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Ends Changed, Means Retained: Scholarship programs, political influence, and drifting goals

Abstract

Many governments offer scholarships specifically to foreign citizens. In recent years both policymakers and academics have associated these scholarships with political influence, arguing that they generate sympathetic and influential alumni who support positive relationships between their home country and their sponsor. Digging deeper into the histories of several scholarship programs which are now being portrayed in this way shows they were actually set up for very different reasons. Explanations for why scholarships are being given to foreign citizens have changed over time, consistent with a Kingdonian model of the policy process. We need to be cautious about taking these claims at face value, an important reminder for foreign policy analysts more generally.

Governments offer many scholarships¹ specifically to foreign nationals. The Fulbright Awards which bring foreign scholars to the USA are perhaps the most celebrated example, but financial support reserved for foreign citizens includes, *inter alia*, the British Marshall and Chevening Scholarships (FCO1985), France's Eiffel Scholarships (Égide 2008), a range of financial awards offered by Germany's Academic Exchange Service (DAAD 2012), Australian Leadership Awards and Endeavour Awards (Australian Government 2012), the Chinese Government Scholarship Program (China Scholarship Council 2011) and the Japanese Government's MEXT Scholarships (MEXT 2012). Redistributing money from domestic taxpayers to foreign students may seem a perverse activity for a government

ultimately accountable to its citizensⁱⁱ. Part of the explanation is a rhetorical move which associates bringing foreigners to a country with improving international relations. Scholarships are portrayed as part of a larger effort of “public diplomacy”, which builds up goodwill among the populations of foreign countries (Cull 2009 provides a genealogy of the phrase; I am using it in its contemporary sense). That goodwill ultimately benefits the sponsor country, and its taxpaying citizens, by improving relations with those countries. Hence, spending time and money supporting foreign visitors is seen to be serving the national interest.

This paper shows that, while scholarships given to foreign citizens are commonly portrayed as part of a public diplomacy strategy in which the recipients of scholarships play a key role, the stories of how scholarship programs have evolved can be much more complex. Literature on the diplomatic practice of offering scholarships to foreigners sidelines this complexity. Scholarship programs were not necessarily created to do what their proponents now say they do. Such goal redefinition is unlikely to be confined to this one example, and if goals are often redefined for bureaucratic convenience this has important implications for how we analyze foreign policy.

The “opinion leader” model and scholarships

There is a substantial literature on the political and diplomatic impact of international mobility programs, government schemes which fund foreign nationals to visit those governments’ countries (see Atkinson 2010, Leonard and Alakeson 2000, Scott-Smith 2008, Sell 1983, Snow 2009). These discussions typically present this impact within the framework of what Giles Scott-Smith in his analysis of the International Visitor Leadership Program (2003, 2008: e.g. 177; see also 2006), calls an “opinion-leader”

framework. In essence, mobility is seen as influencing international relations through the subsequent careers of grantees. During their time in the host country these elite foreigners are assumed to become better-informed about that country, and often to develop favorable attitudes towards it. In later life they will support positive relations between their home country and their sponsor, and mobilize others to the same end.

Scott-Smith discusses the opinion-leader model in the context of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), which is distinctive among mobility programs in its emphasis on political impact. The IVLP recruits foreigners to visit the United States specifically on the basis that they are likely to become influential in the relatively short term. However, the idea that mobility programs may be used to generate sympathetic alumni who will lead public opinion is clearly being stretched to notionally academic scholarships as well. Many scholarship programs claim to benefit their countries by generating alumni who are well-informed about and well-disposed toward the country in which they studied. When these programs' administrators communicate with other government officials, they often point to alumni who have gone on to attain influential positions in society and appear sympathetic to their former hosts (House of Commons 2006, State Department 2012, Wilson 2010). Internal reviews and evaluations of scholarship programs also rely on these assumptions, and the actors to whom scholarship programs' managers are accountable (primarily politicians and finance ministries) periodically raise concerns that they are not influencing effectively enough (Pamment 2011, e.g. FCO 2005, State Department 2012) prompting officials to generate evidence which deflects such concerns. The belief that the purpose of scholarships is at least partly to influence public opinion abroad, through the opinion leader model, underlies this.

In this article I will be focusing on three British scholarship programs which the Foreign Office, in its internal filing, has labeled as

“Schemes which are intended to help Britain *win friends and influence people abroad*. Most of these schemes aim to attract people *taking a leading part in the future* in their field of study and in their own countries generally, or who seem likely to do so” (FCO 1985 section 3.1, my emphasis)

The opinion leader model has penetrated official thinking on scholarships for foreigners so deeply that by 2006 the House of Commons’ Foreign Affairs Committee was expressing concern that alumni were not demonstrating enough influence. The Foreign Secretary later echoed this worry, exhorting selectors to ensure that scholarships went to future leaders in foreign countries (Miliband 2008).

The academic evidence that scholars who spend time living in a country actually do develop more positive attitudes towards it is decidedly mixed. How studying abroad affects attitudes may well depend on a range of contextual factors (see Atkinson 2010, Marion 1980, Sell 1983, Selltiz and Cook 1962, Selltiz et al 1963, Sigalas 2008, Wilson 2010). However, the assumption that spending time in a country can reliably change grantees’ subsequent behavior is clearly widespread.

A Kingdonesque view of (foreign) policymaking

Public resources are finite, and demands on them are heavy. Doing anything has an opportunity cost: spending time and money on one activity means not devoting resources to another. Spending money on foreign scholars implies not spending that money on citizens. The opinion leader model offers a superficially plausible explanation. It would be easy to observe that the proponents of many scholarship

programs claim they cultivate favorable sentiment toward the sponsor country among foreign opinion leaders, and deduce from this that scholarships targeting foreigners were created to generate influence among future foreign elites. However, policy theory would caution us against taking this observation at face value.

Public policy theory offers several plausible models of how some ideas come to form the foundations of government programs. Over the past half-century, these have challenged the ‘common-sense’ view that policymakers identify problems faced by citizens and then design programs to solve those problems (John 1998, Kingdon 1995: Ch5, Lindblom 1959, March and Simon 1993). From the point of view of an official within government, identifying an activity in which the government could become involved and *then* seeking problems for which that activity appears to be a solution can be just as effective a strategy. In fact, it is often more effective. When officials need to form coalitions with colleagues to make a joint case for an action, their most likely coalition partners will often be seeking solutions to different problems.

