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Abstract:

Nations have for years engaged in cultural promotion through specific organizations. A number of these ventures have manifested themselves as formal initiatives for attaining foreign policy goals through programs of higher education. The attention garnered by China's Confucius Institutes has raised the awareness of the possibilities of generating soft power for the nations that launch such pedagogical initiatives. This article, after delineating the psychological dynamics underlying the creation of soft power affect, looks at three programs that have been far less auspicious in this soft-power narrative of education, but nonetheless important. They are America's Fulbright Program, Australia's Colombo Plan and the Soviet Union's Patrice Lumumba University. Each of these was designed to promote both broad and specific foreign policy goals for the sponsor nation during the post-war period. Looking at these cases individually and comparatively yields some essential insights into how nations intentionally attempt to raise their global influence through the medium of higher education.

Key words: education, soft power, culture, power, foreign policy, consistency theory, cognitive dissonance

Introduction

Nations have for years engaged in cultural promotion through specific organizations. A number of these ventures have turned into formal vehicles for attaining foreign policy goals through educational programs. The attention garnered by China's Confucius Institutes has raised the awareness of the possibilities of generating soft power for the nations that sponsor such pedagogical initiatives. This article looks at three programs that have been far less auspicious in this soft-power narrative of education, but nonetheless important. They are America's Fulbright Program, Australia's Colombo Plan and the Soviet Union's Patrice Lumumba University. Each of these was designed to promote both broad and specific foreign policy goals for the sponsor

nation in the post-war period. Looking at these cases individually and comparatively yields some essential insights into how nations intentionally attempt to raise their global influence through the medium of higher education. This article also attempts to delineate the psychological dynamics underlying the creation of soft power affect.

Soft Power and the Geo-Politics of Education:

An already robust literature on the soft power of education has emerged, much of it from a radical perspective. This vision portrays education as a commodity in the capitalist system of trade in services, but this commodity has more robust manifestations for deepening and expanding the capitalist system than others. These manifestations of influence are ideational in that they promote Western values and consumption patterns through prevailing epistemologies. The scholars in this vein see the development of universities and scientific knowledge as inextricably tied to the evolution of capitalism over the past 300 years, a synthesis that has globally commoditized North American and Western European modes of thought, and thus made them a hegemonic foundation of advanced education. In this sense, and consistent with the postulates of postmodern deconstructionists, knowledge is geographically “situated” and consequently value laden. Knowledge, therefore, is a vehicle for cultural assimilation. One common refrain sees the institutions as ingrainning neo-liberal values (self-interest, efficiency in production, and the dominance of private over public spheres) in students that perpetuate the structures of ideational domination, or what Gramsci (1971) would call hegemony (Livingston 2003, Breidlid 2013, Naidoo 2008, Amthor and Metzger 2011, and Adriansen and Madsen 2013).¹

Going beyond this radical perspective, a number of scholars have pointed out the potential of higher education to contribute to the geo-political goals of nations (Nye 2004 and 2005, Adeleke 2008, Atkinson 2010, Bettie 2015, Kramer 2009, Byrne 2016, Lowe 2015, Amiebek and Ydyrys 2014, Yerezhepekova and Torebekova 2019, Hong 2021, Marksimova 2021, Laifer and Kitchen 2017, Wojciuk et. al. 2015, and Tyler and Van Leuven 2020). Using education as a soft-power tool for political purposes has a long tradition in the operations of foreign ministries, one that has increased to the point of it becoming a well-established diplomatic tool for gaining political influence. Well before the appearance of the highpoint of this phenomenon, China’s Confucius Institutes, imperial Britain used the Rhodes Scholarships to promote British values to elite students from around the world. In the U.S. the Fulbright Program financed over 400,000 students from over 150 nations from 1946 to the present (40 of these students went on to become heads of state). In the former Soviet Union, Patrice Lumumba University sought to spread socialist principles among Third World citizens. Australia used

¹ The literature emerges from the more general theme of education as social control. Education is the institutionalization of social hegemony. It creates and reinforces dominant social hierarchies. Much of the work of course is inspired by the logic evident in Gramsci’s (1971) work on hegemony. See Tsvetkova (2008).

education as a foreign policy tool by initiating the Colombo Plan, which brought future leaders of Asia to study in Australia. More recently, the European Union's Erasmus+ Program has emerged as an essential foreign policy tool for united Europe.

The basic logic of this narrative suggests that people gain a particular kind of human capital and affect from cultural immersion as a result of study abroad. Very often these initiatives of foreign-learning experience are regionally focused (as we shall see in the cases below). At the elite level, quite a few programs encourage future leaders in nations of particular interest to live and study in a particular culture hoping that the capital developed will serve the foreign interests of the host nation. A large proportion of world leaders have spent at least some time studying abroad. As of 2022, 62 heads of state studied at universities in the U.S. At the most elite level, such cultural imprinting can have substantial consequences for host nations when political leaders pursue policies that are within the fundamental norms and practices of the host nations, both domestically (e.g., proponents of democracy) and in foreign policy (e.g., policies of free trade). Some glaring examples come in the context of reformism in Russia in the late 1980s in the persons of Aleksandr Yakovlev and Mikhail Gorbachev. Yakovlev studied under David Truman at Columbia University. Many of his ideas developed in his days abroad were a foundation for his work in liberalizing the Soviet Union. Gorbachev, the very spearhead of reform in this period, studied law at Moscow State University, a bastion of liberal and reformist thinking in the Soviet state. Beyond elite actions that attend to goals of core-education centers, the many micro actions that emanate from the great multitude of non-elite students that have been acculturated can also generate an impact on foreign political goals (e.g., foreign enclaves of public support, consuming host-nation products). With respect to foreign policy, this public diplomacy based in cultural immersion through education represents what Lowe (2015, P. 450) identifies as a "shift from state-centric diplomacy to a more fluid set of information flows" (Nye 2004 and 2005, Amiebek and Ydyrys 2014, Yerezhepekova and Torebekova 2019, Admissiionally 2022 and World Education News and Reviews 2018, Marksimova 2021, and Tyler and Van Leuven. 2020).

