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ARTICLE

Human Development in Post-Conflict Situation: Projects and Institutions of the USA After World War II

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ABSTRACT
The project-based activities of U.S. educational, cultural, and research institutions played a crucial role in shaping international knowledge infrastructure during the latter half of the twentieth century. After the end of World War II and during the ensuing Cold War, these projects became instruments for creating networks, norms, and institutional structures that underpinned global human development. Drawing on Petar Bojanić's theory of institutions, this article examines the institutional logic of U.S. international projects, emphasizing their dynamics and the production of enduring social spaces. Through a critical analysis of historical scholarship and available statistical data, the study highlights the mechanisms of institutional stabilization, including the formation of actors and regulatory frameworks. The findings demonstrate that U.S. organizations such as IIE, USIA, AMIDEAST, and USAID not only executed programs but also actively constructed the scaffolding for global knowledge networks, influencing international mobility, cultural exchange, and the circulation of human capital. This research contributes to scholarship on international education and institutional formation, offering insights into the long-term infrastructural impact of human development projects.

KEYWORDS
human development, international education, educational infrastructure, US history of education, post-conflict situation, institutions

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Introduction

In post-conflict situations, the rebuilding of social and institutional order is never limited to physical reconstruction or formal political stabilization. It also involves less visible but equally decisive processes through which capacities, skills, and forms of expertise are reorganized and redistributed. Educational and cultural projects occupy a central place in this domain, as they contribute to the production of what is often called human development. The notion refers not simply to an economic resource, but to a broader field of institutional formation, where new forms of agency, knowledge, and transnational connection are shaped. To study these projects is therefore to examine how post-conflict environments are reconfigured through the construction of infrastructures of learning, mobility, and recognition.

In the second half of the twentieth century, U.S. educational and cultural projects developed at the intersection of postwar reconstruction, cultural diplomacy, and institutional engineering. Initially designed in the aftermath of World War II and later intensified during the Cold War, these programs functioned as instruments for stabilizing political orders and fostering long-term social and intellectual alignment. Over time, they evolved into transnational systems that structured global flows of knowledge, expertise, and professional mobility (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2010).

During the Cold War, initiatives such as Fulbright, cultural programs of the United States Information Agency (USIA), and related exchange mechanisms were oriented toward rebuilding intellectual infrastructures in Europe and beyond, while simultaneously promoting pro-American orientations and English language acquisition. They contributed to the formation of transnational networks of scholars, administrators, and professionals integrated into U.S.-led systems of knowledge production (Cull, 2008; McDonald, 1986). These programs relied on standardized procedures and selective recruitment mechanisms designed to ensure both ideological coherence and institutional stability.

In the post-Cold War period, their objectives shifted from ideological competition toward globalization, economic competitiveness, and technological leadership. This shift led to the expansion of international student mobility, the diversification of institutional actors, and the increasing involvement of private and non-governmental organizations in educational governance (Bevis, 2019; Daniels & Krige, 2022). Educational projects increasingly operated according to logics of scalability, standardization, and performance evaluation associated with broader neoliberal forms of governance (Harvey, 2005).

From an analytical perspective, these developments can be understood through an institutional approach that treats educational and cultural projects not merely as policy instruments, but as processes of institutional formation. Such processes generate stable infrastructures of cooperation, codified procedures, and durable relations that extend beyond individual programs or political contexts (Solovey & Cravens, 2012).

In this regard, the concept of the institution developed by Petar Bojanić (2022) is particularly useful. He emphasizes the artificial and necessarily incomplete character of institutional order, defining institutional formation as in-statuere: a continuous process of establishing and maintaining institutions through the incorporation

of new participants, the production of norms, and the formalization of rules and procedures (Bojanić, 2022). Within this framework, educational and cultural projects can be understood as mechanisms through which institutional order is continuously reproduced and expanded across transnational space.

Although recent scholarship has examined various dimensions of international educational exchange, such as cultural diplomacy, soft power, student mobility, and the governance of knowledge flows (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2010; Daniels & Krige, 2022; Saunders, 2000), less attention has been paid to how the accumulation of such initiatives produces broader institutional configurations. The question of how educational projects generate and stabilize large-scale infrastructures of human development remains insufficiently explored.

This study examines U.S. international educational and cultural projects in the second half of the twentieth century, focusing on their role in the formation and reproduction of institutional structures related to human development. It analyzes key organizations involved in educational and cultural exchange, including universities, foundations, exchange programs, and governmental agencies such as the Institute of International Education[1] (IIE), United States Information Agency (USIA), and America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST).