Convincing potential allies that an action can solve both of their problems simultaneously (‘kill two birds with one stone’) may well be the best way to expand a coalition (Kingdon 1995: 78, Lindblom 1959). For example, an official in a foreign ministry may be concerned that their country has a bad reputation abroad. Another official working on higher education may worry that the quality of incoming undergraduates is poor. If the foreign ministry official subscribes to the opinion leader model, then both may agree that it would be good for the government to subsidise talented foreign students - without agreeing on why.

John Kingdon’s much-lauded model of the policy process as an interaction among potential problems, potential policies, and political context (1995) seems to offer a plausible framework for interpreting such behaviorⁱⁱⁱ.

Kingdon portrays public policymaking in quasi-Darwinian terms, prefiguring debates about Darwinian models in public policy theory (see John 1998: Ch8, 1999). There are a huge variety of possible policy ideas which could be implemented, but most of them are not compatible with the environment. Those which are compatible with the policy environment are much more likely to be selected. In Kingdon's model of policymaking there are an almost infinite number of activities in which the government *could* become involved, and an almost infinite number of things it could potentially do. At any one time there are many ideas floating around in what he memorably labels the "Policy Primeval Soup" (1995: Ch6)^{iv}. Many officials, academics, interest groups and politicians have ideas for things the government could do. Kingdon shows that, at least within the US Federal Government, the policies which end up being implemented are those which 'policy entrepreneurs' can successfully match up to problems and favorable political circumstances. The choices these entrepreneurs make about where they wish to invest their energy, and how successful they are in matching the streams, determine whether a policy is likely to be implemented. Hence, most of the time we observe governments implementing policies which match the political context, even though a wide variety of possibilities are being generated (Johns 1999, Kingdon 1995).

This seems a plausible paradigm for how much policymaking occurs. Corbett (2003, 2005) has already shown that a Kingdonesque approach can be fruitful in explaining how the European Union's education policy has developed. In particular, it proved very useful in explaining why the Union has funded scholarships for Europeans who choose to study in other member states (Corbett 2005). In that case, policy entrepreneurs seeking to nurture opinion leaders supportive of further European integration played a key role, bringing together other actors who could be

persuaded that a European student exchange program would solve a range of different problems (Wilson 2011).

Kingdon's (1995) model does not necessarily imply that policy entrepreneurs need to propose a new activity in order to connect the problems, policies and political circumstances. It is equally plausible that when a new 'problem' is identified, and political support for a solution builds up, a policy entrepreneur who favors continuation or expansion of an existing activity can portray this existing activity as a solution to the new problem. For example, if an entrepreneur were in favor of giving scholarships to foreign students for some reason, any new problem might potentially become an opportunity to portray giving more scholarships as a solution.

'Policy entrepreneurs' can have many motives. Some are driven by ideology, others by self-interest. These are likely to coincide when the entrepreneurs are government officials, including managers of scholarship programs. Officials have vested interests in keeping their jobs, and if the agencies which employ them expand they may enjoy better promotion prospects (Peters 1995: 211-35). But it also seems reasonable that personnel who find themselves administering scholarships will be much more likely than the general population to believe that scholarship programs are worthwhile; they have selected into the role. Personnel who believe international scholarships are a good thing will presumably want to see them continue. Regardless of whether they are motivated by self-interest or idealism, officials who manage scholarships should tend to present scholarships as the solution to problems (Peters 1995).

In order to succeed in delivering any goal, whether it be perpetuating the careers of its overseers or spreading goodwill among nations, a publicly-funded program must first succeed bureaucratically; that is, its officials must obtain sufficient resources for the program to survive. They may be incentivized to claim benefits for their program

which they know are sought by the disbursers of funds, regardless of whether their programs are optimally designed to generate such benefits (Hogwood and Peters 1983: 142-8). Such tactical redefinition of what the program is *for* may well mean that the advertised objectives of government programs change greatly over time, even while they continue to do more or less the same things. Scholarship programs, for example, might continue to fund visitors even while narratives about *why* they fund them change (see Hogwood and Peters 1983: 14-18). To test this hypothesis, I explored the histories of several scholarships offered to foreigners by the British Government. In my examples, even the officials in charge of major scholarship programs appeared to be laboring under misapprehensions about what those programs were intended to achieve.

The Shifting Goals of (British) Scholarship Programs

If scholarships are now being presented as tools for generating sympathetic opinion leaders abroad, it does not follow that they were created to do so. It is necessary to study programs' historical development.

I have examined the development of three scholarship programs directly funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. These are the Marshall Scholarships, Chevening Scholarships, and the UK contribution to the part of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan which brought visitors from wealthy Commonwealth countries such as Canada to Britain. All three are listed in an internal government document, the 'Review of British government and British Council funded award schemes' as examples of programs primarily "intended to help Britain win friends and influence people abroad" (FCO 1985 section 3.1). Their most recent official mission statements clearly indicate that they are, or were, intended to influence attitudes to the UK by generating sympathetic alumni. I have compared these contemporary interpretations of what the programs are for with the best information I could gather about why they were originally set up. Only one of these programs attracted much directly-relevant secondary literature (Perraton's 2009 analysis of the Commonwealth Scholarships), so I have tracked down and interviewed surviving officials who were involved in the creation of the scholarship programs and traced any freely-available archival material. All interviewees were promised anonymity, as several were serving diplomats bound by civil service regulations. I will discuss the three in chronological order of creation: the Marshall Scholarships (early 1950s), followed by the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships (late 1950s), and finally the Chevening Scholarships (early 1980s).

Marshall Scholarships

The Marshall Scholarship Scheme brings American postgraduate students to study in the UK, providing funds to cover their tuition and a relatively generous grant for living costs. It is funded by a grant from the Foreign Office, but this money flows into a Marshall Trust administered by the London office of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). The Scheme is unusual in having been established by an Act of Parliament in 1953, apparently as a spontaneous gesture of gratitude for Marshall Aid given by the United States in the postwar years (Marshall Foundation 2009a). The Trust's website gives a brief account of its 'official' history.

