International Education during the Cold War: Soviet Social Transformation and American Social Reproduction

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After World War II, international relations were shaped by a confrontation between the United States and Soviet Union, an East-West confrontation framed by divergent models of their respective political systems, economic systems, and ideologies. These differences were exacerbated in an international struggle, the Cold War, in which each superpower established distinct and competing economic, political, and ideological systems. The Cold War was mainly waged through attempts by each side to extend its ideological influence in foreign states around the world. As noted by U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson in 1950, the U.S.-USSR Cold War was a “struggle for men’s minds and men’s allegiance” (U.S. Congress 1950, 3).

During the 1945–90 period, the United States and Soviet Union employed various cultural and informational and educational tools to establish and maintain friendly political regimes in foreign states. The “friendliness” or loyalty of foreign political regimes was achieved through legitimizing rival political and cultural values among existing or potential dominant groups in foreign countries. Education became one of the powerful vehicles, through which both superpowers produced or reproduced the loyalty of foreign dominant groups, who in their turn maintained the belief in their societies that imposed models of political institutions, economic arrangements, and cultural values were the most appropriate. In this context international education programs became a major part of their strategy to win the “minds” and “allegiance” and to reproduce or transform foreign dominant groups. These international education programs involved two interrelated initiatives. First, they selected foreign nationals to attend and receive instruction at American or Soviet educational institutions (mainly at the postsecondary level). Second, they exposed participants in such programs to ideas and practices in line with the dominant ideology of the American or the Soviet system. Thus, Marxist thought was promoted in the USSR international education programs, and capitalist (or “free-market”) ideas were emphasized in U.S. international education programs.

This study compares American and Soviet approaches to international education.

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education during the period of the Cold War. Several related questions guided my research:

1. What criteria were employed by Soviet and American authorities in selecting foreign participants to attend international education programs in their respective societies?

2. What were the Soviet and American authorities’ stated goals for involving these individuals in their respective government-sponsored international education programs?
   a. In what ways can the goals be interpreted as seeking to socially reproduce or to socially transform dominant groups in the foreign societies?
   b. In what ways can the goals be interpreted as seeking to ideologically incorporate dominant groups in the program organizer’s bloc during the Cold War?

3. To what extent were the Soviet and American authorities successful in reaching the goals of their international education programs?

I focus here on the criteria employed and the outcomes intended in selecting prospective foreign students to attend universities in either the United States or the USSR as part of government-sponsored international educational programs. This article first reviews the theories and research on social reproduction, social transformation, and ideological incorporation through education. Next, I describe the primary resources and methods applied in the study. The third section of the article offers an interpretation of the findings. The article concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for theorizing about how education contributes to social reproduction, social transformation, and ideological incorporation.

Conceptions of Social Reproduction, Social Transformation, and Ideological Incorporation through Education

Giving primacy to either political-economic or cultural models of reproduction, the overwhelming majority of research has revolved around the argument that the main social functions of education are to be an agent of social control (Weber 1946) or to reinforce existing dominant culture, ideology, social structure, and economic relations.1 Moreover, this literature indicates that these functions are pursued in countries with different political systems.2 Some studies focus on how education plays a critical role in intergenerational transmission of parental socioeconomical status; it is a conveyor belt of advantaged family background and has little independent effect.3

Other studies argue that a labor market favors those in upper-middle classes, who often have better economic opportunities through familial support (Erikson 1988; Hansen 1996), or the advantage in the labor market comes through a privileged background, with personality traits (acquired in the home) rather than knowledge and skills (obtained in the education system) being the determinants of labor market success. In all these studies social reproduction is defined in terms of the role played by the national education system in perpetuating and legitimating the wealth, status, and power of the dominant groups in a given society.

Complementing these studies of reproduction are studies illuminating how education systems, usually in societies that have recently experienced “socialist” revolutions, are used to transform wealth, status, and power relations within a given society. Often in rhetoric and sometimes in practice the new political leadership seeks to change the social background characteristics of those who are selected to gain access to and succeed in (higher) education and, thus, qualify for higher-level positions within political and economic institutions. Literature focused on China and Tanzania offers examples of the rationales, strategies, and (sometimes contradictory) outcomes of such efforts to use education to transform (or invert) hierarchical relations within society.