How it Works Theoretically: The Power of Ideation and Soft Power Impact

How does soft power generate ideations that enhance attraction of particular nations and cultures, and how do these ideations lead to specific actions that enhance their influence? Nye in his many works on soft power has issued celebrated refrains that identify the essence of soft power: *the power to attract or co-opt, the power to shape what others want*. This logic posits a cognitive foundation of soft power. The process itself is entirely ideational or cognitive. Little has been said theoretically about the cognitive foundations of soft power, and how they lead to specific actions that enhance influence. This article attempts to lay some groundwork for understanding the fundamental psychological theory of soft-power creation. We can start with a concept of cognitions (see Figure 1). How we think about people, an organization, a group or even a nation

is the product of the interaction of various dimensions of human thought. A person's moral code dictates how they evaluate actions and people on a deeper ethical plane. Is someone or something right or wrong, good or bad? Beliefs are ideational phenomena that determine how people see the reality of human relations unfolding in the environments in which they live. Theories are logical ideational structures with which people understand the world. Emotions are an important subset of human psychology that determine how one reacts to the world around them. Together these processes modify one another in creating outcomes in the form of how people perceive the environments in which they live. In other words, they create an ideational structure that generates affect (i.e., a cognitive reaction and disposition to what people perceive). Affect will be consistent across cognitions.

Figure 1 about here

Psychological theories of consistency and cognitive dissonance suggest that the human mind generates a stable, homogeneous and integrated structure among its cognitions. So beliefs, principles, theories, emotions and ethical codes are consistent and self-reinforcing. If for example you believe in the ethical sanctity of equal remuneration for labor, you will be less likely to believe that capitalism is best for attaining human progress as a theory and principle. Conversely, if you hold theories and principles that capitalism is a superior economic system, you are likely to think income gaps are not immoral. Any number of permutations can be constructed within a person's network of cognitions, but in all cases there will be some fairly homogenous slant among any number of permutations on any subject that engages the human mind. This accounts for the existence of what psychologists identify as cognitive rigidity among human beings. Once a cognitive structure crystallizes, it produces a stalwart phalanx against clashing ideations or evidence. In a case of potential subversion, the human mind processes any inconsistencies in ways which filter through psychological structures that reduce their impact. Such processes are evident in manifestations of bias. The processes can be either motivated (i.e., ego defensive) or unmotivated (simply cognitive), but both produce powerful psychological obstacles against change. Hence, any affect created in the minds of a person will be quite robust even in the face of heterogeneous experiences and evidence. In many cases, people will likely read disconfirming evidence in a light that is dismissive or critical. People will even misperceive incoming information to conform to strongly held dispositions (e.g., confirmation bias). All the components of cognitions exist in a tightly integrated psychological network that maximizes equanimity and minimizes distress. This cognitive reaction of course is a foundation for human behavior. Hence, ideas or cognitions lead to actions and dispositions to act. (Gawronski 2012 and Cooper 2007).

We can depict affect on a continuum that goes from extreme dislike (antipathy) to assimilation, or what Nye would call co-optation.

Figure 2 about here

An individual's network of cognitions will shift as a consequence of cultural imprinting (see Figure 2).² Any movement toward the right of the continuum of affect will yield actions and dispositions that are favorable to the imprinted culture. Such a movement will circumscribe or bind actions and dispositions in ranges that are superior for that culture. Hence, those individuals will be thinking and acting in ways that are beneficial to the nations that have successfully imprinted their cultures. This process is consistent theoretically with a meta-power approach taken by sociologists and political theorists who study power (Gallarotti 2010 and 2011). Such an approach sees power relations as embedded in greater social structures. The ranges of agency in direct relations among actors are dictated by the boundaries of these meta-structures underlying the relations. Hence observing the outcomes of direct relations between agents tells you little about distributions of power among those actors. In other words, individuals that have been culturally imprinted think and act within boundaries on an affect continuum that are favorable to the nation with soft power (points A1 and A2). Non-imprinted individuals who are, for example, inimical to a particular culture will occupy the far left of the continuum, and thus can be expected to act and think within boundaries that are far less favorable (points H and D). Pushing to the point of the most positive affect, an individual's actions and dispositions are closely aligned with said culture.³ This is a point defined by assimilation.⁴

² This is an adaptation of Nye's (2005, p. 12) diagram on soft power's spectrum of affect. The adaptation is also consistent with the canon of political power established by Dahl (1957): i.e., that power has a relational nature involving interplay between two or more actors. Gallarotti (2010 and 2011), in keeping with this canon, has interpreted relational power as a bargaining space.

³ The relationship defining the convergence of interests and actions is complex. Equally accommodating actions on the part of admiring states may reflect quite different structures of interests among these states and soft-power states. In many cases actions will be driven by a convergence of interests (i.e., actions of deference to a soft power nation may reflect the adoption of similar objectives among soft-power and admiring nations), but accommodating actions by admiring nations may occur without a convergence of interests (i.e., states have different objectives, but admiring nations coalesce to the wishes of soft-power nations out of deference).

⁴ Lennon (2003) presents a number of essays that discuss the fight against terrorism as a contest over imprinting. (i.e., positive imprinting as a wedge against radicalization). Gallarotti (2010) has discussed the soft power of assimilation under the rubric of emulation.