“The principal architect of the scheme was Roger Makins (Lord Sherfield) who, as Deputy Under Secretary in the Foreign Office supervising the American Department, arranged for the bill to be drafted and passed through Parliament. Soon after the bill passed he was transferred to Washington as Ambassador where he was able to organize the scheme in the United States.

The idea behind the Marshall Scholarships was to build on the Rhodes Scholarships established by a private bequest a half-century earlier. The Rhodes scheme was acknowledged to be an outstanding success, but it was restricted to one British university and, in 1953-54, to one carefully defined category of male candidate. The Marshall, in Roger Makins's view, would extend the Rhodes Scholarship idea and apply it, without distinction of gender and with a wider age range, to any university in the United Kingdom.” (Marshall 2009a)

While this account is accurate, it conceals a good deal of complexity. The Marshall Scholarships' early history is detailed in a file of correspondence between senior civil servants in the Foreign Office America Unit, including Makins, JNO Curle and to a lesser extent MS Russell and KM Anderson (National Archives 1952). While Foreign Secretary

Herbert Morrison bore ministerial responsibility (House of Commons Hansard 1952: cc1689-70^v), the files make clear that these officials made the key decisions which led to the establishment of a scholarship programme and the creation of an autonomous Marshall Trust to which the Foreign Office makes an annual donation. These officials did not initially plan to finance American students, and nor did they agree from the outset on what the Scholarships were supposed to achieve. While the Trust has continued to do basically the same things since 1954, the narrative about why it continues to do them only drifted towards changing participants' attitudes and behavior toward the UK much later.

Foundation

The Marshall Trust was conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War, at a time when there had already been discussion of how Britain could recognize support given by the USA, especially Marshall Aid. By the time the files on Marshall Scholarships begin, official discussion had come to focus on the possibility of gifting an original copy of the Magna Carta (a mediaeval charter limiting the power of the English king) to the United States. A copy had been loaned to the Americans during the War for security, and had proved a wildly popular attraction. The Magna Carta has acquired great symbolic value in the United States, where it can be portrayed as foundational to a liberal political tradition which would ultimately reject monarchy altogether in the Declaration of Independence. A Magna Carta could have acted as a powerful symbol of the two countries' allegedly shared liberal traditions, challenged by Fascism during the War and Communism in the 1950s. There had been speculation about gifting a Magna Carta to the US since the War, but interest seems to have been reawakened in December 1950 by Sir Evelyn Wrench, who raised the possibility of giving a copy publicly in a letter to the Times (National Archives 1951a). Wrench was a particularly notable figure in the US-UK relationship at the time, due to his famous support for Anglo-American relations

after the First World War. Wrench was reckoned to have been instrumental in maintaining the Anglo-American relationship in the interwar years, having arranged the creation of the English-Speaking Union, a large multinational charity based in London. Wrench hoped the ESU would help sustain trans-Atlantic solidarity which could be (and was) called upon in the event of another war. The ESU had gone on to provide support to the government's campaign to bring the USA into the Second World War and to lend key personnel to the wartime Ministry of Information (Cull 1995: 7, 23-6, 29). His intervention therefore attracted some attention within the Foreign Office, and senior civil servant Sir Roger Makins began to take soundings from his colleagues on the feasibility of the idea.

Unfortunately for Makins and his colleagues, obtaining a copy proved impossible. Only four copies of the most desirable Magna Carta, the famous 1215 Runnymede issue, have survived. Of those, two had to be kept in the UK according to legacy conditions, while two were owned by Cathedrals unwilling to part with them due to government pressure. The more recent, less desirable issues could have been seen as inferior gifts^{vi}, but sending the originals abroad would have been either illegal or extremely controversial.

The Foreign Office perceived this situation as an embarrassing diplomatic and public relations *problem* (in the Kingdonian sense). Correspondence in the files (for example, a letter from the Minister of Labour to the Foreign Secretary – National Archives 1951b) suggests that influential people in the British government believed their American counterparts felt that Britain was almost compelled to provide a suitable gift in recognition of Marshall Aid. Ideally this should be made to seem like a spontaneous gesture of goodwill. The fact that the first-choice 'gift' was not available put the civil servants involved in an awkward position. There followed an urgent search for alternatives. There was a feeling that the 'gift' should be made when the UK was no longer obviously dependent on Marshall Aid, but given the country's precarious financial situation in the early 1950s there was a fear that

Britain might require American aid again in the near future. The gesture needed to come before the government was forced to seek further aid, in order to build up goodwill on the American side and to avoid being seen as manipulative (National Archives 1951e).

The scholarship program soon to be known as Marshall emerged from this “primeval soup” (Kingdon 1995) of possibilities. Scholarships were seen as a viable alternative gesture because creating them was expected to appeal to American public opinion – Americans reading or hearing about this gesture would be impressed. The Rhodes Scholarships, created by Cecil Rhodes’ vast legacy to bring Americans to Oxford University, were clearly a model from the outset^{vii}. Even at that time former Rhodes Scholars were known to have had a notable impact on American public opinion, and the original plan seems to have been to choose people “of Rhodes Scholar type” who would take second undergraduate degrees before returning home. There was mention of Marshall alumni acting as a “leaven” for public opinion in America^{viii} (National Archives 1951c). Importantly, however, the files provide strong evidence that the symbolism of the gesture was seen as a far more important consequence of creating the scholarships than any impact alumni might have on the Transatlantic relationship decades later. In the very early stages of the process many suggestions were floated around Whitehall. These included using the gesture of reciprocity as a cover for more clearly propagandistic aims. Proposals included sending select British students to the United States and funding visits by American schoolteachers to the UK in the hope of influencing future generations. These ideas had to be squashed by Anderson, Curle and Russell on the grounds that they were distractions from the task in hand:

“It must be remembered that the object of this exercise is to make a suitable gesture of gratitude for Marshall Aid, any long-term advantage to this country arising from the gesture being incidental [...] The suggestion that the scheme should concentrate on U.S. teachers coming to this country [for example] would, I think, run the danger of making

the scheme so obviously propagandistic and limited as to distract from its value as an expression of gratitude” (Curle in National Archives 1951d)

