European Union Soft Power: Cultural Diplomacy & Higher Education in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

European Union foreign policy engagement in Southeast Asia is predicated upon its institutional capabilities which are limited both by institutional design and ideological forbearance for the application of traditional hard power. It is my argument that European Union higher education funding in Southeast Asia has at its foundation, motivations for the revival of European influence and power within the region. European Union engagement with Southeast Asia is designed to further EU and EU member states agenda's in the realm of politics, economics, trade and security by utilizing soft power instruments which has as its target, Southeast Asia's next generation of influential business, academic and government leaders via culture and/or a value based model inculcation in order to establish long term goals of influence, power, prestige and to buttress EU diplomacy.

Key Words: higher education, soft power, European Union, cultural diplomacy, Southeast Asia

Introduction

Due to the European Union's institutional limitations in military power deployment combined with its ideological penchant for constructive engagement via partnership dictates the EU resort to foreign policy methods based on applicable use of soft power.[1] In Southeast Asia, economic potential, geographic distance, regional challenges by the rise of China and preeminence of Japan has led the EU to devise a number of policy engagement mediums to address geopolitical needs; among these is higher education policy. Higher education as a method of influencing future relations via co-option and internalized agent cooperation is being utilized as a foreign policy tool and proactive medium, in an attempt to establish long term security concerns by utilizing soft power methodologies.

The European Union's inability to bring to bare offensive military force to buttress its foreign policy objectives is often seen as its critical weakness.[2] These assumptions stem from cultural and theoretical interpretations distilled from realist notions of international relations and classic typologies of state action based on zero sum outcomes in diplomacy and/or Hobbesian variations of human and state behavior. To analyze European Union foreign policy exclusively through these lenses takes a myopic view of the European system and is a discredit to the profound effects that World War II had on Western Europe, its people, states and the intentions of the founding fathers of the European project.

This essay's focus will be towards tertiary education policy in Thailand, Malaysia, providing an overview of EU higher education policy within Southeast Asia. I will begin with an historical overview

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[1] P. Colson, *Soft Power Discourse and the Significance of European Union Foreign Policy Methods* in F. Laursen ed., *The EU as a Foreign and Security Policy Actor*, European Union Centre of Excellence, Nova Scotia, 2009

[2] R. Kagan *Power and Weakness*, Policy Review, 113, 2004 & K. L. Nielsen *The Weakness of the EU's Soft Power Strategy*, 4th Pan-European Conference on EU Politics, University of Latvia, September 25-27, 2008

of European tertiary education initiatives, which led to a viable EU led education export product. Following is an analysis of Nye's soft power approach to international relations and perceptions of power within an institutionalist and sociology of power framework directed towards higher education. Factors for EU engagement in internationalization of European higher education such as tertiary student consumption patterns, cultural transfers and perceptions of Southeast Asian's of the EU [Europe] will be analyzed. Lastly, EU driven external higher education policy in Southeast Asia pertaining to European Studies and Erasmus Mundus programs will be analyzed to prove that the EU is engaging with willful intent to in an attempt to influence Southeast Asian decision makers and support EU foreign policy objectives by exercising soft power in its funding of higher education.

Historical Evaluation of EU Education Initiative Development

An historical evaluation of European education initiatives in higher education can be traced back to the *Magna Carta Universitatum* of 1988. This document is not of singular importance due to any revolutionary or breakwater event that occurred due to its being. But rather this document exemplifies a concerted European awareness for the need of an integrated approach in the field of higher education structure, recognized universities primacy as mediums for cultural awareness and enhancing competitiveness as a driving force for change, responding to needs of a global economy.[3] Later the Sorbonne declaration of 1998 as a front runner to the Bologna Process one year later would further emphasize:

    ❦   roles that universities play in developing intellectual, cultural, and social elements within the European integration process

    ❦   harmonization of education systems via ECTS

    ❦   emphasis on greater student mobility

    ❦   need to create European Higher Education Area

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[3] Magna Carta Universitatum, Bologna 18 September 1988

However, in a wider context the *Sorbonne Declaration* should be noted for its explicit political undertones stated as "the international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are directly related to their **external** and **internal** readabilities."[4] This demonstrates concerted awareness of the position that European university systems have in the broader framework of pan-European competitiveness and the role in which the abovementioned play in the broader realm of European [external relations] politics. Education therefore is directly conferred with the status of being a contributing factor to European abilities to function in a capacity that engenders relationship generation by cognitive social value perceived in utilitarian terms as well as what Vuving terms as 'beauty' within the contextual confines of his external validity and power currency analysis.[5] Furthermore, it signifies the leading role that education plays with third party individuals and nations conceptualization of the EU, its nuances, mentalities, intricacies, providing an avenue for an environment which is conducive for understanding and at least a minimum of recognizability and acquaintance.

