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Los Angeles

Russian Cultural Centers in Africa:
Higher Education and Critical Geopolitics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Hope Katherine McCoy

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Russian Cultural Centers in Africa: Higher Education and Critical Geopolitics

by

Hope Katherine McCoy

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Walter Allen, Chair

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the history, political agenda, and cultural context that led to the establishment of Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs) in Africa in the 2000s, identifying higher education as a diplomatic tool. This work is guided by the following research questions: (1) How was the Soviet Union involved in higher education development in Africa? (2) How is the Russian Federation involved in higher education development in Africa? What is the purpose of Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs) in Africa?

The qualitative methodology included analysis of (N=394) archival documents, content analysis of (N=1,000) google reviews of RCCs in Africa, and (N=10) in-depth interviews with African RCC students and alumni of Soviet-era educational programs. Three countries were chosen to examine RCCs in Africa: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia, informed by a hybrid theoretical framework divided between the perspective of the State and the Student. When neocolonial behaviors combine with neoliberal pressures, the State engages in soft power as a

strategy for advancing their agendas, using higher education as a tool of soft power. RCCs impact the perspective of the Student, for whom value homophily and transnational social capital lead to improved African human capital. Both the State and the Student engage in Critical Geopolitics, their behaviors and motivations infinitely impacting one another.

Eurasia and Africa have long enjoyed diplomatic ties, with relationships spanning military and economic development, political camaraderie, and soft power educational initiatives. The Soviet Union educated locals and supervised the building of infrastructure; founded and supported universities; supported the study and preservation of indigenous languages; and educated future political leaders who in turn forged political partnerships.

Although much of the programs were shuttered in the early 1990s, there was a rekindling of interest in Africa in the mid 2000s. The Russian Federation is currently fostering symbolic partnerships, establishing hybrid universities, and awarding scholarships to African students. RCCs serve as a new type of institution providing informal non-credited education and social engagement in Africa.

Two major themes arose from the findings of this research: (1) the development of the African elite, and (2) dignity, political camaraderie, and respect. Value homophily and transnational social capital catalyzed the development of these concepts in political relations, but critical geopolitics ensure a multipolar and often cyclical shifting of power between the State and the Student. This research demonstrates how informal and formal postsecondary education engages in critical geopolitics, with implications for Africa, China, Russia, and the U.S.

The dissertation of Hope Katherine McCoy is approved.

Robert Teranishi

Daniel Solórzano

Andrey Rezaev

Edmund Keller

Walter Allen, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

DEDICATION

For Elisa, Glendon, and Michelle

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ANACRONYMS

BP = Bologna Process

CIA = Central Intelligence Agency

DAAD = German Academic Exchange Service

DERG = Provisional Military Administrative Council of Ethiopia

Egypt = Arab Republic of Egypt

Ethiopia = Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

FBI = Federal Bureau of Investigation

FOCAC = Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

KGB = Committee for State Security

RCC = Russian Cultural Center; Russian Centre for Science and Culture; Russian Centers and Cabinets

Russia = The Russian Federation

USIA = United States Information Agency

USIS = United States Information Service

USSR = Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Zambia = Republic of Zambia

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Vita

Education

- M.A. in Education**, University of California, Los Angeles; Los Angeles, CA 2013
- B.S. in Psychology**, Northwestern University; Evanston, IL 2012

Research Experience

Publications

- McCoy, H. and Bocala C. (2021). Building Virtual Communities of Practice for Equity in Education. In: Parson L., Ozaki C. (eds) *Teaching and Learning for Social Justice and Equity in Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan. (In Press)
- Starikov, V., & McCoy, H. (2015). Higher Education Studies of Post-Soviet Space: Between Global and National Systems. In: A. Rezaev, P. Kivisto (Eds.) *Transnationalism and Current Migration Processes*. Saint Petersburg: Saint Petersburg State University Press. (Publication in Russian language)

Selected Presentations

- April 2016 *Transnationalism and Higher Education: Russian Faculty Perceptions of Change*. Going Global: Transnational Issues in Interdisciplinary Applications. UCLA International Institute Third Annual Conference. Los Angeles, California. (Honorable Mention Best Paper Award, Cash Prize)
- April 2016 *The Ivory Tower from Below: Toward a Multicultural Framework for the History of Higher Education*. Annual Meeting. American Educational Research Association. Chicago, IL. Ilano, L.A., McCoy, H.K., Wagoner, R. Zapata, I.
- November 2014 *Mission Statements & For-Profit Colleges: A Critical Analysis of Organizations' Presentation in Higher Education*. Annual Meeting. Association for the Study of Higher Education. Washington D.C.
- April 2014 *Education Quality: Perspectives and Evaluations in United States' Tertiary Education*. Invited Talk. Global University Summit. Moscow, Russia
- April 2014 *The Transfer Experience: Encouraging Community Cultural Wealth*. Annual Meeting. American Educational Research Association. Philadelphia, PA

Teaching Experience

Teaching Associate, Assistant and Special Reader, UCLA

- Public Affairs: Qualitative Research Methodology (online course) Winter 2021
- Labor & Workplace Studies: Research Internship: Working in the Gig Economy Summer 2017
- Civic Education: Center for Community Learning: Engaging LA Winter 2017
- Psychology: General Psychology Laboratory Fall 2016
- Education: History of Higher Education Winter 2015, Fall 2014
- Communication Studies: Communicative Dynamics in Film & TV Production 2013, 2014
- Communication Studies: Social Networking Winter 2013, Winter 2014
- Communication Studies: Multiculturalism in Television & Film Fall 2012, Fall 2013
- Communication Studies: Celebrity, Fame, and Social Media Summer 2013

Teaching Experience in St. Petersburg, Russia

- Instructor of Record, Business English, ALM-American Language Master Spring, Summer 2016
- Comparative Capitalism, TA, Faculty of Sociology, St. Petersburg State University Winter 2016
- Comparative Sociology, TA, Faculty of Sociology, St. Petersburg State University Fall 2015

Selected Professional Experience

- Research & Strategy Consultant, Senior Program Coordinator** 2018 - 2021
Reimagining Integration in Diverse & Equitable Schools Project, Harvard University
- Project Manager**, California Rare Book School 2013 - 2015
Department of Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles
- Coordinator of Communications**, Dean's Office 2010 - 2012
Program Assistant, Office of Advancement
Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

Selected Honors and University Service

- Graduate Peer Mentor**, Extramural Fellowships 2017 - 2021
Fellowships & Financial Services, University of California, Los Angeles
- Global Inequality Research Fellowship**, WORLD Policy Analysis Center 2017 - 2018
Fielding School of Public Health, University of California, Los Angeles
- Fulbright Student Research Grant, Russia** 2015 - 2016
Faculty of Comparative Sociology, St. Petersburg State University
- Vice President, Graduate Student Association** 2013 - 2014
University of California, Los Angeles
- Director of Communications**, Graduate Student Association 2012 - 2013
University of California, Los Angeles

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 1958, 90-year-old W.E.B. Du Bois travelled to Russia to give lectures, attend events celebrating the anniversary of the October Revolution, and, to meet with then Premier Nikita Khrushchev (Higbee, 1993). Du Bois had just recently received his passport, which had been confiscated by the United States government after years of political persecution. Like many African American intellectuals of his time, such as Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, Du Bois was a long-term supporter of socialist ideals, and endured the combination of McCarthy-era paranoia, racism and oppression (Clark, 2016; Lewis, 1993; Morris, 2017).

During this trip (one of several to the Soviet Union in his lifetime), Du Bois met with Khrushchev to advocate for the development of an institute housed in the USSR that would focus on Pan-African academic research and cultural preservation (Morris, 1973; Weaver, 1985). He arrived in Moscow on the heels of the 1957 World Festival of Youth and Students, which welcomed the largest number of African students that Russia had ever seen (Kotek, 2015). In 1959, Khrushchev convinced the Party to establish the Institute for African Studies, a research institution part of the Academy of Sciences, that remains active in Russia today (Rosen, 1963; Studies, 2021).

By 1960, the USSR founded Patricia Lumumba University (today known as RUDN University) in Moscow, an institution now famous for educating thousands of students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Rosen, 1973). A student festival and a single meeting between Du Bois and Khrushchev were the catalyst for a series of wide-ranging educational initiatives that targeted students from the newly liberated African nations of the 1950s and 1960s. With the decolonization of Sudan in 1956, Ghana in 1957, and Guinea in 1958—sprang up multiple

programs for both technical training in African countries, as well as scholarship programs for African students to study abroad in the Soviet Union (Rosen, 1970).

By the time of the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, more than 400,000 African students had studied in Soviet-administered higher education institutions, including universities, military institutes, vocational schools, and short-term training programs. An additional 200,000 African students matriculated in Soviet-funded education programs based in their home countries (Patman, 2009). As of 1984, a total estimate of 45,075 of those students hailed from Sub-Saharan African countries. From 1955 to 1984, the most scholarships were awarded to students from Ethiopia, followed by Nigeria, Madagascar, the Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Tanzania (Holt et al., 2014).

The purpose of this work is to understand the nature of Russian higher education development on the African continent—the history, scope, agenda, and relationships of power. This research examines the historical context, identifies key players, and demonstrates how informal and formal postsecondary education shapes the geopolitical terrain, while predicting future diplomatic engagement. This dissertation is guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. How was the Soviet Union¹ involved in higher education development in Africa?
2. How is the Russian Federation² involved in higher education development in Africa?
3. What is the purpose of Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs) in Africa?

¹ The Soviet Union refers to the USSR, a nation state that existed between 1922 and 1991.

² The Russian Federation refers to the current nation state that has existed since 1991.

Education as a Diplomatic Tool

Although many Soviet-funded cross-national education programs were discontinued in the 1990s, the impact remains embedded in various aspects of society including public health, education, military, and politics. For example, as of 2014, over eleven percent of current practicing medical doctors in Ghana were trained in either the USSR or Russia (Holt et al., 2014). In addition, numerous African political leaders have degrees from Russian and Soviet institutions, including José Dos Santos of Angola, Ahmadou Touré of Mali, and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.

The far reach of Soviet-era education programs in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, are an example of the inherent diplomatic influence of higher education on society. Not only a Soviet-era trend—China, France, Germany, and the United States all have extensive, successful education programming with similar goals. For example, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) is a state-funded scholarship program that not only funds postsecondary education of German students, but also provides funding to over two million international students in 1,800 programs, with the express purpose of promoting the German language and culture around the world. The DAAD also states that the organization “assists developing countries in establishing effective universities and advises decision makers on matters of cultural, education and development policy” (DAAD, 2021). This broad goal, specifically the latter portion on advising decision-makers—has deeper political implications, more so than merely sharing culture and language abroad.

These types of educational and cultural programs are examples of the concept of soft power (Nye, 2005). Soft power refers to the influence a country has over another, specifically excluding economic or coercive methods of persuasion. Developed by Morgenthau (1967),

Knorr (1975), and Cline (1975), and most famously expanded on by Nye (1990)—soft power justifies the adoption and inclusion of policies and cultural norms in shaping the opinions of others. The language used to describe the impact of soft power is often aspirational and isomorphic, with countries adopting the norms of others, while simultaneously seeking legitimacy (Altbach & Peterson, 2008; Cline, 1975; Knorr, 1975; Lo, 2011; Mattern, 2005; Nye, 1990).

Describing soft power, Nye delineates the difference from hard power, with a focus on co-opting rather than coercing others to gain the outcomes through three methods: culture, political values, and foreign policies. Nye argues that higher education fulfills all three of these methods, (1) through cultural exchange when international students come to the United States and live among American peers, (2) absorption of western political values in their coursework, and (3) positive foreign policies through opportunities to work together on research and other collaborative projects (Nye, 2005). Higher Education offers a wide range of opportunities to implement the tools of soft power. Some of these opportunities serve individuals—such as study abroad and research programs; some serve countries—such as international branch campuses and libraries; and other opportunities engage regions in systemic change via cross-national public policies (Altbach & Peterson, 2008).

Engaging Individuals

It is not only scholars and students that move individually across borders, but programs, education providers, and policies, shift as well. The higher education landscape is characterized by national governments increasingly seeking to drive internationalization, graduate employability, patterns in student mobility, as well as government and institutional initiatives to increase funding streams (Manners & Whitman, 2013). Approximately four million students

study abroad each year, and a substantial population of faculty and scientific researchers participate in transnational collaborative opportunities across borders (Cantwell, 2019).

Former Senator Fulbright once stated "Education is in reality one of the basic factors of international relations...quite as important as diplomacy and military power in its implications for war and peace" (Fulbright, 1964). The 1946 establishment of the Fulbright Program specifically addressed a need for developing "post-war leadership" and "advancing mutual understanding" between countries (Fulbright, 1964). This series of exchange programs has often been described as tool of soft power—influencing and advancing the agenda of the United States throughout the world (Altbach & Peterson, 2008; Nye, 2005; Trilokekar, 2010).

Although much has been published on the individual impact of such study abroad programming like Fulbright, citing social and character development opportunities (Lee & Rice, 2007; Nye Jr, 2010; Scott, 2000)—the impact on institutions and state actors, is more nuanced. With a variety of program types targeting students, educators, and artists, Fulbright has provided funding to 370,000 people since its inception. This range of influence has included political leaders—37 heads of state, as well as 84 Pulitzer Prize winners and 59 Nobel Prize winners (Arndt & Rubin, 1993). Funneling transnational leaders into positions of power, Fulbright is and was a U.S. program with a focus on the Global, that significantly impacts the Local.

Establishing Institutions

The Fulbright program is only one of many soft power-oriented programs administered by the former United States Information Agency (USIA). In the 1960s the USIA founded exchange programs such as Arts America, the robust broadcasting initiative: Voice of America, the Washington File information sharing service, and over 100 libraries around the world, through the United States Information Service (USIS) (Maack, 2001; "Role of libraries in the

USIA program," 1961). The USIS libraries were a cultural branch of the USIA, established in 1953, charged with the responsibility of building an understanding of the culture, institutions of the United States with people around the world (Anderton, 1967). Although their expressed goal was to provide public access information for developing countries, many scholars argued that at best, these were institutions supporting U.S. propaganda goals, and at worst –the USIS libraries were adjuncts of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in foreign countries, used as fronts to conceal surveillance and tracking activities (Anderton, 1967).

The expansion of international branch campuses is another soft power trend in transcultural higher education. There are currently over 200 of these institutions operating on a global scale, with the United States serving as the most significant provider, currently hosting 80 institutions around the world (Verbik, 2007). Branch campuses are entities owned wholly or partially by foreign providers that operate under the goodwill of the sending institutions, offering complete academic programs that result in degrees awarded by main the campus (Brauch, 2017).

Branch campuses are not a new concept; between 1962 and 1973, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was instrumental in the establishment of the Institute of Technology (IIT) in India, the Aryamehr University of Technology in Iran, as well as the Indian Institute of Technology and Science (Scott, 2000). Michigan State University also has a foreign presence in India, as well as in Dubai, China, Burundi, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Mali, coordinating independent student research projects, and providing American students with an international context to their own education. However, these programs have expanded beyond serving foreign markets, with the benefits of these relationships sometimes serving the western side of the partnership, more so than that of eastern stakeholders (Trilokekar, 2010).

Implementing Policies

In addition to the individual and institutional venues of soft power, cross-national policies in education dictate even more extensive, long-term soft power influences. The Bologna Process (BP) is a prime example, a pan-European educational policy initiative that encourages the mobility of students and academic professionals. The BP eliminated the regulations that stunted this goal in the past, while streamlining accreditation policies and standardizing degree structures. A series of policy actions with the purpose of creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the BP was born of the Bologna Declaration, an agreement initiated in 1999, signed by the Ministers of Education of 47 countries (Adelman, 2009). The purpose of the BP was to make European education more attractive, competing with the United States in recruitment of international scholars, research and innovation, and global university rankings. What began as an educational reform geared towards mobility, has expanded into multiple strategic initiatives, including working groups on lifelong learning, quality assurance methodologies, and employment development (Huisman & Van Der Wende, 2004).

The BP encourages faculty and researchers to be mobile, engaging in cross-country partnerships. However, global university rankings privilege the elite universities, with scholars only choosing to partner with the most esteemed institutions, which are often located in Western Europe (Voegtler et al., 2011). While the objective of these types of cross-national policies encourages both faculty and students to be mobile—studying, working, and researching in institutions outside of their home country, this shift has been remarkably dominated by the movement of East to West (Heinze & Knill, 2008).

Problem Statement

Altbach and Peterson (2007) argue that the ability of higher education to transcend national boundaries, as well as the type of education programs these institutions are involved in, can significantly influence global relationships on a grand political scale (Altbach & Peterson, 2007). The rising trend in higher education has been to engage across borders and institutions, including dual degree programs, faculty consulting contracts, collaborative research projects, and joint degrees among other education programs (Roberts, 2009). Higher Education is changing to meet the needs of the future; new modes of education have progressed in response to globalization, engaging a variety of types of students and institutions.

The reach of digital initiatives such as Massive Open Online Courses, the expansion of branch campuses, and the massive movement of international students challenge traditional notions of brick and mortar higher education, as well as the need for, or value of the Humboldtian model of higher education, which necessitates liberal arts values and a four-year degree (Anderson, 1914). Along with new modes of learning are innovations in cross-national partnerships, continuing the tradition of education and diplomacy by expanding the borders of institutions, countries, and their subsequent ideologies and agendas. To better understand the present and future of education and diplomacy, this project studies a new institution type that by its very nature, crosses the borders of categorization, and the borders of Nation States.

This research examines new types of cross-national partnerships in higher education, specifically focused on Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs) in Africa. Much like their Chinese counterparts, RCCs share the goal of spreading their respective languages and cultures around the world. However, China's Confucius Institutes are also affiliated with local universities, whereas RCCs (in many, but not all cases) exist as separate, autonomous organizations.

RCCs also perform some of the same duties and tasks as traditional colleges and universities, including skills training such as computer technology and mathematics courses, social engagement such as networking and alumni events, and resources and support for African students to apply for Russian universities. I argue that these RCCs are an example of a fifty-year trend that prioritizes the educational development of the non-university sector in Africa, rather than efforts to support formal higher education (Omwami, 2013).

Overview of Theoretical Framework

I frame my analysis of the purpose of Russian Cultural Centers through two perspectives: the State and the Student. The State includes Russia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. Although these diverse state actors have different goals and historical contexts, they all wield political power over the Student. I define the Student as African alumni of educational programming developed by the USSR or Russia, current students enrolled in RCCs in Africa, and the general African public—which includes potential RCC students. When the State engages in neocolonial behaviors coupled with neoliberal pressures, the result is Soft Power, the concept famously theorized by Joseph Nye.

Moreno et al (2018) also link soft power and neocolonialism, using the example of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) enacted by the European Union, which unduly influences other countries both in terms of cooperation on human rights issues (soft power) and economic aid (neocolonialism) (Moreno et al., 2018). Von Eschen (2006) in her book about the U.S. State department-hosted jazz tours of the 1950s and 1960s, connected the cultural exchange mission of these tours to the pursuit of oil and uranium, stating that these concerts were both an attempt to bolster diplomatic relationships, but also were a cover for the American acquisition of natural resources in Africa and the Middle East (Von Eschen, 2000).