The question about ideology and education or ideological incorporation and education as well as political indoctrination and education is connected to the above-mentioned findings. The researchers who studied the relationship between education and social structure of a society or between a political power and education argued that ideologies are transmitted through the content and process of schooling that support the hegemony of (preexisting or newly established) dominant groups (Gramsci 1971; Apple 1978). The thesis that the school is the principle mechanism for the promotion of a dominant ideology and for engineering of a consensus between dominant and subordinate groups within a given society is a thread woven through the works of James Coleman (1965), Antonio Gramsci (1971), Dennis Smith (1972), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Richard Dobson (1977), Michael Apple (1978), and others.

However, these researchers have not focused on the role of international education programs as an agent to reproduce or transform the social hierarchy within participating countries or as a mechanism for ideological incorporation within competing international political/economic/ideological blocs, for instance, the Soviet or American blocs during the period of the

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1 Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Erikson and Jonsson 1998; Bowles and Gintis 2002.

2 Examples of research on education in social transformation can be found in the cases of China (Epstein 1991), Cuba (MacDonald 1985), Egypt (Cochran 1986), German Democratic Republic (Fiszman 1982), Hungary (Darvas 1991), Nicaragua (Rippberger et al. 1992), South Africa (Kallaway et al. 2001), Soviet Union (Archer 1979), and Tanzania (Urch 1991).
Cold War. To my knowledge, theorists and field researchers have not examined how international educational programs organized by external dominant groups have influenced the social reproduction and transformation processes in another society under certain international circumstances (Cold War), when all possible instruments such as education were operated to reproduce or transform dominant group membership in order to reinforce and secure an ideological allegiance to one or another external political power. Thus, we are shifting emphasis from the question of how class systems are reproduced through within-society educational content and processes to the question of how two superpowers organized international education programs to reproduce or transform class relations and, thus, to establish allegiant dominant groups in other societies.

Data and Methods

Here I draw on archival records of the former Soviet Ministry of Education as well as published reports of the U.S. Department of State and declassified documents of the National Security Council of the United States. I specifically examined the Soviet and American approaches to selecting and educating foreign nationals. In the case of the USSR, I relied on a database of information that had been accumulated and stored by the Soviet Union’s Ministry of Education. This database is called Foreign Students in the USSR Statistics and contains background information about all foreign citizens who studied in the USSR. The data about participants of the American international educational programs, which were sponsored and administrated by the government, were obtained from annual reports of the Department of State generally titled International Educational Program: Reports of the Department of State (U.S. Department of State 1948–present). All such documents in the Soviet Union’s and the United States’ archives were analyzed for purposes of this study. The various records provide extensive information on the process of planning and implementing the international educational programs as well as the number, country of origin, and social background or professional status of foreign citizens recruited as students and professionals by either the Soviet Union or the United States throughout the period of the Cold War.

Since the mentioned sources constitute both qualitative and raw quan-
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titative data, discourse analysis and basic descriptive statistical analysis were employed. The documents were discursively analyzed to understand the principles and logic of educational policies that both superpowers pursued in relation to foreign countries. For the quantitative data for the Soviet case, I selected 101 (out of a total) of 148 countries (Ministry of Education of the USSR 1990) around the world in which the Soviet Union consistently recruited prospective students; these 101 countries are the ones in which the USSR’s international educational programs were implemented during the entire period of the Cold War. For the American case, we defined 128 of 134 countries from which exchange students and professionals were consistently selected during this period (U.S. Department of State 1948–present).

