Adaptations to global changes: strategic evolutions of an elite school, 1961–2011
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ABSTRACT
This article explores elite international education in the late twentieth century through the case of the Leysin American School (LAS), an international boarding school in Switzerland. From LAS’s founding in 1961 to its re-branding in 2011, broader geopolitical and economic frameworks shifted from a period dominated by the Cold War to one informed by international capitalism, itself an evolution of American Cold War strategies. In parallel, the school, established for overseas Americans and oriented towards the needs of the American Cold War, was refashioned to link to the emerging global financial elite. It is argued that these adjustments to broader changes can be understood as an exercise in institutional adaptability within certain parameters. Such a finding offers critical insight into how elite schools strategically respond to globalising processes over time, in order to remain both solvent and relevant.

Introduction
This article explores the story of elite international education in the late twentieth century through a case study of such schooling. It examines the Leysin American School (LAS), an international boarding school in Switzerland and, supposedly, one of the most expensive in the world. In doing so, this article offers critical insights into how elite international schools strategically respond to globalising processes over time. It argues that this particular school’s adjustments to wider geopolitical and economic shifts can be understood as an exercise in institutional adaptability within certain parameters. Such a finding demonstrates that elite schools can, and perhaps even must, change to remain solvent and relevant as broader contexts change.

A growing body of historical work has examined the evolution of elite schooling in response to emerging configurations of globalisation over time. A study of nineteenth-century Irish elites, for example, examined why such families pursued transnational elite educations for their children. Arguably the most extensive study to date of the role of
elite schools in modern globalisation is that of Kenway et al.\(^3\) Those authors claim from both historical and sociological perspectives that seven elite schools in British post-colonial contexts were refashioned from institutions creating a local elite according to British standards, to ones creating a transnational elite. Using the extant literature, they argue that when the English public school model was exported to the British colonies, its traditions and practices influenced both local power relations and colonial schools’ positionalities in various ways over time. In the present, however, these schools are remaking their histories and traditions to redefine their current and future roles.

This article works to extend this interpretation of elite international schools’ strategic responses to globalising processes, to a context beyond that of the former British empire. Like Kenway et al., it investigates how an elite school was ‘caught up in older social and educational solidarities and how these are expressed in present-day, global times’.\(^4\) As I will show, LAS leadership re-imagined and re-packaged the institution over time.

LAS was founded in Switzerland in the early 1960s, a period dominated by American Cold War interests, to serve the sons and daughters of overseas Americans. As the Cold War morphed into international capitalism, LAS leadership re-fashioned the school for the emerging global financial elite. This response to a globalising economy, I argue, can be seen as an exercise in institutional adaptability within certain parameters, in order to take advantage of new financial opportunities.

**Site, theory and source material**

LAS’s trajectory makes for an excellent contribution to what we know about the changing role of elite schools because it is a different kind of institution than typically found in the literature. Often studied are schools designed to produce a future national elite. At the time of this research, however, less than 3% of LAS students and less than 3% of LAS teachers were Swiss, despite the institution being in Switzerland. These demographics had been long in place. In 1964, three years after the school opened, only five out of 100 employees were Swiss.\(^5\) And although LAS – the Leysin American School – primarily educated overseas Americans in its first few decades, by 2011, Americans comprised only 12% of the student body. They were the second-largest nationality behind Russians (14%). The national diversity within the body of students and staff indicates that the school was, indeed, not beholden to any one nation’s elite. As such, LAS is a fruitful space in which to examine the responses of an elite school to changing configurations of globalisation.

This article analyses the case of LAS using Aihwa Ong’s notion of ‘state strategies’. In *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Ong pushes back against Benedict Anderson’s framing of the nation-state. Anderson argues that global capitalism engenders the kind of mobility that undermines a state’s claims over its people.\(^6\) In response, Ong asks, ‘is there another way of looking at the shifting relations between the nation-state and the global economy in late modernity, one that suggests more complex adjustments and accommodations?’.\(^7\) In pursuit of an

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\(^3\) Jane Kenway et al., *Class Choreographies: Elite Schools and Globalisation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

\(^4\) Ibid., 8.

\(^5\) Leysin American School Document Collection (LASDC), Board Report, 1964.

\(^6\) Benedict Anderson, ‘Exodus’, *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (1994): 314–27.