The study's main contribution lies in shifting attention from individual programs to the broader institutional infrastructures that emerge from their accumulation. This perspective allows educational and cultural projects to be conceptualized as components of a global system for the production and circulation of human capital and development, rather than as isolated policy tools (Bevis, 2019; Solovey & Cravens, 2012; Zubok, 2007). This approach underscores the importance of culture in the analysis of post-conflict transformation. A growing interdisciplinary literature in peace and security studies, conflict resolution, international relations, and cultural studies conceptualizes post-conflict situations as broader processes of symbolic and social reorganization. From this perspective, educational and cultural initiatives function not only as instruments of recovery, but also as mechanisms through which meanings, identities, and forms of human capital and development are reproduced and circulated within larger institutional and transnational frameworks. The concept of post-conflict situation therefore directs attention to the disruption and attempted reconstruction of symbolic systems of cultural reproduction. As Demaria (2020) argues, conflicts reveal how identities and collective memories are continuously constructed, deconstructed, recognized, misrecognized, and mobilized both to define the present and to project possible futures (pp. 11–12). Crucially, this approach conceptualizes the post-conflict condition not as a clearly bounded transitional phase, but as a temporally indeterminate process in which the reconstruction and reinterpretation of "what happened" remain continuously contested and reshaped by changing political, social, and cultural contexts (Demaria, 2020, p. 15).

The article is structured as follows. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework, focusing on Petar Bojanić's concept of *in-statuere*. It then provides an overview

[1] Institute of International Education is recognized as an organization whose activities are undesirable in the Russian Federation. Институт международного образования является организацией, деятельность которой признана нежелательной на территории Российской Федерации.

of the institutional architecture of U.S. educational and cultural projects (1945–2001). The subsequent section examines key stages in the development of U.S. educational infrastructure, including the postwar reconstruction period, Cold War institutional formation, and the post–Cold War period. Finally, the article synthesizes the findings, highlighting both continuity and transformation in the institutional architecture of human capital development.

Theoretical Framework

In post-conflict contexts, institutions are typically understood as mechanisms for reorganizing legitimacy and stability of institutions. However, rather than treating them as fixed structures established after conflict, this study reconceptualizes institutions as ongoing, processual formations, drawing on the institutional theory of Petar Bojanić (Bojanić, 2022; Solovey & Cravens, 2012). Bojanić conceives institutions as processes of *in-statuere*: continuous acts of establishment, maintenance, and renewal through which institutional order is produced and reproduced over time. From this perspective, "institution-building" in post-conflict settings is not a finite task but an iterative process in which institutional arrangements must be repeatedly enacted, negotiated, and stabilized.

Within this framework, institutions are understood as fundamentally human artifacts. They are not natural formations but constructed arrangements that depend on the organization of social space, the production of shared scenes of action, and the stabilization of practices over time. Their emergence presupposes not only organization but also durability ("standing continuously"), as institutions must secure continuity across actors, generations, and contexts (Bojanić, 2022). In post-conflict environments, this underscores the fragility of institutional order: institutions require ongoing recognition and participation to sustain their legitimacy. The restoration of trust, often central to post-conflict transformation, is therefore inseparable from the continuous performance of institutional roles and practices.

A central feature of this approach is the understanding of institutions as mechanisms of collective action and reproduction. Institutions enable cooperation, stabilize coordinated activity, and provide frameworks for the transmission of roles, norms, and responsibilities. At the same time, they constrain individual action by organizing and channeling behavior, making collective coordination possible while limiting autonomy (Bojanić, 2022; Saunders, 2000). Institutional formation thus entails both enabling and coercive dimensions, a tension that is particularly pronounced in post-conflict situations, where processes of inclusion, regulation, and control must be continuously balanced.

Equally important is the open and expansive character of institutionalization. Institutions are not closed systems but depend on the continuous incorporation of new participants and on mechanisms that account for absent and future actors. This orientation toward expansion and reproduction gives institutional processes a transnational and, more broadly, universal dimension (Bojanić, 2022). In post-conflict societies, this temporal horizon is especially significant, as institutional arrangements must secure not only immediate stabilization but also long-term development.

Another key dimension of this framework is the documentary foundation of institutional order. Institutions emerge and stabilize through forms of inscription, such

as charters, statutes, programs, and administrative records, which do not merely describe institutional arrangements but actively constitute them (Bojanić, 2022; Glander, 2000). Institutional language and documentation are therefore not secondary but foundational to institutional existence and continuity. In post-conflict contexts, such documents provide shared reference points that structure coordination and enable the persistence of institutional order over time.