The Soviet Approach to Selecting and Educating Foreign Nationals

The Soviet international education approach involved three core elements: the way foreign social groups were classified, the criteria used to select participants, and the intended outcomes of educational programs organized for those selected. Soviet leaders conceived of foreign societies in terms of a hierarchy of dominant upper and unprivileged lower social groups, with a middle class being located between them in any society (either capitalist or socialist-oriented states). The upper, middle, and lower strata were also divided into social groups depending on their achieved political, economic or social/cultural privileges, power, and resources. The higher statesmen (political and bureaucratic establishment), clergy, and business owners were viewed to constitute the upper stratum. The middle stratum included such social-occupational groups as military, farmers, intellectuals, and traders. The lower stratum consisted of workers, peasants, and “technicians” (sluzhashiy).7

This classification system is important because from the early 1950s the Soviet government sought to select prospective foreign students primarily according to their family background or social origin. Undergraduate students from third world and socialist bloc countries were selected by the Soviet embassies or cultural centers according to the specified quotas (according to the documents, 70–80 percent of the student places were allocated for lower classes, 15 percent for middle strata, and 5 percent for upper-class groups) established by the Higher Education Committee at the Central Com-

7 However, the Soviet government conceived of technicians, i.e., white- and blue-collar workers (sluzhashiy), or members of the new working class (novyy rabochiy klass), as a social group possessing more technical skills as well as more cultural and social capital and career aspirations than workers or peasants. Since many technicians did not have higher education and were descendants from the families of workers and peasants, with the only difference that they obtained a vocational secondary education, the government of the USSR classified the technicians as part of the lowest stratum. However, their vocational education and family origin were viewed by the Soviet government as the basis for the creation of the loyal group through providing the foreign technicians with an engineering diploma with communist indoctrination. The Soviet leaders and some researchers reported that children of white-collar origin had substantially greater chances of reaching higher positions than children of unskilled working-class origins (Erikson and Jonsson 1998).
mittee of the Communist Party. Thus, family origin was clearly emphasized, perhaps more so than academic achievement, when Soviet diplomatic missions, cultural centers, or local communist parties selected foreign youths to participate in the international education programs. The evaluation reports of the 1960s–80s emphasized that “children of labor classes are primary target to be trained in Soviet educational establishments.” Moreover, the children of technicians, classified as members of the lower class and seen to become members of a new socioprofessional group of technocrats (tekhnokrati), were the primary target among other groups within all classes.

In addition, ideological background played a role in the selection procedure to some extent. The 1986 evaluation report indicated that “representatives of labor classes who recommended themselves as active participants in anti-imperialist struggle are selected by local progressive movements for studying in the USSR.” The selection of foreign citizens according to their social origins was accompanied by the criterion of their procommunist ideological background. The 1986 evaluation report of the Ministry of Education stated that “As in the previous period, the representatives of working population, the working class and peasants as well as the active participants of anti-imperialistic struggle were given the priorities for the admission.”

The case of the German reeducation program after the Second World War is also good evidence of the Soviet approach to selection. The Education Division of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany issued in 1946 the executive order prescribed “to democratize the German Universities by means of admitting the students originated in lower classes, because they are likely to be close to Marxism than the students of middle or upper classes background” (State Archive of Russian Federation, records group 7317, inventory 54, file 1). Thus, the strategy of selecting participants on the basis of class of origin also was seen to serve as the basis for ideological selection.

The Soviet government’s purpose in recruiting foreign students according to the above-described policies was to enlist the allegiance to the Soviet bloc of workers, technocrats, and leaders of political movements and to promote their status and political power within their own countries. Through international education programs the Soviet Union also sought to promote the status of the graduate in order to shape the respective country’s political orientation toward the USSR. For instance, in 1988, when Ugandan officials balked at sharing the cost of a Soviet international education program involving offspring of the highest bureaucratic apparatus, a Soviet diplomat wrote a report recommending that “for the sake for pro-Soviet orientation

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8 Russian Archive of Modern History (Moscow), records group 5, Apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, inventory 35, Division of Science and Higher Education Establishments at the Central Committee of the Communist Party, file 228.

9 State Archive of Russian Federation (Moscow), 1986, records group 9606, Ministry of Higher and Vocational Education of the USSR, inventory 11, file 351, 36.
of Uganda we must pay for education of selected Ugandan students who will
govern this country.”