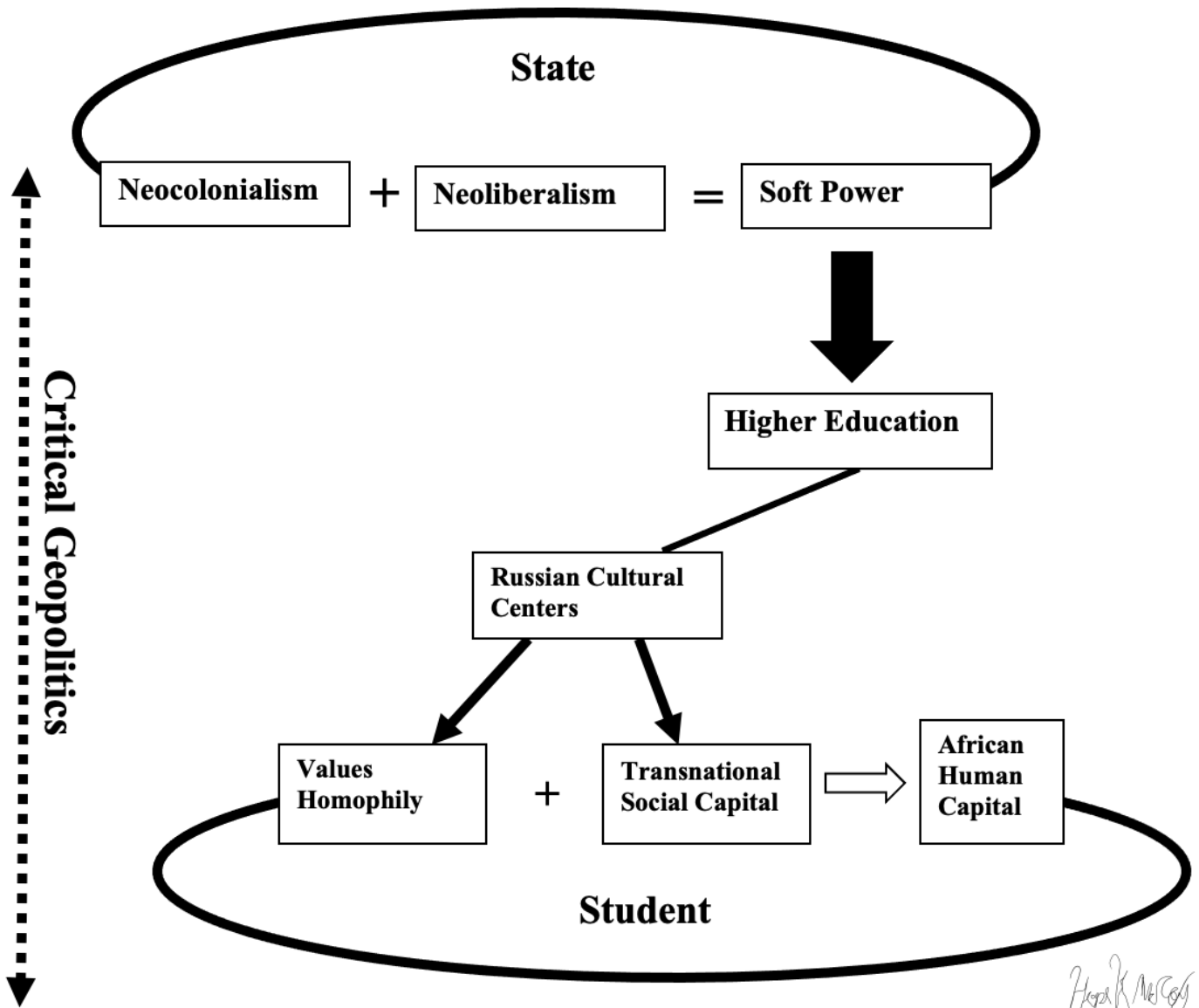
Antwi-Boateng (2017) also connects the concepts of soft power and neocolonialism, highlighting the uneven power relationship between China and Africa. Antwi-Boateng describes the pursuit of raw materials and unscrupulous trade agreements as neocolonial pressures, strategically combined with a soft power rhetoric of altruism, an increase in Chinese university scholarships for African students, and the broadcast of the China Central Television network across 47 countries in Africa (Antwi-Boateng, 2017).

As discussed earlier, soft power is a method of getting what one wants without coercion. Countries seek to wield power and influence by making themselves appear attractive. Therefore soft power is a strategy, and higher education is a tool of that strategy. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power includes three areas of influence: culture, political values, and foreign policies—all of which can be found in higher education development (Nye, 2005). Russian Cultural Centers are a type of informal, unaccredited higher education designed to lead to formal higher education. I argue that soft power combined with capitalistic neoliberal values serves as a catalyst in the creation of new institutions like Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs). This idea supports Edith Omwami's identification of a fifty-year trend of state and supranational powers divesting from African universities in favor of private sector educational organizations (Omwami, 2013).

From the perspective of the Student, I theorize that students enrolled in RCCs may experience value homophily between their own culture and Russian culture. In addition, their experiences in RCCs and possible transfer to Russian universities develops students' transnational social capital, building a network across borders. These values and experiences cultivated in RCCs lead to the development and improvement of African Human Capital. Both the State and the Student engage in Critical Geopolitics, their behaviors and motivations

infinitely impacting one another. I offer a diagram (Figure 1) visualizing this conceptual framework on the following page.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Neocolonialism, Neoliberalism, and Soft Power

The perspective of the State is informed by the theory of neocolonialism—first posited by former Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah in the 1960s. This theory refers to the cultural,

economic, and political pressures used to control other countries, most often occurring between formerly colonized nations and their previous colonizers (Nkrumah, 1967). Dependency is at the heart of this lens, with countries from the Global North creating a system of exploitation that undermines the stability of newly liberated nations in the Global South (Baldwin, 1993). This exploitation occurs through tactics such as development aid and predatory lending which leads to cycles of unpayable debt (Gordon, 1997), or monopolizing natural resources at the expense of ecological damage, such as the European Union overfishing in West Africa, among other tactics (Rodney, 2018). Nkrumah argued that the liberation and establishment of African nation states of the 1950s and 1960s was merely symbolic, due to the exploitative system of dependency that continued post colonialism (Nkrumah, 1967).

Although Russia never joined the desperate Scramble for Africa in the 1800s, and in fact was instrumental in decolonization efforts of the past century—I argue that the Federation still engages in neocolonialism as their goals have shifted along with their country’s political leanings, from socialist to a capitalist oligarchy, much like the United States. Despite the USSR’s vehement vocal opposition to European imperialism, the Russian Federation exhibits the third type of imperialism—a sphere of influence, in rekindling it’s educational and cultural goals in the 2000s while simultaneously seeking access to the valuable natural resources on the African continent. Echa (2013) echoes this sentiment offering the examples of Ethiopia and Liberia—both countries were never colonized, yet due to the precarious nature of their economic system coupled with a reliance on foreign capital, they too suffer under the manipulation of neocolonialism (Echa, 2013).

What sets soft power apart from neocolonialism is the lack of economic influence, as Nye (1990) includes economics into coercive hard power, along with military might (Nye, 1990).

However, Robert Young (2016) in his many writings on postcolonialism, has stated that “development” no longer only refers to economics, but now, due to globalization, also refers to culture, gender, politics, and societal norms (Young, 2016). In his seminal writings on neocolonialism, Nkrumah leans into a Marxist critique, highlighting the class conflicts inherent in postcolonial societies. He argues that as the elite ruling class of postcolonial countries focus their attention on gaining power and prestige from their former masters, the advancement of education and the eradication of poverty among the lower class is all but forgotten. It is this forgotten space of education which is fulfilled by the tools of soft power. In addition, as the educational training provided by RCCs to African students is not pro bono, and charges students individual tuition, economic motivations and power arrangements are present in addition to the sociocultural implications of transnational education exchange.

Altbach (1971) applies a neocolonial lens to the field of education, identifying the use of foreign textbooks, teachers, and practices in developing nations. The destruction of indigenous concepts of knowing, teaching, and learning, in favor of elitist normative practices led to a reliance on a western education to advance even within one’s home country. In addition, the use of European languages in former colonies as the professional and governmental lingua franca is a stark example of neocolonialism in education (Altbach, 1971). Altbach also points to the reliance on foreign aid, foreign curriculum, foreign instructors, and foreign branch campuses (Altbach, 2014) which I argue can be identified in the proliferation of RCCs as feeder institutions into Russian universities.

When neocolonial behaviors are combined with neoliberal pressures, the result is the State engaging in soft power, a post-history strategy of geopolitics. In addition, those same neoliberal pressures have led to the fifty-year trend Omwami identified of investment in private

educational enterprises in Africa, of which I argue RCCs are a prime example. Neoliberalism is a market-oriented approach to economics, pushing towards a free market approach to all aspects of society from education and social services to food distribution and trade. Much has been written about the globalized world, and neoliberal pressures in higher education. Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) use the phrase academic capitalism to refer to the past five decades of changes in university life, from student as learner, to student as consumer (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter, 2004; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

Value Homophily

The perspective of the Student is guided by a framework of value homophily and transnational social capital. Homophily is a sociological theory most famously described as “love of the same” or “birds of a feather flock together” (McPherson et al., 2001). People bond with, and develop networks with others who share similarities, whether it be in level of education, political opinion, religious belief, or cultural background. Merton (1996) delineates between the different types of homophily, including: status homophily, which are the traits people are born with such as their race and ethnicity, and value homophily, which are the traits people develop, their beliefs and opinions, and worldviews (Merton, 1996).

The theoretical framework for this research is informed by value homophily, in describing the incentives students have to join RCCs, as well as the behaviors and practices that occur after attending RCCs. With value homophily, people feel justified in their beliefs due to the proximity of like-minded individuals (Huston & Levinger, 1978; Knoke, 1990). Marx and Spray (1972) observed the ways value homophily impacts how patients choose therapists, with religious background gleaned (or assumed) from doctors’ professional biographies, and ethnicity. Combined, patients would make decide whether doctors might share their values and provide

treatment acceptable to their worldview (Marx & Spray, 1972). However, Rauwolf et al found that in communities that share value homophily, there is a propensity for dishonesty, with the group less likely to point out fallacies amongst those they share beliefs. (Rauwolf et al., 2015).

Transnational Social Capital

The topic of transnational social capital was not originally included in the proposal of this research. However, the concept arose from the data analysis, cropping up in interviews with current RCC students and in the content analysis of RCC social media posts. One of the purposes of Russian Cultural Centers in Africa is to serve as feeder institutions to universities in Russia, offering the language classes necessary for academic study, but also serving as normative agents, legitimizing African applicants to Russian colleges. Although students may apply for scholarships even if they have not attended an RCC, the impressive placement rate, and access to the instructors in RCCs who provide insider knowledge on the application process are incentive to attend the institutions.

Social Capital is a sociological theory arising from the theories Aristotle, Durkheim, and most famously from Bourdieu, referring to the resources gained from networks of relationships among people (Bourdieu, 2011). From the intermittent interactions with our neighbors that form weak social ties to the deep bonds between families, to the professional contacts between colleagues—the strength of a network benefits the individuals in that network by providing more than just socioemotional connections (Granovetter, 1973). Social capital has economic implications, with job opportunities often found within a network, as well as romantic unions leading to marital mergers connected by a network. Inclusion in an influential network is reflection of power, cooperative across ideologies and identities (Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 2018; Sanders & Nee, 1996).

Transnational Social Capital refers to the networks that develop across borders, which is a necessity, and a competitive edge in an increasingly globalized world. Levy et al (2013) highlight the benefits of transnational social capital in business: having friends and colleagues in various regions gives a person advance notice of new trends and opportunities, whether it be a house not yet on the market, or a need in a local community that could benefit from a trade agreement (Levy et al., 2013). Companies can expand overseas when there is a local network available to ease their transition. Knowing which officials' palms to grease goes a long way in understanding the minutiae of foreign tax laws and other bureaucratic barriers.

In higher education, the topic of transnational social capital has been discussed at length, with students from similar cultural backgrounds serving as “bonding social capital” and students from different backgrounds serving as “bridging social capital”, with these diverse bridging ties found to be empirically most dominant (Schartner, 2015). The literature also frequently examines how the social ties developed in college leading to postgraduate employment opportunities (De Graaf & Flap, 1988; Seibert et al., 2001). Even more interesting is that Moon and Shin (2019) found that when international students study in non-English speaking countries, they are often segregated into engaging with other international students, rather than their new domestic peers, leading to the development of transnational social capital in an unexpected way (Moon & Shin, 2019). Fincher and Shaw (2009) came to the same conclusion, identifying international student housing as a significant impact on social networks, segregating foreign students from both their peers and the local community (Fincher & Shaw, 2009).

These interactions, between students going through study abroad and being the Other, bonded in this experience with others. I argue this would be play out in the same way for African students studying in Russia. The Zambian and the Ethiopian student might come from different

cultures, but being Black abroad supersedes these interethnic conflicts, while simultaneously creating new transnational networks in Africa, upon return to their respective home countries post-graduation. However, Waters & Leung (2013) in a study of foreign students enrolled in British university branch campuses, found that non local degree programs have less of an impact cultivating group solidarity, describing a social disconnect (Waters & Leung, 2013). I argue this effect is less prescient in RCCs, due to the addition the value homophily and critical geopolitics unique to this particular phenomenon.

Language, or: knowledge of more than one language is a form of transnational social capital. Even without knowing people within a network, just the act of learning a new language opens up the opportunity to develop a network, opening up more job opportunities, and chances for migration. However, even monolingual Americans enjoy the transnational nature of English serving as a lingua franca in business and diplomacy, the legacy of the imperialist British Empire. Language is centered in the mission of Russian Cultural Centers, even for the locations that don't serve as feeder institutions. Many RCCs located in former socialist republics serve as social spaces, for entertainment and connection between Russian speakers. The RCC in Ethiopia is also more nostalgia-oriented, providing a place for alumni of soviet-era programs to practice their forgotten Russian, and for Ethiopian scholars to seek translation services for their Aramaic-written publications.

In addition to the language aspect of transnational social capital, is the role networks play for international students in higher education. For students interested in studying abroad, having a friend or family member who studied in that country provides both a sense of comfort and safety. A transnational network also provides insider knowledge on what local customs to be aware of, what academic expectations are, and how to navigate both a foreign university and a

foreign country (Alfred, 2013; Markley, 2011; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Waters, 2009). In the field of migration studies, this phenomena is referred to as cumulative causation theory, positing that as more members of a community decide to immigrate to a particular region, more will be encouraged to join them, now that family and friends have tested the waters and determined them to be safe and sustaining (Fussell, 2010; Liang, 2014; Maier, 1985; Massey, 1990).

The data from this research also suggests that African students who wish to study abroad are likely to return to their home country upon graduation, in order to apply the knowledge and skills that they developed in college, to their country's infrastructure and development.

Thwarting concepts of brain drain and brain gain (human capital flight), these behaviors fall within the concept of brain circulation, referring to the circular movement of workers across borders (Blachford & Zhang, 2014; Robertson, 2006; Schmitt & Soubeyran, 2006). I argue this brain circulation leads to a transnational identity that serves and supports the needs of the State, falling under the pressures of neocolonial influence. Yet, I also argue this transnational identity simultaneously challenges the prior dominance of the West, engaging in Critical Geopolitics.

Critical Geopolitics

In the discipline of geopolitics, the focus is on how place impacts people and policies. Traditional modes of study include examining how geography impacts political power, studying natural resources, spatial networks, and boundaries. Critical geopolitics, a poststructuralist approach, deconstructs the assumptions made about the world based on previous notions of superpowers and spheres of influence. It is "a critique of dominant representations of international politics" (Sharp, 2013). Also called subaltern geopolitics, referring the voices not usually heard in international relations and political geography discourse (Craggs, 2018; Sharp, 2011; Sharp, 2013).

I offer two main critiques of dominant discourse in the field of international education research, the first is the supposition that African students aspire to study abroad in the United States or the United Kingdom, decentering those regions due to the changing political landscape accompanied by value homophily and transnational social capital. The second idea I turn over upon its head, is the idea of African countries passively acted upon by “greater” world powers. Instead, I offer examples of how both the African members of the State and the Student act with agency, both engage in savvy political maneuvering, with the express goal of improving and expanding African human capital.

I move beyond a top-down approach to understanding the impact of cross-national policy. It is true that Russia, as a state is executing soft power with political agendas in creating these institutions, and African countries are engaging in soft power of their own, by *allowing* Russia (and other nations) to build these cultural centers in the first place. But another lens to consider is that African students who participate in these programs are doing so for their own reasons, they are not simply being “acted upon.” African students are creating their own learning experience for us for various reasons: opportunities for economic mobility, and/or the chance to develop social and cultural capital through study abroad opportunities. Savage (2016) alludes to the niche I pursue in this work:

The opening of the Soviet archives in the early 1990s has lent new perspectives on the dynamics of educational diplomacy, revealing that, rather than passively accepting these gestures of solidarity or soft power, the recipient States often negotiated and determined the terms of Soviet assistance and educational aid. p.35 (Savage, 2016).

This research is a unique approach to neocolonialism as Russia, formerly socialist, but now an oligarchy, is engaging in the same behaviors they denigrated, not long ago. However, I

do not subscribe to a Manichean model of thinking, not all is defined in terms of good and evil, oppressor and oppressed. In this instance, the hybridization of Russia's neocolonial and soft power activities serves as an alternative to the Western dominance of the United States and the United Kingdom. In the following chapter I describe the research methods I utilized to test these theories.

Purpose and Significance

Given fluctuating tensions with the West due to social conflicts and economic sanctions levied by Europe, the U.S., and Canada the Russian government is rekindling past Soviet relationships. For example, since 2008, Russia has funneled funds, weapons, and military training to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Pham, 2010). In addition, each year since then, 50 military officers from the DR Congo have trained in military programs in Russia. In 2011, the Russian Minister of Culture traveled to Senegal to announce a substantial increase in scholarships for international students, in addition to establishing a Russian Cultural Center in Senegal (Kulkova & Sanusi, 2016). The RCC established in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo, is physically located in the Diplomatic Academy, spatially connecting education and diplomacy in time. Pham (2010) highlights the geopolitical tensions here:

“Talk of a ‘new Cold War’ may be premature, but it should not be forgotten that, during the original Cold War, Africa was a major theater of the Soviet Union’s competition, not only with the United States, but with the People’s Republic of China. And while Beijing’s burgeoning engagements across Africa have received considerable attention, the Kremlin’s reemergence as a significant power in Africa has gone largely unnoticed, unwittingly giving an increasingly assertive Russia a free hand in forging multiple economic, political, and military ties. ” (Pham, 2010)

At the core of this phenomena is the ways the higher education is both subject to and a tool of the pressures of neocolonialism, which Lo (2011) argues is transnational by nature, distinct from colonialism with a flow of power from country-to-country, neocolonialism relies on the actions of transnational companies and actions (Lo, 2011). Lo uses Nye's concept of Soft Power as an alternative to neocolonialism, whereas I argue they are one and the same. Alatas (1993) warns of the dangers inherent in the exchange of ideas between the Global North and South, using the term mental captivity, to refer to a reliance on Western thought and ideas, leading to academic dependence at the expense of indigenous knowledge (Alatas, 1993).

Another topic to consider is that in the field of international and comparative education research, there is often a focus on Europe, Asia, and the United States. This homogeneity of sources, ideas, and practices can lead to stagnation. Methodological nationalism, according to Wimmer & Schiller (2003, p. 576) is the process and focus on the primacy of the Nation-State as the focus of research and analysis in the social sciences; and is a common reductive practice in comparative higher education (Wimmer & Schiller, 2003). Building this bridge between Eurasia and Africa, may rekindle former networks, identifying potential areas of cross-national research collaboration. This work also addresses issues of power, to better understand future partnerships, and to expose western audiences to the machinations of higher education outside our own borders. Education is a vehicle of mobility with individual and societal motives, both to the benefit and the stability of the Nation State. However, in an increasingly interconnected world, the scope of education extends beyond the national. Higher education is a multinational entity that shapes economic, political, and social development over time. This dissertation fills a gap in the literature on African diplomacy from an interdisciplinary standpoint by blending education, international relations, sociology, and political science literature.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the lens/aspect of the global expands the scope of education beyond the national. Examining this topic helps us to understand the changing landscape of international education, expands perspectives, and serves as a case on globalization, and the impact of capitalism on peripheral Soviet actors. The large-scale impact and contrast from the Western model of education, serves as ample ground to examine, learn, and compare.

Chapter two of this dissertation examines the history of Eurasian and African educational partnerships, from the time of Tsarist Russia, through the era of Soviet Union, to the present agenda of the current Russian Federation.. Chapter three provides the research methodology and data considerations. Chapter four offers the findings and major themes from this research. Chapter five closes with a discussion of the purposes of RCCs, implications and conclusions, and areas for future research.