\(^7\) Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 2.
answer, Ong analyses how people and states in East and Southeast Asia adapt to global capitalism. She argues that ‘individuals as well as governments develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty as strategies to accumulate capital and power’.\(^8\) In other words, Ong finds that states are ‘highly responsive’ to the challenges posed by globalisation.

This is a useful way to make sense of the changes at LAS over time. Though not a state per se, LAS operates as such. It is an independent school with its own set of rules. It has a private campus on which all services are paid for by annual fees, including groundskeeping, waste removal and building renovations. The school leadership has free rein to set the annual budget, make choices about the curriculum and design and enforce a disciplinary system. Campus security is maintained by a system of cameras and checkpoints. Students and staff are given cards that signal their right to be on campus. Although LAS is accredited by outside bodies (namely, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the Council of International Schools), the school neither receives funding from them nor depends on them. For instance, LAS could lose its accreditation and still operate as a school. Finally, as Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, nations were founded as political entities rather than ‘socio-anthropological’ ones. They ‘consisted in the decision of a sovereign people to live under common laws and a common constitution, irrespective of culture, language, and ethnic composition’.\(^9\) In these ways, then, LAS functions as a state.

LAS faces many of the same challenges and displays many of the same strategies as Ong’s states. For example, although LAS was founded in 1961 to link to American priorities, the rise of global capitalism caused its leadership to re-orient the school to a global economic elite, to stay financially solvent. In this instance, LAS reflects a state that ‘evolved by aggressively seeking global capital while securing their own economic interests’.\(^10\) However, framing LAS as a state also requires taking some liberties with Ong’s ideas. This arises primarily from the fact that LAS does not have citizen-subjects (students are arguably subjects but not juridical ones). Consequently, this article does not pursue some of Ong’s lines of inquiry, such as a state’s regulation of its people and markets.

Following Ong, this analysis of LAS ‘bring[s] into the same analytical framework the economic rationalities of globalization and the cultural dynamics that shape human and political responses’.\(^11\) As already mentioned, Ong argues against the notion that global capitalism erodes state power. She demonstrates that, instead, the state is still key ‘when it comes to the rearrangements of global spaces and the restructuring of social and political relations’.\(^12\) Moreover, Ong highlights states’ flexible responses to new economic circumstances. Applying this to LAS, we see that by realigning the school’s goals with a shifting economic climate, LAS leadership retained the institution’s relevance. In other words, their responses were an exercise in adaptability within certain parameters.

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\(^8\)Ibid., 6.

\(^9\)Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Language, Culture, and National Identity’, Social Research 63, no. 4 (1996): 1066.

\(^10\)Ong, Flexible Citizenship, 21.

\(^11\)Ibid., 5.

\(^12\)Ibid., 215.
The source material for this article comes from a wider study of LAS as a case of elite international schooling. This article draws on documentary data collected from current and former LAS administrators, staff and students; Swiss cantonal and national archives; and online repositories. My analysis primarily uses material housed at the school, here cited as the LAS Document Collection (LASDC). These include letters dated from 1960 to 1982, meeting minutes and school memoranda from 1961 to 2011, yearbooks from 1963 to 2011 and recent school publications.

**A school for the Cold War**

When LAS opened in 1961, the institution was embedded in an emerging intersection between American foreign policy and education as informed by the Cold War. Yet, financial practicalities meant that the leadership gradually turned to prospective students whom it did not necessarily want but whom it needed: those who could afford high fees. In this way, the leadership’s evolving vision for the school through the 1960s and 1970s reflected the Cold War’s evolution into international capitalism.

The Cold War was ostensibly a stand-off between two geopolitical superpowers, the United States and the USSR, that emerged from the Second World War. According to Richard Saull, there are two leading narratives of the Cold War: one that focuses on the conflicting military and economic interests of those superpowers, and one that focuses on their conflicting domestic ideologies. Saull, however, convincingly argues for a third. He suggests that ‘the Cold War was a form of global social conflict associated with the revolutionary and communist consequences – in the form of political movements and states – of a shifting, contradictory and uneven capitalist development’. It is this understanding that I adopt, particularly as international capitalism would become a critical part of LAS’s institutional trajectory.

