

**International Student Exchange  
Among Muslim Nations;  
Soft Power and Voting Alliances  
At the United Nations**

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## **Abstract**

*The main goal of this research is to analyze the impact of student exchange as a component of soft power in American foreign policy. Since September 11, 2001 there has been a significant increase in the number of Muslim international students enrolled in American institutions. In addition, there has been an increase in study abroad programs to predominantly Muslim countries by American students. I analyze the potential benefit to America's foreign policy of accepting these international students and sending American students abroad. The measurement is whether or not the United States gets more support for measures it endorses in the United Nations. I use the 48 Muslim member countries of United Nations, and the Secretary of State's Report to Congress on the voting practices in the United Nations as the key dependent variable. Other variables that are analyzed include G.D.P, U.S Aid, oil exports and production, and international trade. I anticipate the results will show that countries that send students to the U.S. and accept American students vote more consistently with the United States at the United Nations Assembly.*

## Introduction

Joseph S Nye, Jr. calls soft power as getting others to want what you want, not by coercing them, but through cooption (Nye2002a). Examples of soft power are exchange programs, financial assistance, aid during emergencies etc. In other words, soft power is almost anything besides military power.

I will focus on exchange program among foreign students in America and Americans studying abroad. There are many exchange programs out there, however there are special programs that were designed after the 9-11 incident, and I would like to measure the success of this programs.

Every year congress spends a lot of money on exchange programs as part of their public diplomacy effort. In 2010 the appropriation was \$633 million, this number has been increasing as data shows. In 2002 the appropriation for exchange program was \$231 million under the Education and Cultural Exchange Program (ECE). ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)). The main goal of the state department is to advance the understanding of America's fundamental values abroad. Other goals of the state department are to; pursue greater global ideological engagement, utilize enhanced technology, advocate U.S. policy, and provide for timely evaluation of results achieved through public diplomacy. ECE continues to build youth oriented programs and sustain key educational exchanges while expanding alumni outreach and networking efforts. These efforts are focused on maintaining long-term ties to those who have been directly exposed to life in the United States.

The current trend is to bring foreign students to America, live with host families, attend local high schools. The main goal of programs like these is to bridge the connection between America and the Muslim world.

I was an exchange student as part of this post 9-11 exchange program effort that was sponsored by the Department of State. I'm now curious to know how successful exchange programs are as part of American Foreign Policy. Every year, congress keeps allocating more money for exchange programs; however, do these programs really benefit America as part of their effort to bridge the connection with Muslim nations?

## Literature Review

One of the main topics discussed in international relations is political power. Political power can range from military strength, economic strength or even population strength. Some states will be in search of these strengths and they will invest in relationships with states that can enhance their power. Merriam Webster's dictionary defines power as possession of control, authority, or influence over others. This could very well be used in our context when we are talking about countries having power over another country. The Oxford dictionary further defines political power as a country viewed in terms of its international influence and military strength: *a world power*.

The other part of power that's often not seen as having a big role is soft power. Joseph Nye, Jr., defines soft power as getting others to want what you want, not by coercing them, but through cooption (Nye 2002). One of the strengths of soft power is to reduce the number of carrots and sticks needed to get others to do what you want (Nye 2002, 10). An important component of soft power is diplomacy. Public Diplomacy can be defined as the effort to influence public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. (Iyamu, 2004, 225; Fisher, 1972)

As defined, soft power is power that is not as obvious as other powers such as military power, but it does play a big role. However, anti-Americanism has increased in recent years, and the United States' soft power -- its ability to attract others by the legitimacy of U.S. policies and the values that underlie them -- is in decline as a result. (Nye 2004).

Many of our current political leaders have failed to grasp fully that although much changed since September 11 2001, much did not (Brown, 2008). John Brown from the Association of International Educators further explains that America cannot be secure in a world that does not trust it and that resents and resists American leadership.