Psychological theories of cognitive consistency generate complementary evidence that the imprinting generates actions that benefit actors enjoying positive affect. Just as cognitions are structured into homogeneous networks, so too will actions be expected to follow suit. Hence any actions taken by imprinted actors will interface perfectly with the interests of the parties that have enjoyed positive affect. The alternative would be radically inconsistent with theories of psychology (i.e., actions that are inconsistent with cognitive networks). In this sense, actions benefiting the latter parties are *ipso facto* a manifestation of influence. If in this vein influence is defined in terms of outcomes, nations enjoying positive affect will occupy a world in which imprinted actors will be behaving in a manner that serve their interests. A stimulus response process is not necessary for them to generate actions that improve their standing of soft-power nations. This soft-power simultaneity is a more nuanced process than that originally conceived by the canons of political power established by Dahl (1957), in which there is temporal disjuncture in the process by which power is exerted.

Education and Cultural Imprinting

The literature on study abroad suggests that such experiences are “transformative” for students. While the relative academic benefits of such programs are debated, there is much less disagreement about the strong and positive affect derived from these visits as a result of cultural imprinting. This affect is often discussed within the categories of *inter-cultural competency*, *cultural IQ* and *acculturation*. There is a greater openness to acceptance of a foreign culture in students that study abroad. The affect ranges from a greater tolerance to outright adoption or emulation. Such cultural immersion deepens students’ affection for the people and cultures they study about and in. Such dispositions lead to far more positive perceptions and actions toward the host cultures and nations, such that behavior is altered evermore in favor of the hosts.

Imprinting in this literature is defined as multidimensional; it is both unidimensional and orthogonal. Under unidimensional imprinting, the individual assimilates extensively into the host culture, while reducing an identification with their original culture. Such a disposition is often manifest as extreme acculturation: e.g., extreme Anglophiles or any other culturally adoptive behavior. Orthogonal imprinting is the distribution of identity across more than one culture. In this case an individual may display bi-dimensional identity (where they identify simultaneous with two culture) or multi-dimensional identity (where identity is distributed across more than two cultures). Cognitively, there will be more of a zero-sum element in identity (i.e., you can’t be more than 100% of any two cultures combined), but not necessarily in consequent actions. In this latter case, acculturation may spur an individual into far greater actions for both cultures than might have otherwise existed from exposure only to the culture of origin. This literature on study abroad is primarily focused on the psychological manifestations of imprinting: suggesting the very strong positive affect that exposure has on individuals who study abroad, rather than delving as extensively into the behavioral manifestations of the positive affect. Of course, in the case of future national leaders, the behavioral manifestations of this positive affect can be large

indeed, as these individuals are positioned to make a large impact on international relations through policy initiatives. But the cumulative micro-manifestations of the affect can have a robust and beneficial impact for host nations as well. In this respect, foreign students become *de facto* agents of their host nations, attending to national interests in a plethora micro-actions, the addition of which yields significant benefits in terms of international influence (Lowe 2015, Doyle 2009, Kamdar and Lewis 2015 and Lee and Negrelli 2018).

Gallarotti (2010, pp. 239-263) has discussed the impact of this imprinting in the context of the global influence of American culture, part of which emanates from its educational institutions. This impact goes on at many different levels, from elite to micro. Perforce, here is much international influence to be derived from the positive affect for American culture. The greater demand for American products raises the real wealth of American companies. The adoption of American practices (language, business procedures) lowers the costs of both travelers and American businesses overseas, once more increasing the real wealth of Americans. The allure of the U.S. as a residence attracts a great many productive and often talented individuals, as well as foreign direct investment: both representing a major boon to the American economy and quality of life in a myriad of ways. The dominance of American ideas produced by its system of higher education creates consensus knowledge that maintains America's global primacy. Such ideas, for example, undergird the major international institutions that run the world economy such as the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization. These organizations essentially promote a liberal-capitalist agenda that accords perfectly with America's economic needs. At the most direct elite level, as noted, national leaders and important functionaries embrace American political and economic norms that keep their nations functioning in ways that are consistent with American political and economic interests. The fundamental idea here is that any nation will benefit extensively from a world that adopts its practices and ways of thinking. In other words, the soft power from cultural imprinting carries a very robust and hard impact.

Studies of exchange programs strongly attest to the significant cognitive and behavioral impact of imprinting. There is overwhelming evidence that foreign exchange students return home to engage in actions and strategies intended to change their societies.⁵ The following quotes from well-connected students abroad capture the extent of this impact.

“Exchanges were a Trojan Horse in the Soviet Union. They played a tremendous role in the erosion of the Soviet system. They opened up a closed society. They greatly influenced younger people who saw the world with more open eyes, and they kept infecting more and more people over the years.” (former KGB General Oleg Kalugin, as quoted in Richmond 2003, p. 32).

⁵ There are a number of these studies. Readers should see Atkinson (2010) for a discussion of their findings and citations.