In 1950s and 1960s America, linking to the Cold War arguably conferred elite status. C. Wright Mills, for example, theorised that the ‘power elite’ in the United States in this era were corporate officers, statesmen and military leaders, a group notably defined by its members’ professions. These arenas (the economy, the government and the military) directly related to Cold War concerns. In fact, Mills’ theory of who constituted the ‘power elite’ was apparently inspired by the American public’s acceptance of the Cold War. The trifecta of economy, government and military reflected the three prongs of US Cold War policy: what Saull describes as ‘leadership of the capitalist world, geopolitical containment of the USSR, and the containment and rollback of international revolution’. In other words, from 1947 to the 1970s, Mills’s ‘power elites’ were united in their goals.

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13See also Karen Lillie, ‘Mobile and Elite: Diaspora as a Strategy for Status Maintenance in Transitions to Higher Education’, *British Journal of Educational Studies* 69, no. 5 (2021): 641–56; Karen Lillie, ‘Multi-Sited Understandings: Complicating the Role of Elite Schools in Transnational Class Formation’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 42, no. 1 (2021): 82–96; Karen Lillie and Pere Ayling, ‘Revisiting the Un/ethical: The Complex Ethics of Elite Studies Research’, *Qualitative Research* 21, no. 6 (2021): 890–905.
14Richard Saull, *The Cold War and After: Capitalism, Revolution and Superpower Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 2.
15Ibid., 1.
16C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 4.
17Aeron Davis and Karel Williams, ‘Introduction: Elites and Power after Financialization’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 5–6 (2017): 5.
18Saull, *The Cold War*, 152.
Educational institutions were implicated in these Cold War concerns. They were even integrated into foreign policy. Looking to expand American influence abroad, for example, US President (1961–1963) John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps in 1961. University academics had lobbied for this programme as a response to Cold War concerns, thereby linking American academia to the federal government. Kennedy’s administration also passed the Fulbright-Hays Act in 1961. This placed international educational exchange programmes under the purview of the US Department of State. The International Education Act of 1966 then started, expanded and better-funded various international educational activities. Effectively, it ‘placed education at the very heart of our relations with the nations and the peoples of the rest of the world’. Thus, education became a core pillar of US foreign policy.

In parallel, American education in the 1960s became increasingly integrated with the military. Domestically, scientists shaped a new science curriculum for secondary schools in response to the Cold War environment. Internationally, American schools abroad proliferated. By 1969, the US Department of State sponsored 129 schools in 83 countries. The US Department of Defence sponsored another 312 schools in 27 countries. Together, these institutions enrolled almost 185,000 students.

LAS was part of this landscape, both as an American school abroad and, particularly, as one started by someone who worked for the US military, as will later be explained. It was not, however, convenient to set up such a school. As one LAS Board report noted, ‘[i]t was definitely foreseen that difficulties would be encountered in adapting American standards and practices in school operation to [the] legal requirements, customs, and environment of Switzerland’. Five years after LAS’s opening, those difficulties were enumerated by the Board:

recruitment, selection and adjustment of American staff; labor shortages and recently enacted laws curtailing employment of foreigners; language and communication difficulties; cantonal requirements pertaining to the operation of schools in general and of private schools in particular; official pressure that business management be in the hands of a Swiss, preferable a Vaudois; the sharp rise in food and other costs; the many legal ordinances to which non-Swiss are subject.

The Board persisted, seemingly because Switzerland offered material advantages. The canton (Vaud) had granted the school five tax-free years from the time of its incorporation. The Board also considered the country ‘perhaps Europe’s best and most favoured location for educational institutions such as ours’. There is no further explanation as to why that was. However, an earlier letter from members of the school’s planning committee noted, ‘[t]he

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19 Anne Palmer Peterson, ‘Academic Conceptions of a United States Peace Corps’, *History of Education* 40, no. 2 (2011): 229–40.
20 R. Freeman Butts, ‘America’s Role in International Education: A Perspective on Thirty Years’, in *The United States and International Education: The Sixty-Eighth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, ed. H. Shane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 34.
21 John Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science Education* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
22 Cole Brembeck, ‘United States’ Educational Designs Woven into the Fabric of International Education’, in Shane, *The United States and International Education*, 187–219.
23 LASDC, Board Report, 1964.
24 LASDC, Progress Report, 1966.
25 LASDC, Board Report, 1964.
26 LASDC, Progress Report, 1966.
location of our school, and the educational program we will be offering, appear to be a much desired answer to the needs of an ever increasing number of American families at home and abroad. Thus, LAS was established to serve those American families, despite the issues engendered in the process.