While it was not considered problematic that, in JNO Curle’s words, scholarships for Americans had “the added advantage of indoctrinating young Americans with the British way of life” (National Archives 1951f), this really does seem to have been considered to be of secondary importance. The scheme was established by the most high-profile means possible, an Act of Parliament establishing an autonomous Marshall Trust which was to have its terms of reference laid down in statute, and therefore publicly visible. Agencies involved in public diplomacy are often granted some autonomy, but there is usually some indirect mechanism for the government to keep control. The British Council is autonomous, but it receives a block grant from the government which is to some extent influenced by the Council’s ability to demonstrate effectiveness in changing opinions (British Council Interview One). While the Marshall Trust was eventually funded in a similar way (and hence needs to rely on an annual appropriation) this was not the intention of its creators. In fact, it was hoped that the Trust could be sustained by an endowment in which the government would deposit enough money to sustain the scheme in perpetuity and would then have no more involvement. That would have made it very difficult for the FCO to use the Scholarships for the diplomatic priorities of the day unless the Trust’s objectives were changed by statute. This would involve widely publicizing a change in objectives as a result of parliamentary debate which, given the fear of being seen as “propagandistic”, could be highly embarrassing. In the end, the perpetual endowment was not created because the economic uncertainty of the time led to worries about any one-off endowment being exposed to a significant inflation risk (National Archives 1951g, 1951h). Had this not been a factor, it seems that the Scholarships would have been completely dissociated from the Foreign Office. It does seem that the Marshall Scholarships were created by a consensus of people who either had not thought through the long-term

consequences of their actions or else genuinely did not see targeted attempts to influence American public opinion through Marshall alumni as the priority.

Goal redefinition

This history is not what might be expected from the scheme's modern objectives. Despite these origins the Marshall Scholarships are now very much considered part of the UK's public diplomacy. One official involved in administering the scheme made an explicit statement that while people within the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) – which manages the Marshall Scholarships – tended to believe that the Scholarships had originally been created as a gesture of thanks, diplomatic considerations had since taken over (Marshall Interview Two). A recent graduate of the scheme remembers the “diplomacy” objective being made explicit in pre-departure briefings. Scholars were made aware of expectations that they would function as “miniature ambassadors”, that “the whole purpose of [the] program is to bolster UK/US ties” (Marshall Interview One). Professional diplomats are directly involved in the final selection process, conducted by the British Council at Consulates around the United States. Each final interview panel contains a Consul. The Trust's official website includes in its mission statement “To motivate scholars to act as ambassadors from America to the UK and vice versa throughout their lives thus strengthening British American understanding” (Marshall 2009b) – a clear statement of the opinion leader paradigm.

The ACU's evaluation of the scheme shows a desire to demonstrate a link between the scheme and the strength of the “special relationship” between Britain and the United States. In 2008 the ACU commissioned a large survey of Marshall alumni, presumably designed partly to impress sponsors (Kubler 2008: 12-13). The survey is clearly designed to

demonstrate the impact of the Scholarships on alumni beliefs and behavior to the benefit of the United Kingdom. A brief appraisal (1985: 1.9.7) noted that

“The standard of scholars is exceptionally high and, as their careers progress, they frequently occupy positions in American life of importance and influence [...] The Scheme is thus rewarding in both academic and *political* senses” (my emphasis).

The Marshall Scholarships are now expected to generate influence through the careers of Marshall alumni.

This comparison shows a noticeable drift in the policy objectives of the Scholarship scheme. While in the early stages the symbolic impact of their very existence as a gesture of goodwill was seen as sufficient to justify funding, today the emphasis has shifted towards the role of Marshall alumni in supporting the “special relationship” between Britain and the USA. The change is a somewhat nuanced one. It would probably be impossible to trace anyone who could identify a pivotal moment at which it occurred, even if they were still alive. Believing that the Scholarships have a symbolic value (or, phrased negatively, that taking American money without a suitable gesture of gratitude would be embarrassing) is not logically incompatible with believing that Marshall alumni support the “special relationship”. There may well have been a stage at which officials emphasized both equally. However, it is clear that the justification for funding these Scholarships offered in the 21st Century differs from that of 1953. Only comparing and contrasting the scheme’s current goals (Marshall 2009b) with its founders’ aims (National Archives 1952) reveals the shift.

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) provides financial support for nationals of one Commonwealth country who wish to pursue university-level education in another. From the outset, the CSFP has been supported largely by the British contribution: Britain has always funded more awards under the Plan than any other country. (Perraton 2009: 195). Thus, while the CSFP is strictly speaking a multilateral award program, British support for the Plan has been of vital importance. The British Government's motives for sponsoring CSFP grants are interesting, and have already been investigated in Hilary Perraton's detailed history (2009).

Until a few years ago the British government (like other developed Commonwealth countries) used the CSFP to fulfill two objectives. Firstly, it provided development aid in the form of access to skills and training to the developing Commonwealth countries. Secondly, it promoted academic mobility within the developed Commonwealth. This division was neatly illustrated by a division of British government funding flowing to the CSFP Secretariat from the 1970s on: one chunk of funding came from the Department for International Development (DfID) and its predecessor agencies and was ring-fenced for students from developing Commonwealth countries, while the rest came from the Foreign Office to maintain a quota of students from the wealthier Commonwealth members (Marshall Interview Two). For my purposes the Foreign Office contribution is the interesting one, because it was justified not on the basis that developed Commonwealth countries like Canada and Australia needed British help, but instead on the basis that bringing their citizens to the UK brought diplomatic benefits (Kirkland 2003: ix).

In the early stages of this research the Foreign Office decided to terminate its contribution to the Plan for developed Commonwealth countries, with some attendant controversy (BBC 2008, Perraton 2009: 78-9). Since then, the CSFP has become an aid program to poorer

Commonwealth members financed almost entirely by DfID^{ix}. However, for many years the Foreign Office provided scholarships to developed Commonwealth countries on the basis that this brought diplomatic benefits. Again, this was not simply a continuation of the Plan's initial *raison d'être*. Well before their abrupt termination in 2008, the developed-Commonwealth scholarships had undergone a shift similar to the Marshall Scholarships'. The symbolic value of making awards ceased to be sufficient, and evaluators began to seek evidence that grants influenced foreigners' views of Britain (Commonwealth Secretariat 1989).