International education could be an important component to America's public diplomacy effort. "An effective public diplomacy must include exchange of ideas, peoples, and information through *person-to-person* educational and cultural exchanges". (Brown, 2008)

One of the fundamentals in international education is exchange programs. Exchange programs started long ago with the Fulbright program in 1948. Since then, many government exchange programs and many non-governmental organizations have been part of the effort in promoting exchange programs. The Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau of the U.S. Department of State, along with the US exchange community, recognized the importance of youth exchange as a key component of renewed commitment to building bridges between citizens of the U.S. and countries around the world. Recently this has expanded to include countries with significant Muslim populations. An example of this would be is the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program. The YES program evolved out of a generalized recognition that public diplomacy efforts had been neglected in many countries around the world for many years and that the effects of this came into stark focus in the events of September 11, 2001. Its aftermath resulted in appropriations committed by Congress in 2002, followed by a call for grant proposals later that same year. ([www.yesprograms.org](http://www.yesprograms.org))

There has been a push from congress to expand exchange programs within the Educational and Cultural Bureau network with the State Department. Secretary of State has

asked congress to “double or triple” exchange programs. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, that he believes citizen diplomacy and international exchange programs are “critical” aspects of U.S. public diplomacy. Sec. Clinton stated her agreement, saying that she would “double or triple” student exchange programs if she could, and that she is a “big believer in people-to-people diplomacy”. ( [www.alliance-exchange.org](http://www.alliance-exchange.org))

## **Exchange Programs**

There are many kinds of exchange programs that take place between countries. Some of them are self-sponsored but most of them are sponsored by individuals or organizations. One of the exchange methods are exchange-of-person.

These programs have become increasingly popular as part of cultural promotion and the public diplomacy effort. This is done by bringing one foreigner into a host country and sending the resident of the host country to another country. These programs have a large network and operate around the world; however in this study I’m focusing on United States of America and its counterparts within the exchange network with Muslim Nations Proponents of these programs say the effects is self-evident, exchange programs produce international understanding and it also create mutual respect among countries. However in an article, O.W.Riegel (1953) questions the optimistic observations of the effects that can reasonably be expected from the sponsored exchange programs

Studies also show that the selection of nontraditional destination is increasing (Institute of International Education, 2004). Ryan Wells from University of Iowa said, “As higher education institutions and study abroad providers offer students more options for studying in the

African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern regions, students are responding in a positive way.”(Wells,20006)

What is the main purpose of bringing people on exchange program? Riegel found that some of the sponsoring agencies have their own agenda. For example, the State Department gives out grants to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to recruit students within their network to spend their exchange year in America. What are the main objectives of these NGO's? Are they merely doing business to sustain their nonprofit organization or are they actually running these exchange programs in support of the effort of State Department in helping boost the public diplomacy effort. Riegel argues regardless of their purpose, all exchanges receive impressions of direct and indirect political significance.

### **Exchange Programs and Public diplomacy**

Educational exchange has an important role to play in public diplomacy, particularly because the face-to-face contact between nationals of different countries helps to diminish negative stereotypes and ultimately facilitates inter-cultural communication (Lima, 234). It is often said that international educational exchange is a way to improve the image of a country.

International exchange promotes mutual understanding and benefits both countries. It's also worth noting that a large number of international students making impact on the host culture are far weaker than the impact the host culture makes on them. Mark Leonard's three dimensional concepts of public diplomacy states that the more a country is accurately understood by other countries, the better the message that will be communicated and interpreted in other nations.(Lima, 2007).This is an example of soft power practiced by many countries with United States of America being the major contributor



A good example of an exchange program is the Fulbright program. Its funded by the State Department. The Congressional appropriation for the Fulbright Program in fiscal year 2010 was \$253.8 million. Foreign governments, through binational commissions or foundations abroad, contributed approximately \$68.5 million directly to the Program in fiscal year 2009. (<http://fulbright.state.gov/funding.html>)

Marianne Craven (2007) in her speech at the Industrial Engineering (IIE)'s 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Best conference in New York said that the State Department's new initiative was to reach diverse, under represented and non-elite population through academic exchange. The Gilman program for American undergraduates helps Americans go abroad to learn language, culture and the diversity of a country. This is another new program that's developed to help boost American students learn another language, as for many American students this could be their second language.

As part of the same effort, the State Department also launched the "Opportunity Grants" initiative for selected countries in Eurasia and Latin America. This program helps international students gain entry into a college and the grants helps these students pay the initial cost for tests and application fees, with the condition that the university awards them scholarship for their major. This is another positive note as the grant is helping more international students to study in America.