LAS’s links to the intersection of American foreign policy and education can be seen in its objectives. A school’s mission statement, it has been argued, articulates its envisioned purpose and value. LAS originally had three objectives, printed on a pamphlet that announced the opening of the school:

To provide youth, by a synthesis of best American and European pedagogic means, with effective tools to carve successful careers.

To guide youth, by quality in education, toward a cultural aristocracy within the framework of responsible citizenship.

To inspire youth, in the free atmosphere of an incomparably beautiful country, with ideals for lives of useful service.

These objectives were central to the school’s identity and marketing. I here discuss the second one, as it is particularly illustrative.

The notion of a ‘cultural aristocracy’ echoed an idea from Thomas Jefferson, first a Founding Father and then a US President (1801–1809). Jefferson advocated for producing a ‘natural aristocracy’ by educating young people for American leadership. At the time LAS was founded, a ‘cultural aristocracy’ may have also called to mind ‘the best and the brightest’ – the intellectual elite recruited to advise US President Kennedy on foreign policy. Both of those notions tied education to the American government.

That tie would have been particularly relevant in the early 1960s, when the national government was expanding and, simultaneously, young people graduating from prestigious American secondary schools were losing interest in government roles. Seeing this trend, Henry Commager warned the American nation to ‘tilt the balance [from the private sector] back to public enterprise’ by teaching young people ‘an avid sense of duty and of civic virtue’. In other words, schools were put on the front line of creating future American civil servants.

LAS was thus advertised as an American school that dovetailed with US government concerns, but to families that were already connected to an American Cold War elite. The school leadership sent marketing materials to US firms with overseas offices, US embassies and governmental agencies abroad – or, in other words, to Mills’s business, government and military professionals.

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27 LASDC, Letter from F. Ott, June 23, 1960.
28 Tiago Bittencourt and Alexandra Willetts, ‘Negotiating the Tensions: A Critical Study of International Schools’ Mission Statements’, Globalisation, Societies and Education 16, no. 4 (2018): 515.
29 LASDC, Opening Announcement, n.d. [before 1961].
30 Lester J. Cappon, ed., The Adams–Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959).
31 David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993); David Halberstam, ‘The Very Expensive Education of McGeorge Bundy’, Harper’s Magazine, July 1969.
32 Edward Saveth, ‘Education of an Elite’, History of Education Quarterly 28, no. 3 (1988): 367–86; Allen Potter, ‘The American Governing Class’, British Journal of Sociology 13, no. 4 (1962): 309–19.
33 Henry Steele Commager, ‘Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today’, Daedalus 90, no. 4 (1961): 668, 670.
34 LASDC, Board Report, 1960.
Moreover, the leadership created a fee structure that made the school affordable primarily to those groups. In 1961, when the median income of US families was US$5700, LAS charged US$1980 per year.35 Both the US Department of State and multinational companies, however, subsidised boarding school fees for the children of their overseas employees. The State Department, for example, offered an allowance of US$1200 in 1961.36 Families connected to the US government therefore paid US$780 out-of-pocket for an LAS education, which was less than half the advertised cost.

The LAS student body reflected those recruitment and fee strategies. In 1963, it was 97% American, though students were drawn from 30 countries.37 The 1963 yearbook lists 98 of the 110 students’ home addresses. Of those 98, 34 were ‘in care of’ an organisation: 19 diplomatic efforts (seven US embassies, eight US governmental organisations and four non-governmental organisations), 13 commercial enterprises (seven oil companies and six assorted others), one university and one military base. This means that LAS recruited from a Millsian elite while also proposing to create one.

The idea of linking students to American foreign policy was also put into practice. In 1963, for example, Roger Tubby gave the school’s graduation speech.38 He was the US Representative to the European Office of the United Nations. The 1964 yearbook was dedicated to US President Kennedy, who was assassinated that school year. Two American ambassadors to Switzerland visited the school in 1969 and 1970.39

The graduation speaker in 1964 illuminates LAS’s articulations with not only American foreign policy but also the ‘power elite’. The speaker was W. True Davis Jr, US Ambassador to Switzerland.40 Davis may have spoken as a relative of a graduating student, as one such student’s family name was Davis, although the first name did not match those of Davis’s children.41 In any case, Davis was in close contact with LAS in his capacity as ambassador. The next year, for example, the Stars and Stripes American military newspaper reported a financial scandal at the school. This prompted a phone call from one of Davis’s staffers to learn more about the situation.42

Davis exemplified a Millsian elite in that he was not a career diplomat. In his obituary, the Washington Post described him as a ‘multimillionaire businessman’. The article re-reported something Davis said in 1972, about being chosen as Ambassador to Switzerland: ‘Kennedy felt that economic intelligence flowed more freely between companies than between countries, and he wanted me for my international connections’.43 Davis was thus both corporate officer and statesman.

