

1981

Education As A Strategy in Foreign Policy of the United States

Ghulam M. Haniff
St. Cloud State College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/jmas>



Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Haniff, G. M. (1981). Education As A Strategy in Foreign Policy of the United States. *Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science*, Vol. 47 No.2, 24-26.

Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/jmas/vol47/iss2/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science by an authorized editor of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Education As A Strategy in Foreign Policy of the United States

GHULAM M. HANIFF*

ABSTRACT — The role of international education as an element in the foreign policy strategy of the United States is examined from the end of World War II until the late sixties. It is hypothesized that education was used as a convenient device during the period of the Cold War for conducting international relations when the battle for men's minds was being fought by the superpowers. Data presented indicates that with the intensification of the Cold War, a greater interest was expressed in international educational projects.

As an instrument of the United States foreign policy, education was conceived as a convenient format for the achievement of both long range and short term national goals, through the development of a common framework for elite socialization and the articulation of a positive image of the United States around the world.

During the Cold War, activities endorsed by the American public and government officials included programs involving cross-national educational enterprise. There was a feeling among political decision-makers that the task of conducting American foreign relations could be facilitated by using education as a national tool, to be exercised in a complex age for winning friends and influencing people in other lands. This paper attempts to analyze the role of international education as such a foreign policy instrument.

Belief in the efficacy of education as a means for creating the good society has been pervasive in America, as attested by the enormous expenditure of resources for that purpose. Many political decision makers therefore became convinced that similar results could be achieved on a worldwide basis.

Postwar reconstruction provided opportunities for adoption of novel strategies in the conduct of foreign relations consistent with the changing cultural and political realities of the time. Indeed, Henry Kissinger in a 1960 book suggested that policy-making in a revolutionary age required new strategies for the realization of national goals if a nation was to persist and endure as a great power.

That education was to be an innovative mechanism for the attainment of foreign policy objectives as proposed by Senator Fulbright in the midst of military demobilization from World War II with legislation to "commit the United States government deeply to international education but, at the same time, in a sophisticated way to integrate such educational activity into foreign policy of the nation." Twenty years later President Lyndon Johnson, reflecting on the rapidly changing international tempo, articulated a new commitment when he persuasively echoed Fulbright in a message to the Congress (1966). That message said, "Education lies at the heart of every nation's hopes and purposes. It must be at the heart of our international relations Ideas, not armaments, will shape our lasting prospects for peace. The conduct of our foreign policy will advance no faster than the

curriculum of our classrooms Let this nation play its part . . . to stimulate exchange with students and teachers of other lands, to assist the progress of education in developing nations, to strengthen our capacity for international educational cooperation."

The American response directed towards using educational resources was appropriately timed, because the form and substance of international politics were undergoing transformation so drastic that relations between actor nations, their goals, and the means utilized in the pursuit of these goals also were experiencing fundamental changes.

Education an early postwar effort

Incredibly, one of the first bills to be passed by both houses of the congress during early postwar calculation of foreign policy objectives was legislation authorizing international education by Public Law 584 of the 79th Congress. This bill was designed so that "international understanding could be brought about through international and scholarly interchange between the United States and other countries. Preceding the Marshall Plan, the Fulbright Act was signed by President Truman on August 1, 1946, as a small step towards instituting education as an integral part of the foreign policy process. Though a considerable sum of money was involved, it attracted scant attention. As the first substantial piece of legislation concerning educational exchange, its potential was not realized until much later. Only the New York Times (September 14, 1946) was moved to editorialize after a few weeks on possible impact of the measure as "a constructive forward looking step that seems certain to improve international understanding."