Summary of Chapter One

Higher Education serves a diplomatic tool: engaging individuals, establishing institutions, and implementing cross-national policies. RCCs are a diplomatic tool and the result of a recent trend of prioritizing the non-university sector in African higher education. This research inquiry is informed by a hybrid theoretical framework divided between the perspective of the State and the Student. When neocolonial behaviors combine with neoliberal pressures, the State engages in soft power as a strategy for advancing their agendas, using higher education as a tool of soft power. RCCs, as a form of higher education impact the perspective of the State, for whom value homophily and transnational social capital lead to improved and expanded African human capital. Ultimately, both perspectives are guided by critical geopolitics, all of which will be applied in the following four chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPACT OF EURASIA ON AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Long before the arrival of Europeans, Africa enjoyed longstanding trading relationships with Asia and the Middle East. With economic trade came cultural exchange, from Ghanaian gold traders converting to Islam from interaction with their Berber-speaking business contacts—to Swahili Kingdom traders bringing Indian cuisine to the continent, sambusas only a few letters distant from samosas. In addition to economic prosperity and cultural exchange, education has an ancient grounding in the African continent that influenced European colonists, not the other way around, as western-dominant history suggests. From the tragically famous Library of Alexandria in 3rd century BCE Egypt, to religious study in Christian monasteries in 4th century Ethiopia, to Islamic mosque universities such as University of Al Quaraouiyine, founded in 859 CE, all pre-date the most prestigious of European institutions (Zezeza, 2006).

In this way, I ask the reader to challenge notions of afropessimism that relegate this topic to deficit thinking. This lack of knowledge of pre-colonial African culture often frames the experience of the Black Diaspora as forever flawed, and ultimately doomed (Zezeza, 2006). Although this work examines the impact of Russia educational programs in Africa, I remind my audience that higher education existed on the continent long before colonial or postcolonial foreign intervention.

In the twenty-first century, Russian Cultural Centers have sprung up as informal postsecondary institutions, charging students for an education while lacking accreditation and normative status. RCCs serve multiple purposes—political, cultural, and educational. To fully understand the context of the problem, this research inquiry offers an interdisciplinary

examination of the literature, including examining political science publications, historical archives, arts and media archives, and education research. This chapter provides the historical context of the educational partnerships which paved the way for the establishment of Russian Cultural Centers on the African continent.

What is in a Name?

Throughout this work there are instances where the words: Soviet, Socialist, and Russian, are used often interchangeably. It is important to explain the distinction between these terms, and how they impact the analysis of the historical context and the research data. The names *Soviet Union* and *USSR* both refer to nation states. However, the word *Soviet* relates to power, specifically the political power wielded between the years of 1917 and 1991 by the confederation of republics who were members of the USSR/Soviet Union. *Socialist* relates to the ideological and political values guiding the policies implemented, and values internalized by the citizens of the USSR, for example: free education for all people. The term *Russian* refers to the Slavic people who make up 81% of the population, but it also refers to the nation state of the Russian Federation. In a sentence: there are many Russians who are not *Russian*, but, are not foreigners either, with the remaining 19% of the population consisting of 190 ethnic groups, many of which are indigenous to the region of Eurasia (Курчиков, 2021).

Early African Russian Relations

In the late 1500s when Russia fought off the invasion of Turkish Muslim occupation, the ancient kingdom of Abyssinia offered their aid to Ivan the Terrible. Later, in the 1600s, explorer Hiob Ludolf published a book on his travels, including a history of Ethiopia, in the Russian language. These early interactions led to geological surveys and gold mining by Russian explorers in the Wollega province (Yakobson, 1963). Russia's history in Africa further

developed in the 19th century during the Tsarist regime. The most esteemed African in Tsarist Russia was Abram Petrovich Gannibal, the son of a local ruler in Cameroon. Gannibal was abducted by Turks as a young boy and sold into slavery, later adopted and freed by Russian monarch Peter the Great in 1705. A skilled mathematician and military engineer educated in France, Sweden, and Russia, Gannibal built fortresses (while exiled in Siberia) in addition to his position as a military strategist and nobleman (Schmemmann, 2010).

Gannibal's eleven children were members of the Russian nobility, eventually producing the writer and poet Alexander Pushkin. Pushkin is to Russians, what Shakespeare is to the British, though many would argue Pushkin is even more revered than Shakespeare, as Russians have a famous saying: "Пушкин—наше всё" translating to: "Pushkin is our everything." In his writing, Pushkin spoke often of his heritage and pride in his African phenotypic features. Gannibal's influence also led to Russia establishing relationships in South Africa, with trade routes in the Transvaal province in 1898, as well building a consulate in Morocco, that same year (Coles, 1999).

The longest and most prominent relationship on the continent is with Ethiopia, with many Ethiopians also claiming ancestry with Alexander Pushkin, alleging his grandfather was from Ethiopia and not Cameroon (or Ghana or Central Africa, as other scholars speculate) (Coles, 1999; Demassie, 2021). Ethiopia is a country with which Russia shares historic cultural ties and religious camaraderie—both with a majority Orthodox population. Indeed, prior to the second Italo-Ethiopian war of the 1930s, Ethiopia was a deeply religious orthodox country, devoted to a social system similar to feudalism, much like Russia prior to 1917.

V.F. Mashkov's diplomatic meetings with Emperor Menelik I in 1889 established formal trade between the countries, bolstered by mutual respect of both sides' orthodox beliefs (Clarke,

2011). That mutual respect supplied the mountain guns that helped Ethiopia win the Battle of Adwa against Italian colonialism in 1895, leading to the official establishment of diplomatic relations in 1897 (Drake, 1987). Between 1901-1913 a number of Ethiopian soldiers and officers attended cadet school in Russia, including Tekle Hawariat, the future author of Ethiopia's constitution (Van Creveld, 1990). At the age of 12, Hawariat was adopted by an elite Russian family in 1897, with whom he shared a close relationship. Later colloquially named "the Raven Baron" and "Petya the Abyssinian," Hawariat lived in Russia for seventeen years. In many ways, Hawariat served as a child diplomat, satiating the Russian romanticization of his Ethiopian heritage while informally brokering relations between the two regions (*The Raven Baron*, 2021).

Despite the cultural respect and positive engagement, the Kremlin's marked interest in Ethiopia was also a strategy to exert influence on Egypt, impact the Nile region, and gain control of the Red Sea, while showing strength to their British rivals. Ethiopia was hypothesized to be a "peaceful penetration" of the interior of the African continent (Pham, 2010; Yakobson, 1963). This peaceful penetration was but a taste of the impending complex geopolitical web, the threads of which were spun a few short years later with the global conflicts that began in 1917.

The Cold War and Soviet Partnerships

Despite the necessity of an alliance with the USSR that allowed Allied forces to win World War II, the tensions of the Cold War began in 1917, when President Woodrow Wilson changed allegiances during Russia's civil war (Foglesong, 2014). Although the USSR and Western powers enjoyed positive relations in the 1930s-1940s, those relationships soured by 1947. After benefiting from the Soviet military might in World War II, altering a dangerous fascist course of history—the U.S. published the Truman Doctrine of 1947, catalyzing a forty-year Cold War, in an attempt to curb their geopolitical influence.

The Bolshevik Revolution and subsequent communist state threatened American ideals and imperial sovereignty. From 1917 through 1991, the Soviet Union and the United States engaged in a series of hostile engagements: the rapid expansion of atomic nuclear weapons, the Space Race, proxy wars, propaganda campaigns, and soft power-designed cultural and educational programs. Both regimes strategized and competed for hearts, minds, and geopolitical power (Gaddis, 2006). Understanding the purpose of Russian Cultural Centers in Africa today, requires grounding in the political context that shaped the landscape where these institutions have been allowed to flourish.

Although the United States and the USSR never engaged in an outright war, the damage from manipulative proxy wars caused millions of dollars' worth of destruction and incalculable human carnage and suffering in Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bolivia, Cambodia, China, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Grenada, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Oman, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Slovakia, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zimbabwe (Gerócs, 2019).

The anti-imperialist messaging and influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology catalyzed the rebel movements in Angola and Mozambique, and heavily influenced the political regimes in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Tanzania, at various stages in their early days of liberation (Russell & Pichon, 2019). Backed by the Soviet Union, Cuba also intervened in African political conflicts during the Cold War, most famously in the 1963 Sand War in Algeria and the Angolan Civil War in the 1970s, but also in Benin, Guinea, Egypt, Ghana, the Republic of Congo, and Mali. The impact and aid was so extensive, that during a 1991 trip to Havana, President Nelson Mandela stated “we come here with the sense of the great debt that is owed the people of Cuba. What

other country can point to a record of greater selflessness than Cuba has displayed in its relations to Africa?” Indeed, thousands of construction workers, doctors, nurses, soldiers and teachers travelled from Cuba to provide resources and support to African liberation movements throughout the Cold War, coupled with military and logistic support from Soviet partners (Schmidt, 2013).

In addition to meddling in the civil wars and violent border disputes of the Global South, the United States and the USSR strategized other methods of power, weaving espionage and surveillance into the goals of influencing citizens of developing nations undergoing political transition from the 1950s through the 1970s. The CIA was tasked with sabotaging the political infrastructure of opposing groups, covertly and overtly throughout developing countries (Saunders, 2013). Between 1957 and 1985, the USSR signed agreements with 37 African countries, while the U.S. was engaged in sabotaging these new regimes (McClellan, 1993).

However, beyond these coercive measures lies the influence of ideology, with economic support fueling sociocultural change. The political and ideological goals of the Soviet Union encouraged widespread partnerships in education. The USSR historically championed the internationalization of higher education, stemming from early socialist ideals. The Bolsheviks—leaders of the revolutionary working class, believed that the October Revolution of 1917 would lead to a Global Revolution, and subsequent New World Order. Education was the vehicle for the proletariat to advance their understanding of their current condition (Lilge, 1968). Advancing higher education was no longer about the Russian elite, but about educating all people, training workers, and disseminating the ideology necessary for the eventual transition from war communism to utopian communism (Kuraev, 2014).

Edu-political relationships were nurtured with newly liberated African nations, Central

Asian countries, and Latin America. Coined the “Affirmative Action Empire” the international egalitarianism of Soviet education has been noted by historians (Martin, 2001). In education, the largest number of Soviet scholarships were awarded to Ethiopia, followed by Nigeria, Congo (Brazzaville), Ghana, Egypt, Madagascar and Tanzania (Mortimer, 1972).

The first African students began studying in Soviet universities in the 1920s, enrolling in Stalin Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow. A new university, KUTV was originally tasked with training workers for the eastern borderlands, specifically training Arabs, East Asians, South Asians, Turks, and Jewish people. In 1923, the mission adapted to include both African and African American students. The courses these early students enrolled include Russian language, Political Economy, History, Leninism, Military Science, and English language. And in addition to these seemingly innocuous studies, was a hidden curriculum on espionage, small arms training, coding, guerilla warfare, rule of conduct under surveillance, and interrogation techniques (Nash et al., 2016).

After the subsequent establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, contact with Africa expanded beyond scholarship programs and enrollment in Soviet universities to fulfill specific needs of the State. In the 1930s, geological exploration became the priority in Soviet-African relations. The establishment of a research institute funded Soviet specialists who travelled to Angola, Benin, Ethiopia, and Mali, building laboratories and national geological centers. This later led to the construction of power plants and hydroelectric stations in the 1960s, such as the Malka Wakana in Ethiopia. The Aswan Dam built across the Nile River in Egypt was a Soviet project that took ten years to complete and cost millions of dollars. These engineering constructions required vocational training of local workers, which were taught by Russian instructors. In addition, Soviet specialists built schools and hospitals, as well as Bahir Dar

University, an institution still respected today in Ethiopia (Kochetkova, 2009).

A boom of internationalization was triggered by the death of Stalin in 1953. Violently xenophobic, Stalin, in stark contrast to his predecessor Lenin, stood in the way of transnational opportunities. Khrushchev had the express goal of training personnel to increase the industrialization of former colonies, seeking political friendships in exchange for technical education to increase the numbers of pilots, medical experts, and construction workers in these countries (Nash et al., 2016).

On the heels of the 1959 establishment of the Institute for African Studies in Moscow, enrollment of African students in Soviet universities increased by 120% between the 1959-1960 and 1960-1961 academic years, whereas the number of African students studying in the United States had only increased by 40% those particular years (Weaver, 1985). Deterred by civil unrest and racist violence against African Americans in the United States at the time, African students were motivated by the opportunity for an education in the USSR. By 1960, there were 777 African students studying abroad in universities in the USSR, the majority of whom hailed from Egypt (at the time, called the U.A.R.), Guinea, Ghana, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan, though there were also students from seventeen other African countries studying in the Soviet Union that year (Rosen, 1963).

The universities that hosted the majority of African students were Peoples' Friendship University (originally named Patrice Lumumba University, after the Congolese politician and martyr), Saint Petersburg State University (at the time named Leningrad State University), Shevchenko University (at the time Kiev State University), the National University of Uzbekistan (then known as the Central Asian University in Tashkent—which also founded its own preparatory academy specifically for students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America), and

the Tashkent State Agrarian University (then known as Tashkent Agricultural Institute) (Rosen, 1963).

In addition to enrolling African students interested in teacher training, health services, science, and sports—universities also established indigenous African language programs for Russians interested in working abroad, as well as for African students working on the preservation of cultural and artistic artifacts. Leningrad State University offered language training programs in Amharic, Hausa, Luba, Luganda, Kikongo, Swahili, and Yoruba. These programs also required companion courses in “the cultures and economies of African peoples” (p.3) with the express goal that at the end of this series of courses, undergraduates would have working, conversational proficiency in two or more related African languages (Rosen, 1963).

At Moscow State University, students had the option of majoring in African languages and culture. The degree required six years (5,672 hours) of course work, language laboratory, practical training, and seminars. The program also required students to specialize in one western language (English, German, or French), and two eastern languages, one being Arabic, and the other usually Amharic or Hausa, the languages local to Ethiopia and northern Nigeria respectively. These requirements were in addition to the expectation that students would be fluent in Russian, reading and conducting their examinations (both written and oral) in Russian. All students, both Russian and African, were required to take three courses of political nature: Political Economy, Dialectical and Historical Materialism, and History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Rosen, 1963).

In contrast to Western scholarship of the time, Soviet art history courses delineated between African national art tradition and valued the cultural specificity of the many forms of African art. Soviet art historians critiqued Western perspectives on their lack of respect and lack

of nuanced historical knowledge of the richness of African artistic traditions. When African artists like Eshetu Tiruneh and Tedasse Mesfin moved to Moscow to study at the prestigious Surikov and Repin art academies, they were encouraged not to replicate Soviet art and historical figures, but to pursue projects of their own histories, traditions, and contemporary movements. Rather than collecting the art of Africans to display in museums, relegated to limited categories, the USSR valued and respected these cultural contributions, rather than demanding assimilation, as Western propaganda implied (Nash et al., 2016).

One of the first cultural and educational exchange programs in the 1960s were a series of short-term group tourism trips, funded by the USSR, lasting from several weeks to several months. These trips would welcome young African students to tour the Central Asian republics, at the time famed for their industrial innovation, as well as the famous cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In 1960, 200 African students attended these short-term programs. By 1963, the USSR had initiated three-year technical training programs on the African continent in agriculture, mining, power plant maintenance, and wood and glass processing across Egypt (at the time, called the U.A.R.), Guinea, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Sudan (Weaver, 1985).

Decolonization offered the chance to connect and influence nations seeking independence. The Soviet government not only funded liberation movements, but also provided military training. In the 1960s alone, the Soviet Union had either financial or military involvement in the Angola Civil War, the Nigerian Civil War (of 1967-1970), and both sides of the Ethiopian-Somali war of the late 1970s (Tareke, 2009). Several prominent political leaders in Guinea, Ghana, Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique were supportive of Marxist ideology and welcomed both the economic support, but also the opportunity for social change beyond the political regimes of their colonial oppressors (Mortimer, 1972). Considering the fact that the

western supranational economic powers like the World Bank and the IMF directly and publicly opposed the development of higher education in newly liberated countries like Burkina Faso, and the United States offered limited exchange programs for young Africans, the USSR was primed to step into the educational void (Nash et al., 2016).

Red Shadows: The Dark Side of Global Soviet Engagement

By the end of Khrushchev's reign in 1964, the USSR spent 25% of its new initiatives budget on economic aid and programming for Africa. New premier Brezhnev, disappointed in failed alliances with Egypt, Ghana, Guinea and Mali reduced that expenditure to 10%, after halting funding to regimes he considered "too unreliable to warrant major investments in their loyalty" (Nash et al., 2016). However, in 1974 funding was reupped as new nationalist movements in Africa sprung up that also supported the ideological goals of the USSR. The Carnation Revolution in Lisbon initiated a transfer of power in Lusophone Africa to socialist groups in Mozambique, Guinea, and Cape Verde, and a coup in Addis Abba deposed the anointed Emperor Haile Selassie, whose Pan African philosophy and choice to avoid sides had blocked Soviet goals in the past. These two events suggested a new Marxist-Leninist alignment of ideals, prompting Brezhnev to tout the necessity and success of Soviet-led transnational education programs.

In 1981, the USSR was training 72,090 international students, including 34,805 from the Africa, in a variety of programming; by 1986, the Soviet Union had spent a total of 1.7 million U.S. dollars on foreign student scholarships. These education programs were not merely socialist training modules, in fact, they filled the gap left by colonial powers, such as the training of electricians to replace the Portuguese technicians who fled Mozambique in 1975 (Kotek, 2015).

And yet despite the egalitarian ideals and positive contributions to African education, there were conflicts and outright hostilities that contradicted these partnerships.

The lofty anti-colonial rhetoric of the Soviet establishment could not conceal the country's homegrown racism and its officially inspired xenophobia. Africans in the Soviet Union were often confused by the mind-boggling mixture of state-sponsored propaganda and the reality of everyday racism and the selfless generosity and the warmth they encountered in many Soviet people. (Matusevich, 2008)

The 1963 suspicious death of Ghanaian student Edmund Assare-Addo in Moscow was believed to be murder, due to his romantic relationship with a Russian woman student. After police failed to arrest anyone, international students and their Russian allies led a protest of hundreds of people that ended in a violent clash with Moscow police. It had been 40 years since a political protest was held at Red Square and was catalyzed by the civil rights movement efforts in the United States, with protesters holding signs that read: "Moscow, a Second Alabama." (Matusevich, 2008)

In addition to outright violence and hostility, African students experienced a syrupy display of forced kindness, with Russian colleagues and instructors fearful of Kremlin reprisal if they expressed racist attitudes which were strictly prohibited in an utopian socialist society (Matusevich, 2008). Cowcher (2016) offers an example in the 1975 children's book "First Time in Moscow" that was published and distributed throughout Ethiopia at the time. The book, written by Russian authors, describes a young African boy visiting Russia for the first time, marveling over the achievements of soviet culture, describing the exceptionalism of the State, respecting the legacy of Lenin, and expressing his gratitude to the USSR. However, the book failed to impress Ethiopians, who, within their own culture, considered themselves to be

exceptional in comparison to other African ethnic groups. This ham-fisted approach was insulting, as the child depicted in the book, never references which country they are travelling from, to visit Russia, erasing his identity relegating him to a generic, and forgettable character (Nash et al., 2016). This patronizing attitude was reported by many African students in Russia, one Ugandan student stating in the 1960s “I was beginning to feel uncomfortable from all this flattery, which had a touch of condescension in it, too. I began to feel that this was racial discrimination, but as it were, in reverse” (Matusevich, 2008).

In addition to the patronizing attitudes and condescending assumptions visited on African students in the USSR, there was also a marked flip flopping of political allegiances, that these education partnerships were meant to nourish. For example, the USSR secretly supported Italy during the 2nd Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935, despite their outward support for the abolishment of colonialism (Patman, 2009). The back and forth shifting of Soviet support between Ethiopia and Somalia during the Ogaden war of the late 1970s demoralized many African allies, and racist conflicts on college campuses in Moscow led to a decreasing population of African students in the Soviet Union (Nash et al., 2016).

