



Military Soft Power: Public Diplomacy through Military Educational Exchanges

By Carol Atkinson

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The military has long been associated with hard power, yet it is engaged in public diplomacy as it represents the U.S. abroad and facilitates the diffusion of ideas. *Military Soft Power* examines one such aspect of U.S. public diplomacy: how the United States extends its influence or “soft power” worldwide through military educational exchange programs hosted by the United States’ elite military schools, its war and staff colleges. The presence of international officers at U.S. military schools is substantial, yet very little is known about the long-term impacts of these exchanges. This study shows how the exchanges build personal and professional networks that then serve as important conduits of ideas between the United States and other countries. These networks help to improve interoperability between the U.S. military and its partner nations and to extend U.S. influence through military soft power rather than through hard power.

This is an alternative bottom-up view of how military organizations can influence political processes and decisions through the development of cross-border communities of military professionals. This involves a two-step model of socialization. First, individuals (military officers) are socialized by a large political institution (the U.S. through its war and staff colleges). Second, these individuals function as idea entrepreneurs, bringing new ideas, beliefs, and practices home with them. There is a need for policies and programs that help countries successfully transition from authoritarian governance to democratic rule as well as countries undergoing democratic revolutions and those seeking more gradual change. Exchange programs are one pathway, in which an important group of citizens (military officers and their families) can experience the everyday functioning of democratic practices and institutions.

This unique survey provides timely insights into the important political impacts of military exchange programs and how military institutions and their personnel influence international politics beyond simply being used as an instrument of coercion.

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Editorial Review

Review

As the U.S. seeks to empower its partners to assume more responsibility for international security, Atkinson gives us a pioneering study to understand why, how, and when military education works. (Derek Reveron, author of *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and Changing Face of the U.S. Military*)

Atkinson presents an innovative and insightful study of the U.S. military as an instrument of soft power. Presenting the first systematic, data-supported analysis of the impact of military exchange programs on the roughly 7,000 foreign military and civilian personnel who attend U.S. war colleges, training courses, and conferences each year, Atkinson persuasively argues that these exchange programs yield tangible, measurable results. Drawing upon constructivist theory, Atkinson examines how professional military education acts as a conduit for transmitting norms ranging from the notion that civilian authorities should control the military to an increased appreciation of basic human rights. Thoughtful, well-researched, and refreshing, this study challenges the traditional distinction between hard and soft power, arguing that the U.S. military's vast array of schools, training courses, and exchange programs not only enhances the military proficiency of its international graduates but imbues them with a greater appreciation for democratic values and civil rights. (Douglas Peifer, Professor of Strategy, U.S. Air War College)

Military Soft Power re-frames the discussion of the value of "experience and relationships" in influencing attitudes and behaviors. Supporters of US provided mil-to-mil education and training are now armed with more than anecdotal evidence when they argue that resources used to educate international military students provide "good value for money." (Jim Fain, U.S. Army, Retired)

We generally associate military resources with the hard power of coercion, but they can also produce the soft power of attraction. No-one has shown this better than Carol Atkinson in this important and well researched book. (Joseph S. Nye Jr., University Distinguished Service Professor, Harvard University)

Carol Atkinson provides a fascinating study of how the transfer of ideas through international military networks shapes civil-military relationships. Making a theoretical contribution to the literature on soft power and greatly enhancing our understanding of military education exchanges, Atkinson's deeply researched work is a gem. (James Goldgeier, American University)

About the Author

Carol Atkinson is a retired military officer who is now a Fulbright Fellow in Sofia, Bulgaria at the Rakovski National Defence Academy. As of spring 2014, she will be Professor of the Practice of International Relations at the University of Southern California. While in the military, she served in a wide range of operational assignments in the fields of intelligence, targeting, and combat assessment. She is a veteran of Operation Desert Storm (1991) where she served on the Central Command Headquarters' staff in Riyadh, and on the contingency planning staff in Dhahran/Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Her research interest in military-to-military exchange programs stems from her experiences working with foreign military officers both abroad and in the United States. She has taught at the U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Air Force Command and Staff College, University of Southern California, Stanford University, and Vanderbilt University.

Users Review

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Robert Marques:

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Louise Rosenbaum:

Typically the book Military Soft Power: Public Diplomacy through Military Educational Exchanges has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of profit. The book was compiled by the very famous author. The author makes some research ahead of write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you can find the point easily after looking over this book.

Frank Wimmer:

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Julio Rico:

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