

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0231

Internationalization, national integration and ‘troublesome’ minorities: Higher education policies towards Hong Kong and East Jerusalem

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Abstract:

In this paper we analyze the internationalization policies of China and Israel towards Hong Kong and East Jerusalem respectively. We demonstrate that they constitute a form of internationalization designed to consolidate national forms of identity and extend state control over ‘troublesome’ minorities within the nation state. This is a form of internationalization in which the state deploys higher education as a tool of ‘soft power’ to control parts of the domestic population. This form of internationalization operates within a broader program of ‘internal colonialization’ that is neither well developed in the literature nor explained by prominent typologies of internationalization.

Paper:

Internationalization is a key feature of higher education systems worldwide. While research has focused on the institutional and the student/scholar level, recently, there has been a shift to consider the role of the state. This has led to a focus on national policies for promoting internationalization (e.g. Buckner, 2020; Lomer, 2017a; Sanders, 2019), the primary focus of which has been international student and staff mobility and to a lesser extent research and university partnerships. While there are multiple, overlapping rationales for internationalization policy at the national level, these are commonly portrayed as economic, academic, competitive, and - increasingly political. However, the political dimension of internationalization tends to be limited to ‘soft power’ portrayed as an attempt by nations to secure and promote their *global* influence (Lomer, 2017b; Mulvey & Lo, 2020).

We investigate the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) relationship with Hong Kong and Israel’s relationship with East Jerusalem through an analysis of policies and programs which promote student mobility. Our analysis focused on two levels; firstly, the national policies designed to promote student mobility, and subsequently the policies and programs of two institutions heavily involved in delivering those policies. We draw on national and local government policies, reports and decisions; decisions and programs from the national higher education authorities and their steering/advisory committees; monitoring reports from local NGOs; university websites; domestic media coverage and interviews with staff in the two institutions. The Israeli case also draws on an in-depth study of internationalization over time in the HE Institution (Bamberger, 2020). These cases we argue represent a political rationale for internationalization which is based on *domestic* ‘integration’ or the exercise of soft power towards domestic populations, which are viewed as rebellious and in need of ‘integration’ into the dominant national society. We portray these cases as forms of

internationalization because the residents in both territories (Palestinians in East Jerusalem, Hong Kongers): have separate passports/identity documents from Israel/China; follow different systems of schooling and curricula; they are not considered 'domestic' students in terms of policy, official statistics or immigration; and they have an identity distinct from and in conflict with the national identity. Further, as we demonstrate, national policies and HE institutions in both nations treat them as a particular form of international student.

We reveal that the state is using internationalization in order to weaken competing national ambitions/identities, and to integrate a 'troublesome' population into the ideologies and structures of the more powerful nation-state (i.e. the 'mainlandization' of Hong Kongers; and to convert PAfEJ into Israeli Arabs). Through these international higher education programs, the state strives for students to shed 'problematic' competing national and local identities, shifting their political/ideological views and allegiances to those of the 'motherland'.

We demonstrate that the economic motives for internationalization are sometimes secondary, or negligible. We further demonstrated that 'soft power,' usually thought of as a way to influence *outsiders*, can be directed at domestic populations as a way to tame 'troublesome' populations.

We demonstrate that the current portrayal in the literature of internationalization as a form of neo-colonialism designed to maintain power imbalances and promote the West's neoliberal agenda (e.g. Stein et al., 2016) fails to recognize how it has been used by non-western nations to control local communities (cf Vickers, 2020) within a nation, or increasingly to project influence internationally. That meta-narrative, which frames internationalization as an extension of western hegemony, reinforces a global imaginary that obscures our understanding of how internationalization is deployed beyond the West and *within* nations for various purposes, in this case, for subjugating troublesome minorities. This echoes Vickers' (forthcoming) argument that Western frames, applied to social phenomena in other contexts (specifically China), are often misleading. Whilst we focus on the PRC and Israel, 'internal colonialization' has a long history, and has surfaced in myriad other contexts (e.g. Russia, UK, South Africa) (Gouldner, 1977; Moyo, 2010; Wolpe, 2012); thus, we suggest that there are likely many other states which are operating internationalization as a form of 'internal colonialization.'

While we did not attempt to evaluate the enactment or effectiveness of the forms of internationalization that we focused on, we did identify powerful barriers that will limit their potential to achieve their state mandated goals, however the nature of these barriers is different.

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