In addition to recruiting exchange students from the less privileged
groups within third world societies, Soviet officials used other mechanisms
to promote loyalty to the Soviet Union and Marxist ideology among lower
social groups in these countries. For instance, the Higher Education Com-
mittee worked to diffuse Soviet ideology through special centers and higher
educational establishments built with Soviet financial assistance around the
world. The programs were aimed at inculcating working-class youths with a
historical materialist understanding of society. The Soviet Union built 450
centers throughout the world, where the children of the poorest and illiterate
families were educated. The future technocratic elites were educated in Soviet
vocational institutions (L’Ecole Polytechnique) or in 67 higher-educational
institutions around the world, also built by the Soviet Union. The Soviet
leadership believed that diplomas of engineers received by foreign students
in the times of worldwide modernization in industry could be exchanged
for high status in local labor markets and, consequently, for dominant posi-
tions in the political field. The plan was for graduates with engineering
diplomas, prospective technocrats, to become the oppositional force against
the old elite in those countries that retained independence from Soviet
political and military interventions (e.g., Middle Eastern states) or to become
agents of Soviet domination in those countries that had been previously
subjected to the USSR (e.g., Eastern European states).

Maintaining the allegiance of socialist bloc countries to the Soviet Union
was the primary concern of Soviet educational policy during the Cold War.
A selection of young members of movements with a “socialist” orientation
was implemented by the Committee for State Security (KGB) and diplomatic
missions. They arranged negotiations with politically active youths to deter-
mine how they viewed the Soviet ideology in order to identify youths who
aspired to become part of a political vanguard to promote socialism in their
countries. Consequently, they received a scholarship for short-term education
in Soviet party schools and funds to continue their activities in their country
of origin.

In the early 1960s the Higher Education Committee and Central Com-
mittee of the Communist Party elaborated the long-term strategy to form
(mold) a new loyal generation of technocrats in foreign countries. Soviet
strategists set 2010 as the target date for when pro-Soviet technocrats would
gain dominant positions in their respective societies, assisted by “domestic”
political movements as well as Soviet economic and military support (Ministry
of Education of Russian Federation 1999, 71). This plan was elaborated in
1962–66: “Our goal is to select and educate foreign people from lower classes,
mainly from families of technicians. This policy will result in establishing a new loyal generation of technocrats who will gain political power in almost all countries throughout the world by 2010.” However, this goal (along with others set by the Soviet Union) evaporated with its dissolution in 1990.11

The American Approach to Selecting and Educating Foreign Nationals

Against the Soviet Union’s attempts to establish new dominant classes (social transformation) in other countries that would tend to be allied to the Soviet socialist bloc, the American government sought to reinforce the dominant groups (social reproduction) in foreign countries whose allegiance would be to the American capitalist bloc. Thus, in the American approach, potential foreign candidates were selected according to their current professional status or potential rather than their social origin (directly).12

Accordingly, all potential candidates for education were classified according to three categories: leaders, teachers, and students (U.S. Department of State 1948–72). The category “leaders” included politicians, businessmen, and journalists; the “teachers” group consisted of school and university teachers, researchers, and administrative staff in educational establishments; and “students” were youths who were identified as potentially becoming members of the country’s ruling elite. This classification applied to both nonsocialist and socialist countries. For example, American programs involving exchange students/scholars from Eastern Europe began in the mid-1950s, after the Soviet Minister of Foreign Relations, Viacheslav Molotov, agreed (during a conference in Geneva in 1955) to American diplomats’ proposal to involve Eastern European citizens in American educational programs. With the assistance of philanthropic foundations, the U.S. government expanded educational and cultural exchange programs involving elites, even party elites, from Eastern Europe. Later, the period of détente contributed to real expansion of American programs there, and during the Reagan administrations (1981–89) the programs played a significant role in development of civil society, involving mainly Western-minded citizens of these countries.

This system of selection was realized by the Educational Bureau at the Department of State. The National Security Council, with help from the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) centers located in 138 countries around the world, elaborated “country plans” that identified professional groups to be selected for these education programs (U.S. Department of State 1950). As a result of these policies and procedures, political leaders, journalists, and

11 Russian Archive of Modern History (Moscow), records group 5, Apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, inventory 35, Division of Science and Higher Education Establishments at the Central Committee of the Communist Party, file 202.

12 Note that given at least some degree of social reproduction in these other countries, it is likely that individuals in higher-status occupations selected for participation in U.S. programs were “coincidentally” from middle- and upper-class backgrounds.
businessmen, depending on the country, accounted for between 55 and 99 percent of total foreign citizens selected by the American government during the Cold War to participate in programs administered by the Department of State.