The Fulbright Act of 1946 was restricted in scope because of its focus on the countries for which foreign currencies were available as a means of support. Congressional travel abroad later convinced lawmakers to develop a greatly expanded program to combat ignorance abroad about the United States. The Smith-Mundt Act, (1948) created a com-

*GHULAM M. HANIFF, faculty member in the Department of Social Science at St. Cloud State University did doctoral work at Case Western Reserve University after having received the B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Minnesota. Besides teaching, he has been the campus foreign student advisor at St. Cloud State University.

prehensive framework for educational exchange financed directly with dollar appropriations from the congress. Besides expanding the Fulbright program, it specifically directed the Secretary of State to "utilize to the maximum extent practicable, the services and facilities of private agencies through contractual arrangements or otherwise and encourage participation by the maximum number of different agencies in each field consistent with the present or potential market for their services in each country." Eventually major portions of the exchange program were administered by private agencies under contract with the Department of State. Institutions of higher learning benefited from this act as a valuable source of funds, but their role was construed to be a necessary vehicle for establishing direct (non-governmental) contacts with people in transnational intercourse.

Conceptual problems are implicit in any discussion of education, profoundly so under the classification devised by the Department of State, in which education, culture and information had been lumped together into a single scheme. Though these activities are inter-related, international education as used in this paper pertains to intellectual activities as distinct from performing arts (culture) and propaganda (information). Though a multitude of meanings may be attached to the term "international education," it generally refers to movements of people across national boundaries for the purpose of acquiring skills, attitudes, beliefs and ideas in a systematically organized and deliberate fashion. Educational exchange was seen as a process with long term objectives designed to affect values and capabilities which are international in terms of perspectives gained through actual experience in other countries. As an instrument of the American foreign policy, international education was to provide a format for the emergence of national leadership well versed in the idiosyncracies of foreign cultures so that relations with other nations could be based on more realistic foundations. It was reasoned that through exposure to American education, a proportion of foreign elite also would come to share a common frame of reference with American decision-makers, to the advantage of U.S. national interests.

The expansion of international facilities for the interchange of ideas, scholars and students became startling and diffusive during two decades, opening hitherto unexplored channels of communication. But the potential and possibility as a resource in the foreign policy objectives was only gradually realized, Stewart Fraser wrote in 1965. Manipulation of the student exchanges by the Soviet Union for ideological reasons also became an example of nationalistic goals being pursued through international education, according to statements by Joseph Mestenhauer and Fraser himself in that volume.

Blatant indoctrination may not have existed in the free world, but studies have indicated that foreign students on their return home often were repositories of "progressive" ideas, that is, expressing appreciation for the ethics of hard work, democracy, market economy, and modernity; while the American student returning from overseas were considered to be more "liberal" in reports of 1955, 1962, and 1964.

In arrangements for exchanges, particular emphasis was given to fields "which fulfilled country needs and U.S. objectives," the Department of State said in a 1950 statement.

Between 1947 and 1970, Fulbright exchanges totaled 112,151, with 35,797 American and 76,354 foreign recipients. The American policy-makers at least viewed the

Fulbright grantees as a reservoir for leadership to the nation.

Government assessment of sponsored program

Despite funding difficulties at times, the Department of State considered its educational exchange to be successful in terms of individuals who completed graduate work as Fulbright scholars in the United States, citing such luminaries as a minister of education in Sweden, a Singapore ambassador to the United Nations, the director of a nuclear research center in Israel, plus innumerable members of parliaments, ministers, diplomats, leaders in professional fields and academicians. Follow-up studies, while not exact, indicate that in every country covered by the exchange program, later top leadership included United States educated persons.

Moreover the Fulbright framework provided a format for organizing seminars on American civilization, some of permanent nature, like the Salzburg Seminar and the Bologna Center for American Studies in Europe. A tally made in 1964 listed 116 academic chairs, 338 courses, and 70 seminars on American studies in Europe alone. Universities in Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Malaysia also instituted programs in American studies years ago, and studies of American civilization have flourished around the world with American funding.

Another effort considered to be a crucial variable in the long range United States policy was the Foreign Language Training and Area Studies Program. One phase was for overseas study funded under the Fulbright program and the other for study in this country financed through the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Through these activities, it was hoped, manpower resources could be developed for the internationalization of university and college curricula. At another level, programs were developed consisting mainly of public school teachers and pupils.

Millions of school children reached

Beyond the exchange of elementary and high school teachers, it was estimated that by 1966 about 5 million American children had either been taught in their own schools by a foreign teacher or by an American teacher returned from an exchange experience abroad; and about 8 million children abroad had been taught either directly by an American teacher or by their own teachers returned from interchange experience in the United States that reached more than 80,000 schools in 17,000 communities.