Institutionalization also presupposes processes of collective learning and disciplinary coordination. An institution exists only insofar as it produces and maintains actors capable of sustaining it. Its reproduction depends on continuous processes of training, adaptation, and integration, through which institutional roles and practices are transmitted and renewed (Bojanić, 2022; Solovey & Cravens, 2012). This dimension is particularly visible in post-conflict situations, where the building of administrative, professional, and civic capacities becomes a central condition of institutional continuity.

Within this framework, educational and cultural project activity, including universities, foundations, exchange programs, and governmental agencies, can be understood as a specific modality of institutional formation. In post-conflict situations, these actors play a crucial role in institutional continuity by structuring spaces of cooperation, building transnational networks, and producing the actors required for long-term development. Rather than merely implementing predefined policies, such organizations actively produce institutional environments through the formalization of practices, the circulation of knowledge, and the incorporation of new participants. Their projects function as acts of *in-statuere*, through which relations are organized and institutional order is extended and stabilized across contexts (Bevis, 2019; Bojanić, 2022; Cull, 2008). The analysis that follows examines how such projects were engendered by various US actors and progressively established, expanded, and transformed across distinct institutional phases in the second half of the twentieth century.

Taken together, this framework reframes institutions in post-conflict situations not as static solutions to post-violence instability but as processual formations. Peace, stability, and human development depend less on the mere presence of institutional structures than on the continuous processes through which institutional order is enacted, reproduced, and transformed over time.

In this context, the notion of human development can be understood as a specific outcome of institutional processes. Rather than treating human development as an individual attribute or purely economic resource of human capital, it can be understood as an effect of institutionalized practices of formation, coordination, and reproduction within educational and cultural systems (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). These institutions do not merely transmit skills, but actively produce the capacities through which populations become economically and socially governable. In this sense, human capital formation can be read as a biopolitical process, insofar as education and culture operate as technologies for the administration and optimization of life (Foucault, 2009). In post-conflict settings, these in-statuere processes acquire a reconstructive function, as institutional infrastructures become key mechanisms for building administrative and professional capacities.

Institutional Architecture of U.S. Educational and Cultural Projects (1945–2001): Overview

The institutional landscape of U.S. international educational and cultural engagement developed gradually through a layered configuration of governmental agencies, semi-public organizations, private contractors, and transnational development institutions. It did not emerge as a single coordinated system but rather took shape as an evolving infrastructure in which different actors assumed complementary roles in the production, regulation, and circulation of educational mobility and expertise (Table 1).

Table 1

Evolution of U.S. Educational, Development, and Cultural Institutions (1945–post-1985)

Agency/ Institution	Role and Mandate (1945–1985)	Role and Mandate Post-1985
USAID (United States Agency for International Development)	Established in 1961 as the main U.S. development agency during the Cold War, USAID focused on reconstruction, modernization, and containing Soviet influence through economic and technical assistance in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Implementation was largely internal, with limited subcontracting, though outsourcing began to expand in the late Cold War period	USAID evolved into the central agency for foreign assistance, with a growing focus on governance reform, market integration, and security-linked stabilization, including post-conflict reconstruction. Its operations became increasingly outsourced to private contractors and NGOs, while the agency itself downsized significantly, reflecting broader shifts toward privatization and "reinventing government"
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)	The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), within the U.S. Department of State, was formally established in 1961, building on earlier post–World War II cultural and educational exchange units. It became the central institution for U.S. public diplomacy during the Cold War, managing major exchange programs such as Fulbright and the International Visitor Program. Its activities were designed to support people-to-people engagement and promote U.S. interests in the context of ideological competition with the Soviet Union, functioning as a key instrument of soft power	Following the end of the Cold War, the ECA expanded its global exchange programs, particularly in post-socialist countries. In the early 1990s, it launched new initiatives such as the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program (1992), providing high school students from the former Soviet Union with academic exchange opportunities in the United States. The bureau continued to serve as the main U.S. government institution for educational and cultural diplomacy, with an expanded global scope and sustained emphasis on long-term exchange and leadership development
Fulbright Program	Established in 1946, the Fulbright Program became a flagship Cold War exchange initiative promoting mutual understanding and building pro-U.S. academic networks. It played a central role in developing international education and academic mobility, facilitating large-scale exchanges of students and scholars and serving as a key instrument of U.S. soft power. It also helped institutionalize study abroad, contributing to the creation of NAFSA in 1948 and campus-based advising systems. It remained the world's largest academic exchange program until 1987, when the European Union launched Erasmus	The Fulbright Program continued as a major global exchange infrastructure, increasingly integrated into internationalization and human capital strategies. Although some officials questioned the relevance of public diplomacy after the Cold War, the program expanded significantly, particularly into post-socialist countries, beginning with Poland (1990), followed by Hungary (1990), the Czech Republic (1991), Bulgaria and Romania (1992), and Slovakia (1994). Following the launch of Erasmus in 1987, it operated in a more competitive, multilateral environment while maintaining its role in U.S. public diplomacy

