



EDUCATION AS A SOFT POWER INSTRUMENT IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract

In this globalized world, education has become an important means of expanding contacts between people. The Delors International Commission on Education in the Twenty-First Century report highlights the enormous potential of higher education to leverage globalization as a resource for bridging the knowledge gap and enriching intercultural dialogue. As a key factor in soft power and an important area of public diplomacy, international education can have numerous benefits, including the ability to create commercial value, advance a country's foreign policy goals and interests, and facilitate economic growth and investment. The People's Republic of China, known as the world's most populous country and a global economic powerhouse, has prioritized the internationalization of its higher education system. This research paper analyzes China's use of the education system as a soft power tool in foreign policy and its impact.

Keywords: Joseph Nye, Hu Jintao, Confucius Institutes, International Student Scholarships, Programs, Research Collaboration.

Introduction

The concept of "soft power" was developed by Harvard University professor Joseph Nye in the early 1990s. Coined in 1990, Joseph Nye defines "soft power" as a state's ability to win the favor of others by securing support for their programs in international relations, demonstrating their cultural and moral values, the attractiveness of their policies, and the effectiveness of their political institutions" [1:10]. In the 21st century, elements such as education, culture, and political values, according to the scholar, are becoming increasingly important in world politics. At

the same time, traditional methods of economic and political pressure will gradually become less effective. [1:5].

Russian scholar A.M. Bobylo notes that soft power is the ability of a state or other international actor to exert intellectual, cultural, and informational influence on the outside world, without the use of direct "hard" economic and military means. The researcher views the flexibility of "soft power" as an actor's ability to attract and act collectively in the name of shared interests, persuading others to do what they otherwise would not do by constructing an appropriate interpretation of facts or reality. By endorsing its own interpretations of what constitutes a "good" or "fair" idea, theory, model, or project, a state can count on the support of other actors in international relations for its goals and interests. [2:52]

Chinese politicians and scholars have highly valued this concept. It has been officially enshrined in the programmatic documents of the Communist Party of China. At the 17th CPC Congress in 2007, Hu Jintao's report officially announced the implementation of the concept of "soft power." The Chinese leader emphasized the importance of strengthening "soft power" in foreign and economic policy. [3]

Today, the educational component, or the degree of internationalization in higher education, is perhaps becoming the most important part of the spectrum of soft power instruments. Thus, countries are pursuing policies to increase the number of incoming international students and the number of outgoing students from the host country studying abroad. Leading educational institutions are often a magnet for students from other countries. Moreover, well-educated students tend to have a high level of influence and connections with the global community, which enhances the soft power of the host country [4]. One effective instrument of soft power is education. Two areas of this policy can be distinguished: attracting international students to Chinese universities and spreading the Chinese language abroad. The internationalization of higher education has been identified as the main instrument of China's rapidly growing soft power. According to the National Plan for Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development of China (2010-2020), the internationalization of higher education in China serves to strengthen the country's global position, influence, and competitiveness in education. The following forms of internationalization are distinguished:

- participation in the creation of joint international academic organizations or global scientific plans.

- "managing demonstration joint schools or joint projects in cooperation with foreign partners" and encouraging the opening of branches of high-quality Chinese educational institutions abroad";

- supporting the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language in other countries [5]

The Chinese government provides annual grants for study at Chinese universities to attract international students. Students are also paid monthly stipends in addition to tuition [6]. Not only is the number of scholarship recipients growing, but the size of the stipends is also increasing. The Chinese government supports bilingual and English-language programs at educational institutions in the country. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, the total number of international students in China in 2014 was 377,054, an increase of 5.7% compared to 2013. In 2004, Confucius Institutes and Classrooms were established with the aim of disseminating the Chinese language and Chinese culture worldwide.

They are managed by the Office for the International Promotion of the Chinese Language (Hanban). Confucius Institutes are required to publish and distribute Chinese language educational literature; conduct Chinese language proficiency qualification examinations (HSK); and conduct internships for students and teachers in China; and provide consultations on studying in China. The main goal of the annual Hanban World Chinese Language and Culture Proficiency Competition is "to awaken the enthusiasm of students from various countries to learn Chinese and strengthen global understanding of Chinese language and culture." [7]

China's educational soft power tools:

- Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms: These institutions offer courses in Chinese language and culture worldwide.
 - Scholarships for International Students: China provides a large number of scholarships for study at Chinese universities.
 - Student and Faculty Exchange Programs: China actively develops exchange programs with foreign universities.
 - Joint Education Programs: Chinese universities establish joint educational programs with foreign partners.
 - Research Cooperation: China actively participates in international research projects.
- Let's take Sino-Russian relations as an example. In this area, China's policy has achieved some success. More than 40 countries teach Chinese in their schools. In recent decades, the number of people studying Chinese as a foreign language has

increased. According to official data from the State Chancellery, in 2009, the number of people studying Chinese worldwide exceeded 40 million. The number of Russian students at Chinese universities has increased slightly. In 2011-2012, approximately 13,300 students from Russia studied at universities in China [8: 441-442]. Speaking about the influence of Chinese "soft power" in education, it can be said that the establishment of Confucius Institutes contributes to the development of educational relations between Russia and China.

Russia is also pursuing a policy of disseminating Russian culture and language in other countries, including China. The Russkiy Mir Foundation was established in 2007 to promote the Russian language and support Russian language education programs in Russia and abroad. It utilizes Confucius Institute-like structures to establish Russian Language and Culture Centers. Currently, there are five Russian-language centers operating in China. In 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Education reported that approximately 6,500 Chinese students were studying Russian. [9]

Thus, the beginning of the 21st century has marked a significant transformation in China's foreign policy strategy: the Chinese authorities now view soft power, or non-violent means, cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and economic and humanitarian cooperation programs as leading instruments for ensuring China's national interests and security. Promoting the Chinese language, culture, and education contributes to the creation of a favorable external environment for the country's long-term socioeconomic growth. Education is an important instrument of soft power in China's foreign policy. China actively uses educational programs and scientific research to enhance its international prestige, strengthen economic and technological cooperation, and expand political influence.

However, China also faces a number of challenges related to concerns about political influence and issues of academic freedom.

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