During the period of reforms, generally known as *perestroika* and *glasnost*, ushered in by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet press commentary on Africa grew increasingly negative. Both political commentators and people in the street often attributed the economic decline of the once-powerful Soviet Union to “too much aid for Africa”. (Martone, 2008)

The Soviet focus on the needs of the State and the military-industrial complex garnered educational advancements not only in diplomatic strategy, but also in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which as result, developed a worldwide legacy of Russian

research innovation (Smolentseva, 2003). However, the democratization and decentralization of public institutions led to a marked decline in higher education funding, resulting in the cancellation of many of the collaborative relationships with students in Africa (Rezaev, 2006). In addition, the Russian people balked at Gorbachev's reforms, whose capitalist notions caused the system to collapse. The Soviet agenda of sending money overseas, and supporting foreign students, was no longer tolerated during a time of economic desperation.

By the 1980s, in contrast to Ethiopian artists who had previously been respected and valued at Moscow art academies, new student artists like Bekele Mekonnen were now mocked by their instructors when they presented their work. The students who arrived from various African countries, were often the children of elite families. Throughout the Cold War there was a stewing resentment among Russians living in impoverished conditions, observing wealthy bourgeois Africans enjoying special privileges in the USSR. The Soviet scholarship package included not only tuition, and higher quality room and board, but also stipends for meals, travel reimbursements, and access to high level Party officials. One student recounted the experience of sitting down and putting his expensive jacket onto his chair, to be approached by a young Russian woman who indignantly told him "I paid for your jacket" implying that the Soviet scholarships that brought him to her university to study, were excessive, funding fashion rather than supporting the global class struggle and class solidarity espoused by the State (Nash et al., 2016).

Issam Khouraj describes the desperation of living in Moscow during perestroika, stating: "The changes on the street were so dramatic. The generosity, the kindness...suddenly the tension on the street was so evident...Being a foreign suddenly becomes an obstacle rather than a celebration. It was one of the most desperate times I felt in my life, that is

you don't know if you're going to have the next meal. Crime became evident which you'd never heard of before. Racism became evident." (Nash et al., 2016)

A Sri Lankan student echoes this sentiment, observing that Soviet racism extended beyond Anti-Blackness to include Asian students as well, stating (p.32) :

"Many foreign students were targeted, I myself was beaten when I was in Kiev. We were accused of robbing their money; we were accused of taking their jobs; we were the scapegoats, by the time I left to Soviet Union." (Nash et al., 2016)

The combination of nationalistic policy changes, economic constraints, and long-simmering racism formerly hidden by socialist policies led to the end of 70 years of formal transnational education policies between Africa and Eurasia (Nash et al., 2016).

Current Russian Higher Education Development in Africa

In 2014, sanctions from the West in response to the annexation of Crimea led President Putin to ramp up the rekindling of old Soviet partnerships in Africa, leading to an increase in official visits, signed agreements, arms sales, and soft power activities, including in higher education. I identify four methods of higher education development currently pursued by Russia in Africa with varying purposes: 1) symbolic partnerships, 2) new hybrid universities in Africa, 3) scholarships to Russian universities, and 4) Russian Cultural Centers.

Symbolic Partnerships

I define three practices as symbolic partnerships: (1) the media-publicized diplomatic visits between regions, such as Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs' multiple trips to five countries in Africa in 2018; (2) conferences and conventions such as the massive Russia-Africa Summit co-hosted with Egypt in Sochi in 2019; and (3) written agreements and memorandums of understanding, that have been signed over the years that sometimes lead to actionable plans,

but do not always bear tangible fruits. In this term “symbolic partnerships” I combine the ideas of symbolic power (Bourdieu) and symbolic interactionism (Mead & Cooley). Symbolic power is institutional, requiring the complicity of those being dominated, recognizing their place in a social hierarchy. It refers to power wielded due to “renown, prestige, honor, glory, [or] authority.” A common example is power and influence exerted within churches and schools (Bourdieu, 1979). Symbolic interactionism focuses on the relationships between people, and the way that language and communication are used to understand the world. People choose to interact with what they find meaningful, and they ascribe that meaning to things, based on their interactions with others (Blumer, 1986). Combining these two concepts is an apt description of the partnerships influencing higher education in Africa.

These agreements begin as symbolic gestures, are followed up with media-publicized visits from Russian politicians, are later codified into action by private and State-run Russian corporations, which then leads to higher education development. Here, I offer an example from Ethiopia. Russia and Ethiopia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2017, as a gesture of symbolic partnership. In 2018, the following year, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov took multiple trips to the continent that year, visiting Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, and Ethiopia. In a 2018 interview published in an Ethiopian newspaper, Lavrov stated:

We intend to have a detailed discussion...on ways of enhancing the bilateral cooperation with the emphasis on its trade, economic and investment component, implementation of joint projects, particularly in the energy sector, including nuclear energy. Among the promising areas is Russia's assistance to Ethiopia in building its own scientific and research capacities in developing basic and applied sciences. Specifically we plan to

create an Ethiopian center for nuclear science and technologies based on a Russia-designed research reactor.” (Contributor, 2018)

In this same interview, Lavrov gushes over the positive diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Russia, harkening back to their shared cultural heritage in orthodoxy. After teasing out this value homophily, Lavrov zeroed in on the goal of building a nuclear science center in Ethiopia, priming the public for the next stage of development.

Later, in October 2019, Ethiopia and Russia signed an intergovernmental nuclear arrangement, with the goal of developing Ethiopia’s nuclear facilities within ten years. The arrangement was formalized during the Russia-Africa Economic Forum at Sochi, when Russian government-owned Rosatom Nuclear Energy Corporation signed an accord with the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Ethiopia, to provide technical and technological supplies for atomic energy projects. It is important to note that the Russian government-owned Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation is the largest nuclear company in the world, conducting business with South Africa, China, Egypt, Finland, India, and Turkey, amongst others (Fikade, 2019).

The MoU stated that Ethiopia would be responsible for the security, storage and safety regulations of nuclear materials, as well as establishing a central authority responsible for regulating “waste treatment, education and training with nuclear and radioactive materials and substances” (Fikade, 2019). In addition, Russia engaged in relationship building between Ethiopia and Rwanda on this new nuclear energy project, with both countries joining the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In the same news article about this MoU, Russia also announced it planned to forgive twenty billion dollars of Ethiopian debt. The connection between this MoU on nuclear energy and the development of higher education is clear, when considering this 2019 press release posted on the Rossotrudnichestvo website:

The Ethiopian side reacted with great attention and interest to the proposals of the Russian side. It was agreed that the Ethiopian Ministry of Higher Education will consider the possibility of sending Ethiopian scholarship holders to study in Russian universities in the specialty in nuclear energy as early as the 2020/2021 academic year.

(The delegation of Russian universities in Ethiopia, 2019)

Through the symbolic partnerships, marketing in the media, and diplomatic visits this nuclear energy project is an example of how a simple memorandum of understanding leads to higher education development.

New Hybrid Universities

The Russian Federation's educational transnationalism also includes operating 41 branch campuses outside the country, 38 of which are located in former republics of the USSR (Chankseliani, 2021; Mäkinen, 2016). In addition, in the past decade Russian universities have begun offering instruction in the English language, even at the most prestigious of universities such as Saint Petersburg State University. Combining these two trends, Russia has now begun building new hybrid universities. These institutions seek to expand the transnational reach of a Russian education, while diversifying a new generation of scientists and scholars. One such institution in Africa is the Egyptian-Russian University (ERU) located in Badr City, with an additional campus in Suez. ERU was founded in 2006, as one of the stipulations of an official agreement of cooperation in education between Egypt and Russia, finalized during President Putin's visit to the country in 2005. Notably, it was President Hosni Mubarak, himself an alum of a Soviet education program, who signed the decree that established the university. Here, we see the legacy of the impact of Soviet education and the benefits of developing an elite class of Africans.

Providing some context on the higher education landscape in Egypt: there are currently 26 public and 31 private universities, with thirteen of these schools landing in the top 100 of the Times Higher Education global rankings (as of 2018). There are also hundreds of private technical schools, vocational programs, military academies, and for-profit institutions operating in the country, with twenty percent of Egyptian students studying at private institutions. Egypt serves as a major hub within the Middle East, with a very large population of international students from other MENA (Middle East North African) countries. ERU is not the only foreign institution, as there is an American University in Cairo, the German University in Egypt, the British University of Egypt, and the French University of Egypt. However, it is only ERU and the even more recently established Chinese Egyptian University, that act as hybrid institutions in partnership with Egypt, rather than outsiders operating branch campuses on foreign land (Cochran, 2012; Hartmann, 2008; Mohamed & Trines, 2019; Richards, 1992).

ERU focuses on STEM disciplines, housing four departments: the Faculties of Pharmacy, Dentistry, Engineering, and the Faculty of Management, Professional Technology and Computers. ERU is located on a 32-acre campus complete with dormitories, a food court, a library, and sports facilities. The language of instruction is English, a compromise between the local language of Arabic, and the language of the faculty instructors: Russian. A coeducational institution, the university offers bachelor's degrees, and markets itself as a place where students can prepare to attend graduate school abroad, either in Russia, or in other countries (*Egyptian Russian University*, 2021).

The establishment of ERU was not merely a development of higher education—it was the building blocks for Egypt's New Administrative Capital city (NAC), a 58-billion-dollar project that will serve as an international hub of Afrofuturistic innovation. Located 28 miles east of

Cairo in the desert, the plan to build the NAC was announced in 2015, almost a decade after ERU was established in this exact geographic region (Loewert & Steiner, 2019). Egypt has also cultivated multiple international partners in the development of the NAC.

Immediately after the announcement, Egypt partnered with China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC) to build government offices, luxury hotels, high-rise apartments, and a convention center in the NAC (Ayembe, 2021). Note the connected battling higher education interests here, as the new Egyptian Chinese University (ECU) was founded two years prior to this construction agreement, in 2013. The completed NAC will be roughly the size of the country of Singapore and is also located halfway between the critically advantageous seaport of Suez and the historic and popular tourist destination of Cairo (Ayembe, 2021).

A major feature of this new city will be dedicated areas for educational institutions, a technology and innovation park, hospitals, and two massive religious feats: a cathedral and a mosque. Taking a page from the desert success of Dubai, the NAC will be a “smart city” with high tech amenities, as well as artificial lakes, skyscrapers, a massive theme park, solar energy farms and international airport. Germany has also stepped into the arena, signing an agreement in January 2021 to design an electric railway to Cairo, one of several new light rail projects being built in the NAC (Ayembe, 2021). A Belgian construction firm is working on designing a new Egyptian Museum, and a UAE based firm won a contract to handle all waste management and city cleaning in the NAC (Mathews, 2021).

Although Russia has expressed interest in working with Egypt on cyber security issues and information technology development in the NAC (*Egypt, Russia to cooperate in ICT sector, Africa*, 2019), they have mainly focused on adjacent projects, such as building Egypt’s first nuclear power plant in the city of El Dabaa. Part of a larger plan called Egypt Vision 2030, the

completion of NAC is expected by the year 2022, with numerous residential neighborhoods, skyscrapers, and business offices already constructed, as of July 2021. The new Ministry of Defense buildings have completed construction in the NAC. Called the “Octagon” the sprawling, futuristic architecture are a science fiction movie fan’s wildest dreams (Abdelmoaty & Soliman, 2020; Ayembe, 2021; Bolleter & Cameron, 2021; Loewert & Steiner, 2019; Mathews, 2021).

It seems ERU will no longer be the main higher education institution in NAC. In November 2017, Egypt’s Minister of Education announced there will be six new hybrid or branch campuses opening in the city, from Canada, France, Hungary, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. As the number of international students in Egypt has doubled in the past decade, Egypt has become one of the top three destinations for students in MENA countries, after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Mohamed & Trines, 2019). The expansion of the NAC has solidified Egypt as a coveted future destination of higher education, with Russia partially responsible for these advancements, by being the first to test the waters of hybridity by building Egyptian Russian University back in 2006.

In an interview with Alana, a twenty-five-year-old Egyptian-born woman based in Los Angeles, she offers a practical (or cynical) view of Russian higher education development in her home country:

Some of my family had to move back [to Egypt] and I thought I might have to go, but my visa problems ended up finishing, so I stayed here. But if I went, I was looking into a master’s degree, and maybe a scholarship to Russia. A lot of the programs teach in English because nobody wants to learn Russian. I don’t want to live there, but they have excellent IT programs, I could get the diploma and then go.

(Alana, Egyptian Potential RCC Student Interview, May 11, 2021)

After a follow up question asking if she would attend ERU, Alana chuckled, stating that there were better options in Egypt, mentioning the global university rankings and reputation of American University in Cairo.

Scholarships to Russian Universities

As discussed previously, the former Soviet Union championed higher education development in Africa by providing millions of dollars in scholarships for African young people to study abroad in Russian universities. From 1955 to 1984, the most scholarships were awarded to students from Ethiopia, followed by Nigeria, Madagascar, the Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Tanzania. Although the number and amount of scholarship funding decreased dramatically near the end of this era, more money has become available again in the 2000s, along with rekindling diplomatic relationships with former partners on the continent (Holt et al., 2014).

As of 2021 there are close to 21,000 African students studying abroad in Russia, most of which come from Morocco, followed by Nigeria, Cameroon, Zambia, and Kenya. Of all top five countries, Zambia currently receives the largest percentage of scholarships, and has a total of 6,000 students enrolled in Russian universities ("Number of students from Africa enrolled in Russian education institutions," 2020). However only a fraction of these students receive scholarships, with less than 2,000 scholarships awarded to Africa in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Klomegah, 2021). Despite the positive impact of scholarship aid benefiting young Africans while simultaneously fulfilling the soft power agenda, there have been notable conflicts impacting the African students in Russia.

Examining popular Zambia newspapers, a quick search of the word "Russia" brought forth a large volume of articles about abuses Zambian students as well as other African students experience while studying abroad in Russia. This is even before adding the word "education" to

the search terms. Some complaints include poor housing facilities and lack of amenities, while others allege that their scholarship living stipends have been delayed on multiple occasions by the Russian government, making it impossible to pay for everyday needs. A number of students, including the Zambian Student Union of Russia and Ukraine (ZASURU) contacted their government begging for aid to purchase food, leading to a public outcry. An excerpt from the published letter by ZASURU reads:

This has been an ongoing issue for many years now. Students find themselves in very desperate situations due to delayed payments. This leads to students not being able to meet their obligations in terms of visa renewals, settling hostel fees, buying medical policies on time which in some cases have led to court summons for visa related issues and evictions from hostels for delayed payments. (ZASURU, 2016)

In another article from the year prior, Algerian, Moroccan, and Zambian students all experienced delayed stipend payments ("Zambian and Moroccan Students," 2015). It is interesting that this article was published in 2015, during the height of economic sanctions levied against Russia by the West. The ruble was low, and the country experienced economic hardship; one could infer those African students paid the price for what was not even their battle.

From Congo to GONGO: Russian Cultural Centers on the African Continent

In addition to fostering symbolic partnerships, establishing hybrid universities, and awarding scholarships, Russian Cultural Centers serve as a new type of institution within the current agenda of Russian higher education development in Africa. The prevalence of GONGOs offer new modes of learning around the world. A government-sponsored non-governmental organization (GONGO) is an institution type which straddles a fine line between NGO and Nation State status (Naím, 2007). Regimes utilize non-coercive strategies to consolidate power,

avoiding international criticism on their nondemocratic domestic practices; GONGOs provide a discreet method for which governments influence and control NGOs.

Often considered citizen interest groups who lobby government actors, GONGOs have been a source of controversy in foreign policy since the 1980s (Lushnikov, 2019). For example, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), is a GONGO funded and operated by the United States. Established in 1983 and partially funded by an allocation from Congress, the NED is marketed as a grant-making foundation that funds democratic initiatives abroad (ned.org). Despite the benign text of the mission, the NED has come under criticism many times over the years, due to a lack of transparency, as well as accusations of tampering with foreign politics (Anderson, 1985; Carothers, 1995; Corn, 1995; Drezner, 2000; Heymann, 1960; Nichols, 1990; Sims, 1990), with Naím (2007) nicknaming the NED a “neocolonial slush fund” (Naím, 2007).

Not only a U.S. and Russian strategy—countries throughout the world have their own GONGOs with a variety of political interests. For example, in China, the 1998 reforms to the State Council system caused a boom of environmentally focused GONGOs. The impact of these organizations expanded to work in collaboration with German NGOs on renewable energy and energy efficiency. The early founding of environmental GONGOs was a reaction to the “internationalization of environmental protection” in the late 1970s (p. 6), with China and other countries addressing issues together that continue to concern scientists worldwide (Wu, 2003).

There are two different types of cultural centers, founded in the late 2000s, that are funded and operated by various government-affiliated stakeholders in Russia. In total, between the two institutions, there are fifteen RCCs located across nine countries in Africa: Egypt, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Zambia (Popovic et al., 2020). The first type of institution— Russian Centers of Science of

Culture, were founded by the Russkiy Mir Foundation, a GONGO established by a presidential decree. In his 2007 address to the Federal Assembly, President Putin stated:

The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements...As the common heritage of many peoples, the Russian language will never become the language of hatred or enmity, xenophobia or isolationism...In my view, we need to support the initiative put forward by Russian linguists to create a National Russian Language Foundation, the main aim of which will be to develop the Russian language at home, support Russian language study programs abroad and generally promote Russian language and literature around the world. (Putin, 2007)

A joint venture between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russkiy Mir is led by an academic dean and political figure, and the board of trustees consists of “prominent Russian academics, cultural figures, and distinguished civil servants.” By nature, the organization is a tool of soft power, and subsists on both public and private funds. There are 109 RCCs established around the world via funds from the Russkiy Mir Foundation (Pieper, 2020).

The second type of RCC are the Russian Centers and Cabinets funded and operated by Rossotrudnichestvo, an autonomous agency funded and managed solely by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main differences are that the first type, organized by Russkiy Mir are a collaborative effort between Foreign Affairs and Education, with funding from private donors, with the express mission of Language Education & Cultural Exchange. Whereas the second type organized by Rossotrudnichestvo, reports only to Foreign Affairs, and has a dual mission of Education & Foreign Aid. The impact of Rossotrudnichestvo has been met with controversy since its inception, with many considering the organization to be a recruitment tool, grooming foreign operatives for political use (Jurevičius, 2014; Popovic et al., 2020).

In contrast to the RCCs in the U.S. and in Europe, the RCCs in Africa seem to be the result of restructuring prior cultural centers, rather than building new relationships with universities. While the RCCs in Europe, the U.S. and Asia are often affiliated with local universities, there are less of these connections in Africa, even when there are local institutions available nearby. In Africa, RCCs offer a more comprehensive educational experience besides cultural engagement, with curriculum depending upon the need of the local community.

The RCC in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia produces more social functions such as networking events and business opportunities. The center website advertises alumni networking events for students who studied in the USSR/Russia and have returned to Ethiopia. The RCC Addis Ababa also helps students obtain recommendation letters to study in Russia, and links scholars who translate Russian literature into Amharic. In contrast, the RCC in Cairo, Egypt is strictly an educational facility, focused more on skills development, rather than sociocultural opportunities. The Cairo RCC could be considered vocational, due to the offering of a wide range of engineering, computer science and technology training courses taught in English.

Conclusions

In considering the long impact of Eurasia on higher education development in Africa, one must connect the political goals with the education goals of each nation state. Savage (2016) relates education and politics in this way, stating (p.42):

“It was often the students themselves who exposed the frictions between the various registers of internationalism.... A close reading of these histories therefore demands a disentangling of multiple narratives of political desire, and an excavation of solidarity at the micro-level, in the lived experiences of the people who undertook these journeys.”
(Savage, 2016)

I offer an outsider's examination of new modes of learning in informal higher education in Africa, while tracing the political goals and impact of Russian educational engagement on the continent. This research inquiry offers a three-pronged approach to study this problem: examination of the national goals that catalyze the development of these programs, investigation of the institutional practices and purposes of cultural centers, and analysis of individual student motivations and experiences with these educational institutions. This research offers insights on transnationalism, the politics of education, and the intersection of education and diplomacy.