Foundation

The Plan was agreed in the late 1950s at successive meetings of Commonwealth Trade and Education Ministers in Montreal and Oxford, and the first class of Scholars left home in 1960. While some details of the Plan's inception are hazy^x, Perraton (2009: 5-7) is clear that the political impetus came from Canada. John Diefenbaker's new Canadian administration brought a bundle of policy ideas of which British delegates were skeptical, and the CSFP was only one of many. It was, however, considered "safer and cheaper than [the Canadians'] grander plans" (Perraton 2009: 6). From the outset, British support was motivated more by a desire to save face than a strategic calculation of national diplomatic interest. Much as the creation of the Marshall Scholarships distracted from failure to provide a Magna Carta, contributing to a relatively cheap scholarship scheme balanced Britain's refusal to consider the potentially expensive Commonwealth Development Bank proposed by Canadian delegates. There also seems to have been some concern to signal Britain's continued interest in the Commonwealth despite the country's engagement with precursors of the European Union (Perraton 2009: 35).

The size of the British contribution was driven by issues of prestige. From the outset, the FCO committed itself to provide at least half of the funding for the Plan out of concern for Britain's image abroad (Perraton 2009: 36). The CSFP was seen as a symbol of bonds between Commonwealth countries, which were believed to strengthen Britain's status among the Great Powers. A very visible show of British support for Commonwealth Scholarships strengthened this symbolism. The Commonwealth was perceived to have much greater political and economic importance in the 1950s than it does now (Perraton 2009: 81-3). The potential for CSFP alumni themselves to mobilize public opinion, by contrast, does not emerge as a significant theme.

For the universities, of course, promoting Commonwealth cohesion combined with pursuit of their own (educational) interests. Universities were key beneficiaries of the Plan, and their representatives were closely tied into its organization from the beginning (Perraton 2009: Ch1). Unsurprisingly, universities supported the Plan largely for educational reasons, as a means of bringing talent into British higher education, and from their point of view this may have been more significant than any benefits to Commonwealth relations. However, at the outset most academics couched their support in terms of its usefulness as a symbol of Commonwealth unity (Perraton 2009: 37). Even if this were a cloak for those academics' actual motives, the fact that they chose this argument indicates that they believed diplomats would be most responsive to this line of argument, reinforcing the case that the CSFP was seen as a means to this end within the government.

Goal redefinition

While all of these arguments were present throughout the lifetime of the program, Perraton's account makes clear that there was a significant shift in emphasis from promoting Commonwealth links towards pursuit of Britain's perceived national interests (Perraton 2009:

26-7, 61). By the end of the 20th Century contributions to the Plan for developed countries were being justified by claims that its alumni strengthened Britain's relationships with the developed Commonwealth. By the early 1990s diplomats were explicitly setting the goals of British awards as making "future leaders, decision makers and opinion formers" into "influential friends overseas" (quoted in Perraton 2009: 71). Although they retained elements of Commonwealth-unity rhetoric to avoid the diplomatic consequences of being seen to reject the Commonwealth, the civil servants funding the CSFP came to see its role as influencing influential foreigners (Perraton 2009: Ch5, 184). The CSFP secretariat was certainly aware of the political motives behind this component of its funding, as the Secretary implicitly acknowledged in his introduction to a catalogue of prominent alumni:

"Governments offer scholarships for a variety of reasons. Typically, however, they represent a balance between enlightened self-interest and a genuine desire to help others. One motive might be to 'win friends' in other parts of the world, who, if favorably impressed, *will in turn influence policy or public opinion towards their former hosts in later life*. Another might be to provide key skills to the next generation of leaders and practitioners, particularly in developing countries, as part of strategies to improve living standards there." (Kirkland 2003: ix; my italics)

The first of these reflects the FCO's expectations for its support, the second DfID's. By 2003 'winning friends' was invoked as the primary objective for developed-country awards. At the same time, a study commissioned to trace CSFP alumni (Commonwealth Secretariat 1989) suggests that the Commonwealth Secretariat was taking an interest in how influential alumni had become. As well as gathering general information about their careers, it very explicitly sought alumni who had been politically active in their home countries, regardless of whether this was part-time or voluntary. Although the Secretariat is tasked with promoting

the interests of the Commonwealth as a whole, it clearly had an interest in encouraging member states to maintain their contributions to the CSFP.

There are parallels between the development of arguments surrounding the British CSFP contributions for developed countries and Marshall Scholarships. In both cases, interest in creating scholarships seems to have been sparked by potentially embarrassing circumstances which were outside Foreign Office control, the unavailability of a Magna Carta and the Canadian delegation's over-ambitious plans for the Commonwealth conference. Both were set up largely to signal goodwill. The behavior of officials involved shows that the symbolism of creating the awards was of foremost importance, greatly outweighing the future impact of grantees themselves. By the turn of the (21st) Century, however, program administrators were staking claims to funding on the basis that they were shaping soon-to-be-influential grantees' attitudes to Britain.

Chevening Scholarships

The Chevening Scholarships are administered by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (a responsibility only recently transferred from the British Council, the UK's key cultural relations body) but are funded by an annual grant from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Chevening is the largest scholarship programme funded by the Foreign Office: it is expected to support around 700 students annually, and have well over 40,000 alumni, by 2014 (Chevening 2013). It is actually a continuation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Scholarships and Awards Scheme (FCOSAS) which had existed since the 1980s and was renamed in 1994 by Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd (Chevening 2002).

Little knowledge of how FCOSAS was created survives among current administrators (Chevening Interview One) but there does seem to be an assumption that it was created for diplomatic ends. Speculating on the early history of the Chevening Program, one British Council administrator seemed confident that

“it would have been set up with the same principles that it has now which [are] to try and attract the future leaders from other countries [...] for a period of study in the UK, to get a good impression of the UK and to become a friend and possibly a partner to the UK in future years” (Chevening Interview One)

Again, this assumption warrants some investigation.