35 Bureau of the Census, ‘Current Population Reports: Consumer Income’ (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1963); LASDC, Catalogue, 1965.
36 LASDC, Board Minutes, 1968.
37 LASDC, Board Report, 1963.
38 LASDC, Yearbook, 1963.
39 LASDC, Yearbook, 1969, 1970.
40 LASDC, Yearbook, 1964.
41 LASDC, Commencement Program, May 30, 1964.
42 LASDC, Letter to S. Ott, July 23, 1965; LASDC, Letter from S. Ott, April 7, 1965.
43 Bart Barnes, ‘William True Davis Dies’, Washington Post, March 5, 2003, para. 5.
LAS’s construction as an institution that would educate young people to serve the American nation articulated with the personal and professional history of its founder: Fred Ott (F. Ott). According to his curriculum vitae (CV) written in 1985, F. Ott was born in the German-speaking city of Basel, Switzerland on 28 August 1914. In 1925, his family migrated to New York City. Eventually, F. Ott earned a US university degree in Germanistics and Philosophy, during which time he studied abroad at the University of Basel. In his CV, between mentions of his university extracurricular activities (the arts and journalism) and his academic merits, is the comment, ‘[i]n Germany during the early Nazi period, Fred was harassed for his outspoken anti-Nazi sentiments’. This statement’s ad hoc placement suggests a desire that it appears somewhere, rather than that it provides relevant context.

A CV can be seen as an autobiography that constructs, presents and performs a particular self. Here, it also appears to respond to wider discourses. F. Ott seemed to be assuring readers that although he was a German speaker and scholar, he was not a Nazi sympathiser. Statements to this same effect are found in several school marketing materials. For example, one commonly retold story is of F. Ott’s encounter with Nazis at a German tavern in 1934. As the story goes, he told them that his favourite cultural figures were a Jewish composer and a Jewish writer – and then was kicked out of the tavern. Such tales and what they convey contribute to how F. Ott constructed an image of being ‘a fiercely patriotic American who loathed Nazism’.

This distancing from his Germanic roots must be understood in its historical context. After university, F. Ott completed a master’s degree in Educational Administration. He then worked as a secondary school principal from 1938 to 1939 and a junior college instructor from 1939 to 1942. In early December 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed, and America entered the Second World War. According to the family biography, F. Ott was then asked by his boss whether he was a Communist or a Nazi. He was told: ‘[i]n our school and city, we worry about you!’ To protect his job and reputation, F. Ott put on a pageant entitled I Pledge Allegiance. This took place within weeks of Germany and the United States declaring war on each other. Although the family biography does not discuss the pageant’s reception, it is perhaps telling that F. Ott left his job the following year.

In 1944, he was drafted into the war. He was first assigned to a prisoner of war camp in the United States for captured German troops. Then, after May 1945, he was transferred to the Office of Military Government for Germany. This means that, in the span of just a few years, F. Ott was a native German speaker first in an America at war and then in the US armed forces in Germany.

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44 Although public documents and private letters refer to F. Ott as the founder of LAS, his wife, S. Ott, played a significant role in starting the school. She was approached with a real estate deal in Leysin and envisioned a school there. Yet she is present in the LASDC primarily as a scribe – the Board secretary and a letter-writer on behalf of her husband. There are many examples of women, in various geographies and times, whose creations were credited to men in their lives; S. Ott may be yet another one.

45 LASDC. F. Ott curriculum vitae, attached note dated 1985.

46 Nad Miller and David Morgan, ‘Called to Account: The CV as an Autobiographical Practice’, Sociology 27, no. 1 (1993): 133–43.

47 S. Ott and K. S. Ott with D. Beaudouin, Saga: How One Family Made a World of Difference Through Education (Self-published, 2017); LASDC, Yearbook, 2011; LASDC, A School for the World, 2011.