It can be concluded that there are three main areas' that will benefit public diplomacy when it comes to exchange programs. They are; generating mutual understanding, creating a positive image of the host country and creating support for the host country's foreign policy.

## **Strategy**

It is really important to examine what is the best strategy used to push for exchange program. A yearly review is probably the best way to keep the program on track. Things that should be taken into consideration are things like how United States formulates, strategizes, and communicates its foreign policy, improve the practice of public diplomacy and improve the funding (Fulton, 2004).

Fulton questions what was wrong before 9/11 that caused the Islamic world to have such anger towards the United States. Several factors were taken into consideration including whether there was a failure in public diplomacy at that time? What made the Muslim world support Bin Laden? Did the exchange program by scholars undermine America's insensitivity towards other culture? This notion can be developed by researching how long exchange program have been active among Muslim countries.

A strategic plan is needed to map exchange program policy and public diplomacy connections, replace coordination with strategic direction, marshal private sector creativity and institutionalize planning (Gregory, 2005). Situations change every time, hence it's only right if the strategic directions keep changing as the strategy changes. For example would be is it worth spending money in bringing students from Pakistan to the U.S. for six months if the hosted Pakistanis are not leaving with a positive attitude about America?

### **Measuring the success of exchange program**

The United Nations meets and discusses global issues that take place around the world. The Security Council and the General Assembly deal with a full spectrum of issues—including threats to peace and security, disarmament, economic and social development, humanitarian relief, and human rights—all issues that are critical to U.S. interests. Previous study from the

Heritage foundation has shown that U.S. Foreign Aid recipients show little support for America when voting at the United Nations.

A country's behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship with the U.S. A country's voting record in the United Nations is only one dimension of its relations with the United States. (Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2009). However, it is a usual place to begin with this assessment.

One way of measuring the success of exchange programs as a component of U.S. Public diplomacy effort is to compare exchange rates with voting pattern at the United Nations. Are countries that U.S. have exchange relations with voting consistently with the U.S. or are they not aligning themselves with the U.S. policies at any greater rates? It is worth mentioning that a successful public diplomacy is obtained if countries work together with the United States at the United Nations.

If these countries are working with the United States, further research would be to examine are these countries having a good relationship because of the exchange programs. If exchange programs do have an impact on the American public diplomacy effort, the government should consider expanding exchange programs.

## **Political Leaders**

As part of the behind the scene efforts on who and why these countries want to work with the United States, I tried to research on political leaders and what influence they play in decision making process as part of their Public Diplomacy effort in engaging with the United States.

There is a definite linkage between a political leader and their Foreign Service effort and that could reflect on the number of students that America sends and receives from these countries.

Political leaders definitely play a fundamental role in framing the Foreign Service effort. A good public diplomacy background and understanding will be the key success in helping a country further develop and strengthen its public diplomacy effort with another country.

Dr.Dino Pati Djalal is the current Ambassador of Indonesia to the United States. He has shown an excellent reputation in helping Indonesia strengthen its democracy and Foreign Service.

Dr. Dino Patti Djalal was born into a diplomatic family on September 10th 1965 in Belgrade, (what was then) Yugoslavia, the second of 3 children. The experience of being born in a country that no longer exists (Yugoslavia) serves to remind him of the supreme importance of maintaining national unity for multi-cultural Indonesia. His father, Professor Hasjim Djalal, was Indonesia's Ambassador to Canada and Germany, and an international expert on the law of the sea. Hasjim Djalal is a key figure in the "archipelago concept", a legal innovation on maritime territory which dramatically - and peacefully - multiplied the area of Indonesia's territorial sovereignty. The archipelago concept, rejected and opposed by maritime powers when it was announced by Indonesia in 1957, is now part of international law and is fully endorsed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.([www.embassyofindonesia.org](http://www.embassyofindonesia.org))

His current contributions towards Indonesia's effort is strengthening their public diplomacy effort is enormous. Dr. Dino started the Presidential Visitor's Program, an annual program for inviting friends of Indonesia from around the world to visit Indonesia during the time of independence celebration in mid-August.

Dino has a great for the youths. In 2008, he has established the "Innovative Leaders Forum" to promote innovative leadership from all sectors of Indonesian society. The Forum has held a series of public seminars presenting emerging leaders in the field of : local governance, education, peace workers, health, bureaucratic reform, entrepreneurship, moderate Islam, and climate change.