Table 1 Continued

Agency/ Institution	Role and Mandate (1945–1985)	Role and Mandate Post-1985
USIA (United States Information Agency)	Established in 1953, the United States Information Agency (USIA) served as the central institution for U.S. public diplomacy during the Cold War. It coordinated international broadcasting and information campaigns aimed at shaping foreign perceptions of the United States, promoting democratic values, and countering Soviet influence. Its broadcasting system included the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty, which operated under USIA supervision and were central to ideological competition with the Soviet bloc. With a global presence in more than 100 countries, USIA functioned as a key instrument of U.S. cultural and informational outreach	USIA's mission shifted in the post–Cold War period from ideological confrontation to broader public diplomacy and international engagement. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strategic role of its broadcasting system declined, alongside reduced ideological confrontation. In the 1990s, USIA increasingly emphasized global communication strategies, educational and cultural exchanges, and targeted information programs, including speakers' programs, information resource centers, and foreign press services, as well as economic diplomacy initiatives such as NAFTA-related outreach. In 1999, USIA was dissolved and its functions were integrated into the U.S. Department of State
IIE (Institute of International Education)[2]	Founded in 1919, the Institute of International Education (IIE) developed as a major intermediary for international academic exchange and cultural diplomacy. After World War II, it supported reconstruction-oriented exchanges, assisted displaced scholars, and helped establish organizations such as NAFSA and CIEE. During the Cold War, it played a central role in administering scholarship programs, including the Fulbright Program, and coordinating exchanges between universities and governments as part of broader U.S. international engagement strategies. It also contributed to refugee scholar support initiatives and expanded its global reach through offices in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America	IIE evolved into a global infrastructure organization for international education, focusing on data collection, analysis, and program administration. It became known for its "Open Doors" report, tracking international student mobility and informing policy and institutional planning. The organization expanded its role in managing fellowship and exchange programs, including initiatives for mid-career professionals such as the Humphrey Fellowship. It also developed scholar protection and rescue programs, while continuing to support global academic mobility and higher education partnerships
America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST)	Founded in 1951, AMIDEAST provided educational services in the Middle East, including English-language training, scholarship administration, and academic advising. In the 1970s, increased regional demand for U.S. education led to the expansion of advising and standardized testing services. Growth in education and training investments during the oil boom further increased demand for workforce development programs	AMIDEAST expanded its role as a regional provider of educational services for programs supported by USAID and the U.S. State Department, with a focus on testing, advising, and capacity-building. Its technical assistance activities diversified, and demand for short-term training and professional development programs increased in the 1990s. The organization also expanded public outreach and informational activities in the United States

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Table 1 Continued

Agency/ Institution	Role and Mandate (1945–1985)	Role and Mandate Post-1985
NAFSA (Association of International Educators)	Founded in 1948 as the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, NAFSA supported the professional development of U.S. higher education staff working with international students in the early Cold War period. Its membership expanded to include admissions officers, language specialists, and other practitioners, reflecting the growing institutionalization of international education. In 1964, it was renamed the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs	NAFSA developed into a key professional organization in international education, contributing to the standardization of practices and regulatory compliance in global student mobility. In the 1980s, it played an active role in shaping Immigration and Naturalization Service reforms, particularly in areas related to student visa regulation, reporting requirements, and institutional compliance. It also developed professional standards and a code of ethics for international educators. In the 1990s and 2000s, NAFSA expanded its role in policy advocacy and professional training through initiatives such as the NAFSA Academy for International Education and institutional recognition programs
American Council on Education (ACE)	The American Council on Education (ACE), founded in 1918, played a central coordinating role in U.S. higher education policy and international engagement. It supported the establishment of major initiatives such as the Fulbright Program (1946) and contributed to the creation of UNESCO. Domestically, it worked on issues of educational equity, including women's participation in higher education, desegregation, urban education, and federal student aid policy, notably contributing to the Higher Education Act of 1965	With the end of the Cold War, ACE increasingly focused on internationalization and global competitiveness in U.S. higher education. It raised concerns about declining foreign language learning and study abroad participation and produced national reports on international education capacity. In 1992, ACE, together with partner associations, entered into a cooperative agreement with USAID and the U.S. State Department to support higher education development partnerships. These initiatives linked U.S. universities with institutions in developing countries to promote collaborative research, training, and capacity-building. ACE also became a key advocate for campus internationalization and global engagement

Note. Source: Compiled by the author based on data from Brooks, 2015; Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.; Deuel, 2022; Diem, 2021; Johnson, 2019; Latypova, 2017; Nilsson, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Toner, 2023; Zook, 1950; websites of NAFSA (nafsa.org), American Council on Education (https://www.acenet.edu/Pages/default.aspx), AMIDEAST (https://www.amideast.org), IIE (https://iie.org).