The Bologna Process while reiterating much of Sorbonne has its importance in its emphasis on the need to make European education more competitive and quality assurance in developing comparable criteria and methodologies.[6] As Jones argues, importance lay in Bologna's reform capacity for education systems both within Europe by providing governance models[7] and externally in partnership forms both to attract inbound students to give credibility and value to degrees

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[4] Sorbonne Joint Declaration, Paris 25 May 1998, Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System

[5] A. L. Vuving, *How Soft Power Works*, paper presented at American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Toronto Canada, September 3, 2009

[6] The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, Joint Declaration of European Ministers of Education

[7] P. Jones, *The EU-Central Asia Education Initiative*, EUCAM Working Paper No. 9, 2010

obtained and also to strengthen partner institution capabilities in line with European standards; which is of particular interest to this paper later in relation to the Erasmus Mundus program.

It is of peculiar interest that the word harmonization which was a centerpiece terminology of the *Sorbonne Declaration* is missing from the *Bologna Declaration*; in place of harmonization is the vaguer term of 'compatibility and comparability'. This signals the recognition of member states of their own staggering diversity, yet conversely implies the ever present need to base one another's higher education systems on commonalities and institute a regime of convergence rather than simply amalgamation of diverse systems.[8] In and of itself this demonstrates the degree to which European nation states inside and outside of the Union placed dual priority on education as a vehicle to further European integration and promotion of Europe to the wider world.

The Lisbon Agenda is best known for its view that Europe should aspire "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" by 2010.[9] According to Corbett the motives for EU awareness, hence consolidation of the political perspective of quantitative personification the Lisbon agendas' significance is in its underlying motive "to stimulate the 'Europe of Knowledge' which is deemed by the EU's political leaders to be one of the characteristics which the EU needs to assert ever more powerfully on the world stage."[10]

In sum total, an historical view of European higher education initiatives begins with a European integrationist view of reform

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[8] B. Wächter, *The Bologna Process: Developments and Prospects*, European Journal of Education, 39(3), 2004

[9] The Lisbon Special European Council March 2000: Towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge

[10] A. Corbett, I*deas, Institutions and Policy Entrepreneurs: Towards A New History of Higher Education In The European Community*, European Journal of Education, 38(3), 2003

mindedness to converge disparate systems into a harmonized form. It is with Sorbonne and Bologna that saliency is found in exporting higher education reform and products as well as linking external relations to the European Higher Education Area. Lisbon attempts to find an integrative and synergistic function for higher education on cross cutting issues linked to security, stability and the Union's wider role in international relations that is present in policy documents and policy presently.

Soft Power & Higher Education

Higher education as a both a medium of social capital as well as cultural transference should not be underestimated within the context of individuals operating within 'institutionalized' societies and both states and international organizations being at different levels, parts of organic systems of social construction and social/cultural reproduction. Moles attributes great importance to education, describing it as "one of the processes by which the past is incorporated in the present to fashion the future…organizing the sum of knowledge acquired by the community to aid the individual to take his useful place in society in a spirit of solidarity." [11] If this is taken as a basic foundation of education as a vehicle for transmission of ideas/ideals to an elite demographic, it can not be assumed that it will be value free, in which case Durkheim surmises that "education is necessarily a deliberate and value-laden [moral] enterprise" [12] and medium of social reproduction. Furthermore, Durkheim makes it clear that there are no objective criteria so to speak pertaining to education but rather these are to be found in the larger political society to which socialization is subjectively applicable. [13] What is of particular interest in Durkheim's functionalist view of education

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[11] P. G. N'Diaye, *Culture Development: Some Regional Experiences*, UNESCO, 1981, 42

[12] E. Durkheim as quoted in Young, P, Adler, S. A., Shadiow, L. K., *Cultural Foundations of Education*, Pearson, 4th ed, 2006, 126

[13] E. Durkheim, *Education and Sociology*, Free Press, NY, 1956, 71

is embedded not in what education is intended to mean but rather its functions which applies within societies at large. This view coincides with social stratification and prestige construction which graduates enter into and employ throughout their social lives in a given society by taking their social position in a larger system of citizenry.[14]

Joseph S. Nye formulated his thesis and understanding of soft power in the early 1990's as a means of juxtaposing military or use of coercive power instruments against a more nuanced use of cultural, attractive and implantation of power.[15] This typology of power is critical for evaluating education and its value transference capacity. Criteria for formulating a model of soft power usage as formulated by Nye must consist of first a reason and intent of the actor in question, a policy vehicle and lastly a medium of exchange so as to promote the interests and intent of the actor in question.

Noya argues that Nye's soft power ontology must be distinguished in its applicable form from its counterparts of military or economic power which are classified as hard powers. Noya's argument is clear in its assertion that soft power is indeed measurable and indistinguishable from hard power if it is perceived by the subject/s as being intrinsically attractive. In essence Noya stipulates that hard power is exercised exogenously and expressed as attractiveness upon the subject whereas soft power is internalized subjectively establishing preference, thereby constructed objectively as part of the subject in their perceptions of the power transmitter.[16] Lukes also confers the intrinsic nature of

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[14] T. Kazepides, *Educating, Socialising and Indoctrinating*, Journal of Philosophy of Education, 16(2), 1982, 158

[15] J. S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Perseus, 2004(a)

