



Australian Policy and History

Linking the past with the present for the future

Soft Power Review Submission

October 2018

The Australian Policy & History (APH) Network aims to provide policymakers, the media and the general public with relevant, accessible information about the historical background to current events and issues.

We connect historians with those making and commenting on public policy, so that the insights gained from the past can be used to inform decision-making in the present, in turn leading to better outcomes in the future.

APH believes that an understanding of history is important in the formulation of foreign policy – in this case the development of a *Soft Power Strategy* following this review. APH members and contributors have considerable experience in researching the role of soft power activities in the development and implementation of Australia's foreign policy, and in the foreign policies of Australia's allies and adversaries.

Recent contributions to the APH website (aph.org.au) demonstrate the breadth and depth of this research. In 2017 Anna Kent produced a piece looking at the role Australian government scholarships have played in Australia's bilateral relationship with Indonesia¹; earlier this year Professor Joan Dassin wrote a short essay about the role of the Fulbright scholarship program and others like it, in the foreign policy of the United States and other nations²; Professor David Lowe has written a policy brief outlining steps that could be taken to improve the soft power potential of the New Colombo Plan³; and most recently Dr Amy Clarke has written an essay on the role of heritage sites in Australia's public diplomacy.⁴ These pieces provide an overview of the role that historical research can play in understanding current policy conundrums.

¹ <http://aph.org.au/australias-scholarships-to-indonesia-value-and-values/>

² <http://aph.org.au/senator-fulbright-we-need-you-now/>

³ <http://aph.org.au/the-new-colombo-plan-next-steps/>

⁴ <http://aph.org.au/heritage-diplomacy/>

In Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)-commissioned research in 2015, Professor David Lowe and his team were also able to demonstrate – through historical research – the extent of people-to-people connections that Australian government scholarships to Indonesia and Papua New Guinea have produced.⁵ This focus on scholarships and educational exchanges mirrors a growing body of literature about the role of international educational exchange in international relations and geopolitics.⁶ It is important that this growing literature is incorporated into any strategy into the future. People-to-people connections are at the heart of many soft power initiatives across the globe; education programs represent only one element of these. However, it is only with the long view of history that we are able to fully understand the outcomes – and thus potential for similar programs.

APH would like to recommend to this *Soft Power Review* that any strategy that may result from this review should have a comprehensive understanding of the history of soft power activities. In addition, the strategy should allocate funding for historical research, regarding not only Australia's soft power activities, but also those of Australia's allies and adversaries.

⁵ David Lowe, Jemma Purdey, and Jonathan Richie, "Scholarships and Connections," (Deakin University, 2015).

⁶ David Lowe and Jemma Purdey, "Scholarships and Connections in Public Diplomacy, the Long View: International Students as Foreign Policy?," in *IEAA Sponsor Forum* (ANU, Canberra: IEAA, 2016); Paul A. Kramer, "Is the World Our Campus? International Students and U.S. Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 5 (2009); Tamson Pietsch and Meng-Hsuan Chou, "The Politics of Scholarly Exchange: Taking the Long View on the Rhodes Scholarships," in *Global Exchanges: Exchange Programs, Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World*, ed. Ludovic Tournes and Giles Scott-Smith (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017).