Its earliest and most stable core was formed in the immediate postwar period with institutions such as the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the American Council on Education (ACE), both of which were founded earlier in the twentieth century but significantly expanded their international scope after 1945. These organizations became central intermediaries in managing student exchange, academic mobility, and university partnerships, gradually developing the statistical, administrative, and logistical frameworks that would later underpin global educational governance.

From the late 1940s onward, the U.S. federal state expanded its direct involvement through the Fulbright Program (1946) and, later, the establishment

of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1953. These institutions formalized cultural diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy, combining educational exchange with ideological, linguistic, and cultural outreach. Alongside them, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), founded in 1961, emerged as the principal agency for international development assistance, increasingly linking education to broader goals of economic modernization and institutional reconstruction.

By the 1970s and 1980s, this system had become more complex and decentralized. Agencies such as the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) within the U.S. State Department consolidated exchange programs, while USIA expanded its global cultural infrastructure. During the same period, AMIDEAST (established in 1951 but significantly expanded after the 1970s) became a key regional implementing organization in the Middle East and North Africa, providing testing, training, and scholarship services that linked local educational systems to U.S. institutional frameworks.

Parallel to these governmental and quasi-governmental structures, there developed a dense ecosystem of private contractors and non-governmental organizations. Firms such as DAI[3], Chemonics[4], and VITA[5] became central implementing agents of U.S. development policy, particularly from the late Cold War period onward, translating federal funding into operational programs in education, governance, and institutional reform.

Finally, the World Bank[6], while not a U.S. agency, became an increasingly important actor in the global educational infrastructure from the 1990s onward. Its involvement in post-conflict reconstruction and human development aligned closely with U.S.-led institutional frameworks, particularly in contexts where education was integrated into broader strategies of stabilization, governance reform, and economic recovery.

Taken together, these institutions form a historically layered and functionally differentiated system of educational governance. Their development can be traced across four overlapping phases, which I am going to consider in more detail below: the early postwar consolidation of exchange infrastructure (1945–1960), the expansion and politicization of educational diplomacy during the late Cold War (1970s–1980s), the post–Cold War globalization of mobility and development regimes (1990s–2001), and the gradual integration of educational policy into broader frameworks of human capital formation and post-conflict human development.

[3] DAI was founded in 1970 as Development Alternatives, Inc., it is now legally renamed and formally registered as DAI Global, LLC. www.dai.com

[4] Chemonics International Inc. is an international development and sustainability firm based in Washington, D.C., USA. www.chemonics.com

[5] Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA) was a US-based private, nonprofit, international development organization, with emphasis on appropriate small-scale technologies for agriculture, food processing, renewable energy, water supply and sanitation, housing and construction, small business development.

[6]The World Bank Group (WBG) is a family of five international organizations that make leveraged loans to developing countries. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C., United States. worldbank.org

Early Postwar Period (1945–1960)

The immediate postwar period marked the beginning of intensive U.S. engagement in international educational and cultural projects, driven by both the devastation of European institutions and the strategic imperative to consolidate influence within an emerging bipolar world order (Appy, 2000; Cull, 2008; Hixson, 1997). This phase saw the rapid establishment of initiatives aimed at rebuilding higher education systems, facilitating scientific exchange, and promoting cultural diplomacy. Among the most prominent were the Fulbright Program (1946), initiatives of the United States Information Agency (USIA), and support for academic institutions through organizations such as the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the American Council on Education (ACE) (Bevis, 2019; Saunders, 2000).

From an institutional perspective, these programs functioned as mechanisms of *in-statuere:* not as isolated interventions, but as processes that created durable structures capable of sustaining collective action across national boundaries (Bojanić, 2022; Solovey & Cravens, 2012). The Fulbright Program, for example, combined the promotion of international understanding with the systematic cultivation of new actors—students, scholars, and administrators—who would carry its norms and practices forward. Each cohort became part of an expanding institutional chain, ensuring continuity and long-term reproduction (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2008).