[16] J. Noya, "*The Symbolic Power of Nations*", Place Branding & Public Diplomacy, 2(1), 2006. Noya's argument in this piece is derived from his conclusion that soft power if applied, internalized and reconstructed ontologically it indeed is equivalent to traditional hard power as it has produced an end product that is just as effective for shaping and coercing choice.

internalizing of perceptions and mobilizing of soft power as being effective in that the subject is susceptible to it.[17] Lukes and Noya both attribute soft power affectability to the legitimization of the power source/product in the ability of the subject to internalize the ideology of ideas, which is based on reputation of the power source, effective benefits of the power product or method of application of power. Sölter further stresses the assumption that western states success in soft power application as being embodied in ideas and values that can only be achieved by exchange or rather transference in the propagation of beliefs.[18]

The critical point of inflection is the value system or idea-centered conceptualization that is being propagated via higher education funding of European Studies and the Erasmus student mobility program. In terms of European Studies and Eramus Mundus it is the capital value of social/cultural export systems and social immersion which presents an opportunity for European historical and contemporary interpretations of the EU and Europe as a global actor within the theoretical enclaves of achieving Kantian peace, liberal institutional values, multilateral engagement, adherence to international law, normative concepts as a contemporary postmodernist European enlightenment project. Nye distinguishes what he states as the second face of power as the ability to get others to want or desire what you yourself desire, or what he terms as co-option.[19] The conception of co-option should be considered further in light of the source of power generation, which within the framework of desires and wants points towards both an external motivational factor of power in prestige or social legitimacy and internal motivations

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[17] S. Lukes, *Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds*, Millennium, 33(3), 2005

[18] A. A. Sölter, *The Renaissance of Soft Power Rediscovering Cultural Diplomacy In Transatlantic Perspective*, CMG Workshop, Goethe-Institut Toronto, 2008

[19] J. S. Nye Jr., *Power in the Global Information Age From Realism to Globalization*, Routledge, London, 2004(c), 56

for internalization[20] of those external power products. Colson's insight into Nye's soft power discourse makes a critical distinction between Nye's core conceptions of co-option and cooperation. Co-option is not about getting actors to do what they might not want or 'bringing them on board' but rather it points towards agents coming from a higher or dominant power position of interests and/or resources and the maintenance of this by attracting others to your source of power.[21] Attractiveness of higher education in routing soft power towards a currency of effectiveness is deeply rooted in interest subjectivity and outcome objectivity towards social utilitarian value in social mobility and conscience social acceptance.[22] To understand interests of actors is presage to recognizing policy objectives of the Union in its funding of higher education.

Co-option from state level attraction in terms of EU higher education policy derives from resources [money, scholarships, and funded partnership programs] allocated and available to countries and legitimacy of the funding allocation as to conditions of resource take up, in this case higher education is seen as positive public goods to domestic populations that contribute to a country's knowledge capability. On an individual level of agency, resources can be defined as prestige of European tertiary institutions, social legitimacy that is derived by and from attending and graduating from these universities in the domestic social context, prestige and social legitimacy of attending and graduating from prestige imbued universities domestically that are hosts to European Studies programs. The prestige of social acceptance

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[20] J. S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century*, British Council Parliamentary Lecture, January 20, 2010

[21] P. Colson, *Soft Power Discourse and the Significance of European Union Foreign Policy Methods* in F. Laursen ed., *The EU as a Foreign and Security Policy Actor*, European Union Centre of Excellence, Nova Scotia, 2009

[22] S. Lukes, *Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds: On the Bluntness of Soft Power*, in F. Berenskoetter, M. J. Williams eds., *Power in World Politics*, Routledge, NY 2007, 87

value in attaining these public goods is objectified as cultural capital [symbolic capital] and a measure of social capital of institutionalized credit which graduates as individuals carry with them when they enter into social systems.[23]

    Soft power is inherently elusive and should be viewed through the lens of legitimacy in order to capture a conceptual analysis as argued by Cooper who sees legitimacy as being at the core of soft power and behaviors.[24] This reflects back to legitimacy as the creator of power currency as stated by Vuving in his analysis of power generation.[25] Higher education as a legitimate and valued public good both from a development [state level] as well as from an individual to social perspective is the generator of this soft power and will drive EU foreign policy in higher education. If successful in reformulating the subject's social construction soft power in this sense has indeed co-opted via cooperation both of the transmitter and subject and the interlocutor inherently stands pinned on legitimacy.