48 Ott and Ott, Saga, 102.

49 Ibid., 79.
In 1951, F. Ott took a job as Director of Plans and Programs for the Dependent Schools of the US Air Force. He oversaw Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The US government started this programme in 1946, after the military allowed enlisted individuals to take their families abroad. The schools employed American teachers to educate American children in an American curriculum. In his role, F. Ott planned and established elementary and secondary schools abroad. He remained in this position until 1966. In other words, he planned and opened LAS in 1961 while still working for the US military, planning and opening its schools. While the ethics of this may be questionable today, internal documents from the time did not flag this arrangement.

LAS’s guiding principles, as articulated by its objectives, were thus aligned with those of F. Ott, an American immigrant who outwardly demonstrated patriotic citizenship. Critically, however, the school’s educational goals eventually competed with its financial obligations. This would steer LAS’s course moving forward.

F. Ott did not have enough personal financial capital to open LAS on his own. As a result, he created a shareholders’ association to run the school. The Leysin American Schools Société Anonyme (LASSA), as it was called, was incorporated on 9 July 1960. It had a basic capital of 350,000 SFr. (£1.2 million in 2020), which was divided into 350 shares and sold to 26 different shareholders. According to the Articles of Incorporation, Americans had to hold at least 60% of the shares. This clause was apparently meant to preserve the American spirit of the institution.

Simply being American, however, did not translate into prioritising LASSA’s educational values over its financial profits. As a group, the American shareholders were characterised as motivated by capital gains. In a shareholder meeting in 1964, for instance, F. Ott announced that ‘[t]he majority of American stockholders are mainly interested in dividends’. F. Ott was pushing his own agenda, trying to shore up support for financially driven decisions. Yet, he was, in fact, also under pressure from some American shareholders to deliver dividends. In 1966, for example, an American shareholder living in New York City wrote to F. Ott, ‘[i]t will be to your advantage to think in terms of your investors before using such monies that may be due investors for further expansion’. This sentiment was likely exacerbated by financial losses of 56,000 SFr. in 1963 and 130,000 SFr. in 1964 (£167,000 and £387,000 in 2020). LASSA, however, managed to make a profit for the first time in 1965.

This tug-of-war between educational and financial priorities characterised many of LAS’s internal documents from this period. LASSA faced a poor financial outlook owing to decreasing student enrolment. In 1971, enrolment was at a high of 185 students, after years of steady increase. In 1972, there were 135 students; in 1973, 101 students; and in 1974, 92 students. Over these three years, then, LAS lost half of its student body. Official communication attributed this loss to external forces: Other ‘US-type schools’ opening in the LAS market area and the worsening dollar-to-franc exchange rate. Internal documents, however, pointed to the worsening educational quality of the school. Staff

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50 Department of Defence Education Activity, ‘About DoDEA: History’, 2020.
51 Ott and Ott, Saga, 102.
52 LASDC, Articles of Incorporation, 1960.
53 LASDC, Shareholders’ Meeting Minutes, 1964.
54 LASDC, Letter to F. Ott, December 12, 1966.
55 LASDC, Board Minutes, 1966.
56 LASDC, Annual Report, 1973.
members, for example, complained about the business office, which they felt was not ‘subordinate’ to the school’s educational goals. Financial priorities seemed to have overridden educational goals to the extent that daily life at the school was affected.

As student enrolment decreased, fees increased. In 1972, LAS charged 14,320 SFr. (£32,000 in 2020) per year. This was roughly a 45% increase from 1961, when adjusted for inflation. The US Department of State, however, had also increased its subsidies for boarding school fees. LAS was thus still affordable to families connected to the State Department, although it cost 25–35% more than ‘comparable schools’ in the United States. Officially, this was because of the increasing cost-of-living index and poor exchange rate. Unofficially, it seemed sparked by the need for more capital from fewer students.

As a result, as F. Ott wrote in a letter to a shareholder, LAS entered ‘the “jet-set” category available only to the affluent, while virtually eliminating a most desirable group of students, i.e. those whose fathers have to work for a living’. This statement delineated between the ‘desirable’ and the ‘affluent’ – or, just 12 years after LAS opened, between those whom LAS leadership wanted to educate and those whom it needed to recruit. As such, the alignment amongst LAS’s objectives, F. Ott’s biographical narrative and American Cold War priorities came up against very real financial pressures. This forced LAS leadership to rethink the school’s purpose and clientele, and ultimately to rethink its position in a changing global landscape.