In the magnitude of budgetary allocation and official sponsorship, programs cited above constitute the core of the international educational exchange, but there is considerable community involvement as well as support.

Programs without governmental sponsorship also exist

In 1970, 144,708 foreign students were reported enrolled in the United States institutions of higher education, the great bulk funded on their own. Only 4 percent has official sponsorship under auspices of the United States government, but all foreign students could be beneficiaries of various programs funded by the Department of State through the Fulbright-Hayes Act of 1961 authorizing use of federal funds to improve experiences of the foreign students through services of educational guidance, personal counseling, community hospitality, travel aid and the like.

Over the years following the end of the Korean war, both the number of students coming to the United States and American students going abroad increased greatly. As shown American students going abroad increased greatly, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 — Cross-rational students, 1957 - 1971

Year	Foreign Students in the U.S.	American Students Abroad
1956	29,044	6,700
1961	53,107	15,306
1966	93,000	18,200
1971	144,708	35,100

In the total context of complex governmental activities, the exchange programs of the Department of State constitute only one of the several schemes with educational and scholarly components to impact upon the conduct of international relations.

Some of these programs, rationally, were instituted with particular objectives in mind, being planned and carried out with the purpose of achieving specific effects in and with other countries in a framework of broadly conceived foreign policy objectives.

During the decade of the sixties explosive growth took place in the international programs of the American universities and colleges. This created an international dimension to the learning enterprise underlying the national interest. Numerical and percentage growth are shown in Table 2.

The concept of private-governmental cooperation as a dimension of American foreign relations has become institutionalized in a broader framework for the pursuit of

REFERENCES

BARAKAT, MOHAMMED KHALIFA, et al. 1964. Report on the United Arab Republic's Study. Paris, UBESCO.

COELHO, GEORGE V. 1962. Impacts of Studying Abroad. Jour. Soc. Issues. 18.

DuBOIS, CORA. 1956. Foreign Students and Higher Education in the United States. Washington, American Council on Education.

FRANKEL, CHARLES. 1965. The Neglected Aspects of Foreign Affairs. Washington, The Brookings Institution.

-----1967. International Education. College and Univ. Business, Vol. 43.

FRASER, STEWART. 1965. Government Policy and International Education. New York, Wiley.

**Table 2 — International programs of American universities
1957 - 58 1964 - 65 Percent Increase**

	1957 - 58	1964 - 65	Percent Increase
Number of Universities	1946	2,095	+7.7
Universities with Programs	184	396	+115.2
Number of Programs	382	1,314	+245.3

foreign policy objectives of the United States via large universities which participate.

Although there is no conclusive method of obtaining quantifiable data demonstrating the impact of educational exchange on the nation's foreign policy, it is nevertheless believed that much has been achieved from the exchange programs. In a 1966 report, the Board of Foreign Scholarships argued that congress should not look for immediate gain but to seek long-range return through the subtle process of attitudinal changes resulting from educational exchanges.

In a broad political framework, the programs have given official international relations a "psychological" dimension parallel with the economic and the military activities.

Deeper impact upon human perceptions is the element that Senator Fulbright referred to (1964) when he said: "In our quest for world peace, the alteration of attitudes is no less important, perhaps more important, than the resolution of issues.

FULBRIGHT, J.W. 1964. Old Myths and New Realities. New York, Random House.

HUMPHREYS, RICHARD A. (Ed.) 1966. Universities and Development Assistance Abroad. Washington, American Council on Education.

JOHNSON, WALTER A. and FRANCIS J. COLLIGAN. 1968. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

KISSINGER, HENRY A. 1960. The Necessity for Choice. New York, Praeger.

USEEM, JOHN AND RUTH H. 1955. The Western Educated Man in India. New York, Dryden Press.

WARMBRUNN, ELLEN. 1966. Cultural Dimensions of International Education. Washington, National Association for Foreign Student Affairs.

Statistical data for this paper has come largely from documents prepared by the U.S. Department of State.