European Union Engagement with Southeast Asia
    The Commissions' 2001 communication "Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships" reiterated much of

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[23] P. Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in J. G. Richardson ed., *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood, New York, 1986, 241-258 and S. R. Clegg, D. Courpasson, N. Phillips eds. Power and Organizations, Sage, New York, 2006, 253
    [24] R. Cooper, *The Goals of Diplomacy, Hard Power, and Soft Power*, in Held, David, Koenig-Archibugi, Mathias eds. *American Power in the 21st Century*, Polity, UK, 2004
    [25] A. L. Vuving, How Soft Power Works, paper presented at American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Toronto Canada, September 3, 2009. It is important to note that Vuving denotes soft power production into benignity, brilliance and beauty to which higher education as I have analyzed conform and show characteristics of all three such as promotion of self-esteem, capability in excellence and shared ideals that can produce a dichotomous effect of "other" if value structures are inculcated, given legitimacy and juxtaposed as per the subjects own experience in their domestic context

what was presented in the 1994 predecessor, stressing the need for greater awareness of the European Union. In the Commissions' 1994 communication "Towards a New Asia Strategy", specific mention of the need to "raise the profile of Europe in Asia…greater knowledge of the Union and its activities would increase the regard in which it is held in Asia."[26] In order to achieve this the Commission suggests "strengthening higher education and training links with Asia, including University Co-operation schemes targeted into specific technological, policy and management studies and emphasizing the implementation of joint or mutually recognized post-graduate programmes…these will include, inter-alia, support to European and Asian Studies Centers."[27] However, added emphasis was placed on education in relation to services and the degree of competition from other regional educational players. Presumably there is no coincidence that the greatest numbers of inbound students come from Asia and the US has a significant lead in terms of students that will be exposed to culture transmissions and hence soft power derivatives. If tertiary education competition is a factor then one must look at volumes of students and where they are going for tertiary education services.

From the perspective of global exports of education services it is apparent that the United States is by far the global leader in terms of national education exportation. In aggregate terms from 2004 the United States hosted *572,509* students or *23.3%* of total inbound student flows with the closest competitor being the United Kingdom with *300,056* students or *12.2%*.[28] Furthermore, 40% of students consuming education services in third countries originate in Asia with Europe coming a distant second with 30%.[29] In Asia aside from former British colonies the United States is far in advance of any European country

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[26] COM (94) 314 final, 13 July 1994, Communication from the COMMISSION to the COUNCIL, Towards a New Asia strategy
[27] Ibid
[28] UNESCO report on tertiary education consumers 2004
[29] Ibid

in terms hosting tertiary education students by margins ranging from 2:1 to 12:1.[30] While the Bologna Process according to the OECD has augmented Europe's attractiveness to Asian inbound students to nearly equal America, it is the massive potential of Asia in having over 1.2 million citizens abroad studying in OECD higher education institutions in 2007 that demands EU awareness and policy action.[31]

Deficiencies in European tertiary institution attractiveness are prominently publicized as "the great majority of Asian students studying abroad tend to go to North America or Australasia as a first priority."[32] European Commission Communication (COM (2001) 385) reinforces the importance of education services to pan EU interests "there is an ever-increasing demand for international education and student mobility. The number of international exchange students has never been greater; but they flock mainly to the US."[33] Of particular interest to this paper is further reference to deficiencies in "the number of European academics or students with links to Asia remains very small, while European Studies remains an underdeveloped field in most Asian countries."[34] Purposeful intent of the Commission is best evidenced by its own words in (COM (2001) 385) to "strengthen European studies capacities in third countries…the Commission will extend the network of European Union Studies Centers and Jean Monnet Chairs around the world, so as to provide a full service to interested academics and to

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[30] UNESCO report on international tertiary education students by host countries 1998

[31] OECD (2009), Higher Education to 2030 Volume 2 Globalisation, OECD Publishing, Paris, 67

[32] COM (2001) 469 final, 4 September 2001, Communication from the COMMISSION, Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships

[33] COM (2001) 385 final, 18 July, 2001, Communication from the Commission to the EU Parliament and Council on strengthening cooperation with third countries in the field of higher education

[34] COM (2001) 469 final, 4 September 2001, Communication from the COMMISSION, Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships

demonstrate the activity of the EC in this field within universities."[35] The aforementioned states the clear intention of enticing third country students to study in Europe. However, it is not possible to bring all hopeful students to Europe; therefore a parallel approach of exporting education models has become a second strain of EU policy. Where there may be financial or other constraints that restrict third country students from studying in Europe an appeal to bring European education to those has been an applicable model for utilization. This model of European integration or European Studies is of specific interests in that the EU is in fact supporting the exportation of a specific EU tertiary education program and pedagogy via the use of foreign lecturers.

It is within this competitive context that the EU has identified an area of concern and is actively engaging in the competitive struggle to uplift and broaden EU awareness. Internal documentation clearly demonstrates that the Commission is ostensibly concerned in reversing trends in global tertiary education flows. For in terms of higher education "the number of international exchange students has never been greater, but they flock mainly to the US."[36] Even top level political officials such as Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell's' view promotion of higher education as a source of invaluable cultural tribute, stating "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here."[37] Tuition payments and economic incentives are a major factor as well and should not be underestimated as underscored by Wende who sees the 25%+ market share of UK inbound higher education students as 'internationalisation in the UK can be summarized as the mobilization of the skilled human resources needed to make the UK a more internationally competitive

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[35] COM (2001) 385 final, 18 July, 2001, Communication from the Commission to the EU Parliament and Council on strengthening cooperation with third countries in the field of higher education

[36] Ibid

[37] J. S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power and Higher Education*, in M. Devlin, R. Larson, J. Meyerson eds., The Internet and the University: Forum 2004, Educause, 2004(b), 42

trading nation and to maximize export earnings by selling education services to paying customers"[38]

