Hypostases of Power in International Relations

Remarks on the Internationalization of Higher Education as a Source of Soft Power

Associate Professor Anisoara Popa, PhD
"Danubius" University of Galati, Romania
apopa@univ-danubius.com

Abstract: The goal of this article is to provide a few comments on a more and more important dimension of Power in International Relations, that of Soft power. Starting from emphasizing some nuances of the process of internationalization and its terminology and also on the concept of "soft power" we tried to point out the rapport between these two concepts and realities and also the role that universities could have in the new international context. Our investigation leads us to the conclusion of the necessity of distinct national policies in order to maximize the involvement of universities in this process, taking account that the process of internationalization of higher education represents means and not goals.

Keywords: higher education; soft power; internationalization

The new trends detected in the landscape of international higher education show that "higher education is increasingly influenced by globalization, but is also becoming a more dynamic actor in the *global knowledge economy.*" (Adams & de Wit, 2011, p. 29)

We, as many other analysts, have already showed that researchers, practitioners and policy makers are trying hard to find a consensus on the essence and finality of this process and even about the terminology that refers to it (Popa & Puşcă, 2012, pp. 25-29). Concepts as *"internationalization"*, *"globalization"* but also *"internationality"*, *"transnationalization"* and, even *"the end of internationalization"* (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, p. 27) or *"post-internationalization age"* (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, p. 28) are used to designate the same process, one which disconcerts by its complexity. We insisted also on the emphasis of Hans de Vit's *"constructed antagonism"* between *internationalization* which, "in terms of practice and perceptions, is closer to the well-established tradition of international cooperation and mobility and to the core values of quality and excellence and humanistic ideas", and *globalization* which "*refers more to competition, pushing the concept of higher education as a tradable*

commodity in a world of pure economic benefits" (de Wit, 2011, p. 7). But Hans de Vit, himself, and Uwe Brandemburg have shown also that this distinction/antagonism ignores the fact that activities that are more related to the concept of globalization (higher education as a tradable commodity) are increasingly executed under the flag of internationalization. (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, p. 27)

Many authors perceived as a result of internationalization, both, furthering cooperation and also competition among countries, as a new reality of our more globalized world (Knight, 2010, p. 216). Hans de Wit reveals the same aspect when he observed that "*in the Bologna Declaration (1999), as well as in the Lisbon Strategy of 2000, the two dimensions of internationalization, cooperation and competition, meet: should be more cooperation resulting in a European Area for Higher Education and research, a Europe of Knowledge, but this cooperation is strongly required in order to cope with the competition from United States, Japan and increasingly China and others emerging economies*". (de Wit, 2011, pp. 9-10)

"Internationalization" and "Internationality" are two others concepts used by the European researchers involved in the framework of the IMPI project to refer, firstly to the process of becoming international, whereas secondly how international a university is, at a certain point in time (Brandenburg & Gero, 2007). Another concept, "transnatinalization", refers on the issue of the cross-border higher education.

The moving "from the simple exchange of students to the big business of recruitment and from activities impacting on an incredibly small elite group to a mass phenomenon" made Brandenburg and de Wit to talk about "the end of Internalization", "the post–internationalization age". We totally agree with them about the necessity of "a re-conceptualization of internationalization". They pointed out also, that "we have to move away from dogmatic and idealist concepts of internationalization and globalization" and to understand them "in their pure meanings – not as goals in themselves, but rather as means to an end" (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, pp. 27-28). Indeed we need "more philosophy and also more sense of reality", to move to "a fresh unbiased paradigm", in order to "help preparing higher education world for this." (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, pp. 27-28).

In this context, even if we would like to understand the concept of internationalization of higher education as designating "the process of integrating

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an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education" (Knight, pp. 5-31), it is evident that the tradable dimension of the process should be taken into account (Daudel; Popa & Maftei, pp. 172-181). This remark supports the idea that involvement in the internationalization of higher education could mean also a source of economic power for that educational actor or state.