Summary of Chapter Two

Eurasia and Africa have long enjoyed diplomatic ties, both before and after colonial occupation in Africa, and throughout the various political regimes in Eurasia. These relationships spanned military and economic development, political camaraderie, and soft power educational initiatives, oftentimes when other Western powers had no interest in the continent beyond predatory debt collection. The Soviet Union educated locals and supervised the building of infrastructure; founded and supported universities; supported the study and preservation of indigenous languages; and educated future political leaders who in turn forged political partnerships. Although much of the programs were shuttered in the early 1990s, there was a rekindling of interest in Africa in the mid 2000s. The Russian Federation is currently fostering symbolic partnerships, establishing hybrid universities, and awarding scholarships to African students. Russian Cultural Centers serve as a new type of institution providing informal non-credited education and social engagement in Africa. This dissertation helps fill the gap in the literature in the fields of Education, Political Science, International Relations, and History.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research relies on qualitative methodology including archival research, content analysis, a focus group, interviews, and observational methods. These various methodologies reveal the nuances of the ways in which policy actors construct meaning and act according to the constraints of institutional change (Hathaway, 1995). Although the public health limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic required a heavy reliance on digital sources, I pursued a triangulation of data, using multiple methods of analysis and data sources to increase the credibility of findings (Denzin, 2006). A combination of qualitative and historical methodology allows for a complex understanding of the context of the problem, as well as shifting patterns of engagement over time, with a Pan-African focus on Russian educational initiatives and their impact on the continent. These methods guided the following research questions:

1. How was the Soviet Union involved in higher education development in Africa?
2. How is the Russian Federation involved in higher education development in Africa?
3. What is the purpose of Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs) in Africa?

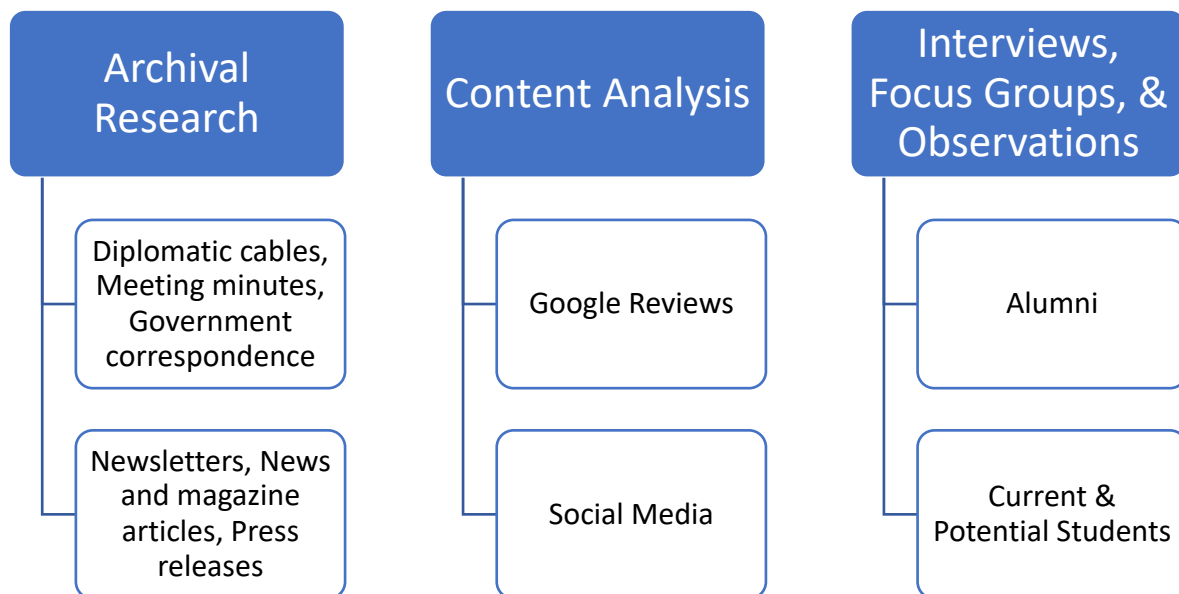
The archival research provided the historical and political context of the problem. From the content analysis I gleaned the institutional goals, the intended educational outcomes as well as the student experience at RCCs. From the interviews, observation, and focus group I investigated the social phenomenology, and sociocultural contexts of the purpose of RCCs, as well as the student experience. As textual analysis is the main method used in critical geopolitics research, this combination of methods is an invaluable resource. This chapter will describe the data sources, collection procedures, and analysis process, closing with the limitations of the study and the positionality of the researcher.

Data Collection Procedures

Rather than investigating all nine RCCs located in eight countries in Africa, I chose three countries to examine: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. I chose these countries due to their geographic diversity: Egypt represents North Africa with two RCCs located in the cities of Alexandria and Cairo. Ethiopia represents East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Zambia represents both South and Central Africa in Africanist scholarly tradition. In addition, all the chosen countries have robust online data available, which was necessary while collecting data during the COVID-19 pandemic. One limitation of this research is the lack of representation in West Africa, however as of 2021, there are no RCCs located in West African countries.

I also chose these countries as they have varying cultural histories, specifically following Edmond Keller's theorizing on the differences between Indigenous Afrosocialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Ethiopia has a Marxist-Leninist influenced history, whereas Zambia is firmly indigenous afrosocialist, with Egypt providing an example of Arab socialism from the Pan-Arabism tradition (Keller, 1984; Pitcher & Askew, 2006; Torrey & Devlin, 1965).

Figure 2. Data Sources



The data for this research is organized into three categories: archival research, content analysis, and in-depth sociocultural data. The archival research included analysis of a variety of government, university, and press documents. The content analysis included google reviews and social media analysis, and the in-depth sociocultural data included interviews, a focus group, and observations of an event. In the following three sections I will describe each method and the associated data sources.

Archival Research

Documents are “social facts which are reproduced, shared, and used in socially organized ways.” (Atkinson et al., 2001). Document analysis fields data as excerpts, quotations/passages that can then be organized into major themes, categories, and case examples through content analysis (Labuschagne, 2003). Bowen (2009) describes the five functions of documents when used alongside interviews: to provide participants’ operational context, to suggest questions or situations to investigate, to track changes and development to the phenomena over time, to supplement other data, and to verify evidence from other sources (Bowen, 2009). Although documents are social facts in that they exist in time and space as indicators of human communication, they are often strategically manipulated, as is the case of political and social propaganda during the Cold War.

This research examines a combination of types of documents, to provide layers and various perspectives on the facts. I reviewed documents gathered from various digital archives related to historical and current Eurasian and African educational partnerships. Archival research is the examination of primary documents and is a necessary component of understanding the historical context of the problem. I conducted a targeted search of seven different digital archives including:

1. Worldwide Diplomatic Archives Index, U.S. Department of State
2. Georgetown University's Digital Fieldwork Archives
3. Harvard University's Open Access archives on Soviet History
4. Archive Grid on WorldCat
5. Institute of African Studies, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow, Russia
6. The Wilson Center Digital Archive
7. UCLA Digital Archives

Using Boolean search strategies, I performed a systematic search using terms related to the USSR, Russia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. I critically examined a total of 394 documents. From the Wilson Center Digital Archives, including diplomatic cables, meeting meetings, high-level government correspondence, telegrams, memoranda, speech transcripts, reports, and declassified scans of *CIA Intelligence Daily*. The Wilson archives contained 204 documents about Egypt, 92 documents about Ethiopia, and 13 documents about Zambia. I also did a close examination of the 37 newsletters published by the Institute from African Studies of the Russian Academy of Science. The final category of documents I examined were newspaper articles, magazines, and official press releases, including 26 articles from Ethiopia, 12 articles from Zambia, and 10 articles from non-African sources. Although all of the close to 400 documents informed the conceptual understanding of this work, please see the appendix for a list of the specific documents quoted in this dissertation.

Content Analysis

This research offers online Google Reviews as a new venue of understanding in educational research. There are currently over 3,000 Google Reviews of the RCCs in Africa, and I have chosen a sample of the 1,000 reviews written most recently prior to September 1, 2020.

Rather than pursue a multiple case study, this is a critical discourse analysis with a Pan-African focus, highlighting the three countries listed below.

Table 1. Google Reviews

Cairo, Egypt	3,110 google reviews
Lusaka, Zambia	185 google reviews
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	5 google reviews

I also examined the official Facebook pages and websites for each RCC, critically examining the official posted content from the RCCs, posts from the student population and the general public, and Facebook Reviews about the RCCs. Most Facebook reviews were numerical, with a star ranking from one star to five stars. I discarded a numerical quantitative approach in favor of analyzing each review that contains more than one word of text. Of 1,000 Egypt google reviews sampled, 264 of the reviews contained text, 64 of the Zambia google reviews (plus an additional 20 Facebook reviews), and 2 of the 5 Ethiopia reviews.

This method is not new, as the field of semantic analysis and sentiment analysis for opinion mining is regularly used in research for business development to offer insight on products and services (Alamanda et al., 2019; Islam, 2014; Liu, 2012). However, semantic analysis is a complex quantitative approach requiring training in linguistics, attempting use generalizability to assess reviewers' opinions, rather than seeking a deep analysis of concepts. This project instead employed qualitative critical discourse analysis to organize, categorize, and theorize on the topic at hand. I applied a method of analysis delineated by Yung and Munksgaard (Young & Munksgaard, 2018).

Analyzing these online reviews provided context to the subsequent interviews, which may have more honest information due to their anonymity. In addition to Google reviews from

various African RCCs, I analyzed a variety of other documents relating to RCCs, including decrees, newspaper articles, press releases, program proposals, institutional reports, public records, institutional reports, and legal documents (among others) found in digital archives.

As the data on Egyptian RCCs is based on anonymous, overseas Google users, my approach depends on textual analysis of their commentary in Google Reviews, rather than conversation built on rapport in a traditional qualitative interview.

In-Depth Sociocultural Data

To understand the history and context of Russian-African partnerships in higher education, I conducted one on one, recorded interviews and one focus group via Zoom remote videoconferencing with ten participants born and raised in the countries of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. There was opportunity for deeper analysis by combining these portraits with document analysis, archival research, and interviews with key figures who may not necessarily be involved with RCCs on the ground, as well as African students who currently benefit from this programming. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person and via videoconference with participants recruited via purposeful and snowball sampling from the researchers' academic and professional colleagues, as well as RCC students who have posted publicly on social media.

The categories of participants included: African alumni of higher education programs from the USSR and Russia, and current students attending Russian cultural centers in Africa. Seven of the ten interviews were conducted via Zoom were with current Zambian RCC students, who I also recruited to participate in the focus group. Two additional interviews were conducted with Ethiopian alumni of educational programming in the USSR, both were conducted in-person in Los Angeles, California. One interview was conducted with a participant from Egypt (via

Zoom) with a potential RCC/Russian University student. Six of the ten participants were male, and four of the participants were female. Five of the participants were teenagers, three of the participants were in their twenties, and two of the participants were over the age of sixty.

Table 2. Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Affiliation	Age	Gender
Dave	RCC student, Zambia	21	Male
Violet	RCC student, Zambia	20	Female
Lena	RCC student, Zambia	18	Female
Mundo	RCC student, Zambia	19	Male
Tom	RCC student, Zambia	18	Male
Lucy	RCC student, Zambia	19	Female
Akaso	RCC student, Zambia	19	Male
Yonas	Alumni of USSR program, Ethiopia	61	Male
Abraham	Alumni of USSR program, Ethiopia	64	Male
Alana	Potential RCC student, Egypt	25	Female

In addition to interviews and a focus group, I observed the Zambian RCC’s debate team competition. It was two hours in length, livestreamed, videorecorded, and posted on the official RCC Facebook page. The interviews, focus group, and observation were all transcribed for a small fee by an online transcription service (rev.com).

Data Analysis

I analyzed a sample of the most recent 1,000 of the google reviews to pilot my approach. I maintained two spreadsheets, one for reviews that have actual text to analyze, and one spreadsheet for reviews that only have a number ranking. I also wrote analytic memos, did two levels of inductive coding, in preparation for data analysis. After my initial dissertation defense, I submitted my proposal to my university’s International Review Board and was approved to conduct interviews and host focus groups. I uploaded my spreadsheets into Dedoose qualitative analysis software for a more efficient and multifaceted analysis of the data. Dedoose was used for the Google reviews, interview transcripts and quotes from archival documents.

I followed the inductive approach of Yung and Munksgaard, who articulate a step by step plan for using qualitative analysis software (Young & Munksgaard, 2018). I have chosen inductive rather than deductive coding, as this approach is recommended in comparative study and case studies, to examine patterns that emerge across multiple cases (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Although this work is not a formal case study, it does examine RCCs in three different countries, each with their own historical context and institutional culture. Although the computer analysis software provides an inductive approach, the process was abductive—with continuous movement between categorizing and interpreting, a comparative approach, changing classifications as necessary, as I comb through the data (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

In framing the data analysis process, there were three areas of examination: by Country, by Data Source, and by Stakeholder. Examining the data by country allowed me to understand the geopolitics that vary by region, the diverse cultural aspects impacting this inquiry, and the historical context of Russian relations that differ by country. Examining the problem by data source, allowed me to gain two different perspectives, the first: how Africans make meaning Russian educational opportunities, and the second: how the Russian government presents themselves to Africa.

The interviews, focus group, observations, and content analysis provided the first perspective, and the archival research and content analysis provided the second perspective. The third area of examination: Stakeholder, allowed me to delve into the different experiences” that of African alumni of Soviet/Russian programs, current RCC students, the African media, and the Russian government. Each stakeholder holding a different view on the role of RCCs in Africa. This a formal case study or comparative case study, rather an examination of RCCs in three different countries, each with their own historical context and institutional culture.

Limitations

The limitations to this study include the fact that most of the data was collected online versus in person, due to the data collection period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition there were varying amounts of data per region: for example more interviews from Zambia than from Egypt and Ethiopia. However, this disparity was compensated by the extensive archival data available on Ethiopia and the extensive google reviews on the RCC in Egypt. Other limitations included that there were no teacher/instructor perspectives in the data, and only one of the two RCCs in Egypt (Cairo, excluding the RCC in Alexandria) was studied.

Positionality

My first taste of the feeling of “tribalism” happened when I came to the USA. I read books written by some anthropologists and half-baked western scholars about exaggerated differences among Ethiopian ethnic groups. I remember well one summer in the early 60s when a sociologist I met for the first time at an Ethiopian Peace Corps volunteers training camp, asked me “where do you come from?” I said “of course, Ethiopia” He said, “I know, are you Amhara, Oromo, Tigre?” I responded “Ethiopian.” He then asked what language I spoke, I said, “I speak Amharic, Oromiffa, and some Tigrigna, and so on.” “Ok”, he said, what is your religion, are you Christian or Muslim?” I responded, “I believe in the One Almighty God”. The arrogant sociologist was frustrated with me and walked away. (Isaac, 2016)

In this quote, famous Ethiopian scholar and professor Ephraim Isaac circumvents incessant categorization, and in this way my positionality remains a simple one. This research was developed as a foreign observer of the critical geopolitics at play in Africa and Eurasia. The interest in these regions formed after living in St. Petersburg, Russia, first as a Fulbright scholar,

and later as a professional musician. As a Black American, with Pan-African sensibilities and a tendency towards diasporic unity, my interest in Africa is both past—through ancestral connection, and future—in the projection of Africa as the future of economic, scientific, and technical innovation.

Summary of Chapter Three

Three countries were chosen to examine RCCs in Africa: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. The countries were chosen to represent geographic regions and historical sociopolitical contexts (Indigenous afrosocialist Zambia) vs. Marxist-Leninist (Ethiopia) vs. Arab socialist (Egypt). This research relies on qualitative methodology including digital archival research, content analysis, a focus group, one on one interviews, and observation of the *Zambian RCC's* debate team competition. Data was triangulated through multiple methods and data sources to increase the credibility of findings. Limitations included the online collection vs. in person, varying amounts of data per region, no teacher/instructor representation, and only one of the two RCCs in Egypt (Cairo, excluding Alexandria) were studied in this research project. The positionality of the researcher is that of an outsider: Black American observing the educational relationships between Eurasia and Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This research inquiry examines new types of cross-national partnerships in higher education: Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs) in Africa. In this chapter I offer the major findings from the research by focusing on the historical and political context behind the development of this new type of institution, and the personal motivations that guide African students' engagement with these institutions. I frame my analysis of the data through two perspectives: the State and the Student. The State includes the USSR, the Russian Federation, and the governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. Although these diverse state actors have different goals and historical contexts, they all wield political power over the Student. I define the Student as: alumni of Soviet-era educational programming, current students enrolled in RCCs in Africa, and the general African public, which includes potential RCC students.

I consider the State as political actors who manipulate the student/worker to fulfill national need, but I do not differentiate between Russia and Africa agendas, challenging the outdated notions of spheres of influence. As governments align based on values and goals, their needs align, sometimes at the expense of their own people. I frame this analysis by highlighting the power differential between the two stakeholders, without regard for military might or geopolitical power.

In this chapter I will offer a summary of the higher education development that occurred during the era of the Soviet Union and the current Russian Federation. Then, I will discuss the two major themes that arose from the findings: (1) the development of the African Elite, and (2) dignity, political camaraderie, and respect.

Higher Education Development in Africa During the Era of the Soviet Union

After the establishment of the USSR in 1922, the purpose of higher education in Eurasia shifted from educating only the Russian elite, expanding to educate all people. Marx inspired the romantic vision of an educated populace, whereas the proletariats implemented a practical vision of the people—educated for the purpose of serving as workers. Lenin combined these two purposes, with a vision of disseminating socialist ideology and lifting the oppressed from the mental bondages of their colonial oppressors, while simultaneously rebuilding infrastructure and training a new generation of workers (Kuraev, 2014).

With internationalism a vital facet of his political and social activist agenda, Lenin viewed the development of higher education in Africa as an opportunity to build political relationships and train new allies. One of the ways the USSR was involved in higher education development in Africa was in the support of like-minded political allies in newly liberated African nations. A poignant example of this goal is the now defunct Stalin Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow. When African students began studying at KUTV in the 1920s, their coursework included language study, critical theory, and the sciences. But there was also a hidden curriculum training students in espionage, with courses in small arms training, coding, guerilla warfare, rule of conduct under surveillance, and interrogation techniques (Nash et al., 2016).

After the death of the decidedly xenophobic party leader Joseph Stalin, there was a surge of international engagement. Khrushchev (the new premier after the short-lived Malenkov), sought political friendships with African leaders in exchange for technical education to increase the numbers of pilots, medical experts, and construction workers in their countries (Nash et al., 2016). The scope of Soviet programming from the 1950s onwards included the establishment of

Patricia Lumumba University (now RUDN University) to serve foreign students, technical training programs in Africa, as well as scholarships to attend Russian universities, and short-term noncredit cultural exchange programs targeting athletes, musicians, and future students (Filatova, 2001; Nash et al., 2016; Weaver, 1985).

However, despite the egalitarian ideals and positive intentions, there were conflicts and outright hostilities that contradicted these partnerships. Racism and xenophobia combined with the resource scarcity of the Gorbachev years lead to an exodus of foreign students no longer welcome in the waning years of a great superpower (Nash et al., 2016). Despite the termination of these programs upon collapse of the USSR in 1991, the legacy of Soviet soft power is a positive one, considering the vast impact on the economy and infrastructure of the African continent (Kotek, 2015).