The EU's role in funding and supporting education as a functional and integral part of EU relations with third countries is engendered in Article 149 of TEC. For Article 149.2.3 illustrates the role of the EU, which is to promote cooperation of education establishments. In relation to direct external relations policy Article 149.3 clearly states that "the Community and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organizations in the field of education, in particular the Council of Europe."[39] Significant relevance should be paid to Article 151.3 of the TEC. As it specifically recognizes needs for the Community and member state involvement to "foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organizations in the sphere of culture."[40] In addition Article 151.4 clearly charges the Commission with responsibility for actions which have culture as an immediate concern so as to "respect and promote the diversity of its [European] culture."[41]

In action concerning education policy, member states clearly retains the right to influence and make decisions concerning education within their respective territories as this pertains to the right of individuality of culture and diversity. Conversely, Community institutions have competence in taking actions that are considered to 'value add', in instances where acting together can accomplish more than acting alone,[42] acting as an educational subsidiary working in parallel with

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[38] M. Van Der Wende, *The International Dimension in National Higher Education Policies: What Has Changed in Europe in the Last Five Years*, European Journal of Education, 36(4), 2001, 438

[39] Consolidated Version of Treaty Establishing The European Community Art. 149.3

[40] Consolidated Version of Treaty Establishing The European Community Art. 151

[41] Ibid

[42] COM (2001) 385 final, 18 July, 2001, Communication from the Commission to the EU Parliament and Council on strengthening cooperation with third countries in the field of higher education

member states. It is within this framework that the Commission operates in a vague and ambiguous area of policy that is not a full competence of the Community, yet by default due to global realities and globalization, neither is it a monopolized sector of member states. Member states have in their own interests promoted higher education in third countries on their own behalf [i.e. British Council, EduFrance], yet in terms of impetus and pan-European promotion, the Commission has been a driver of convergence and played a significant role in the education landscape.[43] The Commission has taken its initiative in education derived from the legal ambiguity and as Corbett points out that "commissioners had produced policy actions in such Treaty 'Grey Areas' as education"[44] that is present in the founding treaties.

Commission involvement in education regarding third country participants is best known for its Erasmus Mundus program which has been under Commission direction since 1987. The Erasmus Mundus program objectives are to encourage [European regional mobility] third country tertiary students, primarily graduate and post graduate level students to attend European universities. [45] The European Commission in its paper of July 2001 Cooperation with Third Countries in the Field of Higher Education emphasized the need for education in achieving other broad aims such as eradication of poverty and need to strengthen European Studies capacities in third countries.[46] Within the context of

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[43] R. Keeling, *The Bologna Process and Lisbon Research Agenda: The European Commission's Expanding Role in Higher Education Discourse*, European Journal of Higher Education, 41(2), 2006

[44] A. Corbett, *Ideas, Institutions and Policy Entrepreneurs: Towards a New History of Higher Education in the European Community*, European Journal of Education, 38(3), 2003

[45] COUNCIL Decision 87/327/EEC, 15 June 1987, Adopting the European Community Action Scheme for Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS)

[46] G. Wiessala, *Re-Orienting the Global Learning Experience: Higher Education in the Relations between the European Union and Asia and the Subject of European Studies*, Chulalongkorn University Journal of European Studies, 11(1), 2004

direct linkages between Europe-Asia; Asia-Link, ASEM, and Eramus Mundus are the most noticeable indicators of education cooperation.[47]

Gains brought about by culture and knowledge transfers are shown within the 2003 Commission Communication, education; in particular higher education is given a more prominent role. In fact in this document higher education/culture warrants an individual subheading, indicating its increasing significance within the sphere of EU-Asia relations. Of particular interests is reference made to the targeting of EU efforts in its 2001 Communication (469) "in Asia, the target population would include opinion makers, media, universities, business and government circles."[48] The 2001 Communication (385) is targeting intellectuals, in particular students is reiterated "Europe's political and commercial success in the world is dependent on future decision-makers in third countries having a better understanding of, and closer ties with, Europe."[49] When realized from a structural perspective this would indicate the EU's intent of focusing on a high socio-economic demographic in order to facilitate the an intrinsically motivated transformation of opinion, awareness, and subconscious consent garnered via greater awareness, familiarity with the EU, and positive elite opinion utilizing positive power with regard to the aforementioned which it seeks. Furthermore, the targeting of tertiary education institutions academics to diffuse information, European expert lecturers to disseminate information, and 'elite' student bodies to receive information pertaining to European integration adds to legitimacy of the entire process of formalizing policy. Transformation as a process, with education as a medium and legitimizer is important for policy direction in that it attempts to fuse and integrate power fragmentation

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[47] See N. Snow 2008 for historical analysis of Fulbright program which is the American equivalent of Eramus Mundus for political, social, cultural objectives attached to intercultural diplomacy.