However, during this period the proportion of program participants who were categorized as leaders (politicians, businessmen, journalists, academics) decreased, whereas the numbers of students and youths increased. For example, after World War II and up to the 1960s, political leaders (members of parliaments, democratically oriented party officials), state bureaucrats (heads of ministries, mayors of cities), and journalists of Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and other European countries were the primary groups involved in American international education programs. When U.S. officials believed that a democratic values consensus between Western Europe and the United States was established (“transatlantic partnership”), they began to prioritize selecting students in Western European countries in the mid-1960s.

Once selected to attend American universities, individuals would be exposed to the American liberal democratic and capitalist ideology, both through the formal curriculum in many of the fields and institutions and through extracurricular activities organized by the institutions or the government. The intent was that, after their international educational experiences in the United States, the foreign participants would implant the democratic principles of management, politics, and life within the professional group and other citizens in their own countries (U.S. Department of State 1950, 1–44). For example, as part of the educational observation trips organized by the Department of State, foreign politicians selected to participate studied and observed how the U.S. Congress worked, foreign youth leaders learned about how democratic principles worked in local communities, and some foreign university faculty took courses and degrees in American studies.

With respect to the case of Eastern Europe, when the National Security Council concluded in 1956 that popular uprisings, with the assistance of radio propaganda and supporting dissidents, were likely to end Soviet domination in the region, the strategy shifted to developing international education programs for Eastern European citizens (National Security Council 1956). The Solarium project elaborated inside the National Security Council recommended to President Eisenhower the development of long-term educational exchanges with the countries of Eastern Europe, because partici-

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13 The transatlantic partnership conception implied the creation of economic, political, and ideological union between the United States and Western Europe under American leadership (National Security Council 1974).

14 See the National Archive Records Administration (Washington, DC), 1945–60, records group 59, central files 1950–54, boxes 2450, 2451, 2456; Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, 1963–70.
pants in these programs could help promote evolutionary change in their countries’ political climates (National Security Council 1988).

Thus, American international educational programs were directed toward involving existing pro-Soviet elites in these countries (e.g., mayors of cities, members of communist parties, presidents of universities) (U.S. Department of State 1963) in programs designed to “encourage them to seek a greater degree of nationalism and independence of Moscow” (National Security Council 1956, 243–46). Fomenting nationalism through radio, books, and education played a very important role in American containment strategy, particularly during the administration of Jimmy Carter (1976–81).

Then, during the first Reagan administration (1981–85), American international education programs aimed mainly at exposing youth activists to the values of freedom and democracy in American universities (Institute of International Education 1981–89). President Reagan articulated that the task for American administrators of such exchange programs was to break down the control of youths by the communists (“Implementing the Geneva Exchange Initiative” 1986). To implement this task, the USIA selected students, civil rights activists, and the leaders of liberal movements, who were eager to build civil society in their respective countries in the region. According to the statistics published by the Institute of International Education, Open Doors, and other sources, the number of students coming to the United States from Eastern Europe during the 1980s increased enormously (Institute of International Education 1981–89; National Council of Educational Statistics 1997).

Results of Soviet and American International Education Programs

Now I turn to examine the third research question regarding the actual outcomes of the policies and programs for international education organized in the United States and the USSR. Here I will focus on the extent to which the individuals who participated in the respective programs (a) assumed elite positions in their countries and (b) established like-mindedness and loyalty to the Soviet or American bloc. Drawing on the textual and numerical evidence available in the archival and published records, I can offer preliminary answers to these questions.