A school for the world

By the 1970s, the United States was losing geopolitical power but pursuing an economic unilateralism that would secure its status as the financial leader of the capitalist world. By the 1980s, that economic stance would morph into US President (1981–1989) Ronald Reagan’s neoliberal policies, which encouraged privatisation, deregulation and free trade. In parallel, LAS’s next generation of leadership gradually, albeit unevenly, reoriented the school to the emerging landscape of international capitalism, by shifting its clientele from corporately subsidised American students to privately paying global ones. Thus, as the global sociopolitical and economic landscape evolved, the LAS leadership learned to serve an emerging global elite whose status had already been brought into being by international capitalism.

By 1980, declining enrolment and other financial struggles pushed LAS to the edge of bankruptcy and liquidation. The previous section explained the beginning of this trend: a high of 185 students in 1971 gave way to 92 students by 1974. This trajectory continued. In 1981, there were only 32 enrolled students at the school, causing a financial loss of over 665,000 SFr. (£1 million in 2020). Under Swiss law, Board members would have been

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57. LASDC, Testimony of the Dissatisfaction Felt by the Faculty of the High School, 1972.
58. LASDC, Memorandum, October 1972.
59. LASDC, Board Minutes, 1968.
60. LASDC, Annual Report, 1974.
61. LASDC, Letter from F. Ott, February 19, 1973.
62. Ibid.
63. Saull, The Cold War, 132–8.
64. David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–2.
65. LASDC, Annual Report, 1982; Letter from F. Ott, July 16, 1980.
66. LASDC, General Assembly, 1981.
financially liable for the school’s bankruptcy. F. Ott therefore took out a 250,000 SFr. (€385,000 in 2020) personal liquidity guarantee to prevent this outcome.\(^67\) After the guarantee was in place, the Board unanimously voted to force F. Ott into retirement.\(^68\) Yet, he continued to be involved with the corporation precisely because of the guarantee. In a letter to the President of the Board, his wife made their position clear: ‘\textit{w}hile we are here, and as long as we have so much financial interest to protect, we will be here, we will work with the Board as in the past.’\(^69\)

In the midst of this, the Board tried to sell the school. In 1982, having not yet found a buyer, the Board approached K. Steven Ott (K. S. Ott) about taking over the institution. K. S. Ott was F. Ott’s son and, at the time, LASSA’s former business manager. He agreed to the Board’s proposed takeover under two conditions: (1) the existing shareholders and Board ‘no longer play a role of any importance’, and (2) he be given both complete ‘authority’ and the majority of shares.\(^70\) LASSA took the deal.

When K. S. Ott stepped in, in 1982, LASSA had a loss carry-over of 1.2 million SFr., a debt of 300,000 SFr. and a capital of only 700,000 SFr. (£1.7 million, £400,000 and £900,000 in 2020). K. S. Ott formulated a recapitalisation plan to eliminate the debt balance and bring in new capital. He reduced the existing LASSA shares to 10% of their original value and sold the other 90%.\(^71\) The new investors were primarily members of the Ott family: F. Ott and his wife bought 36% of the new shares, while K. S. Ott and his wife purchased 40%.\(^72\) Significantly, then, the Ott family consolidated its power and influence over the corporation and, by extension, over LAS.

This period of crisis set the scene for changes to come. Peter Burke argues that communities with internal conflicts are more open to change.\(^73\) This seemed to be the case here. The educational, social and financial fabric of LAS and LASSA was fraying. This gutted much of LAS. Students left, F. Ott was removed and shareholder power was reduced. This atmosphere, I suggest, meant that K. S. Ott not only \textit{could} but also \textit{needed} to restructure the institution. Under these unique circumstances, he changed what kind of school LAS was, over the next 25 years.

Global social, political and economic structures were also shifting during this time. In the 1980s, US President Reagan intensified America’s use of the military in the Cold War.\(^74\) This restored some of the country’s world political leadership and, consequently, allowed Reagan to push for international economic policies that benefited it. He pursued neoliberal policies of privatisation, deregulation and free trade.\(^75\) On an international level, institutions like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank scaled these interests across borders. Simultaneously, the European Union paved the way for a single market. This facilitated the movement of capital across borders and the opening of new markets. What is now called the World Economic Forum was established in Switzerland, annually

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\(^{67}\) LASDC, Letter from F. Ott, July 16, 1980.

