and methodological foundations for studying international migration, integration, adaptation, and migrant identity.

2. To analyse the main trends, forms, and directions of contemporary migration from China to Europe.

3. To identify the demographic, socioeconomic, and territorial characteristics of Chinese migration to France and Germany.

4. To examine the principal features of the migration and integration policies of France and Germany in relation to Chinese migrants.

5. To assess the specific features of the socioeconomic, professional, educational, social, and cultural integration of Chinese migrants in the two countries.

6. To identify the principal barriers and problems affecting the adaptation of Chinese migrants in French and German society.

7. To analyse the role of diaspora networks and transnational ties in migrants' adaptation and in the preservation of Chinese identity.

8. To compare the models of adaptation and identity formation among Chinese migrants in France and Germany and identify their principal differences.

The object of the research is migration flows from China to Europe.

The subject of the research is the demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic features of the manifestation and transformation of the identity of Chinese migrants in the course of their integration and adaptation in France and Germany.

The research hypothesis is based on the assumption that differences between the French and German models of migrant integration produce different patterns of adaptation among Chinese migrants. The French model is assumed to facilitate a higher level of social and psychological adaptation while allowing migrants to

preserve a stable ethnocultural identity. The German model, by contrast, is oriented primarily toward functional and economic incorporation; consequently, professional and educational integration is more pronounced than social and cultural inclusion.

The chronological framework of the research covers the period from the beginning of the twenty-first century to the present, with the main emphasis placed on 2000–2025. This period was selected because it encompasses the intensification of international migration from China to the European Union, the institutionalisation of EU migration and integration policies, the formation of stable Chinese diasporas in France and Germany, and changes in the socioeconomic and educational profile of Chinese migrants. Where necessary, the study refers to the second half of the twentieth century in order to analyse the preconditions of contemporary processes.

The source base of the research includes official legal and policy documents of the PRC, materials of international organisations and research centres, statistical data from the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration, the World Bank, the OECD and Eurostat, as well as materials from the national statistical agencies of Germany and France. These sources make it possible to trace the dynamics of Chinese migration, features of migration policy, the territorial distribution and sociodemographic characteristics of Chinese migrants, and to compare their integration and adaptation in France and Germany.

State of research on the topic. International migration is an interdisciplinary field studied in economics, sociology, demography, political science, history, and international relations. Scholarship has developed a broad range of approaches to explaining the causes of migration and the integration and adaptation of migrants, including economic theories, concepts of assimilation and transnationalism, and studies of human capital, migration networks, and the world-system.

Among foreign scholars, significant contributions to the study of international migration and adaptation have been made by A. Portes, G. Becker, R. Skeldon, M. P. Todaro, J. Harris, J. Taylor, I. Wallerstein, and others. With regard to Chinese

migration in France and Germany, the works of I. Attane, E. Ma Mung, C. Pina-Guerassimoff, S. Dufoix, M.-C. Saglio-Yatzimirsky, T. Heberer, F. Wemheuer, B. Gransow, and other researchers are particularly important; they examine the sociodemographic characteristics of migrants, diaspora networks, academic and professional mobility, transnational ties, and identity.

In Russian scholarship, Chinese migration is more often examined in a global context or in connection with Sino-Russian relations; studies directly devoted to Chinese diasporas in France and Germany remain relatively limited. The works of S. V. Ryazantsev, Ya. Hongmei, Z. K. Vazirov, A. V. Gordon, and other authors are of particular relevance.

Chinese scholarship approaches international migration as a multilevel process involving the country of origin, diaspora networks, and receiving states. Studies by Zhuang Guotu, Chen Lite, Song Quancheng, Yue Liu, Simeng Wang, Li Minghuan, Zhu Mei, and other researchers complement Western approaches through their analysis of the role of the country of origin, transnational economic networks, overseas Chinese communities, and the preservation of cultural identity.

The literature review demonstrates that, despite the substantial body of research on Chinese migration, migrants' internal self-perception, transformations of cultural belonging, everyday interaction with receiving societies, and the comparative specificities of the adaptation of Chinese migrants in France and Germany remain insufficiently studied. This creates a need for a comprehensive comparative study combining political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural dimensions of migration.

The theoretical and methodological framework of the research combines several complementary approaches. E. Lee's push-pull theory is used to explain the formation and direction of migration flows from China to the European Union, taking into account factors in countries of origin and destination, intervening obstacles, and migrants' individual perceptions.

Y. Y. Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation is applied to analyse the integration of Chinese migrants in France and Germany and makes it possible to consider the sociocultural receptiveness of receiving societies, institutions of social support, language competence, cultural distance, social status, and the role of diaspora networks. Identity is used as a key analytical criterion for assessing the nature of adaptation, while the social constructivist approach makes it possible to view identity as a dynamic outcome of social interaction.

Selected propositions of I. Wallerstein's world-systems theory and S. Huntington's concept of civilisational interaction are used as supplementary theoretical foundations, enabling migration processes to be linked with global socioeconomic and cultural-civilisational changes.