In relations to the United States, he initiated an exchange program between University of California, Los Angeles and the government of Indonesia in bringing more Indonesians for higher education opportunity

Moving to the middle east leaders, Nabil Elaraby of Egypt has also been a strong proponent of public diplomacy effort with the United States. Elaraby who is the current foreign minister of Egypt has been an advocate of Foreign Service policy in Egypt. ([www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com))

Elaraby, who is the former judge in the International Court of Justice, who was also the permanent representative to the United Nations and has been serving as the director of the Regional Cairo Center for International Commercial Arbitration, Member of the International Law Commission of the United Nations 1994-2004, Judge at the Judicial Tribunal of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1990 and Commissioner at the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva (1999–2001).

In the recent meeting in Cairo, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced an initiative to help Egypt's economic plan. "We've committed \$90 million for near-term immediate economic assistance. At my request, we've had legislation introduced in the Senate of the United States by Senator Kerry and Senator McCain to establish an Egypt-American enterprise fund",. Hillary Clinton ([www.state.gov/secretary](http://www.state.gov/secretary))

In Saudi Arabia, Turki bin Faisal Al Saud was the Director General of Saudi Arabia's intelligence agency and later served as the ambassador of Saudi Arabia to United Kingdom and United States. Turki strongly advocated that the United States engage in direct talks with Iran over its differences concerning Iran's involvement in Iraq, its nuclear program and support of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Turki presently teaches at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. He has visited many American universities and has lectured on the history of Saudi Arabia to improve relations between the West and Saudi Arabia. He has recently visited University of South Florida, Syracuse University, Rice University, Cornell University, and Harvard University. He recently spoke at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

These political leaders have shown a great interest in engaging dialogues with the United States in promoting their national interest. They certainly play an important role in helping shape the direction of their effort in working with the United States. This is certainly a major factor when it comes to my research. Without political leaders and their influence, America will not be able to engage in any soft power effort with any of these countries and that will dampen their exchange program efforts with the Muslim world.

## **Methods and Analysis**

What I attempt in this research is to create a model using multiple regressions that will predict the support at the United Nations (dependent variable) with other variables such as number of students who are coming to the U.S and number of Americans studying abroad. My theory predicts if there is more exchange students between America and a particular Muslim

country, the better that particular country is going to work with U.S. at the United Nations. The main idea behind this theory is that we can measure the voting pattern of these countries at the United Nations and if there is an effort in strengthening public policy, the number of students who are inbound and outbound should reflect in the voting consistency with the U.S.

I gathered data with number of students coming to the U.S from 2001-2009, number of Americans studying abroad from 2001-2009, voting pattern at the United Nations from 2001-2009, along with other variables. Number of inbound and outbound students was obtained from the Institute of International Education from the year 2001-2009 and I had the average number of students as part of my research. The United Nations votes were obtained from the Secretary of State's report to congress and the scores were counted by: number of yes votes / number of yes votes plus number of no votes. Saudi Arabia and Turkey had the highest number of inbound students, where else Turkey and Egypt was the countries that accepted American students the most. In total 48 countries sent their students to America, however American students only studied abroad in 26 countries.

(Figure 1 & 2 about here)

(Table 1 about here)

## **Variables**

My dependent variable is the voting pattern at the United Nations. This voting numbers was later computed to get the voting score The voting score was obtained by the number of yes

votes divided by number of yes votes plus number of against votes. This data was obtained from the Secretary of State's report to congress that is published annually. My unit of analysis is the 48 Muslim countries. I categorized Muslim countries if any of the countries had more than 50 percent Muslim population and that data was obtained from the CIA fact book.

Other independent variables that was used to test this hypothesis included oil production statistics, G.D.P. per capita, percent of their G.D.P that is spent on education, U.S Aid received and the share that each country contributes to the United Nations. Oil production statistics maybe relevant to this test as most Muslim countries produce, export and import oil. I wanted to test if this is a factor in the relationship with number of exchanges that takes place. G.D.P rate was another significant variable along with percent of their G.D.P share that is used for education as that will show how seriously each courtiers view education in their day to day politics. U.S Aid received was another measure as that shows how much the U.S helps these countries and it could be used to measure with the voting pattern at the United Nations.