The new role that universities have assumed, one which is very different of that "ivory tower" of the Humboldian universities, leads the analysts towards new models such as that of "Triple Helix" which refers to the relations among universities, government and industry (Etzkowitz et al., 2000, pp. 313-330)[1] or, even, that of "Quadruple Helix", adding a new helix represented by the international context.

Insisting on the new role of the university and on the relation between the process of internationalization of higher education and the soft dimension of power Jane Knight said that the "International higher education has been drawn to this new concept of soft power like bees to honey." (Knight, 2014)[2]

Josepfh S. Nye coined the concept of "soft power" which will come into vogue after the dissolution of the USSR (Nye, 1990)[3]. The new approach, made after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, leads him to emphase the different nature of this "other face of power" compared with "hard power" and to the paradoxical remark that soft power is more necessary to "win the peace" than to "win the war" (Nye, 1990).

Nye started from accepting power as the "ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants" and showed that there are three important ways to affect it: coerce them with threats (the stick approach), induce them with payments (the carrot approach) and attract or co-opt them to want what you want (Nye, 1990).

Narrowly, coercion and inducements represent the hard power dimension, based on large capabilities or resources. It always depends on the context where the relationship exists. In order to convert resources into power, there are necessary "well-designed strategies and skillful leadership", but also "to understand what

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[1] Available online at http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048733399000694.

[2] Available online at: http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140129134636725.

[3] Available at http://www.amazon.com/Soft-Power-Means-Success-Politics/dp/1586483064#reader_1586483064.

game you are playing". Nye told in the same work that the nowadays the trait of "the agenda of world politics" is that "it has become like a three-dimensional chess game in which one can win only by playing vertically, as well as horizontally", at the military, economic and transnational issues level.

In the new "power spectrum", drafted by him, there is also an "indirect way to get what you want", named "the second face of power" or "soft power" consisting in attracting its values, emulation by its example, the will to follow it. Because this means the ability to shape the preferences of others by attraction and seduction, soft power is also seen as an "attractive power", a "co-optive power" that arise "*from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in its political values, in its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)*." (Nye, 1990, p. 12)

Nye insists on the cultural dimension of the game of power and on its role in co-optive capacity of power: "the ideas and values that America exports in the minds of more than half a million foreign students who study every year in American Universities and then return to their home countries. Indeed the international student communities are efficient, the "soft power" tools and Internalization of higher education, by its different forms, could generate a power dimension of a state.

Sometimes, these kinds of interests that assure the multiplication of culture attractiveness are promoted in the neighborhood area of a great power, at the level of a region firstly, and then an influence on larger areas. This was also the case of the academic cooperation in the Black Sea Area (Popa, 2010, pp. 222-230). The educational dimension of cooperation in this area covered more than the riparian states and referred to a vast region, known as the Wider Black Sea Region. In our analysis, we observed this "educational dimension of Geopolitics", or "Educational Geopolitics", as a soft power dimension which comes along with hard politics, in the new context of competition in the educational market (Popa, 2010, p. 230). The last developments in this area showed the strategic importance of the Black Sea Area, the focus that the institutions of OBSEC kept on educational dimension. A Working Group on Education was created, which adopted the Action Plan and it should monitor the building of an educational Portal of this area as well as the evolution of the educational issues.

The evolution of internationalization of higher education in this area reflects the constellation of the strategic interests of the main political actors. Thus, the

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European Union stressed on the Neighborhood Program and after on the Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea Trust Cooperation, part of the German Marshall Fund of the USA was created, etc. (Popa, 2010, p. 225) We are able to observe the competition that maybe could explain the absence of the accomplishments as remarkable as those from the European Union area (obtained by SOCRATES, ERASMUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS OR ERASMUS+) or from America, also.

Started before the USSR dissolution, the competition appeared at the level of Globalization/Internationalization of Higher education has increased and generated advantages for the countries located outside the Iron Curtain and, in this context, it rises the perception and the debate question on the term "soft power" as a "really hegemony dressed in attractive new clothes", a "neo-colonialism", or "*a modern branding campaign, using culture and media to win over foreign publics – especially students*" (Knight, 2014).