Positions of Former Participants

During the whole period of the Cold War the United States and Soviet Union through government-sponsored programs selected and educated over 600,000 (U.S. Department of State 2000) and over 500,000 (Ministry of Education of Russian Federation 1999, 141) foreign citizens throughout the

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15 Interestingly, at the same time, the Reagan administration managed to convince the Soviet Union that the training of youths in American universities would contribute to mutual understanding between the American and socialist blocs.
world, respectively. Particularly in Western Europe, most of the participants in U.S. international education and cultural exchange programs attained dominant positions and assured loyalty of their societies to American values and politics. It is reported that former participants of American educational programs constituted 17–45 percent of all members of European parliaments in West Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Ireland, and Belgium during the Cold War years (U.S. Department of State 1964–72). For example, of the over 5,000 government officials and leaders of political parties in the western part of Germany that the United States selected and reeducated during 1947–54, two-thirds attained key positions, such as state presidents and senators, trade union leaders, state secretaries, mayors of large cities, and supreme court judges (Kellermann 1978). Eighty-one percent of British Parliament’s members, including five members of Wilson’s cabinet, were selected by the U.S. government for short-term education and observation during 1964–70 (U.S. Department of State 1964–72). In the United Kingdom, former and current prime ministers as well as 19 current cabinet or ministerial-level officials were educated through international education programs organized by the American government (U.S. Department of State 2000).

In other parts of the world, a report published at the end of the twentieth century (U.S. Department of State 2000) indicates that nearly 200 current and former chiefs of state in addition to over 600 cabinet-level ministers participated in U.S. government-sponsored educational programs during the Cold War. Twenty-six senior officials of Mexico’s National Action Party, a fifth of the Israeli Knesset, 25 Japanese Diet members, 80 percent of members of the Saudi Arabian government, and 75 percent of members of the Kenyan Parliament were participants of international educational programs organized by the National Security Council during the Cold War. Moreover, this report indicates that university presidents, ministers, ambassadors, editors, and leaders of political parties in Afghanistan, Ecuador, China, Nigeria, and Mexico also were educated in American government programs during the period of the Cold War (U.S. Department of State 2000).

In the case of the USSR, archived records do not document very extensively the subsequent positions of foreign citizens who participated in Soviet international education programs. However, the archives contain many reports from Soviet diplomatic missions in the countries of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America that most key government officials in the countries in which they were based had studied in the United States rather than in the USSR. This fact is also confirmed by some empirical studies, which point out that dominant groups in Iran, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries during the 1960s–70s did not recognize Soviet diplomas, and all key political positions were held by members of old elite families (Lenczowski 1975). And, indeed, Soviet political leaders recognized the fact that “lower social groups who graduated from Soviet universities had little chances of
gaining dominant political positions in a country of origin,” implying mostly developing countries. And the post-Soviet, Russian government reports that only 5 percent of foreign graduates from Soviet educational institutions attained “privileged positions” (Ministry of Education of Russian Federation 1999, 141).

Nevertheless, other studies conducted at the end of the 1970s indicate that under certain conditions former participants in Soviet international education programs did become members of the dominant groups. This social transformation was most likely to occur in countries with socialist orientations (e.g., the Congo, Yemen), in countries with poor economies and moderate-sized populations (e.g., Benin), and in countries in which a “national liberation movement” achieved power (e.g., Syria, Algeria) (Scientific Institute of Higher Education Problems 1979). For example, in evaluating the careers of Ethiopian graduates in relation to international education goals, Soviet strategists reported in 1988 that

For the period of 1974–1987, the Soviet Union educated 5,200 Ethiopian citizens. Today, 1,138 of them are working in Ethiopia, comprising 49.2% of all specialists who have graduated from foreign universities. There is a tendency to use our graduates [Ethiopian graduates] to work in the highest governmental positions in Ethiopia: one of them became a member of the Politburo of the Revolutionary Party of Ethiopia, another—a deputy director of the Ideological Division of the Party, and 30% of the Ministry of Foreign Affair’s diplomats are our graduates. Many or our graduates are doctors, librarians, composers and others work in local offices of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. However, only a modest number of our graduates is working in the government. Those in powerful positions are mostly children of petty bourgeois families who studied in Western countries and maintained caste isolation and aversion to new cadres.16

Also, there are many examples about how former graduates established political organizations opposed to local political power—for example, in Algeria (Front de Libération Nationale), Sweden (Communist Party), and Afghanistan (People’s Democratic Party)—or became the leaders of a coup d’etat—for example, in Guinea, Congo, and Libya. One can identify about 30 political movements with a socialist orientation throughout the world that were established and led by youths who had participated in Soviet international educational programs. For example, it was reported in notes of conversations sent by the KGB to the Higher Education Commission of the Central Committee Party in 1962 and 1965 that “such students as . . . [the surnames are classified still] will be used by our Committee for establishing of progressive pro-socialist parties in Algeria, Afghanistan and Libya. Initially, they will be used to disseminate Marxist literature in their countries.”17