“Our experiences made us see that there are alternative ways for China to develop and for us to live our personal lives. Being in the United States made us realize that things can be different.” Qian Ning, son of former Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen, as quoted in Atkinson 2010, p. 3)

Colombo Plan

The Colombo plan was a brainchild of commonwealth policy makers, with a leading role adopted by Australia. The 1950s presented critical problems for Australian foreign policy with burgeoning communist and anti-colonial movements arising in the Asian theater. The plan as a greater commonwealth program mirrored the Rhodes concern for buttressing colonial relations. It was abundantly evident at a January 1950 commonwealth meeting discussing foreign policy in Asia, that the specter of communism was ominous after the Chinese revolution of 1949. The region was ripe for communist incursions given the widespread poverty and dislocation from war and colonial life. The initiative in its most direct intentions was a central part of the Menzies administration’s foreign policy to “engage” in Asia as a bulwark against a wave of potentially rising instability in Australia’s principal region of overseas operations. In a greater milieu context, it would cement its relations with western nations, who were its erstwhile allies, and fully aligned with its regional geo-political ambitions. In this respect, it was the outgrowth of a greater Cold War security policy steeped in creating a bloc through economic development. It was an Asian Marshall Plan designed to create a more assertive regional security plan, one that was necessary as a result of the decline of Britain as a regional power after the war and a tradition of establishing a modest regional footprint. The underlying premise of the program was that economic progress was the best way to undermine anti-western ideologies. The Colombo Plan identified as an aid program for Asian nations of strategic interest, but it was far more ambitious in its structure, as its mechanisms were deeply ingrained in all major parts of Australian foreign policy. Its principal architect, Percy Spencer, underscored this pervasive reach by citing it as “a dramatic example of how a small nation...may influence history” (quoted in Oakman 2010, p. 3). Indeed, it was very much a product of a small nation (Australia) in terms of design and management, even though a large financial burden was shouldered by the U.S. and Great Britain. Originally designed to invite foreign students to study in Australia with an emphasis on long-term training, over the years the program evolved in its mandate and functions: in the 1990s (the New Colombo Plan) shifting to more short-term advanced skills education and experience sharing, and now making arrangements for Australian nationals to study in Asian nations, hence creating a two-way flow in education-based immersion. Some 40,000 Asian-Pacific students came to study in Australia under the old Plan. The New Plan supports some 10,000 Australian students a year for study abroad (Lowe 2015, Adeleke 2008 and Oakman 2010).⁶

⁶ Laidler and Kitchen (2017) have identified a branding scheme for the New Plan that has been designed to augment the positive affect through strategies of product diversification.

On an ideational level, the plan was built to disseminate western ideas and norms as a means of undermining the attraction of a communist ideology: this being accomplished by instilling “the virtues of Australian culture and democracy” (Oakman 2010, p. 90). The guts of the more general Australian dissemination (or as some preferred to call it, propaganda) machine were made up of four distinct but interactive components: communication outreach (Radio Australia—the regional equivalent of the U.S.’ Voice of America), visual (films and documentaries) and print media (magazines, books and newspapers), cultural exchange (sports, arts and journalism), and education (hosting students from Asian countries in institutions of higher learning). This information offensive in the service of foreign policy was administered by what was called the Overseas Planning Committee. Interestingly the substance of imprinting was affirmative and benign. Competing and adversarial ideologies were to be combatted with positive content and affirmations of a particular culture, rather than a smear campaign against hostile competitors. Hence, the approach was archetypically one of soft power: cultivating goodwill through constructive engagement. Perforce, the “battle for the Asian mind” would be marshalled on a playing field of goodwill and pleasant experiences (Lowe 2015, Adeleke 2008 and Oakman 2010).

The educational branch of the ideological offensive was largely administered by the Commonwealth Office of Education. A principal vehicle was the South-East Asian Scholars program. It originally targeted a limited number of regional nations, but as time went on, it was expanded even beyond the Asian theater of interest.⁷ The curriculum was fairly diverse within a STEM and vocational context, with principal studies in fields such as nursing, water conservation, civil engineering and agriculture. Here the program revealed its roots in economic development, as the ideas and training would hopefully be channeled into activities that would allow the students to actively implement the ventures of western progress in their home nations.⁸ Moreover, there was an elite aspect to the education. It was expected that many of the students would go on to occupy positions of political, social and economic influence when returning to their home nations. Such individuals would be strategically positioned to effect changes in their societies that would bring the latter into conformity with western interests. This “snowball effect,” as one Australian functionary put it, was well promoted by the admissions and immigration policies of the program. This strategy placed a great value on creating “networks of influence” within groups so as to serve Australian foreign objectives. Most of the students were men from educated families. This was a demographic that was well positioned to rise in the hierarchy of influence in patriarchal Asian nations. Admissions were combined with a repatriation rule that insisted that students return immediately to their home nations upon

⁷ There was already an educational boom going on outside of the program, as many privately supported Asian students were studying in Australia. In the early years of the program, the ratio favored private over Colombo students at of 5 to 1 (Oakman 2010, p. 179).

⁸ In fact, the role of cultural programs and equipment supply grew in importance relative to some of the conventional aid programs in the Plan. As time went on, money was increasingly shifted from the latter to the former (Oakman 2010, p. 181).

completion of their studies in Australia, thus eliminating any possibilities of brain drain to a more alluring location (Oakman 2010 and Byrne 2016).⁹

The Plan joined an educational component with a vigorous experiential one. More than courses of study, Colombo scholars were treated to a privileged living and social environment. Many students boarded in comfortable private homes with select Australian families. A fairly extensive social calendar was offered, in which they would attend various functions in Australian society. These arrangements were overseen by the Coordinating Committee for the Welfare of Overseas Students. The government even went into partnership with private organizations in providing a social infrastructure: Rotary Clubs, University Clubs, Apex Clubs, YMCAs and the Asian Student Council. It is little wonder that the Colombo scholars achieved celebrity status in Australian higher education and society. The social integration of Colombo students was crucial in another respect for Australia's foreign milieu goals in the greater Asian theater.¹⁰ Demographic structures in the region showed a stark division between white/Christian Australians and non-Christian people of color. Race and ethnic relations among nations of the region were fundamental to all dimensions of foreign affairs. Hence, Australia required some demonstrative proof that racial and religious differences could be bridged so as to create strong diplomatic bonds. The Colombo program was an overt signal that Australia embraced social equality and racial diversity, hence a potent weapon in a cultural offensive.¹¹ This was all the more necessary for a nation whose majority in the early years of the Plan did not demonstrate either virtue. The integration plan also included a program for technical experts to visit and live in Asian nations of interest (doctors, engineers, mechanical technicians), and undertake specific development projects. By the mid-1960s, over 500 such experts had worked in some 650 projects in these nations (Byrne 2016 and Oakman 2010).