## **Analysis**

My main research is to support to my hypothesis which is; the more number of students that America receives or sends to another country, the chances of these countries voting with U.S at the United Nations are higher. The first step I take is running correlations between the variables I choose to represent the voting pattern and other independent variables. For this I use Pearson's r. Below is the finding from the analysis:

(Table 2 about here)



This test shows that the relationship between the number of inbound students and the voting pattern at the United Nations is statistically significant at the .05 level (.352). The .352 coefficient shows that as values increase in my support score at the U.N. the number of inbound students also increases. This shows a very strong association between my independent and dependent variables. This would support my theory: exchange program does help America's foreign policy. None of the other independent variables that I choose shows significance in their relationships to voting pattern at the United Nations. I included all the other independent variables, although significance is not present, there is a weak correlation between them and voting pattern. I include this variable on a theoretical basis than on a statistical basis. I would argue that these variables may have significance due to the nature of education research and their main economical factor of these countries. However, correlation shows that there is no significance besides the number of students coming to the U.S.

For the second test, I did a scatter plot using inbound students and the support at the United Nations score. This figure shows a positive relationship between inbound students and the support score at the U.N. The R-square value is 0.124. This value shows that 12.4 percent of the variation of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable.

Figure 3 shows the results:

(Figure 3 about here)

## Conclusion

The analysis has utilized existing literature and theory to establish the role of Exchange Program in America's foreign policy. The study of soft power and how it effects America's foreign policy is interesting. However, it is definitely hard to pick which part of the soft power component is the most significant. From my research, results have shown that bringing international students to the U.S. does suggest promise voting support at the United Nations. Other factors would have been important to the study, however none show statistical significance For further research, I would attempt to see other factors such as public diplomacy history between these countries, students perception on America while on exchange, visa regulations etc. These may corelate with exchange program in showing a significant result with the voting pattern at the United Nations.

## Appendix

**Table 1: List of countries including inbound students, outbound students and U.N. score.**

| Countries     | Inbound Students | Outbound Students | U.N Score | Countries            | Inbound Students | Outbound Students | U.N Score |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| AFGHANISTAN   | 1696             | 9                 | 0.18      | LIBYA                | 1106             |                   | 0.11      |
| ALBANIA       | 7208             | 115               | 0.52      | MALAYSIA             | 48781            | 663               | 0.16      |
| ALGERIA       | 1292             |                   | 0.11      | MALDIVES             |                  |                   | 0.2       |
| AZERBAIJAN    | 2349             |                   | 0.17      | MALI                 | 6112             | 523               | 0.17      |
| BAHRAIN       | 3463             | 106               | 0.12      | MAURITANIA           | 538              | 25                | 0.13      |
| BANGLADESH    | 23489            | 316               | 0.17      | MAYOTTE              |                  |                   | 0         |
| BRUNEI        | 184              |                   | 0.17      | MOROCCO              | 12547            | 3447              | 0.13      |
| BURKINA FASO  | 2609             | 281               | 0.17      | NIGER                | 1874             | 222               | 0         |
| CHAD          | 778              |                   | 0.14      | NIGERIA              | 47403            | 189               | 0.2       |
| COCOS ISLAND  |                  |                   | 0         | OMAN                 | 3185             | 108               | 0.12      |
| COMOROS       | 253              |                   | 0.12      | PAKISTAN             | 52191            | 53                | 0.16      |
| DJIBOUTI      | 67               |                   | 0.13      | QATAR                | 2904             |                   | 0.12      |
| EGYPT         | 14814            | 7254              | 0.12      | SAUDI ARABIA         | 50177            | 38                | 0.12      |
| GAMBIA        | 3266             | 295               | 0.12      | SENEGAL              | 5760             | 2859              | 0.17      |
| GAZA STRIP    |                  |                   | 0         | SIERRA LEONE         | 2273             |                   | 0.16      |
| GUINEA        | 1700             |                   | 0.16      | SUDAN                | 2449             |                   | 0.12      |
| GUINEA-BISSAU | 117              |                   | 0         | SYRIA                | 4310             | 161               | 0.09      |
| INDONESIA     | 68800            | 569               | 0.16      | TUNISIA              | 2707             |                   | 0.11      |
| IRAN          | 20854            | 17                | 0.11      | TURKEY               | 95985            | 5062              | 0.38      |
| IRAQ          | 1654             |                   | 0         | TURKMENISTAN         | 1017             |                   | 0.13      |
| JORDAN        | 15680            | 1811              | 0.13      | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 10383            | 1742              | 0.11      |
| KUWAIT        | 15934            | 78                | 0.14      | UZBEKISTAN           | 3875             |                   | 0         |
| KYRGZSTAN     | 1748             |                   | 0         | WEST BANK            |                  |                   | 0         |
| LEBANON       | 16450            | 231               | 0.12      | YEMEN                | 2309             | 68                | 0.11      |