16 State Archive of Russian Federation (Moscow), 1960–90, records group 9661, State Committee on People Education, inventory 1, file 357, 1–32.
17 Russian Archive of Modern History (Moscow), records group 5, Apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, inventory 35, Division of Science and Higher Education Establishments at the Central Committee of the Communist Party, file 221.
Evidently, social transformation plans of the Soviet Union could be achieved under certain political conditions: social disorder brought about by “revolutionary democratic” and “national liberation movements” in the third world or socialist parties in Western countries, which could achieve political power and thereby construct a pro-Soviet regime in a foreign society. Thirty percent of graduates became unemployed in their native countries after their return (Ministry of Education of Russian Federation 1999, 141).

Loyalty/Allegiance to the United States or the Soviet Bloc

The U.S. programs always included curricular and/or extracurricular elements that introduced participants to American values and the advantages of capitalism (i.e., free-market economies) and democracy. However, in comparison to Soviet efforts (discussed below), the American programs exposed their foreign participants to American liberal ideology in a less aggressive way. For example, rather than extensive lectures and seminars on the topic, participants more often observed how the American economic and political systems worked at the grassroots level. In many cases these messages were received favorably by participants, in part because they were selected on the basis of exhibiting pro-U.S. sentiments. For example, the follow-up surveys of former West German grantees implemented by the USIA during the Cold War evidenced positive attitudes toward U.S. policies as well as steps taken to promote the American way of life within Germany society, in particular at universities, where the alumni established new chairs and developed new disciplines such as social studies or political science, or in local communities, where the alumni introduced the principles of self-government. The records keep more positive reactions to the American educational programs than negatives ones; however, sometimes the American administrators of the programs mentioned that the German administrative trainees and students selected for the observation tours throughout the United States "seemed phlegmatic, obviously because of their lack of interests in some facets of American life." In addition, "the university students showed less promise of profiting from exchange experience than any other groups. They seem to have acquired something of attitude of snobbery which goes with their being part of the elite and more or less 'elected' group."\(^{18}\) The Soviet government’s educational programs for international students, like those for citizens of the USSR, included extensive study of Marxism as well as film lectures and conversations with Soviet officials and propagandists about national liberation.

movements. However, there is evidence in the documents that such messages were not always accepted by participants. Indeed, many students complained about such curriculum content to their embassies and to Soviet officials. The problem was so serious that, for example, ambassadors of Indonesia, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and China declared to representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR in 1965 that if the number of ideological disciplines was not reduced, their countries would discontinue the participation in the educational programs of the USSR. Indeed, Cambodia, Algeria, Ceylon, Zambia, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, and Guinea discontinued participation in USSR programs in 1966.

There is also evidence that some students participated in anti-Soviet activity in Moscow and Leningrad; the most active were students from “socialist” bloc countries such as Albania, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Vietnam. For example, 165 students were expelled from Soviet universities on political grounds in 1956, representing 10 percent of the total number of foreign students in the USSR.

In contrast, as noted above, studies conducted at the end of the 1970s indicated that international education programs were relatively successful in promoting ideological allegiance among graduates, some of whom became members of the dominant group in their societies. This was most likely to be the case in countries with socialist orientations (e.g., the Congo, Yemen), in countries with poor economies and moderate-sized populations (e.g., Benin), and in countries in which the “national liberation movement” achieved power (e.g., Syria, Algeria) (Scientific Institute of Higher Education Problems 1979).

The Soviet strategy of selecting lower social groups remained unchanged in the course of the Cold War. Only the Russian political establishment modified the Soviet approach to selection declaring a new conception of its international educational policy that implies reproduction of pro-Russian elite within existing dominant groups in foreign societies (Russian Government 2002).

Conclusion

Sharing the ultimate goal of social selection—to establish allegiant ruling groups in foreign society—the Soviet and American governments targeted populations for recruiting participants for international education programs.