As long as this process maximizes anyway the attractiveness of the involved actors, it is obvious that the internationalization is not an option, but it becomes "an evident necessity".

Irina Ferencz observed in her cross-country analysis, the European *and national policies for academic mobility. Linking rhetoric, practice and mobility trends,* published in 2012, that among the actors involved in agenda-setting and policy-making, the state has the most important role (Ferencz & Wachter, 2012, p. 53) and after that some other non-statal actors. This fact confirms the idea mentioned by Nye, *of the problem of power diffusion towards the non-statal actors that becomes more important than that of transition of power from one statal actor to another.* (Nye, 1990)

Analyzing the Internationalization of the Romanian higher education, researchers observed that, after 1989, the new interest in Romania was not valued in terms of internationalization. According to the conclusions of the project "*Universities in the context of Europeanization and Globalization*" even if the number of the international students from Romania at this moment is at the level of 1977, our country was rather active in the area of internationalization of higher education"[1]

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[1] Diagnostic Analysis "Universities in the context of Europeanization a Globalization", Panel 5, coordinator Remus PRICOPIE, rapporteur Luminița Nicolescu, p. 28.
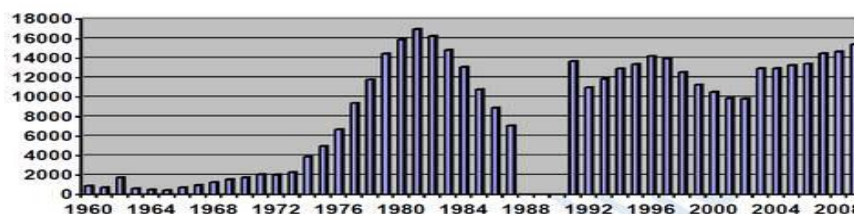
Figure 1. International students in Romanian higher education between 1960-2008

Source: Sadlak (1990) for 1960-1988, World Bank (1996) for 1989-1994, Romanian Institute for Statistics for 1995-2002, MECI (2009) for 2003-2008 according to Diagnostic Analysis "Universities in the context of Europeanization a Globalization", Panel 5, coordinator Remus PRICOPIE, rapporteur Luminiţa Nicolescu, p. 28[1])

At the national level, the Ministry of Education, by its two departments, Department for European Affairs[2], and Department for International Relations[3], is the most important central level entity which has adopted elements of an internationalization policy applicable to the totality of higher education institutions within the country.

The Agency for Loans and Scholarships and The National Agency for Community Programs in the field of Education and Training are also under the Ministry's coordination.

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education uses internationalization as a standard of quality assurance and in 2011 the Romanian universities were classified using this criterion, as well.

At the Romanian universities level, the strategies for internationalization tend to become increasingly important. At the same time, the necessity of the entrepreneurial dimension, especially for the private universities which do not receive a financial support from the state, even if the law stipulates it, could accentuate the pragmatic interest in Internationalization.

There are countries where internationalization has become a national policy priority and the government provides an incentive funds to institutions for enrolling

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[1] Online at http://www.edu2025.ro/UserFiles/File/LivrabileR1/diagnostic_panel5.pdf.

[2] This department is in charge of coordinating and monitoring the participation of the country in EU's education programmes (e.g. the current Lifelong Learning Programme – LLP), in the CEEPUS Programme and in other European Initiatives.

[3] This department is in charge of managing the bilateral cooperation agreements signed with other countries and of setting the regulations applying to the international students.

foreign students, as Nye (2000) showed[1]. Otherwise, there is the risk for universities to stress on the financial aspects and to forget the most important sense of internationalization, that of an education for a global citizenship which is able to guard the cultural identity and values.

In conclusion, the correlation that exists between internationalization of higher education and the soft power of a state as an actor of international relation is evident, as well as the necessity of distinct national policies in order to maximize the involvement of universities in this process, taking account that the process of internationalization of higher education represents means and not goals.

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