These projects were closely aligned with U.S. foreign policy objectives. Rebuilding educational and research infrastructures in Europe was seen as a means of fostering political stability, promoting liberal-democratic values, and countering Soviet influence (Larson, 1985; Zubok, 2007). Organizations such as IIE and USIA operated not merely as administrative bodies, but as institutional hubs coordinating networks of universities, research institutes, and governmental agencies. Through funding, curriculum development, and the facilitation of academic mobility, they contributed to the formation of a transnational knowledge infrastructure that extended U.S. educational models while allowing for local adaptation (Appy, 2000; Cull, 2010).

A crucial condition of this institutionalization was its documentary foundation. Program charters, scholarship agreements, and reporting protocols provided the formal structures necessary for continuity and expansion. As Bojanić (2022) emphasizes, documentation enables institutions to persist beyond individual actors and to incorporate new participants without losing coherence. In the postwar context, systematic archiving and standardized administrative procedures ensured that educational programs remained stable even as they expanded geographically and adapted to diverse contexts (Bevis, 2019; Saunders, 2000).

At the same time, these projects created new social spaces for collective action. Universities, cultural centers, research institutes, and libraries became sites where professional networks could emerge and consolidate (Hixson, 1997; Simpson, 1994). These spaces facilitated not only knowledge transfer, but also the formation of shared professional identities and transnational communities of practice. Importantly, such networks were *self-reinforcing:* former participants often returned as coordinators,

partners, or institutional intermediaries, further embedding program norms and extending their reach (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2008).

Financial structures played a key role in sustaining these processes. Stable funding from federal and philanthropic sources enabled long-term planning, program continuity, and institutional credibility (Daniels & Krige, 2022; Saunders, 2000). This combination of public and private support reflected a *hybrid institutional logic*: educational projects operated simultaneously as instruments of foreign policy, public goods, and mechanisms of institutional reproduction (Bevis, 2019; Bojanić, 2022).

Finally, the postwar period saw the development of systematic evaluation and monitoring practices. Reporting procedures and assessment mechanisms linked program outcomes to broader goals such as capacity-building, cross-cultural exchange, and political alignment (Appy, 2000; Cull, 2010). These practices allowed programs to be continuously adjusted, documented, and scaled, transforming short-term initiatives into durable institutional arrangements (Bojanić, 2022; Solovey & Cravens, 2012).

In doing so, they laid the foundation for a transnational infrastructure of human development that would expand and evolve in subsequent decades (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2008; Zubok, 2007).

Late Cold War and Neoliberalism (1970s–1980s)

By the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. educational and cultural projects had entered a phase of increasing institutional complexity, shaped by broader ideological and economic transformations in American governance (Bastiansen et al., 2019; Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal reforms, particularly during the Reagan administration, reoriented policy toward market mechanisms, reduced state intervention, and an emphasis on individual responsibility. At the same time, the strategic importance of international educational engagement remained, now reframed in terms of global competitiveness and technological leadership (Daniels & Krige, 2022; Harvey, 2005).

Within this shifting context, the logic of educational and cultural projects evolved. Whereas early postwar initiatives had focused on reconstruction and ideological alignment, the late Cold War period increasingly framed educational exchange as an investment in human development. Programs were designed not only to foster cultural and political ties, but also to cultivate a globally networked, highly skilled workforce capable of supporting U.S. scientific, technological, and economic priorities (Daniels & Krige, 2022; Rudolph, 1990).

Key institutions, including IIE, USIA, AMIDEAST, and USAID, played central roles in operationalizing these objectives. IIE managed scholarship programs, collected data on international student mobility, and advised universities and governments (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2008). USIA expanded its global network of cultural centers and coordinated educational and informational outreach (Cull, 2008; Taylor, 2003). AMIDEAST developed region-specific infrastructures for testing, advising, and scholarship administration, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2010). USAID integrated educational components into broader development strategies, linking knowledge transfer with economic modernization (Attewell, 2023; Daniels & Krige, 2022).

From an institutional perspective, these programs exemplified the logic of *in-statuere*. They operated as interconnected elements within an evolving institutional ecosystem, continuously incorporating new actors into structured frameworks of norms, procedures, and documentation (Bojanić, 2022; Solovey & Cravens, 2012). This process combined openness with regulation: while participation expanded globally, access and activity were increasingly managed through formalized selection criteria, administrative controls, and security considerations. The regulation of foreign participation in sensitive research areas, for example, reflects this balance between inclusion and control (Daniels & Krige, 2022; McDonald, 1986).

Documentation and evaluation became even more central in this period. Detailed reporting systems, standardized procedures, and extensive archival practices enabled continuous monitoring, replication, and adaptation of programs (Cull, 2010; Saunders, 2000). As Bojanić suggests, such documentary infrastructures are not auxiliary but constitutive: they allow institutions to persist beyond individual actors and to expand without losing coherence (Bevis, 2019; Bojanić, 2022).