The research methodology includes comparative analysis and a systems approach, the index method as an auxiliary instrument for comparative assessment of integration processes, qualitative interviews, statistical methods, and the analysis of documents, sources, and scholarly literature. The empirical component is based on interviews, materials of international organisations, statistical data, and studies of Chinese migration in EU countries.

Scientific novelty of the dissertation research consists in a comprehensive comparative analysis of the integration, adaptation, and identity of Chinese migrants in France and Germany. The study combines international and Chinese scholarly approaches, uses an original empirical component, and clarifies the relationship between migration patterns, integration policies, diaspora mechanisms, and the formation of ethnocultural and transnational identity.

Propositions submitted for defence:

1. It has been established that educational and economic migration of Chinese citizens represent distinct yet interrelated forms of contemporary transnational mobility originating from the People's Republic of China (PRC). Educational migration to France and Germany is associated with subsequent professional and

academic integration and often evolves into sustained professional mobility. Economic migration is characterized by occupational and entrepreneurial differentiation and encompasses skilled employment, small and medium-sized businesses, high-technology industries, trade, and the service sector. The sustainability of educational and economic migration is supported by well-developed diaspora networks and the maintenance of transnational ties with China, which facilitate migrants' adaptation and their integration into the educational, professional, and economic environments of the receiving countries.

2. Differences have been identified in the structure and main directions of migration flows of Chinese citizens to France and Germany, as well as in the two countries' integration policy models. In France, the Chinese diaspora emerged earlier and has traditionally been concentrated in small businesses and trade; at the same time, the educational and academic mobility of Chinese citizens has been increasing in recent years. Germany, to a greater extent, attracts Chinese migrants to industrial and high-technology sectors, as well as highly qualified professionals and researchers. It has been established that the specific characteristics of national integration policies influence the nature of Chinese migrants' integration into the receiving society: the French model provides more favorable conditions for migrants' long-term settlement and the preservation of their ethnocultural identity, whereas the German model places greater emphasis on their professional and economic integration.

3. Data on the size, geographical distribution, and main areas of employment of Chinese migrants in France and Germany have been systematized, making it possible to identify the specific characteristics of their socioeconomic adaptation in the receiving societies. It has been established that differences in the spatial concentration and occupational structure of Chinese diasporas shape distinct adaptation trajectories: in France, entrepreneurial and diaspora networks, concentrated primarily in major urban centers, play a significant role, whereas in Germany, Chinese migrants demonstrate a higher degree of professional integration into the industrial,

engineering, and high-technology sectors. At the same time, the sustained integration of Chinese migrants into the economic spheres of the receiving countries is not always accompanied by an equally high level of social and cultural integration.

4. The specific characteristics of Chinese migrants' adaptation models in France and Germany have been identified, along with a range of factors that limit their social and cultural integration into the receiving society. It has been established that a higher degree of migrants' integration into particular spheres of the receiving society does not necessarily imply equally successful adaptation across all dimensions. In France, the social and psychological dimensions of adaptation are more pronounced, alongside the preservation of a strong ethnocultural identity, whereas in Germany, professional and economic integration are more prominent, with comparatively limited social and cultural integration. It has been found that the characteristics of the receiving social environment and the nature of interactions with the local population influence the extent of Chinese migrants' social integration. At the same time, diaspora networks perform a dual function: on the one hand, they facilitate migrants' initial adaptation by providing social support, access to information, and professional connections; on the other hand, a predominant reliance on intra-diaspora contacts may limit the extent of their interaction with the receiving society.

5. It has been demonstrated that the integration of Chinese migrants into the receiving societies of France and Germany does not entail the complete loss of their ethnocultural identity or the severing of ties with their country of origin, but rather leads to the formation of various combinations of social, cultural, and transnational belonging. It has been established that the preservation of Chinese identity in the European context is not an indication of unsuccessful integration, but rather reflects the emergence of a stable transnational model of belonging under conditions of global mobility. Based on the author's empirical research and the application of an index-based method, country-specific differences have been identified in the relationship between the key dimensions of identity and adaptation: in France, Chinese migrants'

identity is primarily maintained and reproduced through established urban and cultural spaces, as well as family and diaspora networks, whereas in Germany, educational and professional integration, academic mobility, and institutional mechanisms of cultural representation play a more prominent role.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in developing approaches to the study of Chinese migration, cross-cultural adaptation, and migrant identity through a comparative analysis of France and Germany. The practical significance lies in the possibility of using the results in the development and adjustment of migration and integration policies, in the work of public authorities and organisations interacting with Chinese migrant communities, and in educational courses on international migration, international relations, and regional studies.

The research results were presented and discussed at academic conferences and research events, including the Lomonosov International Youth Scientific Forum and events held at the Faculty of International Relations and Political Studies. The principal findings of the dissertation are reflected in five scholarly publications, four of which were published in journals included in the list of peer-reviewed academic publications recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission, and one in a publication indexed in the Russian Science Citation Index.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters comprising fourteen sections, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The main text is 257 pages. The bibliography contains 276 sources. The dissertation includes 10 tables and 3 figures.