Higher Education Development in Africa During the Era of the Russian Federation

After the political transition from USSR to the Russian Federation, President Yeltsin's era is characterized by missed opportunities to engage with Africa. During this time Russia shut down many of their embassies, consulates, and cultural centers on the continent, downsizing their soft power influence (Schmidt, 2013). However, one might argue Yeltsin's hands were full managing the economic hardship, food scarcity, and internal conflicts in his own country. In the declassified meeting minutes from a 1995 conversation between German Chancellor Kohl and American President Clinton, Kohl alleged that Yeltsin was a decorative figurehead unable to control his own troops:

I am not one who prays to icons in the corner. I don't know if Yeltsin will prevail. But I am sure that if we leave him in the lurch, matters will get much worse.... We need to talk with Yeltsin. I don't like calling him every week and spelling out for him how Russia's

image is going downhill. ...I am not sure whether it is malice or ineptness or both on the part of the Russian military, but he has a military who cheated him. They set him up for a situation in which he could only fail. They set a trap for Yeltsin...perhaps to topple him. (Council et al., 1995)

After former Prime Minister (and sixteen-year KGB agent) Vladimir Putin was elected president in 1999, he enacted a series of economic reforms, raising the country's GDP by 72%, leading to a decline in poverty and unemployment throughout the nation. After resolving these pressing internal priorities, Putin then began a robust foreign policy agenda to revive the image of the Russian Federation (Åslund et al., 2010). Following his 2007 public announcement of establishing RCCs around the world, Putin stepped down into a Prime Minister role from 2008-2012 (before returning to the presidency from 2012 to the present). It was during this time that then-President Medvedev visited four African countries for official visits: Angola, Egypt, Namibia, and Nigeria. This 2009 trip has been described as the official revival of Russia's interest in Africa (Filatova, 2001; Russell & Pichon, 2019).

Now, the Russian Federation has resumed its policy of awarding scholarships to African students, as well as engaging in symbolic partnerships, building hybrid universities, and establishing Russian Cultural Centers. As discussed in chapter two, the USSR valued the study of and preservation of indigenous African languages. Now it is the reverse, with RCC's expressed goal of training Africans to speak Russian. The findings of this study argue that the result of the legacy of Eurasian higher education development in Africa is the development of the African Elite, and the cultivation of political camaraderie and mutual respect.

Development of the African Elite

Let us agree to call African elitism the entitlement to an uncontested leadership inferred from the privilege of being exposed to modern education...It is as though Westernization passes on to local elites the right to rule; that is, to continue the unfinished business of colonialism. (pp. 167-168)(Kebede, 2003).

In East and South Asia, a Portuguese term is used: “comprador”, originally referring to indigenous servants in the homes of European colonists. The term has now evolved, referring to locals who intercede for foreign organizations, involved in political and economic and exploitation (Po-Keung & Tak-Wing, 1999). The Belgians and the French used the term “évolués” to refer to the indigenous Africans who left behind their cultural traditions in favor of those of their colonizers (Kebede, 2003). Also called “les noirs perfectionnés” (the perfected blacks), évolués held white collar jobs, enjoyed power and privilege in society, and often acted as mediators between the colonists and their own kin, who had not been elevated to this status (Tödt, 2012).

Much has been written on the vacuum left by colonizers post African liberation, the subsequent appointment of “perfected blacks,” and the chaos and corruption that followed, destabilizing regions already at the brink of collapse (Gyekye, 2015; Hyslop, 2005; Lange, 2004; Ojo, 2018; Pierce, 2006). Although the Soviet Union never colonized Africa, and Ethiopia never fully succumbed to European occupation, the impact of Soviet higher education engagement in Africa led to the development of an elite class of African allies. This practice of uplifting and supporting the Soviet-educated elite into positions of power is a prime example of neocolonial behaviors exhibited by countries without a past history of colonization.

In Egypt

Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak attended a Soviet pilot training school in Kyrgyzstan from 1959-1961, and again for advanced studies in Moscow in 1964, before his career as an officer in the Egyptian Air Force. Mubarak's education occurred during the years of President Gamal Nasser, who's anti-imperialist policies and support of Arab socialist ideals led to friendly relations between Egypt and the USSR. These relations were severed when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came into office, when he conspired with President Nixon to dissolve his relationship with the Soviet Union. In 1981, when Anwar Sadat was assassinated (while seated right next to Mubarak in a car). Mubarak, who happened to be vice president at the time, ascended to power. Immediately after taking office Mubarak rekindled relations with the USSR, and by 1984, appointed an Ambassador from Egypt to Russia, exactly twenty years after his time as a pilot cadet in Moscow (Arafat, 2011; Shehata, 2011).

However, a Soviet education does not necessarily mean a lifetime of alliance. After thirty years in power as president of Egypt, Mubarak was long-time considered an ally of the West. One example being when Mubarak established membership in the allied coalition in the Gulf War, when Egyptian boots were first on the ground in Iraq, later rewarded by the United States who led the efforts to forgive twenty billion dollars of Egyptian debt (Al-Awadi, 2005). This savvy maneuvering is an example of the critical geopolitics that frame this work. Although the tyranny of Mubarak and his support of neoliberal agendas is at odds with the critical theory aspect of subaltern geopolitics, his policies strategizing in favor of his home country (a former colony) supports this frame. The USSR and now the Russian Federation may have utilized soft power in Africa to expand their influence, but African leaders shift their alliances as they see fit,

subverting the idea of superpowers acting on “weaker” countries. Through critical geopolitical maneuvering, Mubarak went from being the Student, to wielding the power of the State.

In Zambia

The reason why we are saying it would be better [to study there] is because one of our ministers actually studied in Russia. She's a minister now. So, if we have a lot [of Zambian students] going there, imagine having a lot of *hers* in the world, in the whole country. [All laugh] So meaning our country would be somewhere, big ideas would be building. (Lucy, Focus Group with Zambian RCC on April 30, 2021)

In the quote above, Lucy, a nineteen-year-old RCC student from Lusaka, Zambia, speaks about Zambian politician: Dr. Nkandu Phoebe Luo, during a focus group with other students from the RCC in Lusaka. Dr. Luo is a scientist who received her master's degree from Moscow State University in 1977, before attending medical school in Brunei (*Profile of Nkandu Luo*, 2021). Moscow State is considered the Harvard of Russia and the country's most prestigious of institutions, respected throughout Europe. Both a microbiologist and a professor at the University of Zambia, for Lucy, Dr. Luo represents the epitome of Zambian achievement, and evidence of the potential of a Russian education abroad. A success story, yes, but there is also a deeper analysis, here.

Dr. Luo's research background and advocacy work on HIV/AIDS led to her appointment as Minister of Health (1997-1999), followed by an appointment as Minister of Transportation (1999-2001), then Minister of Local Government and Housing (2011-2014), then Minister of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs (2014-2015), Minister of Gender (2015), Minister of Higher Education (2016-2019) and finally her current role as Minister of Fisheries and Livestock (2019-2021) (*Profile of Nkandu Luo*). The constant movement from office to office could be due to her

value to the government, shifting her into various roles that need her expertise. Or, this movement is the result of internal conflicts influenced by external solutions.

In December of 1999 during Dr. Luo's first political role as Minister of Health, a group of nurses and 300 doctors went on strike in protest of extreme work conditions and lack of funding. In response, Dr. Luo fired all 300 doctors and replaced them with doctors flown in from Cuba, who received higher pay and benefits. This led to an exodus of health professionals from Zambia in the early 2000s, many moving to other African countries or the United Kingdom (Makasa, 2008; Mukwita, 1998; Schatz, 2008; *The disaster of Nkandu Luo as minister of health in 1999*, 2021). It was Dr. Luo's transnational social capital developed as a result of her education in the USSR that brokered the recruitment of Cuba doctors that replaced her Zambian colleagues and countrymen.

As discussed in chapter two, Cuba and the Soviet Union worked hand in hand in support of the liberation of colonized nations in both Africa and Latin America. Fidel Castro sent 300,000 troops to engage in the Kremlin's proxy wars of the Cold War (Gleijeses, 2002). In describing the USSR and Cuba's military influence in Angola in the late 1970s, former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda once stated "Africa has fought and driven out the ravenous wolves of colonialism: racism and fascism out the front door, but a plundering tiger, with its deadly cubs, is now coming through the back door" (Small, 1977). In describing Cuba as deadly cubs, the children of plundering tiger the Soviet Union, Kaunda identifies a familial relationship between the two nations, united in military customs and ideological goals. It is no surprise that Luo, who was educated in the USSR at the height of friendship between their three governments, would maintain ties with their allies (and her colleagues and friends from Moscow State University), even at the expense of her own people.

If not for her Soviet education and the social ties she created during graduate school (with fellow doctors from Cuba), Dr. Nkandu Luo would never have reached her career accomplishments, which led to her government appointments, and her ability to wield power over the livelihoods of hundreds of medical professionals. I also offer this vignette as justification for combining both African governments and Russia in my analysis of the Perspectives of the State. In this instance, Dr. Luo's actions in 1999 had no political benefit for Russia, but they did for the Zambian government. Luo's status is an example of the neocolonial intentions that manifest in the development of an elite class of Africans.

In 1968, former CIA director Richard Bissell connected the necessity of developing and manipulating local actors, when he described the steps of covert operations, beginning with finding allies within the country for whom there would be mutual benefits to cooperating with foreign powers (Marchetti et al., 1974). Berman (1974) discusses clientelism, which is the exchange of political favors for goods and services, arguing that as the government was often the largest employer in African countries during the Cold War—the marker of elite or pre-elite status, is civil service and public employment, creating an elite class of senior officials and administrators, and their families and friends (Berman, 1974).

Another topic impacting Zambian students is the tense matter of *who* is awarded scholarships to study abroad in Russia. According to the students from the RCC in Zambia, 80% of their students who apply for scholarships to Russia, receive them. However, there is no requirement to attend an RCC to win a scholarship. In fact, the data points to a trend of funding only the wealthy elite such as the children of Zambian being political leaders. In the previously cited article about late stipends to Zambian and Moroccan students, the unnamed reporter took a jab at Zambian Minister of Agriculture: Given Lubinda. The article reposted a personal

photograph of the politician on a recent trip to Russia to visit his daughter Namatama, who was a current college student in Moscow at that time. The final sentence of the article reads:

Lubinda was last week in Moscow to take food and money to his daughter at one of the universities. We just hope Lubinda's daughter will share with her friends who are starving. ("Zambian and Moroccan Students," 2015)

This pointed statement earned the wrath of Namatama Lubinda herself, who published an op-ed response to the article. Lubinda defends her father stating that he paid for her siblings to study in China and Malaysia, and also offered to also cover the cost for her to study in China. However, she applied to a Russian scholarship without his knowing, as a gesture of respect since he already supports her siblings. She states that she received the scholarship based on her grades, implying that this was not a political maneuver (Lubinda, 2015). However, in this op-ed Lubinda embodies the old saying: "not all skin folk are my kinfolk" when she does not hesitate to deny the experiences of her classmates, even denigrating them in the process. One excerpt reads:

First of all, he is not responsible for the children on scholarship. That's the responsibility of the ministry of education...Secondly, you portrayed a picture that I do not deserve the scholarship that I am on, sponsored by the RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT. Please understand the meaning of the word "scholarship". According to the oxford dictionary...the word "scholarship" means "A grant or payment made to support a student's education, awarded on the basis of academic or other achievement" Do you see the word "poverty" in that? It is awarded on the basis of ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT which you, and many other Zambians don't seem to understand that I worked hard to achieve. I graduated my high school with STRAIGHT DISTINCTIONS and therefore, the bursaries committee saw the need to fairly grant me the scholarship.

Another fiery passage from Lubinda's op-ed states:

Concerning our allowances. My fellow students, please don't accuse the bursaries committee of starving us for 3 months. According to our contracts, we are entitled to \$1000 every 4 months...Be responsible with your money!!! Of course they delay but don't exaggerate everything especially seeing the current situation of our country.

Anyway, because we all haven't been paid and people are starving should not be my problem or my father's problem. Please don't involve is in things that don't concern us.

In the closing of her piece, Lubinda addresses the newspaper directly, stating:

My advice to you is that you provide the country with concrete and helpful information and not petty and private issues which don't concern the country at large. As a public media page, I suppose you are supposed to be a lot more responsible than that and not do "Chinese whisper" because that's not professional. (Lubinda, 2015)

The elitism is apparent in the quotes above, not in the touting of academic achievements, but in the othering of her fellow citizens. It could be that her father is unjustly targeted, as he has a rocky background in politics, and his decision to send all of his children abroad to study rather than at the University of Zambia, is in line with the practices of the upper class in many developing countries. Economic advancement and improved infrastructure are not the only results of an educated populace; the impact of Soviet and Russian higher education engagement also led to the development of an elite class of allies in Zambia.

In Ethiopia

As a postsecondary degree is required for many of these positions, the educated, wield both intellectual and political power, often with transnational influence. Back in 1979, Sklar

identified the power inherent in education, and its linkages to the elite and their subsequent government power, stating:

Ethiopia has a modern ruling class...Nurtured in urban centers and small towns, the core of this class is an educated administrative elite, recruited from the families of landowners, merchants, and officials...Prior to the revolution of 1974 and the subsequent abolition of private property in land, members of this class were closely associated with landlordism...The revolution has now blocked this avenue of enrichment, but the main forces of class formation—modern education and public employment — are likely to sustain the vitality of Ethiopia’s ruling class whatever may become of the practice of landownership (pp. 534-535)(Sklar, 1979).

In this quote Sklar posits that modern education and public employment were the major forces of class formation in Ethiopia. Similarly, Vladimir Lenin stated that with education and electricity, Russia would eventually reach the final stage of development: communism (Lenin, 1920). The concept of an elite class is not only a Western notion, linked to colonialism. In 1902 in an infamous pamphlet, Vladimir Lenin wrote the bones of his ideological vision. In this publication, he sets up the seeds of Leninism, in response to the writings of Marx. Many consider this work to be elitist, as it advocates for a centralized government moderated by a group of professional revolutionaries (Gleberzon, 1978). It is in these writings that Lenin develops his concept of the intellectual, stating that in order to overthrow the aristocratic bourgeoisie, *all* workers must become intellectuals (Lenin, 2012).

One must remember that Nadezhda, Lenin’s wife at this time, (and who’s name translates to “Hope”) was a schoolteacher, and vital in her husband’s efforts to improve and expand education. Immediately after the October Revolution of 1917, Nadezhda became deputy

commissioner of education, and later developed an adult education division. In Lenin's shadow, Nadezhda devoted considerable time and resources to the development of the educated Soviet worker, influencing her husband's political and ideological agenda (Krupskaya, 1940).

The concept of the intellectual within Leninism maintains that the everyday worker, including teachers, administrators, and scientists, should all aspire to be political leaders, stating that power should be placed in the hands of the educated (not those born into a particular bloodline (Lilge, 1968). Kebede (2003) connects the impact of Leninism to the development of the Ethiopian elite, pointing to the Ethiopian college student revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, in opposition to the ancient feudal practices that had characterized the economy for centuries. The brief rule of the Derg (Ethiopian communist party), coupled with the Marxist education Ethiopians received in the USSR advanced this notion that politicians should be educated (Kebede, 2003).

Dignity, Political Camaraderie, and Respect

Another theme that arose from the data were the concepts of dignity, political camaraderie, and respect. Continuing on the topic of Ethiopia, we must consider the cultural connections between the USSR and Abyssinia (the former name of the Ethiopian kingdom and feudal territories). Demassie (2021) articulates four guiding reasons for the longstanding relationship between the regions: (1) an ancient global presence with a multiethnic population, (2) the influence of Marxism, (3) long-term military cooperation, and (4) the influence of the Orthodox Christian church (Demissie, 2021). Both Marxism and Orthodoxy fall into the concept of value homophily, which guides the theoretical framework of this research.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is the largest of the six Oriental Orthodox Churches (which include Armenia, Egypt, Syria, India and Eritrea), and falls within the tradition

of Eastern Christianity, which includes fourteen Eastern Orthodox Churches spread across Russia, Eastern and Southern Europe (Jenkins et al., 2018). Considering the historical geographic coverage of Eastern Christian churches compared to Western Christian churches (which include the Roman Catholic Church and the many protestant off-shoots), there is a clear divide, expanding far beyond religion. Rupprecht (2018) on p. 215 encapsulates the political agendas woven into the East-West dichotomy of Christendom:

Orthodoxy's role in modern global politics in fact went far beyond Cold War espionage. The entangled history of modern Russia and Ethiopia elucidates how Orthodoxy was a source of cross-border identity, legitimized political decision-making, and was a force for mobilizing and controlling populations. This was true even in states that repressed believers and considered expressions of spirituality to be backwards. (Rupprecht, 2018)

In an interview with an Ethiopian newspaper in 2018, Russian ambassador Tkachenko describes the origins of Russian-Ethiopian relations, first starting with religion, and then immediately transitioning into the topic of past military assistance. These two sources of human conflict: religion and war, highlight the complex weaving of culture (soft power) and military (coercive power), impacting the current geopolitical agenda.

Coming back to the origins of our historical friendship, it all began with contacts between our orthodox churches in the middle of the 19th century. They laid the basis on which we started to build our further cooperation. In 1895 the Russian Empire provided the Abyssinian army with 30,000 rifles and 5,000 sabers to oppose the Italian aggression. Russian volunteers fought shoulder to shoulder with Ethiopian brothers in the glorious Battle of Adwa. Moreover, the Russian Red Cross mission arrived in Abyssinia to take care of the sick and wounded. (Tkachenko, 2018)

Demonstrating the shared values between the countries, Tkachenko states:

I don't think there are many examples of such relations that are marked with true friendship and mutual trust throughout centuries. Common orthodox faith was the foundation that brought us closer together. Faithful Russians and Ethiopians celebrate same religious holidays, observe same fasts, and follow same orthodox traditions in family and social life. In fact, we are now intensifying our spiritual ties. Last month there was an exchange of religious delegations to Moscow and Addis Ababa and now we are expecting Patriarch Abune Mathias I to visit Russia for the first time. It will open a new page in the history of relations between the two sisterly churches. (Tkachenko, 2018)

Although many scholars may blame technology and imperialism for globalization, religion has always been the prime driving force behind the melting of borders in favor of a solidified ideological regions of thought. From the early Christian missionaries that laid a path for colonial soldiers, to the military expansion of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, religion not only justifies wars and expansion efforts, but also ties together a cultural and emotional dependence between its followers, and their country's governments. Indeed Marx and Engels stated that "religion is the opium of the masses" when referring to the narcotic, blinding effect of mixing Church and State (Marx & Engels, 1964).

Religion also serves a form of transnational social capital, a prime example being the performance of priestly rites by Ethiopian orthodox priests in the USSR and Russia, and vice versa. The first African students to study in Russia were Ethiopian military cadets, long before the establishment of the Soviet Union. Their religious and therefore cultural proximity made these students the ideal guinea pigs in what would be a long history of educational partnerships. Therefore, membership in an orthodox church is example of both value homophily and

transnational social capital, playing out in the enrollment of Ethiopian students in Russian educational training.

Two Ethiopian alumni of Soviet-era programming discuss sociocultural proximity and positive social engagement in the following two quotes:

You have to understand the Russians they like us because we have a long history. The church, many are Orthodox, and in ancient times they travel to Ethiopia and meet the priests. Not me, I'm born again [evangelical Christian], many years. But the history, the culture, the Russians respect us more than others because of the [Orthodox] church.”

(Yonas, Ethiopian Alumni Interview, April 2, 2021)

When I went to Leningrad, it was called Leningrad back then, it was 1978. It was a training program. We were [athletes] very serious. We learn with them for a couple months. Russian coaches and athletes with Ethiopians. The Russians they were great, they pay for everything, they treat us very well, like Kings! At the hotel, the girls would be in line, down the street, waiting for us, calling for us.

(Abraham, Ethiopia Alumni Interview, March 14, 2021)

In the two quotes above, Ethiopian former professional athletes discuss their participation in short term cultural exchange programs that took place in 1978 in Saint Petersburg. Both highlight the social aspect of their experience in the USSR, using words like “respect” and being treated “like Kings.” Although Abraham inadvertently touches on one of the main sources of sociocultural tension—young Russian women seeking African romantic trysts, triggering the rage and jealousy of their Russian male peers, often ending in violence towards African male students (Law, 2016; Leviyeva, 2005; Martone, 2008; Nash et al., 2016; Weaver, 1985).

In comparing the official social media pages of the various African RCCs, I noticed multiple online advertisements to apply for Russian universities. These ads would tout the scholarships available, and welcoming environment for African students. In some cases, instead of picturing African students engaged in learning, or the architecture of Russian universities—these ads featured photographs of young, blonde, pretty Russian women, depicted holding a diploma or book, while staring into the camera. It seems the romantic motivations of young African men are being marketed to, despite the potential for conflict.