At the same time, the institutional landscape became more complex through the growing involvement of private contractors. Organizations such as DAI, Chemonics, and VITA assumed key roles in designing and implementing educational and development projects, linking public funding with private execution capacities (Attewell, 2023). This shift reflected a broader neoliberal restructuring, in which institutional reproduction increasingly relied on hybrid arrangements combining state coordination and market-based mechanisms.

The expansion of international student mobility further illustrates this institutional dynamic. Between 1979–1980 and 1999–2000, the number of foreign students in U.S. universities grew from approximately 286,000 to over half a million (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2010). This growth was not spontaneous but institutionally organized: agencies such as IIE coordinated data and placement, regional organizations like AMIDEAST facilitated access, and consular systems regulated entry and compliance. Through these mechanisms, student mobility became a structured and reproducible component of a broader system of human capital circulation.

These developments were closely tied to geopolitical considerations. In strategically significant or post-conflict regions, educational initiatives were often integrated with broader programs of economic development, political stabilization, and technological transfer (Attewell, 2023; Daniels & Krige, 2022). This convergence underscores the dual character of institutional logic: educational projects functioned simultaneously as sites of learning and as instruments of strategic coordination, extending influence while producing new forms of social and professional organization.

In sum, the late Cold War period marks a phase of consolidation and transformation in U.S. educational and cultural projects. No longer limited to postwar reconstruction, these initiatives became part of a complex, globally distributed institutional system. Through documentation, structured inclusion, and network expansion, they exemplified processes of *in-statuere*, producing durable infrastructures for the circulation of knowledge, global institutional norms and human development (Bevis, 2019; Bojanić, 2022; Cull, 2008).

Post–Cold War and the Globalization of Educational Infrastructure (1990s–2001)

The end of the Cold War marked a decisive shift in the scale, objectives, and institutional logic of U.S. educational and cultural projects. While earlier initiatives had been shaped by ideological competition, the 1990s introduced new priorities centered on globalization, economic competitiveness, technological leadership, and regional stabilization (Daniels & Krige, 2022; de Leonardis, 2023). Educational exchange was increasingly framed not only as cultural diplomacy, but as a mechanism for structuring global knowledge flows and managing the circulation of human capital (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2010).

In this context, U.S. institutions expanded and systematized their activities. IIE extended its role beyond program administration to include data standardization, mobility tracking, and policy advising for governments and universities seeking to integrate foreign talent into national systems (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2008). Regional organizations such as AMIDEAST intensified their operations, combining testing, scholarship management, and academic advising with broader objectives of modernization and regional stability (Bevis, 2019; Cull, 2010). At the same time, USIA and its successors further integrated educational exchange with global media and communication infrastructures, coordinating cultural centers, educational outreach, and transnational information flows (Cull, 2008; Saunders, 2000).

From an institutional perspective, these developments reflect an advanced stage of *in-statuere*. Educational and cultural projects operated as interconnected systems that continuously incorporated new actors while maintaining standardized norms, procedures, and documentation (Bojanić, 2022). This process enabled both expansion and stability: programs could scale globally while preserving coherence through formalized administrative and evaluative frameworks.

The rapid growth of international student mobility illustrates this dynamic. By the end of the 1990s, the number of foreign students in U.S. universities had exceeded half a million, with significant increases from China, India, and other emerging economies (Bevis, 2019). This expansion was not merely demographic but institutional: it relied on coordinated infrastructures involving recruitment, visa regulation, data management, and academic integration. Agencies such as IIE, regional organizations like AMIDEAST, and U.S. consular systems collectively structured and regulated these flows, transforming mobility into a stable and reproducible component of global human capital circulation (Cull, 2010; Daniels & Krige, 2022).

At the same time, educational projects maintained a *dual logic* of inclusion and control. While programs actively attracted highly skilled individuals, they also imposed increasing regulatory oversight, particularly in fields related to advanced technology and national security. Policies such as "deemed exports"[7] exemplify this tension, as access to knowledge was simultaneously expanded and restricted (Daniels & Krige, 2022; McDonald, 1986). Universities thus functioned as regulated spaces of exchange, integrating international participants while aligning activity with broader strategic concerns.

[7] Deemed exports refer to a regulatory policy under U.S. export control law in which the release or transfer of controlled technology or technical data to a foreign national within the United States is treated as an export to that person's home country. This means that such transfers may require prior government authorization, even if no physical goods or information cross national borders.