[48] COM (2003) 399/4, 9 July 2003, Communication from the COMMISSION, A New Partnership South East Asia

[49] COM (2001) 385 final, 18 July, 2001, Communication from the Commission to the EU Parliament and Council on strengthening cooperation with third countries in the field of higher education

by policy and structural spillover by value creation of relationships rather than narrow conceptions of zero sum power gains which are essentially one off and expensive to maintain. Legitimization and efficacious use of soft power and its evolutionary derivative smart power are stated by Condoleezza Rice as exhibiting an enlightened form of power engagement that suits the contemporary world by stating "transformational diplomacy is rooted in partnership; not paternalism. In doing things with people, not for them, we seek to use American diplomatic power to help foreign citizens better their own lives and to build their own nations and to transform their own futures".[50]

The targeting of so called opinion makers is indicative of a top down approach whereby the EU could extend its influence to an assemblage that would be more adept and susceptible to EU overtures. These are values and ideals that the EU wishes to export to the rest of the world and education higher education is serving as a medium of exchange that the EU could inherently profit from for many years into the future.

Structural theory points to a widening of EU interests due to what Smith terms the logic of 'functional spillover' whereby "actors may have to push for institutionalization in one domain to achieve goals in another domain."[51] The concept of ever 'widening' EU engagement and involvement in various policy fora underlies a deliberate constructive process that will if successful lead to a greater degree of 'deepening' of EU-Asia relations. From a spillover perspective, it seems apparent that greater cultural/social links fostered via investment in third country tertiary education may lead inevitably towards increased interactions and cooperation in future EU-Asia relations. Spillover would pertain directly to Southeast Asia by the realization that "by 2050 the centre

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[50] E. J. Wilson III, *Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power*, ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 661(1), 2008, 117

[51] M. E. Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation*, Cambridge, 2004, 33

of gravity of the world economy will have shifted to the Asia Pacific region, with ASEAN emerging as the world's largest exporter"[52] where market forces and trade relations enjoy preeminence.

The dynamic of policy spillover or cross issue interdependence and linkage is best exemplified by the External Relations Directorate General (Directorate-Asia) "Asia and Europe have increasingly to deal with the same issues. Many Asian security issues - notably of terrorism, drugs and illegal immigration - spill over into the EU. Asia is home to many volatile hotspots that impact globally and that warrant coordination with the EU."[53] It is this sort of candid appreciation of global dynamics which leads this writer to believe that EU involvement in Asia is a pragmatic approach to world politics. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy in higher education funding from the Union to Southeast Asian states is "not primarily about building trust, but about achieving specific policy-driven transactional objectives."[54] Beginning with the 1994 EU-Asia strategy and continuing on to the 2003 EU-Southeast Asia and 2003 European Security Strategy there is a harmonious and consistent structural approach taken to cross cutting security issues.

The attempted generation of influence by the EU is twinned to and runs parallel to member states promotional institutions such as EduFrance, British Council and Goethe-Institut in order to facilitate inbound student mobility while accessing prestige holding universities in third countries as EU initiatives to build European studies centers in order to influence culturally oriented maxims. The process by which the EU has emerged from complete obscurity in Southeast Asia to one which is subtlety present and emerging is bound up within the context

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[52] COM (2003) 399/4, 9 July 2003, Communication from the COMMISSION, A New Partnership South East Asia

[53] COMMISSION of the European Communities External Relations Directorate-General-Directorate Asia, Strategy Paper and Indicative Programme for Multi-Country Programs in Asia 2005-2006

[54] J. Melissen, *Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy*, Clingendael Discussion Paper in Diplomacy #2, 2005, 26

of European integration and increasing influence of the Commission within non-traditional policy spheres such as tertiary education.

European Union, Thailand & Malaysia

In EC-Thailand 2005-2006 NIP education is far more clearly defined in terms of a strategic policy priority "the Commission proposes that given the limited funds available for cooperation with Thailand the single priority for cooperation with Thailand in 2005-2006 be **higher education**."[55] With the rationale that recognition and "knowledge in Thailand about the EU, and the process of European integration are insufficiently developed….knowledge of European issues and culture among Thai students is not very high. Thailand's younger generations have directed their attention to other Asian countries and cultures, in particular Japan, as well as to the English speaking world…consequently, there is a clear need to enhance cultural exchanges and deepen the relations between the EU, as an economic, political and social entity, and Thailand."[56] Alteration of perceptions and attitudes are clearly defined as objectives, EU action is envisioned to "allow Thai students to gain a positive and more accurate view of modern Europe…the action would contribute substantially towards the improvement of economic, and cultural links between the EU and Thailand."[57] Within the framework of this program are earmarked substantial funds for education, to the indicative amount of €3.2 million. When compared to the overall budget allocation for the two focal areas of trade/investment and health/services which total €10 million for the entire 2002-2006 period and compare this with the allocated amount of €3.2 million for education a glaring fundamental seems to be present. The stated non-focal area of education that is alluded to in CSP (2002-2006) has budget allocation equal to 32% of the total allocated to focal areas. Furthermore, both focal areas have €5 million allocated between them, over a period of 5 years, indicating

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[55] EC/Thailand National Indicative Program 2005-2006
[56] Ibid
[57] Ibid

€1 million per year on average. Education in the NIP as stated prior has €3.2 million allocated for the period 2005-2006 (2 years), which is equal to €1.6 million per annum. Taken in this comparative context education funding originating from the Erasmus program would appear to have a higher priority then the stated focal areas of trade and public health, in fact judging from aggregate figures, education is funded at a higher percentage equal to 60% or €600,000 greater than focal areas per annum in the final two years of NIP consideration. When reviewing these from a holistic perspective and indeed conjoined point of view one can deduce that EU funds are utilized strategically for core measures [trade and development] but a higher portion aggregately is apportioned for soft power measures of linking the two entities via European education institutions.