Aside from arranging the exchange of tens of thousands of students over its history, the Plan created strong inroads into the inner sanctums of influential Asian political and social circles through its elite alums: Boediono, 11th Indonesian Vice President; Dato' Hajji Abdul Ghani Bin Othman, former Chief Minister of the Johor state in Malaysia; Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, former Maoist rebel and Prime Minister of Nepal; Ong Teng Cheong, fifth President of Singapore; Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Joseph Pairin Kitingan, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Rural Development of Sabah, Malaysia; as well as numerous other individuals of high achievement in government, media, academia and science. Beyond the direct impact of elite

⁹ The "Trojan horse" metaphor is especially appropriate for the elite effect of the plan: students returning home as important functionaries in the interests of the host nation (Laidler and Kitchen (2017, p. 818).

¹⁰ Lowe (2015, p. 449) sees this "vernacular internationalism" as an essential component of Australian public diplomacy.

¹¹ Lowe (2015, p. 454) refers to the demographic intent of the Plan as being based in a "bottom up" process aimed at "disentangling... White Australia policy."

alums, evidence suggests that at a broader level the cultural interfacing of the Plan has promoted Australian interests significantly in a number of ways.¹² Important industry links have been drawn across fields from business to education, these links being manifest in the development of industrial connections and university partnerships. National labor forces have been diversified and enhanced. Social and human capital has been augmented: i.e., human skills have been enhanced and communities have been deepened. Economies have been positioned to better integrate into a globalizing world. In terms of the broadest dimension of foreign policy: the cultural interpenetration and goodwill achieved stand as platforms from which nations can build cooperative networks and obtain accommodations from one another, thus making regional relations more harmonious (Byrne 2016, Lowe 2015, Hong 2021 and Tran and Bui 2021).¹³

Patrice Lumumba University

Patrice Lumumba University, later renamed Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN), was founded in Moscow on February 5, 1960 as a beacon of Soviet internationalism in the Cold War. It was an outgrowth of the Soviet pivot to the Third World, as decolonization left a political void that the Soviets sought to fill in their struggle for global supremacy, a pivot embodied in Khrushchev's rubric of "Peaceful Coexistence." Both sides in the Cold War became convinced that in order to get a greater foothold in the new political vacuum of the South, progress in newly independent nations should be embedded within a "cultural identity." Consequently, within its general mission of promoting communist progress, the Soviets institutionalized an ideological weapon to capture hearts and minds in the Third World, one that would contest western initiatives such as the Colombo Plan and Fulbright scholarships. Its appeal to newly independent states in the South was evident in its tripartite pedagogical creed of internationalism, anti-colonialism and the importance of science and technology. The University was a creation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Council of Ministers. Intended to be a center for promoting development in the Third World, its educational mission also contained a mandate of ideological evangelism for communism, evincing a large footprint of the Soviet Associations Union of Friendship and Intercultural Relationships. Its launching motto of "We Unite with Knowledge" manifested a banner of strategic union within an institutional vessel of education. Originally, the curriculum featured a blend of practical and ideological training in the form of six faculties: engineering, history and philology, medicine, agriculture, science, and law and economics. The mission was expanded in the 1990s with the addition of a number of new subject areas, as well as with pre- and post-university education. As with the Colombo Plan, a greater fabric of social and intellectual reinforcement was considered necessary to promote the ideological mission. In addition to its formal classroom regimen, the University offered extensive

¹² Hence the "Trojan horse" effect (students returning home as functionaries in the interests of the host nations) cited by Laidler and Kitchen (2017, 818) occurred in both demographics.

¹³ Of course, some take a more critical approach to the achievements of the Plan. See for example (Laidler and Kitchen 2017).

extra-curricular activities designed to reinforce specific and general learning objectives. These activities included cultural functions, political events, conferences, seminars, excursions and holidays; all were hoped would enhance the positive affect among foreign students for the Soviet Union and communism. From its founding, it claims to have graduated some 200,000 students (Kret 2013, Katsakioris 2019 and RUDN 2022).

The Cold War would be fought simultaneously in the battle trenches of proxy wars and in institutions of higher education.¹⁴ The Soviet Union had already established a tradition for educating future communist leaders, revolutionaries and engaged civilians. The Communist University for Toilers of the East and The Lenin International School were founded in 1921 and 1926 respectively to carry out this mission. Aside from inculcating communist philosophies for the purpose of fomenting communist movements and insurgencies in the Third World, their curricula also acknowledged the importance of technical training, as ideology and progress were closely aligned in the mind of Soviet planners. Their missions were carried on by later institutions such as the Higher Party School of the Communist Party and the Komsomol School for Foreigners. The educational intervention in the Third World was part of a greater strategic initiative that sought to form greater interdependencies among developing nations and the Soviet Union. This greater penetration was done on a diplomatic, military and economic front. The ideological component was part and parcel of a strategic security program (Kret 2013).

Promoting economic development particularly, similarly to the Colombo Plan, was seen as a wedge for creating political solidarity among nations in regions of strategic interest. As Katsakioris (2019, p. 285) states,

“Fostering political and economic ties with non-communist countries, which in most cases advocated anti-imperialism or socialism, was intended to encircle the capitalist world and accelerate the march of communism towards victory. A further assumption was that the USSR, with its experience in ‘modernizing’ the backward Tsarist empire, could serve as a model and transfer its knowledge to less developed countries. The latter, it was further assumed, would acknowledge Moscow’s authority and respond to solidarity with gratitude.”