The institutional landscape of this period was further shaped by the growing role of private contractors and non-governmental organizations. Firms such as Chemonics, DAI, and VITA, along with organizations like AMIDEAST and NAFSA, became key intermediaries in program implementation and evaluation (Attewell, 2023; Bevis, 2019). These actors translated policy objectives into operational frameworks, combining public funding with private expertise and thereby extending institutional reach. This hybrid configuration allowed educational projects to adapt to diverse regional contexts while maintaining standardized procedures and accountability mechanisms.

More broadly, the 1990s witnessed the *consolidation* of networked institutional forms. Universities, government agencies, private contractors, and regional organizations formed multilayered systems that facilitated the circulation of knowledge, the training of professionals, and the diffusion of institutional norms across borders (Bevis, 2019; Daniels & Krige, 2022). These networks were geographically dispersed but functionally integrated, enabling sustained influence through coordination rather than direct control.

Educational initiatives also became increasingly embedded in broader development and stabilization strategies. In post-conflict and transitional regions, including parts of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East, programs combined higher education reform, technical training, and institutional capacity-building (Attewell, 2023; Daniels & Krige, 2022). In these contexts, educational projects functioned as mechanisms for reconstructing social and institutional environments, linking human capital formation with economic modernization and political stabilization.

Security considerations further intensified in this period. Enhanced monitoring of foreign students, stricter documentation requirements, and the development of electronic tracking systems reflected growing concerns about the risks associated with increased mobility (Daniels & Krige, 2022). Educational exchange thus became simultaneously a tool of soft power and an object of surveillance, reinforcing the institutional interplay between openness and regulation.

In sum, the post–Cold War period represents a phase of globalization and consolidation in U.S. educational and cultural infrastructure. Projects became increasingly networked, standardized, and scalable, reflecting both neoliberal governance logics and the cumulative effects of earlier institutional development. Through processes of *in-statuere*, including documentation, actor formation, and structured inclusion, these initiatives produced durable transnational systems for the circulation of knowledge and human capital. As such, they functioned not only as policy instruments, but as key components of a global institutional architecture that continues to shape educational exchange and international cooperation (Bevis, 2019; Bojanić, 2022; Cull, 2010; Daniels & Krige, 2022).

Conclusions

The building and expansion of U.S. educational and cultural infrastructure from 1945 to 2001 reveals not only a transformation in institutional scale and complexity, but also a shift in the very logic of how human development is organized, interpreted, and governed in international space. Initially emerging in the Cold War as instruments of

ideological competition, educational programs combined scholarship schemes, cultural diplomacy, and selective recruitment to construct transnational networks aligned with U.S. strategic interests (Cull, 2008; McDonald, 1986). These infrastructures were never merely administrative: they depended on increasingly formalized documentary regimes, procedural standardization, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that enabled institutional continuity across time and geography.

In the post–Cold War period, these structures expanded into a globally distributed system of educational governance. Framed through the language of globalization, competitiveness, and technological leadership, educational and cultural projects became embedded in hybrid institutional configurations involving state agencies, universities, private contractors, and NGOs (Bevis, 2019; Daniels & Krige, 2022). Rather than isolated programs, they functioned as interconnected infrastructures for the circulation of knowledge and talent, increasingly oriented toward the production and optimization of human capital. At the same time, this expansion intensified a structural tension between openness and regulation: the acceleration of global mobility coexisted with increasingly sophisticated regimes of monitoring, selection, and security control.

From the perspective of Bojanić's concept of *in-statuere*, this trajectory can be understood as a continuous process of institutional self-production, in which institutions persist only through the incorporation of new actors, the repetition of procedures, and the stabilization of documentary frameworks (Bojanić, 2022). Educational projects thus appear not as external instruments applied to social reality, but as mechanisms that actively produce institutional environments—spaces where collective actors are formed, regulated, and sustained.

Seen in this light, U.S. educational and cultural infrastructure functioned simultaneously as a technology enabling human capital formation, a mechanism of post-conflict and post-crisis stabilization, and a system of global institutional governance. Its historical evolution underscores a central paradox: the expansion of educational openness was inseparable from the intensification of regulatory control. It is precisely within this tension—between circulation and restriction, inclusion and selection, knowledge production and security—that the durability of these institutional systems can be understood.

Ultimately, the analysis suggests that U.S. educational and cultural projects should be read not simply as tools of foreign policy, but as self-reproducing institutional formations that structure global regimes of mobility, knowledge, and human capital. Their long-term significance lies in their capacity to generate and stabilize transnational institutional environments that continue to shape the organization of education, governance, and expertise in the contemporary world.

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