Russian ambassador Sergey Lavrov also emphasized positive social engagement in a 2018 interview with Ethiopian newspaper *The Reporter*, stating:

Russia values the long-established friendly relations with Ethiopia. I am pleased to note that our wide-ranging cooperation is built on the principles of equality, mutual trust and respect. Russia and Ethiopia maintain intensive political dialogue underpinned by the concurrence or considerable closeness of our views on the key problems of our time (Contributor, 2018)

Minister Tkachenko may have received the same talking points that year, as he also stated in an interview:

The victory of the Ethiopian resistance over Italians in 1941 gave the world the first glimmer of hope in the global fight against fascism. We treat Ethiopian veterans with great respect and take part in joint memorial events including annual celebration of the Patriots Victory Day. (Tkachenko, 2018)

Again, we see the word “respect” this time joined by “mutual trust.” As well as Lavrov pointing out the “closeness of our views.” This falls in line with the fact that all three countries selected for this study, as well as the majority of African countries, have conservative political

positions, often at odds with the ideals expressed by Western powers: such as the existence of the LGBTQ+ community, gender equality, and democratic processes of governance.

These political alignments are also steeped in religious worldviews. Russia shares religious and social worldviews with Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia, with Egypt a mainly Muslim country, Ethiopia a mainly Orthodox country, and Zambia a majority Christian country. After orthodoxy, Islam is the most popular religion in Russia, with close to twenty million followers (Husni et al., 2020). Several scholars have written about the long legacy of Islam in the region, and how the Kremlin is utilizing Islam in its geopolitical agenda (Hunter et al., 2004; Husni et al., 2020; Malashenko, 2000). Most famous is the delicate situation in Chechnya where the Russian government shifted positions back and forth from linking Islam to terrorism, to a more supportive role in favor of a politically advantageous Pro-Russian Chechnya (Smirnov, 2006). Laqueur (2009) argues that “Muslim countries are natural allies against the West” (Laqueur, 2009), which at first glance appears a minimizing and divisive statement. However, one must consider the legacy of the USSR and how geography influences politics.

The USSR was made up of fifteen republics, six of which had a majority Muslim population, as well as a large Muslim population living in the Caucuses, and many Tatars located in the Far East. Although the early days of the Soviet Union disavowed religion (leading to violent purges), the government allowed limited religious activities in those six Muslim republics, understanding that they needed to play down Atheist ideology in favor of political and geographic consolidation. Due to this maneuvering, at one point, Muslims enjoyed more religious freedom in the USSR than Orthodox Christians (though that was a short-lived experience). Eventually the USSR relaxed the position on religion, allowing more freedom in

1989, along with other more democratic reforms during the waning days of the empire (Bennigsen, 1985; Islam, 2014; Kemper, 2009).

Textual analysis of a newsletter from the archives of the Institute for African Studies within the Russian Academy of Sciences provided the following quote from Alexey Vasiliev, the Institute's director:

The elections gave representatives of various sectors of the Egyptian society and various ideological convictions an opportunity to express their will and demonstrate their preferences. It turned out that most Egyptians reject both the secular liberal-democratic or left-wing parties that propagate Western values, adapted to some degree, to the specifics of the Egyptian society and its deep religiosity...The voters rejected the former ruling National Democratic Party and its ideology. The majority of Egyptians have tied their hopes for a better future, justice, political freedoms, higher living standards, the accountability of the government and return of dignity and national pride with Islamist parties.” (p. 1, Inafran Archive Newsletter Volume 2, Issue 2, May 2012)

In this quote, Vasiliev is discussing the recent 2011 Arab Spring, which saw the ousting of former President Mubarak. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Mubarak was educated in the USSR, and in the 1980s, early in his presidency, expressed support for rekindling the Nasir era relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union. However, he ended up a darling of the West, closely aligned with the United States for much of his 30-year presidency. So here, in this quote published not long after the deposing of Mubarak, Vasiliev supports this regime change, framing Mubarak as the secular West, with Egyptians campaigning for a religious East.

The analysis of google reviews from the RCC in Egypt lends a complementary perspective, one student writing that the RCC in Cairo is “respectful and cultural” (review posted

on June 22, 2020). Again, we see the word “respect,” a word used in the Russian and Ethiopian data as well. However, earlier the same year, there are 30 reviews posted on the same day, seven of them negative, and three of those reviews posted each using the word “respect” negatively:

Review #1: (translated from Arabic) “Customer service, Department of Languages, the utmost lack of professionalism or respect in dealing.”

Review #2: (translated from Russian) “these are not friends”

Review #3: (translated from Arabic) “To be honest, a way of dealing is not respected by the security guards!! With visitors the reputation of the center greatly hinders!!”

All three reviews hint at cultural clashes within the RCC in Cairo. The third review is personally familiar, as I remember as a Black American, the conflicts I experienced with Russian security guards when I lived in St. Petersburg, the interactions reeked of hostility and xenophobia, much more than my experiences with other Russian people during my time there. What is interesting is that throughout the reviews from the RCC in Cairo, the positive reviews often had to do with the computer science and information technology courses, whereas the department of languages, received the majority of complaints.

One student wrote: “the service has a bad experience and treated like asphalt and the management of the Department of Languages are all rude.” (review posted on November 4, 2019). Considering the fact that language and culture are meant to be the tools of soft power, the professionalism or lack thereof seems to have a detrimental effect. It could be racism, religious prejudice, or xenophobia, whichever the cause, it is leading Egyptian students to seek out the content knowledge of the sciences, rather than ascribing to a shared cultural connect of the Russian language. It is unclear from the reviews, whether Egyptian RCC students plan to transfer to Russian universities.

The concept of value homophily and transnational capital are not always solidified by religious camaraderie. These cultural clashes presented in the Egyptian data can also be found in the archival data about Ethiopia. Prior to the Soviet era, Emperor Menelik II harbored less romantic feelings about the Russians. Rupprecht (2018) states:

He needed modern technology and knowledge to preserve Ethiopian independence, and he liked Russia for other pragmatic reasons: as a source of weapons, because Russia seemed not to partake in the European conquest of Africa, and because Russia was an absolute monarchy. When he decided to send young Ethiopians abroad to study, he therefore thought Russia more suitable than republican France. (Rupprecht, 2018) p. 219

Here, Menelik engages in critical geopolitics, levying support for Russia vs. France, based on whether these respective countries shared opinions on governance and politics. The echoes of this sentiment reads in the legacy of Ethiopian and Russian relations, with Demassie (2021) stating during a recent Wilson Center panel: “Ethiopia’s perception is that it can rely on Russia as an ally ‘when Ethiopia doesn’t get what it wants from the West’”(Demassie, 2021).

The combination of value homophily and transnational social capital encouraged and continue to catalyze the development of an elite class of Africans. However, in the case of the RCC in Egypt, a lack of dignified treatment and respect may hinder the socioemotional connections between African students and their Russian instructors. Ultimately, the impact on Egyptians studying abroad in Russia, cannot be assumed. African students from all three countries engage in critical geopolitics in their strategies both in studying abroad and in their home countries, ultimately choosing their best interests while simultaneously seeking to improve African human capital.

Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter offered a recapitulated description of the higher education development that occurred during the eras of the Soviet Union and the current Russian Federation. Two major themes that arose from the findings of this research: (1) the development of the African Elite, and (2) dignity, political camaraderie, and respect. Value homophily and transnational social capital catalyzed the development of these concepts in Eurasian-African relations, but critical geopolitics ensure a multipolar and often cyclical shifting of power between the State and the Student.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In the course of his long life W.E.B. DuBois travelled to many countries, throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. Two years after his trip to the USSR where he met with Khrushchev and was influential in brokering Pan-African and Russian relations, he also visited China. He had previously visited the country in 1936 and returned in the late 1950s spending eight weeks travelling throughout the country. Young and Green (1972) note that DuBois visited not long after then President Nixon had travelled there and was treated as a foreign dignitary at the same level of luxury and respect as Nixon. Yet, the American media published no mention of DuBois' trip and positive experiences in communist China. It is of note that a Black academic and political activist was as important to China as the sitting U.S. president. (Young & Green, 1972). The FBI most certainly considered his visit a threat, when reviewing the now declassified FBI file on DuBois. In the 66-page FBI file (part five of a series of five files on his life and movements), there are several notes on this trip to China, quoting DuBois' praise of the will, political consciousness, and industriousness of Communist China (FBI, 1959).

In this chapter I offer a discussion of the culmination of both Soviet and Russian higher education development: the new phenomena of Russian Cultural Centers (RCCs). I will also offer conclusions and implications for American, Russian, and African audiences, as well as promising areas for future research. I close this work by looking to the future, and the role China may play in engaging higher education as critical geopolitics.

The Purpose of Russian Cultural Centers in Africa

State Perspectives

Much has been written about the “end of ideology” upon the Russian government’s transition to a capitalist oligarchy (Knight, 2006; Light, 2003; Lipset, 2017; Morris, 1994). In

this way, the purpose the current Russian higher education agenda is devoid of the seeds of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. According to the perspective of the State, the purpose of RCCs in Africa is to gain access to (from Russia's perspective) or gain income from (from African governments' perspective) valuable natural resources. The second purpose of RCCs in Africa is to cultivate political support (in both directions: Russia seeking political support in Africa, and African nations seeking a partner in Russia).

Although the USSR expressed a vision of supporting newly liberated African nations in defiance of their colonial masters, their soft power higher education development hints at neocolonial intentions of their own. For example, natural resource seeking in exchange for training began in the 1930s with extensive geological exploration from specialists who travelled to Angola, Benin, Ethiopia, and Mali, building laboratories and national geological centers and training local technicians. This later led to the construction of power plants and hydroelectric stations in the 1960s, such as the Malka Wakana in Ethiopia, and the Aswan Dam built across the Nile river in Egypt. (Kochetkova, 2009).

The current Russian Federation trades and invests in the energy and mining sectors in Africa, specifically: oil, natural gas, diamonds, gold, aluminum, nickel, and copper in twenty African countries all with recent trade agreements signed as of June 2018 (Russell & Pichon, 2019). On the topic of mining and energy field operations, Hedenskog (2018) highlights some geographic barriers and bilateral solutions:

Such partnerships bring African countries the capital and know-how they need to tap into their energy potential. For their part, Russian energy companies gain an opportunity to expand production at lower cost than in Russia, where many of the country's untapped reserves are difficult to access, being located under deep water or in Arctic

regions.... Despite its own huge mineral resources, Russia has some critical shortage of certain raw materials, including chrome, manganese, mercury, and titanium, and faces depletion of reserves of others, including copper, nickel, tin, and zinc. It also needs coltan and rare earth metals for new technologies. (Hedenskog, 2018)

In a 2008 newsletter from the archives of the Institute for African Studies, Alexey Vasiliev, the director of the Institute of African Studies in Moscow, does not mince words or sugar coat the purpose of Russian engagement in Africa, stating on page 14 of a 2008 newsletter:

The visits of President V. Putin to a number of African countries – Egypt, the Republic of South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya – have demonstrated Russia’s growing interest in Africa. Our country needs some raw materials mined in Africa and its agricultural products and wishes to develop trade relations with the countries of the African continent.

Related to accessing natural resources, is Russia’s ongoing attempts to build military bases on the African continent. During the Cold War, Russia was granted access to naval bases in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Libya, Somalia, and Tunisia. Due to their support of Angolan liberation, Russia maintained military advisors and selected troops at the military base in Luanda for 25 years. In this quest for land access for military endeavors, Russia seems to be operating even in possible conflict with their traditional partner: Ethiopia, cultivating partnerships that encroach on the boiling tensions in the Horn of Africa:

If Russia is looking to strengthen its ability to sustain naval deployments in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and western Indian Ocean, [an alternative to Sudan] could be Eritrea. In September 2018...Eritrean foreign minister Osman Saleh met with Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov in Sochi. The parties signed an agreement which suggests

an emerging commercial-military relationship including the establishment of a logistics center in the Eritrean port of Assab.... Russia has also had contacts with the breakaway region of Somaliland. In exchange for establishing a small multiuse air and naval facility in the Djibouti-bordering town of Zeila, Russia would formally recognize the region's 'independence' from Somalia. (Hedenskog, 2018)

A report published by the Swedish Defense Agency in 2018 states that twenty-one African countries have recent military cooperation agreements with the Russian Federation. These new agreements were signed between the years 2015 and 2018, during the time of western sanctions against Russia; on that list are Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. For each country, the report lists the main purpose of the agreements, which varies according to each country's needs.

For Egypt, an agreement was signed in November 2017 for "deliveries of equipment and weapons for counter-terrorism operations." For Ethiopia, an agreement was signed in April 2018, for "training and cooperation on peace-keeping and counter-terrorism and antipiracy efforts. Deal not yet in force." For Zambia, an agreement was signed in April 2017 for "provisions for the supply of weapons and delivery of spare parts" (Hedenskog, 2018). However, these military agreements are not supported by all citizens of these countries. Tribal leader Edith Nawakwi expressed strong opposition to the sales and trade agreements made between Zambia and Russia, specifically opposing the sale of Russian MI17 military helicopters to the Zambia government. Nawakwi highlights the obvious fallacies present in the isomorphic behaviors of the State, when she challenged President Lungu to explain the purchase:

Those aircrafts are used in places [where] you need to carry 32 armed military personnel who can be dropped here and there. Or in fact those are aircrafts for countries which have money because to run a MI17 you need \$3,000 per hour and what has baffled me is that

this government has gone to Russia and contracted those useless helicopters, five of them for Zambia Police and one wonders where Zambia Police will park them [and] where they will get the pilots since ZAF doesn't even have pilots and the technicians who are qualified enough to run them. (*Nawakwi questions*, 2015)

Nawakwi then gets to the heart of the controversy when she identifies the critical geopolitics at play, stating:

They are bringing them here purportedly for the police under the Russian-Zambian Government debt swap. When I was Minister of Finance, we would use the debt swap to provide for social services for children like the ones we have just met. But because these people are bent on pocketing resources, they go to Russia and collect those aircrafts.

In addition to accessing natural resources and land for military occupation, Russia seeks to cultivate political partnerships with likeminded conservative countries. In a 2018 interview published in an Ethiopian newspaper, Ambassador Vsevolod Tkachenko said:

The success of Russian-Ethiopian political interaction is based on identical or similar positions on major global issues. Our Ethiopian partners consistently support Russian initiatives in the United Nations on the basis of reciprocity. (Tkachenko, 2018)

“Identical” is a strong word to use when comparing the world views of an African country and a Eurasian country. But this serves the purpose of this interview, in which Tkachenko applies a thick layer of propaganda. Notice, here the use again of the word “respect” two times in his statement, as well as mentioning culture and tradition:

Today we are witnessing a desire of certain Western countries to create a unilateral world model according to their own scenarios, disregarding cultural features, traditions, [and] development level of other nations and peoples. In doing so, they often flagrantly violate

fundamental principles and norms of international law, [and] show lack of respect for world community. From the Russian point of view, this approach is unacceptable since it destroys traditional values developed in societies for generations. In countering these dangerous trends, we feel support of many countries including Ethiopia. We all agree that the only possibility of further development is to create and strengthen a genuinely multipolar world based on principles of mutual respect and balance of interests.

Tkachenko highlights (in so many words) the concept of value homophily incentivizing the continued allegiance of Ethiopia in geopolitical affairs.(Tkachenko, 2018). Not only has Russia expressed support for controversial partners in Africa, there has also been a reciprocal effort to protect each other's interests. During the 2014 UN General Assembly Resolution opposing Russia's annexation of Crimea, 25 out of 54 countries in Africa abstained from voting, and two countries opposed the resolution. Later in 2016, Russia withdrew from the Rome Statute which planned to establish an International Criminal Court, citing their support for the Africa countries also withdrawing from the statute (Russell & Pichon, 2019).

For many African countries, Russia's willingness to ignore human rights problems and offer no strings attached political and military support makes it a welcome ally...Russia has used its UN Security Council veto to shield African countries, such as Zimbabwe in 2008, from international human rights-related criticisms. (Russell & Pichon, 2019)

Albert Kofi Owusu, who is the General Manager of the Ghana News Agency, a state-run media source, articulates the impact of value homophily, stating:

With Western aid, there are all these conditions. They say: 'if you want this money, you have to do this about LGBTQ', for example – even if it goes against your country's values. China and Russia say, 'here's the money,' and that's it. (Kulenova, 2019)

In conclusion, the shared conservative political and religious beliefs between Africa and Eurasia trump the historical legacy of socialist ideology.

Student Perspectives

For African alumni of Russian and Soviet universities, RCCs are a place for social engagement and nostalgia. For currently enrolled and potential future RCC students, the purpose of RCCs in Africa is to provide language and cultural training in order to attend college abroad in Russian universities. This training cultivates transnational social capital bolstered by value homophily, in order to develop and improve African human capital.

Interviewing Zambian RCC students, when asked why they decided to attend the RCC, some stated it was because of an advertisement they saw online, others because of a childhood fascination with the Russia they had seen portrayed in films. However, most of the students enrolled in the RCC in Lusaka because they either had a family member or a friend who previously studied abroad in the Soviet Union, or were currently studying abroad in Russia.

During the focus group, Akaso, a nineteen-year-old RCC student from Lusaka stated:

I've got my cousin who is in Russia. He's the one who tells me about Russian culture, and he told me you know, if you'd like to get more opportunities, I advise you to go to the Russian culture center. You apply [for college/a scholarship] and then one day you become someone. (Akaso, Zambian RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, 80% of RCC students who apply to scholarships to Russia, receive them. This indicates the power of transnational social capital—not only did family and friends catalyze these students' interest, they also provided the insider knowledge that led to tangible, fiscal rewards. For Dave, a twenty-year-old Zambian student, the RCC provides an education, professional development, and a social circle. Dave spends 32 hours a week at the

center in Lusaka, attending Russian language class, in addition to participating in various center-hosted clubs, including the Culture Club, Chess, Debate, Poetry, Music, Public Diplomacy, and Sports Club (which includes soccer, tennis, and badminton).

Dave's active engagement in the club led to a supporting role managing the official social media pages for the Lusaka RCC. With an interest in studying information technology followed by a career in entrepreneurship, this role provides him with professional development. Multiple Zambian RCC students expressed a desire to pursue a future career as an entrepreneur, planning to study in the fields of Economics, Agronomy, Nuclear Physics, and Mining Engineering. Tom, an eighteen-year-old RCC student from Lusaka was one of several who broached the subject of brain drain, brain gain, and brain circulation, although he did not use those terms. Tom states:

In Zambia we do not have so much knowledge about nuclear physics because obviously Zambia is a third world country. Another reason why I decided to go to Russia is because here in Zambia, we're not offered the opportunity to study nuclear physics and technologies, but in Russia, it's there. So obviously you gain some knowledge outside and come back here and implement it. (Tom, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

Lucy echoes this sentiment, stating:

It's just for our government to put in their A-game and try to partner up with other people, not only one, there's more ideas. So I think they should also put in more incentive for the children so they can learn more, so that as they come back to the country, they can also be able to teach the others as well.

(Lucy, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

Violet, near the end of the focus group, also touches on this topic, saying:

I would like to contribute something. In the hope that the government is sending their youth to go study abroad, it is up to the youth society to keep it in mind while studying abroad that we have to come back to our countries because sometimes most of us would want to stay back. Maybe the life is just so amazing, maybe you want to stay back, just don't want to go back home. I think the huge role that's big that shouldn't be played with is by us, the youth, trying to remember that we are there for our country, and afterwards we have to come back and not just keep the ideas on that side, but to bring it here.

(Violet, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021).

One of the interview questions that arose after learning of RCC students' familial connections to study abroad in Russia, probed at what expectations the students had for when they eventually studied in Russian universities. Lucy, an eighteen-year-old, articulates the vital necessity of a transnational network, stating:

I think it's going to be a very good experience. And then for me, what I was told is that Russians are busy people, being people who mind their own business. So for us here in Zambia it's when you're moving in the road, you can easily say hi to when you meet. But my friends told me to say, in Russia they are busy they don't really have that time to stop someone and want to say hi to them. So I feel such information is very helpful to us so we know what we are not supposed to do when we get there, and what are supposed to do when we get there. So having people there is actually a good thing for us here, so for us I think when we go there, we will also help the people coming behind us to say this is what you're supposed to do. So it's good for us.