Foundation

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Scholarships and Awards Scheme dispensed its first grants in 1984, and must be seen in the context of the early 1980s. This was a time of severe budgetary constraint. The Thatcher Government took a strict approach to public spending, and one of the money-saving measures introduced early in the Government's term was, in effect, to greatly increase the fees charged to students who came from outside the EU to study

in Britain. Previous governments had subsidized tuition and controlled fees for non-EU students. Removing this subsidy, unsurprisingly, greatly increased the cost of pursuing a degree in the UK. Equally unsurprisingly, the reduction in support led to discontent both within the British higher education system and abroad (Perraton 2009: 60-1, Williams 1981).

Much archival material on the creation of the FCOSAS will not be released to the public for several years under the terms of the thirty-year-rule, so I supplemented the available documentary evidence with a set of semi-structured interviews. I identified civil servants who worked in the appropriate divisions of the Foreign Office and British Council (which administers the awards), and wrote to them asking if they could remember the creation of the FCOSAS or direct me to colleagues who were involved. Unfortunately many senior diplomats from that period have either died or are too elderly to recall any details, but I was able to speak with a few key witnesses to the Scheme's early days in the primeval soup. All four of the officials I traced agreed that one surviving witness was the best-placed to comment^{xi}. He was adamant that the FCOSAS was created in direct response to the increase in fees for overseas students. This was "absolutely" the primary cause and "it wouldn't have happened apart from that" (Chevening Interview Two).

The decision to remove the subsidy for non-European students had effectively been made by the Department of Education and Science and the Treasury, without the Foreign Office being seriously consulted. The decision led to some ill-feeling in foreign governments whose students were accustomed to relatively inexpensive education in British universities. The creation of a scholarship scheme, albeit one which would support far fewer students than the hidden subsidy, was seen as something ministers and ambassadors could point to when confronted with such complaints. The FCO attempted to create such a scheme repeatedly in the early 1980s (after fees had been increased) but was unable to secure funding from the Treasury until the spending restrictions were eased due to economic recovery (Chevening

Interview Two). Had the FCO been able to fund them, awards would have been offered almost as soon as fees were increased, rather than in 1984. Giving the awards to students was expected to help the Foreign Office smooth relations with their governments in the short term.

Once funding was allocated, a major issue was whether the FCO or the British Council would control the awards. Both of these bodies dispense funds allocated to the FCO by the Treasury, but the British Council enjoys some level of independence. There was a feeling within the Council that it would use the scholarship money to pursue more long-term influence than the Foreign Office might (Chevening Interview Three); the Foreign Office seem to have been under the impression that the British Council wanted to use the additional funding to augment a program of British Council Scholarships which existed at the time (Chevening Interview Two). The Foreign Office chose to resist this, and did so successfully. The reason for the Foreign Office concern to retain control was that Foreign Office ministers had been “taking the flak” for the increase in fees and were therefore keen that an Award Scheme designed to mitigate the diplomatic consequences of this should have Foreign Office branding on it (Chevening Interview Two). It was not a sign that the Foreign Office wanted to handpick young foreigners it expected to go on to become key allies several decades later. The Foreign Office had no fixed criteria for selection besides academic promise and in practice would often delegate selection.

Given this, my best-placed interviewee was clear that the main impetus for *creating* the awards had been a desire to smooth conventional diplomacy, and any impact on the grantees themselves was incidental:

“Interviewer: So from your point of view it was primarily about intergovernmental relations rather than the impact on the students themselves?”

A: Oh, absolutely.” (Chevening Interview Two)

Goal redefinition

Despite its history, the Chevening Program today is heavily tilted toward the opinion leader model. While day-to-day management of practicalities did eventually pass to the British Council, Chevening is overseen by the Public Diplomacy unit of the Foreign Office (FCO 2005: 8) and openly advertises that the awards target “future leaders and opinion-formers”, one aim being to establish a “network of professional overseas contacts on issues of strategic importance to the UK”. The most important part of the first stage of the application process is completion of three very short essays under the headings “personal statement”, “your plans for the future” and, revealingly, “are you a potential leader?”(FCO 2002).

Chevening awards are also closely tied to diplomats. Foreign Office influence has been retained since a struggle between the British Council and FCO in the early days of the scheme over which organization would control the Awards (Chevening Interview Two, Three). The British Council administers most aspects of the scheme, but the final selection board is made up of representatives from both the British Council and the Embassy (FCO 2002). When announcing cuts to the scheme in 2008, the Foreign Secretary took great care to stress that the foreign policy impact of this decision would be limited by more careful targeting of the awards based on grantees’ potential influence in the future. The FCO would

“select more carefully to ensure our scholars really are potential future leaders, with our heads of mission having personal responsibility for ensuring their posts are getting this right.” (Miliband 2008)^{xii}

This emphasis on recruiting future leaders ties Chevening closely to the opinion-leader model.

A Pattern of Goal Redefinition

While the three scholarship programs I have examined may now be seen as means to produce sympathetic opinion-leaders, they all seem to have been created primarily to signal goodwill and evade potentially embarrassing diplomatic situations. The unavailability of a Magna Carta, unwelcome Canadian suggestions for Commonwealth projects, and increases in overseas student fees by other government departments which did not consult the Foreign Office, all provoked the creation of programs which are now justified on the basis that they generate sympathetic alumni.

These historical sketches are more compatible with Kingdon's (1995) model of how policies come into being than any "rational" (March and Simon 1993) view of policymaking. In many respects this analysis also complements Pamment's (2011) finding that public diplomacy bodies change in response to different means of evaluation. In all three cases, alternative activities in which the government could become involved floated around in the "primeval soup" before officials settled on scholarships for foreign students. In each case, circumstances changed to make a situation which had previously been considered acceptable (that promising foreign students could not afford to study in the UK) into a problem. While these situations did not create the kind of national debate which often features in Kingdon's account, and they probably went unnoticed by the vast majority of the British public, they could have been highly embarrassing to the officials involved. Accordingly, those officials may have selected a familiar activity and matched it to the new problem.