The creation of an independent university for the purposes of public diplomacy was essential. Just as Colombo planners crafted a fully integrated set of educational and social

¹⁴ U. S. Department of Education official Oliver Caldwell succinctly captured the essence of the academic Cold War when he stated that “a principal arena for the contest between the two great ideologies of our generation will be the classrooms around the world” (Quoted in Kret 2019, p. 242).

experiences for their foreign students, so too did the Soviet counterpart attempt such a comprehensive plan.¹⁵ If the Soviets merely sought to train technical experts, scientists, physicians, future leaders and political activists; opening programs in existing universities would have been a superior option. The existing schools were on a whole consistently better institutions across fields, as well as having more prestige. They had long established programs, elite faculty and courses that were tried and tested.¹⁶ But integrating Lumumba students, in the same way the Colombo Plan did, would have cut against the whole intention of creating positive affect for communism and the Soviet Union as a nation. Segregation allowed students to interact within controlled spheres so as to avoid any exposure to outside individuals that might undermine the indoctrination process. The curriculum could be tailored to address specific needs of new independent nations, rather than those of existing universities which were not conceptualized in the context of development and the mission of public diplomacy. In this respect, the curriculum could be better integrated to deliver the intended skills and psychology. Furthermore, blending into Soviet society without a roadmap meant exposure to a great many elements that might undo the positive affect. Soviet society had its racist elements and of course the quality of life throughout Moscow was measurably inferior to that in large western cities. Segregation allowed the Soviets to better orchestrate exposure to Soviet society and education, hence achieve “indoctrination without contamination.” Separation made it more possible to build an island of enlightenment in a sea of deprivation. In support of the social network, the University created national associations. The creation of foreign fraternities eased the students into an otherwise unfamiliar landscape. One of the other functions of course served by these associations was to reinforce the circumscription of the students from the rest of Soviet society (Kret 2013).

Training future leaders, political functionaries and activists was a priority for the University from the beginning. Newly independent nations would be shedding the administrative fabric of colonial managers, and their replacements would be highly educated individuals. Soviet attention to the role of training elites was raised all the more by the prevailing narrative among economists that investments in human capital yielded superior returns to investment in physical capital. Carrying an abundant political wardrobe in their intellectual baggage was seen as crucial to communist incursions into the newly independent world in the global south. The appeal of the University as magnet for southern students was enhanced by its admissions and repatriation policies, consistent with socialist socio-economic equality and internationalism, qualities that made nations pleased to send some of their best minds to Moscow. Furthermore, recruiting heavily from poor and working class families made the University a model for socialist class

¹⁵ While the University attended to local training, the Soviet government undertook a vigorous program of academic exportation. During the Cold War some 450 state-sponsored schools and 67 state-sponsored institutions of higher education were established (Tsvetkova 2008, p. 205).

¹⁶ Katsakioris (2019) offers evidence that, in fact, the reputation and curricular offerings of the University were historically inferior to existing universities in the Soviet Union. The educated community in the country looked disparagingly at the reputation of the University.

relations.¹⁷ Moreover, students were expected to repatriate soon after their studies where completed. This counterpoised western programs that were seen as elitist and corrupt. Ostensibly, this fulfilled the needs of newly independent nations comparatively well, as accomplished individuals returned home to help their nascent countries. Hence, both sides of the purported western brain drain (pull and push factors) were mitigated with education in Moscow (Kret 2013 and Katsakioris 2019). Indeed, the University never compromised this mission of leadership training, as is evident in its present mission statement

“Uniting people of different cultures by knowledge RUDN University creates leaders to make the World better.” (RUDN 2022)

In terms of impact, evidence suggests that the U.S. won the elite pedagogical Cold War. American educated students fared better at occupying positions of social and political influence in developing nations. Much of this owes to differing admissions targeting, with the U.S. aiming more aggressively at students already in dominant groups (the Soviets were far more egalitarian of course). But crucial inroads were made into the temples of power. The Russian educated cadre made its most significant inroads into three types of nations: socialist nations, nations undergoing liberation movements and in poor nations with small populations. The Soviet alumni were especially visible in political opposition movements.¹⁸ Some 30 such movements were founded and led by Soviet alumni. The list of prominent alumni of Lumumba/RUDN University also attests to the significant footprint of Soviet higher education: Karim Massimov, former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan; Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and Palestinian National Authority; Fatima Abdel Mahmoud, leader of the Sudanese Socialist Democratic Union; Ilich Ramírez Sánchez (Carlos the Jackal), Venezuelan terrorist and assassin; Timoleón Jiménez, leader of FARC; Porfirio Lobo, President of Honduras; Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua; Alexei Navalny, Russian lawyer, political activist and politician; Hifikepunye Pohamba, former President of Namibia and Bharrat Jagdeo, Former President of Guyana, among other notables (Tsvetkova 2008).

Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program was one of many American academic vehicles used to fight the ideological Cold War. No government was more active and profligate in this cause. The initiative reflected early cold warrior concerns that aside from a strategic balance, the struggle for supremacy also was a “battle for men’s minds and men’s allegiance” (American Secretary of State Dean Acheson in 1950, quoted in Tsvetkova 2008, p. 199). Using exchange programs as a

¹⁷ Quotes for admission were 70-80% from poor and working families, 15% from the middle class and 5% from the upper class (Tsvetkova 2013, P. 203).