(Lucy, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

Lucy highlights both the benefits she receives from her network abroad, and how she plans to return the favor, to the next generation of students. Lena agrees with Lucy, stating:

My sister is there, and I like the things that people say about Russia, they're such cute people. She say it's quite peaceful and people are quite welcoming, you just have to mind your own business. And you don't really have to be so sensitive because the people haven't seen Black people...when they see you, they'll be like, oh wow a Black person! [everyone laughs] That information is really important.

(Lena, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

Akaso jumps in with why he believes studying abroad will be a good learning experience, unknowingly referencing the benefits of cultural competency, stating:

Going abroad makes one know a lot of things, not just to be limited in one thing, not only that's you, your tribe then different cultures. For example, Russia is not the way you think they really portray themselves, maybe in the industry, whatever they may be. So you try to learn different things, maybe their culture, the way they dress, the way they attempt work...So we tend to learn a lot of things.

(Akaso, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

In a focus group, seven Zambian students were asked why they believed Russia built an RCC in their country, and why their government allowed it. Dave answered:

I think we do have Russian cultural centers in our country because Russia and Zambia go way back. When Zambia gained its independence in 1964, Russia was actually the first country to congratulate Zambia...I think through that, they showed they had great interest in our country, great respect and they really wanted us to be friends and think our bilateral relationship has just always been.

(Dave, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

Again, note the use of the word “respect” a pervasive theme throughout this research inquiry. Lena also states her appreciation for Russia:

And I just want to say education-wise: Russia has been helping us next day. It's one of the countries that had given us the most information, and technology wise. So I like Russia, if a student goes to Russia to gain more knowledge and more experience. And then come back to that Zambia. I think it would be way better.

(Lena, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

Dave, like his peers was not ignorant to the political implications of transnational education agendas, discussing the competition between China and Russia:

I do believe Africa [and] part of Asia is going to be the next future because I feel like at this point these countries are beginning to follow countries. Like well, some from the Western side, some from Europe, just because of the tension that is happening amongst each other... I think the future economies is definitely China because those guys are already way ahead of everyone else. But I think agriculture wise definitely Africa.

When pressed to discuss the impact of China on Africa Dave responded:

Basically they are helping us build institutions, basically our infrastructure they're helping us with it, but I think as Einstein say, "for every action is an equal and opposite reaction." So I guess there's like they're helping us with some stuff, but then there's always negatives to it. (Dave, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

And after the follow up question of would you accept a job from a Chinese employer or a Russian employer, Dave answered that he would prefer a Russian employer due to his knowledge of both the language and the culture. Lena also brings up the topic of China:

Currently we have our economic crisis. Our economy is quite really low. Compare the dollar and our quarter its really bad. So I feel like Russia it could play a role, yeah, for now there is more coordination with Chinese people. And if you come to our country, we have more China things than Russian things. So I feel like I think the one thing that would help us as culture. If we grow more, maybe we increase our economy.

(Lena, Zambia RCC Student Interview, April 30, 2021)

When asked about attending other cultural centers in their country, such as the Italian and French cultural centers, the students expressed little interest, with a laser sharp focus on the educational and employment trajectory promised in enrollment in the RCC. Similarly, these types of institutions, even though housed in foreign countries, often employ the same racist and xenophobic tactics used in their home countries. Dr. Elizabeth Giorgis, an associate professor at Addis Ababa University, describes the disrespect she experienced while curating an exhibit at the German Cultural Center in Ethiopia:

There was, for instance, an episode that really perplexed me. I was accused of manipulating the museum space I directed...A complaint was filed by an artist and curator to the German Embassy and the German cultural institute instead of apprehending my Ethiopian superiors. I was flabbergasted!! Since the museum space was close to the German cultural center, both artist and curator perhaps thought I should be reprimanded by the proximity of whiteness. How can the artist and curator deny the conditions of hierarchy, racial or otherwise? And it was with great pain, a pain that I still deeply feel, that I wrestled this incoherently silenced episode of my return. I complained about this event but no one seemed to understand my moan. (Giorgis, 2020)

Upon online perusal, the German Cultural Center in Ethiopia, called the Addis Ababa Goethe-Institute, has a much larger budget and online presence than the RCC in that city. However, it looks to be affiliated with a local university, the Sedist Kilo Compound of College of Business and Economics, whereas the RCC operates independent of any accredited local institutions. Germany, a prominent representative of Western power, represents here a declining African interest in the West. In the interviews with current Zambian RCC students, when asked if they would consider studying abroad or working abroad in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom, none expressed any interest. Only one of the seven students was even interested in vacationing in the U.S., followed by two who were interested in vacationing in the UK or Canada. Analyzing the archival data on Ethiopia, even the connotation of the words chosen by Ethiopian journalists reflects a shift in perception of the U.S. versus Russia. For example:

In the shadow of the official visit by the United States Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, to the nation, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, made a working visit highlighting a new partnership with Ethiopia. On areas of trade, nuclear development and academic scholarships for Ethiopians, the minister had a busy two-days in meetings with the leadership of Ethiopia. (Getachew, 2018)

From the very first words in the sentence “in the shadow of” we see the way Ethiopia views the United States, or at least, the way the media and general public might view the U.S. Indeed, in interviewing Ethiopian alumni, Zambian RCC students, and an Egyptian potential RCC student, representatives from all three countries noted the current instability of the U.S. and the waning days of Empire. Surely the media representations of the U.S. are a concern for foreign

students, seeing and reading about the combination of civil unrest, state-sanctioned racism, and economic hardship in America.

There are several key takeaways from this research project, the first is that soft power-fueled educational initiatives must function as more than just centers of spreading hegemonic culture. In the case of all three RCCs in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia, African students are seeking the best possible strategy to reach their career goals. The Egyptian RCC students were often unhappy with the interpersonal experiences with Russian staff in the Languages department. But, the value of the information technology/computer science courses offered there, were an incentive to continue enrollment.

For Zambian students, studying the Russian language means access to the best nuclear physics programs in order to bring that knowledge back to Africa—rather than a first step towards permanently immigrating to Russia. The network developed at the Zambian RCC, was invaluable in the scholarship application process, with the RCC providing transnational social capital and insider knowledge on the bureaucracies of higher education admissions for international students. Ethiopian RCCs serve more as a physical touchpoint of nostalgia, with many Ethiopians suspicious of the political agenda of the Russian Federation. Ultimately, in each country, the RCC served various purposes beyond the original mission and intent of those organizations. Meeting the population at their most vital need: whether it be IT training, social engagement, or the development of a transnational network, should the goal of policy and practice in informal higher education.

Areas for Further Study

This dissertation provides an overview of the historical and political context and impact of RCCs in Africa. However this is not an exhaustive inquiry, as there is always room for more

study. Future research could include comparative case studies of all nine RCCs in Africa, rather than focusing on the three countries of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zambia. Another research project could include a comparative case study of Egyptian Russian University and Egyptian Chinese University, examining the competing motivations of major political powers currently engaged in African development.

In addition, there is the opportunity to pursue longitudinal mixed methods study of the experiences of students and their learning outcomes, tracing the experiences and educational outcomes of first year students studying in RCCs, to their subsequent enrollment in degree programs in Russia, to their return to their home countries. Another project could be a qualitative study from the perspective of teachers, instructors, and staff in RCCs, which could be very valuable in understanding the institutional perspectives, beyond my initial lens of State and Student. Also, the theoretical framework designed for the study could be applied to other cultural centers, such as Chinese Confucius Institutes. This topic has the potential to be examined beyond education research, in the fields of political science, international relations, peace studies, Black studies, and sociology.

Conclusions and Implications

“In the 1960s a joke went around Budapest about a man buying tea. When asked: which tea do you want: Russian or Chinese? he replied: I will have coffee instead.” (Maru, 2017)

One of the main goals of American higher education is to prepare adults to participate in democratic citizenship, equipping students with the knowledge, resources, and tools to disseminate information, critique unjust power structures, and encourage the sound sustainability of society. However these values transcend borders with global implications, as Keller found that education has a marked impact on political interest and support for government in Kenyan

students (Keller, 1980). Similarly, Zhang and Fagan (2016) highlight how educated young people in China are more likely to express civic expression and political intention than their non-educated peers (Zhang & Fagan, 2016).

There is extensive literature on Chinese Confucius Institutes with speculation that these schools apply ideological pressure to their foreign students. As discussed in this chapter, there is also extensive literature on Soviet education programs in Africa, but after the 1991 collapse, the Global North is no longer interested in the intrigue of the Cold War. Viewing higher education through the lens of critical geopolitics yields an understanding that the dominant idea that those from the Global South seek to immigrate to the U.S. (or the U.K.) is waning. Gone are the days of superpowers, East-West and North-South dichotomies. The future of international education is that of a multipolar world, with both Student and State engaging in strategic maneuvering to benefit their own agendas. This work highlights the historical context of the present higher development agenda wielded by the Russian Federation in Africa. In examining this area of study, the significance of Russia's geopolitical maneuvering points to a future of Chinese engagement.

When Chinese Vice Premier Xiao Deng addressed the United Nations General Assembly in 1974, he revealed Mao Zedong's now famous Three Worlds Theory, categorizing the U.S. and the USSR as the First World; Japan, Canada, Europe and Australia as the Second World; and Africa, continental Asia, and Latin America as the Third World (Yee, 1983). This theory is an application of critical geopolitics, moving beyond Alfred Sauvy's (1952) Three-World Model which categorizes the U.S. and its allies as the First, the USSR and China as the Second, and Africa, Latin America, and all of the countries in the Non-Aligned Movement of the Cold War as the Third World (Sauvy, 1952). This reframing: that of China sharing the third world with

Africa, was the catalyst for the current, voracious economic and political agenda between the two regions (Gillespie, 2004). The establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 1996 brokered official trade partnerships and relations between China and 53 African countries and the Commission of the African Union, and solidified the following decades of influence (Kelly, 2017).

Much has been written on the neocolonial practices of predatory lending, exploitation of natural resources, and monopoly over industries wielded by China in Africa (Alden, 2005; Antwi-Boateng, 2017; Kelly, 2017; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011; Mathews, 2021; Sartre, 2005). However this is not necessarily a deterrent for African students weighing the options for their futures. One might consider the old adage “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” in this situation. Considering China’s recent decision to increase the number of scholarships to Africa students (Ferdjani, 2012; Haugen, 2013; Monitor, 2021) as well as the Zambian RCC students interviewed in this study and their interest in China and Russia over the West—this dissertation has implications for both policy and practice by the United States government. In the past, the United States had the largest diplomatic presence in the world, but as of 2019, has been superseded by China. China has 276 embassies, consulates and diplomatic offices around the world, closely followed by the United States, France, Japan and Russia (*China now has more diplomatic posts than any other country*, 2019). However, there are many Africans who are leery of the neocolonial behaviors China exhibits. For example:

Chimuka Singuwa, a 23-year-old Zambian who is working towards a master's degree in international relations and diplomacy at RUDN, said he had the opportunity to study in Russia or China. He chose Moscow on the advice of his grandfather, who was a student at RUDN in the 1970s. Singuwa said he had no regrets about passing up on a Chinese

education. "I'm kind of against the 'takeover' of Africa by the Chinese," he said, pointing to the debt Zambia has accumulated with China, its main investor.

(As Kremlin Scrambles for Africa, 2019)

The Russian Federation and the prior Soviet Union engaged in educational development in Africa throughout the twentieth century, including scholarship programs for African students to attend Russian universities, short-term cultural exchange programs, and technical training in-country, to teach mechanics, pilots, and engineers to replace the colonists who left after liberation. These programs were cultivated due to multiple motivations—some political, some ideological, and some ethical. While the literature provides a survey of all of the Soviet programming, this is marked gap on the topic of new institutions, post 1991. As goals changed from one regime to the next, so did educational practices.

Indeed, informal higher education institutions like Russian Cultural Centers are an example of a fifty-year trend of prioritizing the educational development of the non-university sector in Africa, rather than bolstering formal higher education (Omwami, 2013). Although it is difficult to impact the vast neoliberal pressures weighing on higher education, there is room to assess U.S. policy and practice as a result of this research inquiry. Keller (2012) describes U.S. foreign policy in Africa as one of “selective engagement” with the U.S. only intervening or engaging when their geopolitical interests are at stake (Keller, 2012). If the United States is to thrive sustainably in the coming decades, simultaneously with Russia and China, we must aim beyond narrow self-serving interests, beyond battling superpowers to consider the multipolar world of this millennium.

APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT TEXT

Facebook Recruitment Message for Students attending Russian Cultural Centers:

Hello, I am a student in the United States, studying education at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am conducting a research study for my thesis and would like to interview you about your experience with the Russian Cultural Center in your city. The interview will take place on Facebook messenger video or on Zoom video (your choice), for one hour, on any day or time that fits your schedule. Let me know if you have any time available this week, or next week for the interview.

Thank you!
Hope McCoy
PhD Candidate, UCLA

Recruitment Email for African Alumni of Russian Educational Programs:

Hello, I am a PhD candidate in the United States, studying education at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am conducting a research study for my thesis about Soviet and Russian educational programs attended by African students and would like to interview you about your experience. The interview will take place on Facebook messenger video or on Zoom video (your choice), for one hour, on any day or time that fits your schedule. Let me know if you have any time available this week, or next week for the interview.

Thank you!
Hope McCoy
PhD Candidate, UCLA

Recruitment Email for Russian Educators & Policy Actors:

Hello, I am a PhD candidate studying education at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation about Soviet and Russian educational programs designed for African students and would like to interview you about your knowledge of this subject. The interview will take place on Zoom video, for one hour, on any day or time that fits your schedule. Let me know if you have any time available this week, or next week for the interview.

Thank you!
Hope McCoy, MA
PhD Candidate, UCLA

APPENDIX B. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol for Interviews with Russian Educators & Policy Actors

1. How many years have you worked in education and cultural programming?
2. Please describe your involvement in education in Africa.
3. What is the budget for each Russian Cultural Center? Does that amount differ by country? Why?
4. Who determined the curriculum for each Russian Cultural Center?
5. What are the types of courses, length of the courses, costs?
6. Can courses taken at RCCs (for example in computer science) be accredited to Russian universities, if the student matriculates?
7. How are teachers recruited and hired to work in Russian Cultural Centers?
8. What educational background do the teachers possess?
9. What were the challenges in starting and maintaining Russian Cultural Centers? In Africa?
10. How do you measure and evaluate program success?
11. What are your department's future plans for RCCs in Africa?
12. Do any of the RCCs have university affiliations (like Confucius institutes)?
13. If not, why haven't RCCs partnered with local colleges and universities?

Interview Protocol for Interviews with RCC Students

1. What city, town, or village did you grow up in?
2. Where did you attend primary school? Secondary school?
3. Have you attended any colleges and universities?
4. Why did you decide to attend the Russian Cultural Center?
5. Did you have to take a test to apply for admission?
6. What classes have you taken? How long were the courses, what days do they meet? How much did the classes cost?
7. Which is your favorite class, and why?
8. Have you attended any fun, social, or artistic events at the Center (not classes)?
9. What is the social experience on campus? Do you get along with your teachers? Classmates? Campus staff and security?
10. Have you attended any other cultural centers (China? France)? Why or Why not?
11. What goals do you have for after completing courses at RCCs?
12. Why do you believe Russia built this center in your country?

Follow Up Questions Emailed to RCC Students

1. How many students attend the Russian Cultural Center in Lusaka?
2. In the interview you mentioned that new classes open up every 2 months. About how many new students usually join each time?
3. What percentage of students are men vs. women? 50-50? 60-40?
4. Is there anything at the center you have to pay for (classes, clubs, meals)?
5. How much do things cost? Are they expensive, moderate, or inexpensive?

6. How do people at the Center communicate with each other? Do the teachers send emails, or is there a website that you log into with a message board, etc?
7. Is there a RCC newsletter?
8. In the interview, you mentioned the different clubs at the Center. Students mentioned Culture Club, Debate, Poetry, Music, Social Media, Diplomacy, and Sports. Are there any other clubs that were not mentioned?
9. When are Zambian university applications due? Did you apply to both Russian and Zambian universities?
10. Which Zambian universities did you apply to? And why?
11. Did you apply to any African universities outside of Zambia? Which ones and why?
12. Every year students from the Center apply to Russian universities, how many are admitted and go abroad?
13. Do some Zambians go to Russian universities without attending the Center first? For example, maybe they studied the language online, and then applied, instead of taking language class?
14. How many hours per week are the language classes? For example: are classes held on Monday and Wednesday for 3 hours? Or 3 days per week for 6 hours? Or does each student decide how much class they want to attend?
15. How are classes divided up? Levels 1, 2, 3? Do many students drop out at first?
16. Do you have any contact with other Russian Cultural Centers in Africa? Maybe on social media you might chat with the Center in Ethiopia, Tanzania, or Egypt? How do you support one other?

Interview Protocol for Interviews with African Alumni of Soviet Era Programs

1. (Ask the same first 3 questions as RCC students)
2. Which Soviet program did you attend? When? How long did it last? In which city?
3. Why did you decide to attend a Soviet program? What were your goals?
4. Did you participate in any other countries' education or cultural exchange programs?
5. What types of courses or activities occurred in your program?
6. What was the social experience on campus? Do you get along with your teachers? Classmates? Campus staff and security?
7. What happened when your program ended? Were you satisfied with your experience?
8. Do you believe this experience helped you with your career?

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM & INFORMATION SHEET

Oral Consent Script Delivered via Zoom Videoconferencing Software

Thank you for participating in this research study. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Refusing or discontinuing participation involves no penalty. The purpose of the research interview is understanding your experience with Russian educational programming.

If you agree to participate we will ask you to answer questions about your experiences in schools, vocational education, and universities. We will also ask you about your experiences with Russian educational programming. We will record your interview, but destroy the recording after transcribing the interview, and assigning a pseudonym for your privacy. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout this process. If you have any questions, please email the researcher:

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the UCLA Human Research Protection Program.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Soft Power & Education: Russian Cultural Centers on the African Continent

INTRODUCTION

Hope McCoy, MA and advanced to candidacy for the PhD in Education, under the supervision of Walter Allen, PhD from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles are conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your knowledge and experience with Russian educational programming. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

This is dissertation research being conducted as partial fulfillment of the PhD in Education program at UCLA. This research examines the history of Soviet education

programs that impacted African students as well as present day Russian Cultural Centers in Africa. The purpose is to understand the context and purpose of these institutions, and to examine how African students make meaning of their education experiences.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

Participation will take a total of about one hour, via online Zoom audio or Zoom videoconferencing, or via Facebook messenger video services.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- *Log onto Facebook messenger or, click the Zoom link to participate in an interview.*
- *The interview questions will focus on educational experiences, choices, and opinions.*

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?

- *There is minimal risk to the participants. The only risk is possible emotional discomfort when discussing personal educational and social experiences.*

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this research study.

The results of the research may potentially benefit social science research, public policy, and international relations.

What other choices do I have if I choose not to participate?

Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

Use of personal information that can identify you:

No names or [subject identifiers will be linked to the research data. You will be referred to by a pseudonym, with the date of the interview as the only identifiable information.

How information about you will be stored:

Interviews will be recorded with your permission, and transcribed. After transcription, interview recordings will be permanently destroyed.

People and agencies that will have access to your information:

The researcher and their faculty advisor may have access to study data and records to monitor the study. Research records provided to authorized, non-UCLA personnel will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Employees of the University may have access to identifiable information as part of routine processing of your information, such as lab work or processing payment. However, University employees are bound by strict rules of confidentiality.

How long information from the study will be kept:

Research data will be kept for one year.

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Your data including de-identified data may be kept for use in future research.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the researcher. Please contact: Hope McCoy via email: hope.mccoy@gmail.com

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone, by email, or by mail.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

APPENDIX D. CITED ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

Wilson Center Digital Archives Documents:

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Inafran Archive Newsletter Volume 2, Issue 2, May 2012. Editorial Board: Dmitri Bondarenko, Galina Sidorova. https://www.inafran.ru/en/sites/default/files/page_file/nl_02_2012en.pdf

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