

ly be slower by only investing in domestic institutions. As such, it could advance Egypt's effort to be home to several top-ranked universities.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR IBCs TO CONSIDER

Proponents argue that New Cairo is an important symbol of Egypt's future and a beacon for new investment. Critics worry that relocating the wealthier members of society to the new city and focusing IBCs in New Cairo will accentuate social class inequity.

Egypt is also a fluid and dynamic policy and political environment. Policies created today can be undone tomorrow. Recruiting an IBC can expand capacity, be structured to align with economic initiatives, and serve as a means to raise global rankings and recruit international students. However, what happens when the academic ethos of critical inquiry and free expression that contributed to the success of the home campus run into conflict with efforts by the host country to curtail such freedoms in the broader environment?

Universities setting up IBCs elsewhere have accepted such compromises when choosing to operate in similar environments, often arguing that it is easier to help change a society from within than from without. Indeed, IBCs can be embassies of knowledge and demonstration sites where academic freedom can be allowed to be experimented with and fostered separate from the constraints in the broader environment. However, such activities must be taken on carefully and often at some risk to the individual and the institution. This risk becomes heightened when in a dynamic policy environment that allows for unchecked bans on parts of the internet and where foreign establishments can as quickly go from being welcomed to being banned. Whether elite institutions will risk Egypt's shifting sands is hard to say; it may all depend on whether they see rewards outweighing risks. ■

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## Xiamen University Malaysia: A Chinese Branch Campus

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With typical Chinese speed, the fourth and newest campus of Xiamen University (XMU), about 45 km outside of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has completed its first phase of development. This project was initially drafted in 2012, began in 2014, and started its second phase in November 2017. Among the ten international branch campus universities in Malaysia, Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM) occupies the largest campus with a total gross floor area of 470,000 square meters, represents the largest overall investment (about RMB 1.5 billion, mostly by Xiamen University—which corresponds to over US\$37million), and is 100 percent owned by XMU. The branch campus celebrated its opening ceremony on February 22, 2016, and currently operates 15 programs, enrolling about 1,720 Malaysian, 950 Chinese, and 30 other international students. It is expected that in five years' time the total number of students will be 5,000.

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**The increase of international student flows into Malaysia over the years has proven the plan's effectiveness in the context of the growing competition of the global education market.**

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#### INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, COMMERCIALIZATION, AND COMPETITION IN MALAYSIA

Before XMUM was founded, the Malaysian government invited three Australian and six British universities to establish branch campuses in various Malaysian states. These initiatives were based on a strategic plan called "the International Education Base of Asia," which started around 1990. The 1990s were an era during which the Malaysian economy began looking for new pathways rather than selling traditional natural resources. The increase of international student flows into Malaysia over the years has proven the plan's effectiveness in the context of the growing competition of the global education market. In particular, XMUM enrolls top quality international students; the Chinese students enrolled are *Gao Kao Yi Ben Sheng* (top level students of the national entrance examination of China). According to local education experts, it is the first time in history that Malaysia has attracted this number of *Yi Ben Sheng* from China, whose overseas study plans used to include only the United States, Britain, Australia, and other western countries.

The Malaysian strategic plan has created mutual benefits for both Malaysia and the majority of the participating international universities, as it has promoted the commercialization of education and stimulated strong competition between universities. As requested by the Malaysian government, international branch campus universities are private universities that charge high and continually rising tuition fees (generally RM 42,000 to 48,000 per year). Local private universities, mostly opened by Chinese–Malaysians, charge one-half to two-thirds of that amount, but none has gained world-ranking status. Malaysian public universities have low tuition fees and provide quality education with higher employability, but the system has privileged the admission of Malay students, maintaining enrollment quotas for all other nationalities. This uneven quota system has triggered a period of rise and decline of private universities. In contrast, XMUM charges RM 22,000 to 24,000 per year and publicly promises not to use a penny for any commercial usage or to refund its mother university in China, but to invest all its proceeds in local academic research and student scholarships.

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These tuition fees are not without problems, as, statistically, it will take XMUM 30 years to break even. It is not surprising, therefore, that XMUM has been questioned regarding the balance between financially sustainable and noncommercial spirit. Local recruitment professionals also express concerns about sustaining steady income streams and qualified human resources at XMUM in the long run. Well-established British and Australian branch universities, founded one or two decades ago, may prove to be strong competitors in recruitment and enrollment in the future. Finally, without any other shareholders, total ownership by the mother university means reputation but pressure, too. Fortunately, Chinese–Malaysians have anonymously made considerable donations to XMUM since 2013, following the example of patriotic overseas Chinese such as Mr. Tan Kah Kee, the Malaysia-based Chinese tycoon and founder of Xiamen University.