While explicit ideological education was extensive in the Soviet international education programs, concerns were consistently raised by authorities regarding how effectively it was implemented. For instance, documents of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s repeated problems, such as “the ideological work with foreign students is implemented weakly in higher educational institutes” or “local party committees have not yet paid attention to education and training of foreign students, barely supervising the activity of universities in this area” (Russian Archive of Modern History [Moscow], Apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, inventory 35, Division of Science and Higher Education Establishments at the Central Committee of the Communist Party, file 58, 13).
that were radically different. The Soviet government expected youths originating in lower social groups to be more likely to become a foundation for establishing pro-Soviet elite in a long-term perspective. The American political establishment, in contrast, relied on existing dominant groups to instill in them an American world outlook and, consequently, to reproduce an old elite with positive attitudes toward American politics.

In addition to the mentioned empirical evidence, the models of social reproduction theory that I identified at the beginning of the article allow me to conceptualize and set out some ways for debating on the examined processes. First, if we utilize the argument that education reproduces existing dominant ideology and social structure, then Soviet international education policy could achieve its aims only in those foreign states in which Soviet leadership controlled the socially valued and legitimate cultural meanings; that is, national dominant groups were loyal to Soviet ideology or local pro-socialist movements were ready to revolt to take power. However, this ideological allegiance was based on imposed social revolutions with continual political pressure and military interventions, as in Eastern European states, or on domestic national revolutions with reinforcing new social structures through the Soviet international education programs, as in Cuba, China, and other countries. Undoubtedly, social modifications exerted under pressure of the external power, instead of reproduced under domestic conditions inherent to foreign societies, could not exist during a long historical period and consequently collapsed. In contrast, the American political establishment recruited in its education programs members of existing dominant groups in foreign societies employing tactics of further imposition of its values without seeking revolutionary changes in social structures as in Western European states. With regard to the socialists bloc states such as the Eastern European ones, the American government, recruiting the existing procommunist elites in the international education programs, intended to urge leaders to introduce the evolutionary political and economic reforms rather than to revolutionize the social structure in the socialistic societies.

Second, if we utilize the argument that education serves to transmit parental social status (Bourdieu 1977; Reynolds and Ross 1998), then it is not surprising that the Soviet approach of recruiting students from lower-status families, who were less likely to inherit from their families the essential forms of capital (cultural, social, and economic), was less successful in creating members of dominant groups who would be allegiant to the Soviet Union. Relying on the same argument, one would predict that American officials’ strategy of selecting the “better players”—those who had inherited solid cultural, social, and economic capital—would turn out to be more

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effective in securing friends in high places in the states of the American sphere of influence.

Third, the argument that the labor market favors those from upper-middle classes contributes to the conclusion that a disadvantaged position of Soviet graduates could not be improved with the help of Soviet diplomas. We can assume that the efficiency of Soviet international education strategy depended mostly on political context, where the graduates came back. If the foreign government and political elites were pro-Soviet, then the former students could get high positions and maintain the prosocialist orientation of their country; however, if socialist revolutions were reversed, the returning students were excluded by the opposite ruling elite. This thesis relates equally to the effect of the American educational programs.

Fourth, the argument that education is a transmitter of the ideology of the dominant elites works in both the U.S. and Soviet cases. Certainly, the educational programs and reforms contributed to rooting Soviet socialist ideas and American liberal ideas in foreign countries. However, as to the Soviet case, the ideology was transmitted to members of social groups, who—only under certain favorable conditions—could establish this as the dominant ideology in their native countries. However, in the American case, the ideology transmitted seemed to have a more enduring effect in most cases, because the target population included the most privileged socially, politically, and economically, who were able to implant it in a society.

When the two different approaches are examined, it would appear that the American approach of reproducing existing dominant groups (but not a transformation of social structure) along with programs designed to inculcate capitalist and liberal democratic attitudes and dispositions was more effective. However, as noted above, some political contexts rendered this approach less effective than the one employed by the Soviet Union, which selected participants from subordinate groups, imbued them with socialist ideology, and returned them to countries where such background and ideologies enabled them to gain high-status positions.

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