--- Blank cells indicate missing data

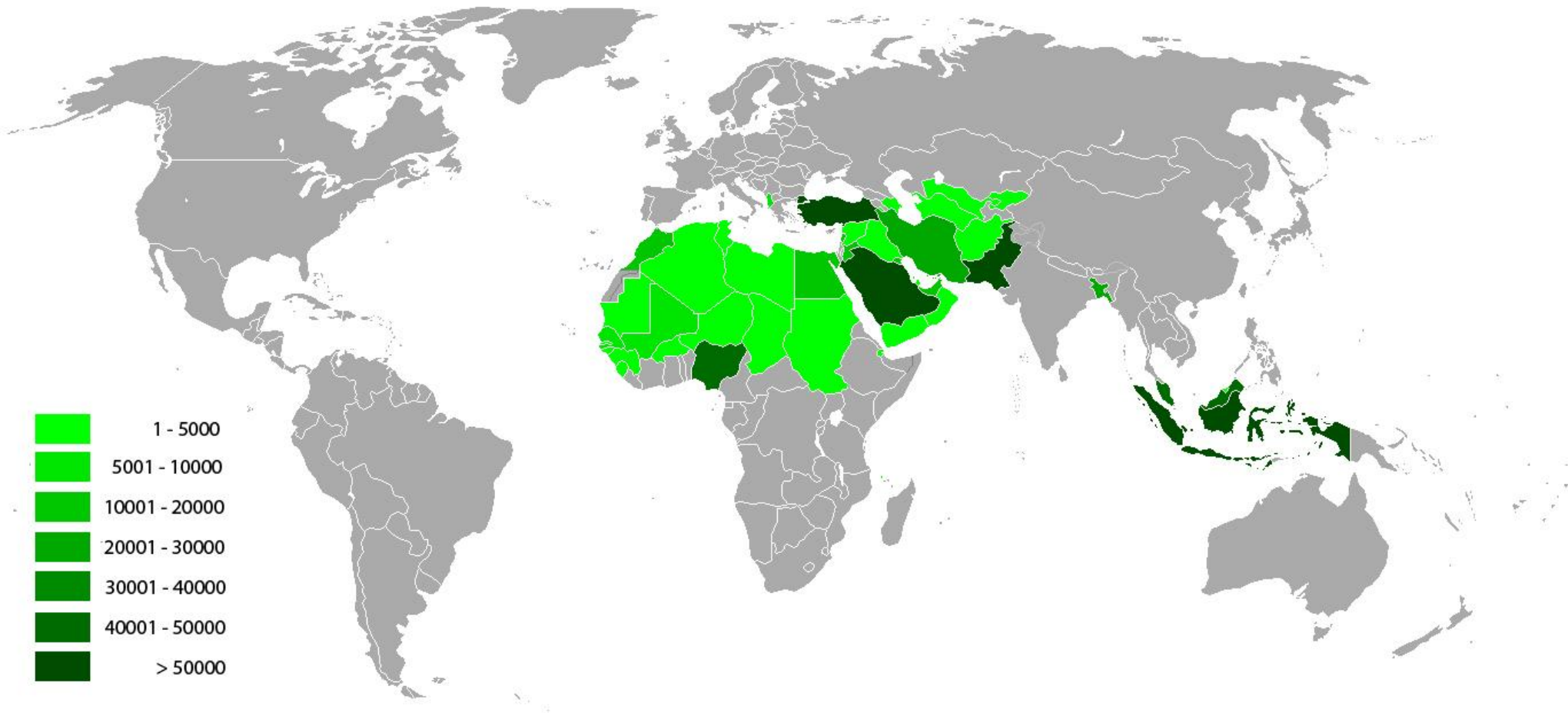
**Table 2****Bivariate Correlation: Average Support for U.S Position at the United Nations with Independent Variables**

