

China's Universities Go to Southeast Asia: Transnational Knowledge Transfer, Soft Power, Sharp Power*

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Abstract

This article examines four Southeast Asian cases of the “going out” of China’s universities, or what is termed as *jingwai banxue* in China. It examines their background and rationale, their academic programs and curricula arrangements, and their overall significance to both China and the hosting countries. Three major themes guide this article: transnational knowledge transfer, soft power, and sharp power. The findings suggest that *jingwai banxue* is a diverse and de-centralized phenomenon, with Beijing playing only a limited role. It shows that the range of transnational knowledge transfer through *jingwai banxue* varies among different projects. It illustrates that these projects both generate and leverage China’s soft power and are intrinsically tied to China’s economic importance to the hosting countries. Finally, it argues against the “sharp power” interpretation.

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