   Malaysia's CSP is quite similar in content, but the structure of the EC-Malaysia CSP is different, in that, education is given an explicitly higher status in terms of being a focal area of cooperation and assistance. Trade is given priority status in the form of WTO related commitments such as TRIPS and TRIMS, conforming to EU regulations/legislation, supporting the EC business community, and environment for investment. With regard to higher education the European Studies pilot program at the Universiti Sains Malaysia is viewed as a key indicator of progress and indeed is a primary focal point if not the keystone to EU overtures in terms of higher education as a pathway to greater intercultural awareness. A key EU priority is the creation of European Studies programs within Malaysia as is evidenced by the 2002-2004 NIP "promoting EU-Malaysia university partnership and networking with a view in particular to the promotion of European studies in Malaysia."[58] The entire EU budget allocation for this period is €3.5 million of which €2 million is allocated for trade issues (focal area 1) and the remainder €1.5 million allocated for **Higher Education** (focal area 2).[59] With relation to budget allocation it is instructive to observe

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[58] EC/Malaysia National Indicative Program 2002-2004
[59] Ibid

that of the total budget 43% is allocated specifically for higher education purposes, particularly the implementation and expansion of European Studies within Malaysia.

   With regard to this kind of budgetary appropriation the Commission of the "opinion that there is a need to integrate in a bilateral initiative trade and investment issues and higher education to achieve cross-fertilization." [60] This harks back to the earlier discussed phenomenon of 'spillover' and linkage. Commission patronage of higher education programs is clearly shown to have a hoped for derivative effect on bilateral EC-Malaysia trade relations. With regard to this ascertation I would contend that the Commissions' expressed view that 'partnerships' will be fostered and strengthened due to greater linkage and understanding garnered via higher education links is genuinely of a nature that seeks to establish a firm EU demographic and academic footprint within Malaysia. For within the specific context of the 2002-2004 document there is numerous mention of perpetuating European Studies within Malaysia (namely via Universiti Sains Malaysia). In addition, a key criteria objective in gauging success of the NIP is the "number of students participating in higher education programs, namely in European studies." [61] In as far as this NIP is concerned it is fair to assume that Commission funding is strategically aimed at fostering an environment of understanding and building foundations which will instigate and evolve into greater competitive advantages for the EU and its member states in the future. The '05-'06 NIP allocates in its entirety €2.1 million to financing the Erasmus Mundus program within the framework of the 'Malaysian Window'.[62] It is stated by the Commission that the underlying objective and intended outcome of this funding is "that students who receive scholarships will return to Malaysia and pursue high-level careers; and that their positive experiences in Europe are disseminated to others…selected students may become decision makers in Malaysia in the future." [63]

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[60] Ibid
[61] Ibid
[62] EC/Malaysia National Indicative Program 2005-2006
[63] Ibid

It is of critical importance that the re-launch of a Malaysian based European studies program took place against the backdrop of the rather dismal prior performance and domestic rejection of the defunct pilot European studies graduate program at the University of Malaya. Re-launching of graduate level European studies program at University Sains Malaysia was rebranded as the Master of International and Diplomacy Studies in order to broaden the appeal of European studies while retaining core content of European studies programs elsewhere. This distinctly points towards the problematic nature of trying to use tertiary education within the highly competitive environment of educational services and the absolute need to connect legitimacy strains of utility as well as prestige to any degree confirmation. Failure to take root of European studies is indeed indicative of other aspects of European integration performance and perception, namely the credibility and expectations gap which exists not just in theory but in practice. This shortfall or gap is largely owed to lack of knowledge, levity and awareness of the EU as an entity but also its lack of credibility outside of the low politics sphere of trade and economics. In terms of targeting higher education institutions in Thailand and Malaysia, it would appear that choosing two nationally prestigious institutions [Chulalongkorn University, Universiti Sains Malaysia] in and of themselves serves to legitimize the degrees awarded on completion of graduate level requirements. The targeting of prestigious national universities to legitimize European Studies as a 'valuable', 'worthwhile', and 'credible' field of study which will produce graduates of top national universities that will enter workforces and bureaucracies with nationally prominent qualifications serves to legitimize the qualifications in and of themselves.