¹⁸ In terms of raw numbers, the Soviets fared comparatively well. During the Cold War Soviet-government-sponsored programs educated some 500,000 students, compared to 600,000 for American counterparts (Tsvetkova 2008, p. 208).

foreign policy tool is a strategy that has been deeply ingrained in American foreign policy bureaucracies for some time.¹⁹ Within the cacophony of America's pedagogical offensive, the Fulbright Scholars Program (FSP) stood in a most illustrious position. It was the most extensive government-sponsored program of foreign education ever instituted. The architect J. William Fulbright envisioned it as one of the U.S.'s most potent weapons to subvert communist ideas and practices.²⁰ His vision that education could bind the heart and mind was evoked by his experience as a Rhodes scholar and his evaluation of the Boxer Indemnity Remission scholarships: both instituted to consolidate colonial ties. The confluence of history and his experiences led to a quest to make the U.S. a major player in consolidating world peace in the aftermath of the bloody war that concluded with the specter of nuclear Armageddon. The program established an identity that would remain strong throughout its history: students would become ambassadors, even if "unaware." The domestic battle over government-sponsored educational activities was neatly resolved by making the program a part of America's "public diplomacy toolbox." Charging the program with a political function was necessary to gain legislative support. The program came in on a post-war and Cold War public diplomatic onslaught for controlling global ideological dissemination. It was another Cold-War "media" resource along with Voice of American radio, American-sponsored schools, American sponsored libraries and the International Leader Visitor Program. While historically plagued by a conflicting mandate of propaganda and academic impartiality, it is clear from the history of administration that the program's charge was embedded in a state bureaucratic infrastructure. It has been administered through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the State Department. In foreign nations, it has been administered by bi-national committees, but in their absence it has been overseen by the Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO) of the local U.S. Embassy. Besides reporting to the State Department, the CAO has also been answerable historically to USIA—a bureau more directly connected to the dissemination of pro-U.S. information (Atkinson 2010, Bettie 2015 and Jeffrey 1987).

From its origins, the program's selection process was envisioned as elite: being highly competitive. The participants were to be of high academic achievement: graduate-student level for foreign candidates and holders of at least a B.A. for American students. Selection was based on a number of other factors besides achievement. Young candidates were preferred to old. Candidates were to be optimally fit to integrate well into the host society: with strict language requirements, demonstrated social responsibility and demonstrated abilities to adjust to foreign living conditions. Selection was based heavily upon the potential success of candidates in their chosen projects, but American national interests defined the broader outlines within which

¹⁹ See for example U.S. White House, *National Security Strategy* 2006. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice issued language that is glaringly evident of the official narrative of American national security: "every foreign student attending one of our universities represents an opportunity to enhance democracy in America and to strengthen the cause of freedom abroad" (quoted in Atkinson 2010, p. 3).

²⁰ William Fulbright showed great legislative perspicacity in using creative financing for the program through war debts and selling surplus war material (Jeffrey 1987).

selections would be made. In other words, the investment here was in creating extremely accomplished individuals in their chosen fields, thus enhancing their entry into the ranks of influential citizens. But the fields would coincide with broader national objectives mandated by the various foreign Fulbright commissions and their American counterparts in the Department of State (Johnson and Colligan 1965).

The program shared a two-way flow of academic ambassadors, but Fulbright exported candidates in far greater proportion to its visitors. The program was far more open to intellectual experiences than the two previous cases of Colombo and Lumumba. It was designed to spread the wealth among candidate ambassadors and gave free reign to activities. Unlike the other two programs, where it was principally for young adult students who had to study at a university or several universities, Fulbright targeted all types of intellectual activities: teachers, students in higher education, professionals and scholars. Of the three pedagogical offensives discussed in this article, the U.S.'s was most directed at creating an elite in target nations, one whose affect for the U.S. would be actualized through direct control over policies and other centers of direct influence in society. Even more than the two previous offensives, the U.S. education policy aimed especially at elite students that would go on to be well positioned in their societies: what in the literature on Fulbright is referred to as taking from and injecting into "key circles." This is most evident in the demanding leadership standards for applicants: i.e., being of high academic achievement, having a compelling project or research agenda, demonstrating social responsibility and possessing leadership qualities. These students were a better bet to rise into positions of power; many of them were already in dominant social groups. Fulbright also fully exploited the potential for top-down cultural diffusion. The American pedagogical offensive, far more than the other two offensives, created a vertical system of production and an ancillary military function. Upstream production of foreign scholars represented preparatory training at the many secondary institutions so as to enhance the transition from lower to higher levels of education (i.e., reinforcing reading, writing and language skills). The downstream was manifest in study opportunities in U.S. institutions of higher education. The military function came in the form of foreign enrollments at elite U.S. military training institutions.²¹ Hence, the system was designed to produce a military wing necessary to fight against subversive political movements, protect democratic regimes and create strong states. The military education was largely administered through the Military Assistance Program. But unlike the other programs, the focus was not on developing and newly formed nations: the targets were global across socio-economic ranges in development. Moreover, unlike the other programs, allegiance through technical training was not a priority. Fulbright was less interested in promoting development (Bettie 2015 and Kramer 2009).

In terms of impact, the notable alumni and output of Fulbright were quite significant. Over 400,000 individuals from over 155 nations have participated in the program since 1946.

²¹ On the impact of military exchanges, see especially Atkinson (2010) and Cope (2005).

Included in the participants are 61 Nobel prize recipients, 89 Pulitzer prize winners and 40 heads of state (Fulbright U.S. Student Program 2022). Indeed, as intended, the program produced the formidable phalanx of defenders of liberal and capitalist values that the founders and supporters had envisioned. Studies of U.S. student exchange attest to the impact that programs such as Fulbright have had on these visiting students. The findings suggest that returning students were transformed by their cultural and educational experiences, and as a result became actively animated in bringing about change in their home nations (Atkinson 2010; Selltiz, Christ, Havel and Cook 1963; and Richmond 2003).