My studies do not provide direct evidence as to why these programs have converged on the opinion-leader model. It may well be impossible to generate direct evidence, because the change has taken place over several generations of officials. John (1999: 44-5) emphasizes that transmission of ideas between policymakers can be imperfect, much like in a game of 'Chinese Whispers' – the information transmitted is slightly altered with each transmission.

Thus, bureaucracies do not retain information (presumably including information about what they are supposed to achieve) perfectly over time. Hence, there may not be one individual eyewitness who can identify a shift from one primary objective to another, and so I have not sought such key individuals. While I cannot provide empirical evidence that there are no such eyewitnesses waiting to be discovered, we can deduce that it is likely. In their absence, how can we explain why officials have converged on the ‘opinion-leader’ model? In the absence of direct evidence can only rely on deduction to suggest possibilities.

One possible explanation for this convergence on the opinion-leader model is that it ages well: while my evidence suggests that these scholarships were actually created to address short-term concerns, the opinion-leader argument would seem to be more likely to secure continued financial support in the long run.

There is a big difference between *creating* a program and *operating* it, and creating opinion leaders is a benefit of *operating*. Many of the arguments which surrounded the creation of the programs applied specifically to *creation*. If the aim of a scholarship program is to symbolize goodwill, or avoid short-term embarrassment, then it clearly does so in the first year in which it operates. The sponsoring government is very publicly engaged with it, and it is likely to attract publicity. Once the program has been running for several years, the positive signaling effect of running it for another year is less obvious. The personnel who set up the scheme have moved on and management has been passed to a new generation of officials. There is no longer a clear link to the will of political leaders, who have simply inherited a scheme. Publicity is likely to fade.

However, someone still has to operate the program. Actively ending scholarships might well be interpreted as a negative diplomatic signal. It would also incur the costs which Hogwood and Peters (1983: 14-8) identify in terminating any government program. Influential beneficiaries and supporters, which these schemes are designed to recruit, may be

hostile to change. Staff may be attached to the program. Particularly with scholarship programs, officials may find themselves in the role because they personally believe that studying in a foreign country is a life-affirming experience and want others to enjoy the opportunity^{xiii}. But to defend their programs from other agencies, eager to cannibalize them for resources, administrators need to be able to tell a story about the benefits those programs bring now. For international scholarships and exchange programs these stories seem to have converged on the opinion-leader model.

Generating sympathetic alumni would be a benefit of *operating* the program. For every year that the program runs at a given level of resource there would seem to be a similar added chance of impressing a grantee who will go on to bring diplomatic benefits. Doubling the number of grantees would double the odds of including someone who will go on to be, for example, an influential diplomat in the future^{xiv}. Administrators will encounter difficulty in making a case for expansion of their programs on the basis that setting them up sent useful signals; the best they could hope for would be stagnating support. But the opinion-leader model could support a case for expansion. The marginal benefit of adding another grantee to the program could outweigh the marginal financial cost of supporting them. In other words, if supporting an extra student were to cost £10000, it is sensible to argue that this could generate more than £10000-worth of benefit to the UK. It would be difficult to do this on the basis that scholarships are symbolic. The symbolic benefit of funding the first hundred scholars is significant, whereas the marginal benefit of adding a second hundred is much less obvious. If exchange programs are presented in terms of impact on grantees, the marginal benefits are much clearer. If there is an impact, doubling the number of scholars would (almost) double the diplomatic benefits. This offers a viable case for expansion.

The evidence presented here cannot, of course, prove that this is the reason that different scholarships have converged on one form of justification. It may not be possible to discover

for sure why this convergence has occurred. This deduction seems plausible: we know that Foreign Office officials have been under pressure to explain what benefit spending on their programs brings, and we know that they have converged on an argument which might secure those programs' futures. Although further research might uncover a less circumstantial explanation, it is possible that the nature of slow change over time may conceal the process.

What my evidence certainly cannot show is that officials responsible for the programs made conscious decisions to change their arguments. The natural personnel changes as previous administrators retire or are redeployed will affect the balance of arguments about why a program is doing what it does. New generations of administrators have to rationalize their activities for themselves. They may want to see their programs continue for a constellation of reasons, but their programmes' odds of survival should be greater if they publicise those reasons most likely to secure support. Just as in Kingdon's model of policy creation, those are likely to be the arguments which *appear* to offer a solution to a problem. The opinion-leader model suggests that scholarship programs can help to 'solve' poor international relations^{xv}.

While identifying policy entrepreneurs who create programs may seem relatively straightforward, identifying individuals who redefine their goals may well be much more difficult. The creation of a program is clearly something all individuals involved will be aware of. Goal redefinition may result from the calculation of a lone genius seeking to protect a program by rebranding it, but it might also result from a slow drift, driven by the succession of new generations of administrators, with intermediate stages in which *both* symbolism *and* cultivation of alumni are seen as primary benefits of giving scholarships. I have suggested one plausible reason for such a process to occur; there may well be others.

This change is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, the trend in studies of public diplomacy has been to stress the importance of two-way communication (Mellissen 2007) in a way that

the opinion-leader model suggests scholarships do and the symbolic view of scholarships does not. But this does not imply that the shift was a calculated decision.

Conclusion

The fact that this pattern of objective drift can be observed in the British Foreign Office does not necessarily mean that it is widespread elsewhere. Further research would be needed to show that this dynamic is not due to some idiosyncrasy of the British system. It is certainly true that many other countries give scholarships to foreign nationals, and justify this at least partly on the grounds that this will bring diplomatic advantages in the future (see e.g. Australian Government 2012, Egide 2008, MEXT 2012). It is not impossible that policymaking in these countries is more logical, and they created scholarship programs as a means to build up a corps of sympathetic alumni in influential positions around the world. However, I think there are good grounds to expect that any future research would find similar inconsistencies in other countries as well. Kingdonesque interpretations of how policies are made have proven robust in several different contexts (e.g. Corbett 2005).