#### **EDUCATION CONSENSUS WITHIN ASEAN AND CHINA**

The Bologna Process has deeply affected the educational systems of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and of China, in particular its ECTS system (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). In 2007, ASEAN countries reached a consensus on degree and credit recognition. In 2016, with the rapid development of economic activities, ASEAN and China agreed to broaden the earlier agreement in order to promote higher education and cultural exchanges. With its ten international branch campuses, Malaysia is one of the leaders within the ASEAN region in terms of exchanges.

A successful model can be copied, and other countries in the region are attempting to emulate Malaysia's approach. Since 2007, Vientiane has authorized Suzhou University (China) to operate in Laos. In 2016, Thailand invited Yunnan University of Finance and Economics (China) to found Bangkok Business School together with Rangsit University. In 2013, against the background of globalization and China's involvement in the broader region, the Chinese government released the *Yi Dai Yi Lu* Framework (the One Belt One Road Policy: A New Silk Road linking Asia, Africa, and Europe). Since then, Chinese universities have been actively operating abroad, including recruiting international students to study in China, particularly ASEAN students. However, the EU model can hardly be replicated because mutual agreements on student exchange and recruitment have not yet been based upon a supragovernmental consensus within ASEAN; for instance, all ASEAN nations have decided to keep working within the Chinese *Yi Dai Yi Lu*, which has the advantage of not being mandatory.

The first Chinese overseas branch campus has therefore been called the "Friendship Bridge between Malaysia and China." According to local recruitment agencies, XMUM fits the educational market of Chinese–Malaysians, but its future operation will greatly depend on the relationship between governments. Tension may be traced back to the Cold War, when communication was discontinued between China and other nations in Southeast Asia. Chinese–Malaysian students in the 61 Independent Chinese Schools of Malaysia, which participate in the "Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School Examination" (UEC), were directly affected by the shutdown of relationships, in that from 1957 they were no longer admitted to Malaysian public universities, a ban that continues today. Since the 1990s, the Malaysian government has reoriented its national policies, shifting from protecting the interests of Malays to adapting to a more diversified ethnic and multicultural reality. The legal framework now protects Chinese–Malaysians, but most Chinese–Malaysian students taking national tests

are not widely enrolled in public universities, as admission quotas there remain the same.

To conclude, the process of founding XMUM reflects a blend of recent educational developments in Malaysia, ASEAN, and China. Even though the branch campus has had a successful start, the expansion of the globalized education market in Asia will mean intense competition in the future—but for that the university is well prepared.

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## Forget the Competition Trope

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Prior to the rise of nationalist populism raising the specter of a dampening of internationalization in higher education, one of the most common tropes in related debates was the idea that there is a global race for international students. The evidence used to support this idea usually includes scholarship programs and international student recruitment schemes, which have been well documented over the years. Both academic and policy literature emphasize the transnational scale of this competition and position it as critical for economic success. Governments have thus been assumed to be intentionally seeking to win the global race by enrolling more students from abroad in their higher education institutions.

What is wrong with this picture? If governments are competing, in the same way that they do when it comes to other areas such as trade and international affairs, we would expect to see some kind of long-term pattern in their actions. That is what University of Toronto doctoral student Emma Sabzalieva and I sought to figure out: have major host countries in the Anglosphere actually engaged in a global race to attract the best international students?

We examined how public policy in Australia, Canada, England, and the United States dealt with international students in higher education between 2000 and 2016. We also looked at how policy frameworks impacting such students

changed over time. These four countries enrolled around 40 percent of all international students in 2015. For each country, we carried out a case study that traced changes in relevant policy over the period investigated, and identified the events associated with policy change. We interpreted the passing of legislation, the introduction of new programs, and relevant policy changes against the political background of each country. In our paper, “The politics of the great brain race: public policy and international student recruitment in Australia, Canada, England and the USA,” recently published in *Higher Education*, we argue that none of these major countries have dealt coherently with international student attraction and retention. Furthermore, the long-term outlook required to cope with the assumed global competition for students is glaringly absent.

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**We examined how public policy in Australia, Canada, England, and the United States dealt with international students in higher education between 2000 and 2016.**

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### INCONSISTENT AND UNCOORDINATED

Our analysis shows that the long-term growth in international student enrollment across the four countries is largely decoupled from policy developments. Although there have been occasional fluctuations, international student enrollment has steadily increased in the four countries during the period in focus, and quite substantially: 226 percent in Canada, 110 percent in Australia, 81 percent in England, and 48 percent in the United States.

A different picture emerges from a review of policies in several sectors that shape the ability of international students to join a higher education institution and potentially remain in the four countries. Despite a shared policy rhetoric that evokes maintaining global competitiveness and attracting talent, none of the countries have maintained a consistent path of facilitating international student recruitment or retention, nor have they sought to pursue improvements in their policies and regulations.

In terms of immigration for example, restrictions on international students have been tightened at different points in time, and well before the onset of Brexit and the Trump administration. In England, for instance, changes to its point-based immigration system early in this decade pe-