| Independent Variables               | Correlation Coefficient |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| U.N Budget Share                    | .047                    |
| Percent of G.D.P on Education       | -.190                   |
| G.D.P per capita                    | -.102                   |
| Average number of Inbound Students  | .352*                   |
| Average number of Outbound Students | .122                    |
| Oil Exports                         | -.158                   |
| Oil Imports                         | .080                    |
| Oil Production                      | -.202                   |
| U.S. Aid                            | -.026                   |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

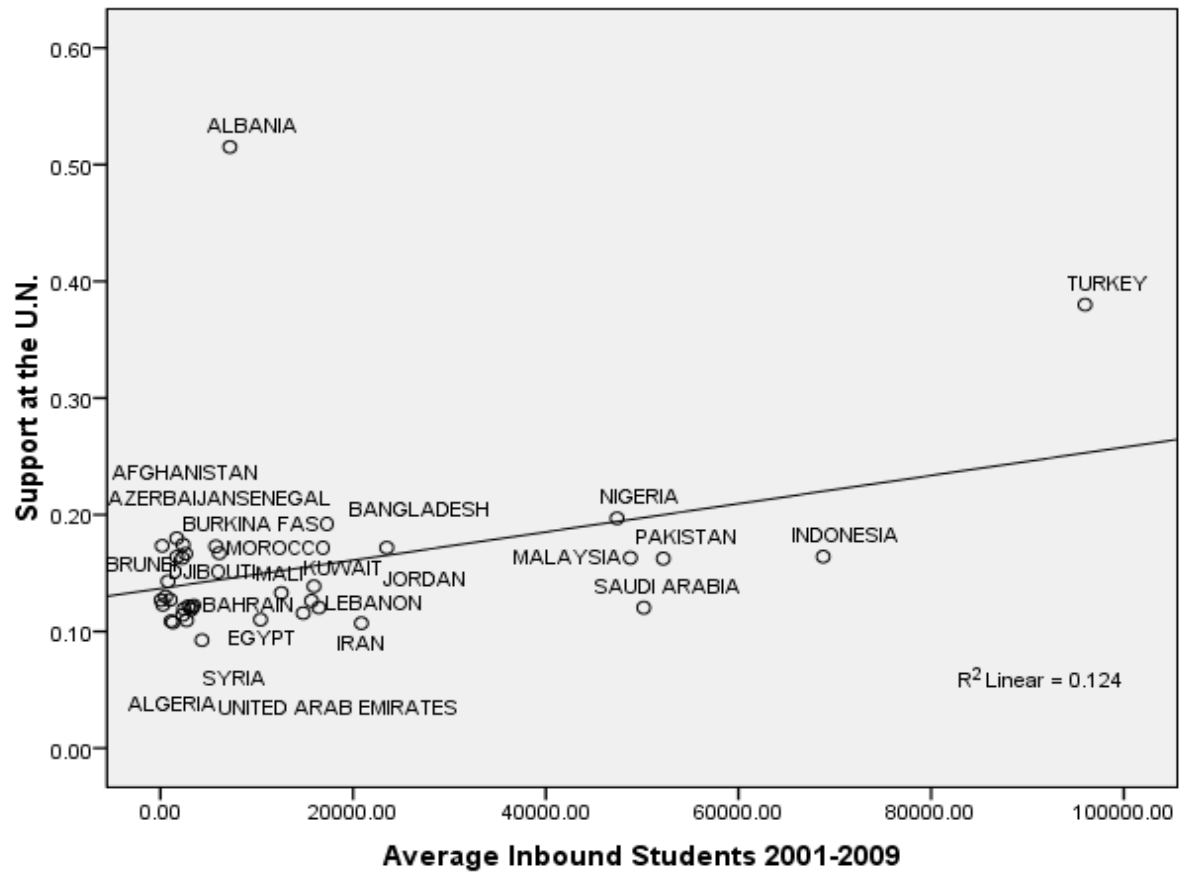


Figure 2: Average Inbound students from 2001-2009



**Figure 3**

Figure 3 : Scatter plot of inbound students and U.N support score



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