Other objectives that appear to serve EU interests are further expressed as intent towards Malaysian students gaining "a positive and more accurate view of modern Europe…contribute substantially towards the improvement of political, economic, and cultural links between the EU and Malaysia."[64] This indicates substantial weight

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[64] Ibid

put upon the assumption that cultural grafting can take place via studying for a period of time and being exposed to 'European culture'. Furthermore, Commission impetus for action in this policy area is due to the acceptance that "knowledge in the EU about Malaysia and knowledge in Malaysia about the EU and the process of European integration are insufficiently developed…the level of knowledge of European issues and culture among Malaysian students is not very high."[65] EU goals of greater recognition and awareness of itself upon the wider world stage serves to facilitate member state interests as well as it "is generally considered that. Malaysia's younger generation have directed their attention to other Asian countries and cultures…the great majority of Malaysian youngsters who plan to study abroad think primarily of the US & Australia."[66] Within this competitive context the Commission further anticipates an "increase future demand from Malaysia for European higher education."[67]

There is a logical progression of not only operational functionality in regards to EU policy action within Thailand and Malaysia, but also a structural change in the evolutionary context between these two countries and the wider regional context. Transformations which have been shown represent a paradigmatic shift in practice of EU engagement with individual Southeast Asian countries as there is progress towards a deeper stage of relations. At present the EU is carrying out its external education policy in tertiary education under the auspices of Erasmus Mundus, Asia-Link, and ASEM programs in Southeast Asia.[68] The monies allocated for higher education programming is not substantial for these objectives as €60 million are allocated for 2007-2010 for all of Asia[69] which signals that

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[65] Ibid

[66] Ibid

[67] EC/Malaysia National Indicative Program 2005-2006

[68] European Commission Regional Programming for Asia Strategy Document 2007-2013

[69] European Commission Multi Annual Indicative Programming for Asia 2007-2010

immediate concerns lie elsewhere in the EU's perception, yet the direct link of student mobility and cross-fertilization of cultures, minds, future decision makers is still present. The nature of higher education engagement exhibits one of developing maturity in that twinning programs, student and instructor exchanges and research promotion are now stressed, with research partnerships exhibiting a deeper and more developed degree of partnership evaluation. This procession of synergistic soft power engagement is inherently trying to achieve what Knight terms an "internationalization [of higher education] by integrating international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service elements of an institution."[70]

Conclusion

Use of higher education in order to increase soft power differentials should not be stringently viewed through the context of an asymmetry of power or inculcation of ideas towards any target population. An enhanced perspective indicative of agent specific socialization would lead one towards a symmetrical perspective of multi-level communications understanding. This model situates a myriad of players within the dynamic of cultural, financial and educational symmetry. In order to be successful, soft power instruments must be accepted by the host university, prospective students/populations and the initiator or facilitator of soft power. Implicit within this framework is that the EU is in fact operating its cultural diplomacy from a relational position of weakness via the USA and its dominant position of cultural attraction while being in symmetrical bilateral relations with host countries and universities of EU studies programs. Levels of engagement for influence operate part and parcel on a vertical level between the EU and host nationals, and horizontally via subjects of

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[70] J. Knight (1995, 2000) as quoted in R. D. Trilokekar, *International Education as Soft Power? The Contributions and Challenges of Canadian Foreign Policy to the Internationalization of Higher Education*, Higher Education, 59(2), 139, 2010

influence and domestic audiences as well as subjects and foreign audiences. These different levels of power perception inherently interact within a milieu of contested legitimacy and are often either resisted, rejected or inculcated in some measure on micro, macro and meso levels of social interaction. The failure of European studies to take hold in Malaysia with the now defunct European studies program at the University of Malaya stands as testimony to not only rejection of European studies as a cultural-educational and economic worthwhile public good, but also the inherent lack of attractionability, beauty and prowess of the EU and its primary educational export product, European Integration Studies.

The policy avenue of higher education engagement and attempted use of soft power can be viewed through a dual prism of institutionalism and liberal ideology. Soft power in EU foreign policy is necessitated by the Union's institutional deficits of bringing traditional sources of hard power to bare as well as its lack of positioning where populations are not aware, thus can put little value to its products. Yet to simply state that the Union's apparent military weakness is to underestimate the value in engaging the wider world from a constructive angle. Instead of being viewed as an axiomatic weakness, the use of soft power and institutional restraint which it is bred from, should be considered a point of strength as it prevents the EU from being drawn into conflicts and arousing dangerous anti-European sentiments and backlash which America is currently suffering from, due to its foreign policy adventurism by using stringent hard power instruments under the George W. Bush administration. The lack of institutional hard power capacity exhibited in the EU's CFSP and ESDP are deeply rooted in a post-World War II renaissance in notions of Kantian peace, constructive engagement and liberal multilateral institutionalism. Interest level cognition of EU objectives can be found in growing ambitions that try and place a commiserate foreign policy to its economic prowess, visions of security and stability balanced against regional and national powers which are the apparent drivers of its attempted use of soft power as exhibited in higher education funding. EU soft power is essentially subject to domestic perceptions, contested legitimacy, socio-historical constructs and social constructivism bound within agency as transposed into the

larger habitus of networked social relations. This stands as its consequent weak point which has been identified by the Commission and stark reminder of the Union's foreign policy shortcomings.

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