Implications for the Anatomy of Pedagogical War

The search for patterns in these cases stands as a crucial-case study of soft power as manifest in the war of pedagogy. Given the Cold War shadow under which these programs were conceptualized and executed, they represent a quest for soft power at the most extreme level, given the stakes of ideological influence in such an intense strategic competition. Under much more innocuous geo-strategic circumstances, the battle over minds would yield neither salient nor conspicuous outcomes. Indeed, it was the importance of cultural immersion for Cold War strategy that made these cases so instructive about the quest for soft power through the vehicle of education.

The findings from the case studies suggest that states are rational and systematic in attending to important foreign policy goals through pedagogical programs, and that these programs had a significant impact on targeted demographics. In each of these cases, the protagonist nation reached its zenith in the investment on soft power resources, with the targets for each matching its relative power endowments. The emerging hegemon of the system (the U.S.) went for a global immersion, as it had the resources to reach beyond specific regions. The Soviets and Australians (Commonwealth) took a more modest approach by targeting developing and decolonizing nations: with their more limited geographic reach being proportional to their hard and soft resources. The superpowers competed for new allies within the competition of bipolarization. Australia was looking for regional stability in its own sphere of influence. However, in all cases, filling gaps in Cold War allegiance by soliciting newly formed and developing nations was a prime objective.

Furthermore, all three case embraced in differing degrees an elite model of power: effecting change from the top down. The U.S. was the most invested in a top down or “trickle down” ideological impact, targeting candidates that would occupy positions of influence in their respective societies. The Soviets were most enthusiastic about having communist revolutionaries and political functionaries at the top, but they also vigorously pursued “trickle up” targets by aiming largely at working class families. Moreover, the targets were dictated by differing demographic receptiveness. The principles of communism resonated far more with groups lower

on the socio-economic scale. Conversely, the Western capitalist vision was far more compelling for influential groups in their respective societies. The Australians fell more in the middle of the socio-economic targeting continuum. It is in this aspect that we see glaring evidence of soft-power impact. The programs on a whole boasted a plethora of influential alumni that carried out official duties and activities in ways that promoted the ideologies of their respective educational host nations.

Many of the pedagogical operations were based in the idea and realization of material progress or wealth. The Soviets and Australians largely oriented their curriculums around teaching skills that would allow the societies of visiting students to develop technologically and economically. In this respect, the ideologies would be consecrated by material advancements. For the U.S. the allure was pinned to the shining example of the great capitalist miracle in the Western hemisphere. The demographic targeting also had an element of protecting the status that influential families already had by preserving a system of private property and inherited wealth.

All three programs were as much exercises in cultural immersion as they were educational in nature. All the programs conceived and maintained systems of cultural integration by hosting foreign students, scholars and professionals. The Colombo program had an extensive social architecture built into plans for visiting guests. Lumumba had a more restricted and carefully managed program of selective exposure. For the U.S., given its relative prosperity, especially in locations of higher education, the U.S. could sit back and allow greater freedom in how and where visitors resided.

The Fulbright and Colombo programs, far more than Lumumba, represented a two-way path to achieving ideological primacy. Most of the traffic went into the protagonist nations, but much (especially with Fulbright) was also exported in ways that led to strategic impacts. In the case of Colombo, technical experts were exported to promote and intensify technological progress that was seen as enhancing the attractiveness of the ideology. In the case of Colombo, the feedback impact came in the form of technical expertise that would enhance development in the target nations. In the case of the U.S., American visitors abroad, through secondary education services, created a fertile ground for improving the human capital of prospective visitors among foreign students: i.e., future international students in the U.S.

Conclusions

In summary, the pedagogical offensives discussed in this article stood as archetypal manifestations of “war by other means.” They embodied “soft” wedges for bolstering the respective influence of the protagonist nations. Rather than achieving primacy through the harder instruments of threat and violence, these nations set about conditioning the minds of target

audiences in ways that brought about a strategic state of affairs in which their most vital national interests would be protected and maintained into the future of an uncertain world. Each program reflected very specific foreign policy goals, generally dictated by the position that each nation occupied in the international structure of power. In this sense, education played a direct role in very particularistic strategic thinking. Geo-politics was played out on a field that complemented military power: competition for ideological domination among specific demographics and the elites within those groups. Evidence suggests that these pedagogical offensives made an indelible impact on targeted populations, and in doing so accomplished some erstwhile hopes of their architects.

Moreover, commonalities among these initiatives suggest that there are certain essential conditions that promote soft power and hence success in enhancing national influence through education. First, nations should target the geographic breath of the programs proportionally to their resources and to the geo-strategic context that most affects their national interests. Second, the demographic targeted must accord with the narratives comprising the ideologies: i.e., the visions must accord with the particularistic interests of the target audiences. Third, soft power strategies work all the better when embedded in hard power resources and incentives: i.e., material benefits raise the affect generated by the pedagogies. This supports the dominant thinking regarding the state of soft power today: that the best strategies for maximizing state influence are to aim at blending an optimal mix of soft and hard power (i.e., smart or cosmopolitan power).²² Finally, pedagogies themselves must be bolstered by complementary experiences. It is not enough to teach individuals about the redeeming qualities of a culture, the individuals must also experience the culture through physical immersion for maximum positive affect. Learning is insufficient to generate optimal affect, and hence pedagogy must be delivered through very specific living experiences.

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²² Gallarotti (2010) has developed a formal model of optimal power diversification among hard and soft power.

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