Why is this significant? Firstly, I have offered a case study to show that foreign policy activities can be redefined according to the logic of the bureaucracies which manage them. Foreign policy objectives may have changed, but civil servants have continued to do basically the same things (give scholarships); their activities have simply been relabeled as means to different ends. This complexity is rarely (if ever) acknowledged by analysts interested in the potential for scholarships to improve international relations, whose arguments are typically rooted in the opinion-leader model (e.g. Snow 2009). There is a fair amount of academic interest in how scholarship programs might bolster a country's 'soft power' (Nye 2004). Maybe they do, but it is helpful to be aware that these academic analyses are themselves intertwined with this redefinition of what government programs are for. Academics talk to diplomats and read their statements. If contemporary diplomats themselves have an inaccurate view of what has been going on, this may affect academics' interpretations. Because concepts of soft power and the formal study of public diplomacy have coalesced

relatively recently within the IR community, the creation of actual programs under scrutiny predates them. Taking the opinion-leader model of what scholarship programs are for at face value is tempting but may be misleading. Assuming that how states behave towards each other is determined by clever calculations is tempting but may be misleading. Presenting these programs to readers as if they were created to mould the attitudes of opinion-leaders is tempting but would be misleading.

We need to remember that policymaking can be chaotic and unpredictable, that is not safe to assume that means correspond with ends, or that declared objectives correspond with what a program is actually set up to do. These concerns are just as relevant when considering a foreign ministry as any other organ of government. Given the raft of very important things that foreign ministries do, if goal redefinition applies to other activities as well as giving out scholarships then it is important to be aware of it. Foreign policy analysis needs to take into account that the policies we see implemented may not result from intelligent design, but from quasi-Darwinian selection of competing possibilities in which those best-suited to the political context will win out (see John 1998).

Nothing in what I have written here can show that scholarship programs do not bring advantages to the countries which sponsor them. It is possible that the opinion-leader model reflects some 'objective' reality, whatever that might mean (see Scott-Smith 2008), although the fact that officials appeal to the opinion-leader model does not prove that. It would be difficult to deny the benefits to the individuals who receive scholarships, or the institutions which host them, and these might justify the cost even if there are no political benefits. I have certainly not suggested that officials who manage them are in any way nefarious, or are putting their personal interests ahead of the public interest. Goals can be redefined over time even while everyone involved continues to behave commendably. However, we should not take the stories we are told about what scholarships are designed to do at face value – any

more than we should uncritically accept any other official narrative about what foreign policies are intended to achieve.

Interviews

British Council Interview One (April 2008) An official responsible for evaluating British Council performance of its quasi-diplomatic objectives.

Chevening Interview One (July 2008) A British Council official administering the Chevening Program in the late 2000s.

Chevening Interview Two (January 2009) A diplomat responsible for creating the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Scholarships and Awards Scheme (FCOSAS).

Chevening Interview Three (April 2009) A senior British Council official of the early 1980s who was involved in the Council's reaction to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Scholarships and Awards Scheme (FCOSAS).

Marshall Interview One (December 2007) A student who received a Marshall Scholarship to study in the UK in the 2006-7 academic year.

Marshall Interview Two (March 2008) An administrator at the Association of Commonwealth Universities, responsible for organizing the Marshall Scholarships in the late 2000s.

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National Archives (1951f) Memo from JNO Curle, 16th March (Internal code FO AU 1952/3) UK National Archives reference FO371/91013.

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ⁱ Similar considerations may well apply to other mobility programs, for example those which allow military personnel to train in a foreign country (Atkinson 2010) or allow foreign professionals to visit (Scott-Smith 2003, 2006).

ⁱⁱ Of course, foreign student make important contributions to their host society, as teaching assistants, consumers, volunteers etc. This does not explain why a select group of international students receive generous funding from the host government when many others would pay handsomely to take their places.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kingdon’s model, in turn, is a substantial refinement of Cohen, March and Olsen’s (1972).

^{iv} This image refers to a hypothetical early stage in the evolution of life. In the beginning, simple organic molecules are believed to have floated around together in puddles resembling soup. When conditions (temperature, mineral levels, etc) were right, these molecules supposedly joined together and formed the first proteins. From that point on, Darwinian selection can explain how life as we know it evolved from those first proteins. John (1998) builds on this evolutionary idea.

^v While Morrison was in opposition by 1952, this Hansard records a public acknowledgement of his role by his successor

^{vi} One of the less-desirable copies of the Magna Carta was eventually moved to Washington in the 1980s thanks to the significant financial inducements of private billionaire Ross Perot; it became a successful attraction at the National Archives (Reynolds 2007)

^{vii} The original plan was to concentrate all the Marshall Scholarships at Cambridge University, on the grounds that Oxbridge would “naturally” make a greater impression than other universities and because Oxford already had Rhodes. A large chunk of the filing is taken up with disagreements over whether other universities should be included before it was decided to leave choice of institution open.

^{viii} The first reference to this term on file is actually a handwritten correction in which “leaven” replaces the original typing of “lever” (National Archives 1951c). It is difficult to be certain of whether the original typing was simply a clerical error, and this could change the meaning of the passage. However, subsequent correspondence adopts the term “leaven”. Incidentally, the scheme has since become dominated by research postgraduates instead.

^{ix} A small number of awards for developed Commonwealth countries have been reintroduced, but these are co-funded by Universities and the education ministry, as opposed to the Foreign Office.

^x As Perraton (2009: 8) puts it, “at least four Canadian academics [lay] claim to its paternity”. While the details are complex, there are two interesting links with the Marshall story. As with Marshall, existing international scholarships may well have been models, as these Canadian academics had received such scholarships as students. Another link was that a key player in the British delegation which agreed the CSFP was senior diplomat Sir Roger Makins, aka Lord Sherfield, father of the Marshall Scholarships (Perraton 2009: 6 n4).

^{xii}This interviewee was identified in private correspondence with two other civil servants as the key decision-maker.

^{xiii}How responsibility could be assigned if the benefits might not be seen within those officials' careers remained unclear.

^{xiv}Most of the officials I met had previously studied abroad; unsurprisingly, given their subsequent careers, they had positive experiences.

^{xv}The relationship would probably not be entirely linear as the most promising grantees would be recruited first.

^{xvi}This would explain the intense interest in them in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (e.g. Leonard, Small and Rose 2005, Ross 2003), when perceptions of America in Muslim-majority countries came to be defined as a serious problem.