\(^{68}\) LASDC, Protokoll der Verwaltungsratsitzung, 1980.

\(^{69}\) LASDC, Letter from S. Ott, July 21, 1980.

\(^{70}\) LASDC, Memorandum, 1982.

\(^{71}\) LASDC, Board Minutes, 1982.

\(^{72}\) LASDC, Shareholders List, 1984.

\(^{73}\) Peter Burke, \textit{History and Social Theory}, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

\(^{74}\) Saull, \textit{The Cold War}, 155.

\(^{75}\) Harvey, \textit{History of Neoliberalism}, 1–2.
bringing together global business leaders. In other words, ‘the more hostile international atmosphere, which [the US] had helped to create, consolidated its leadership of the capitalist world’ and the so-called ‘project of neoliberal globalisation’ began. At the same time, the Cold War thawed.

As these global changes were taking place, K. S. Ott oversaw LASSA’s financial recovery. First, he intensified recruitment of its traditional clientele: Americans abroad. By 1985, enrolment increased to 130 students. K. S. Ott then tried to diversify this clientele by opening admission offices in the United States, to attract domestic American students. These offices were unsuccessful and closed the following year. However, over the next few years, the pipeline of overseas American families to LAS was disrupted. In 1988, the US government stopped subsidising private boarding school fees for overseas employees. Ten students connected to the US Department of Defence withdrew from LAS that year. Additionally, multinational companies were decreasing the number of employees posted in member-states of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), particularly Saudi Arabia. In 1989, the number of LAS students normally resident in Saudi Arabia fell for the first time after seven years of growth.

K. S. Ott then experimented with taking LAS in an international direction. In 1989, the Kumon Institute of Education approached him with the idea of co-starting a Japanese boarding school in Switzerland. In 1990, the Kumon Leysin Academy of Switzerland (KLAS) was born as a joint venture. According to K. S. Ott, this new school prepared students for a future ‘most strongly . . . influenced by the European Community, North America, and Japan’. At the time, West Germany and Japan were seen as global economic powerhouses. This vision, then, tied KLAS as well as LAS to the evolving global marketplace.

This tie became even clearer in 1991. That year, the same in which the Cold War is widely considered to have ended, LAS adopted the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme, an international curriculum. This signalled both the school’s increasingly international outlook and its coming recruitment from an international clientele. In 1995, just four years later, K. S. Ott made a ‘concerted effort’ to build LAS’s international markets. He reasoned that parents in countries that were ‘liberaliz[ing] trade’ would want to educate their children abroad, in Switzerland. In other words, he looked to capitalise on changing global political and economic situations.

K. S. Ott’s tapping of new markets, however, was an uneven effort. It was moderated by a lingering American orientation. For example, he imposed an upper limit on the number of Japanese and Russian students allowed at LAS (10% of the student body each). As justification for this, K. S. Ott explained, ‘[t]oo much success in one market (excluding the US/Canada) could color the student body too much’. Thus, even as he looked to new geographies, he retained an image of the target LAS student as white and North American.

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76Saull, The Cold War, 153.
77LASDC, Summary of Financial Restructuring of the Leysin American School, 1985.
78LASDC, Shareholders’ Newsletter, 1987, 1988.
79LASDC, Shareholders’ Newsletter, 1989.
80LASDC, Shareholders’ Newsletter, 1988, 1989.
81LASDC, Board Report, 1991.
82David Harvey, Spaces of Global Capitalism (London: Verso, 2006), 88.
83Saira Fitzgerald, ‘Blackboard/Whiteboard: The Discursive Construction of the International Baccalaureate in Canada’ (PhD dissertation, Carleton University, 2017).
84LASDC, Board Report, 1995.
85LASDC, Letter from K.S. Ott, September 21, 1995.
KLAS (the Japanese school) and LASSA divorced in 1997 due to growing managerial disagreements. K. S. Ott then refocused on American students. His perspective had changed. ‘Being successful in the U.S. is of greatest importance’, he wrote: ‘LAS needs to remain an American international school’. His pursuit of the growing international economic elite was therefore tepid. This recalls Michael Apple’s argument that, in moments of conflict, traditional values come to the fore. When adapting to external forces did not go as expected, K. S. Ott returned to LAS’s traditional client base.

He was again faced with changing global circumstances at the end of the 1990s. Saudi Arabia allowed international high schools to open in the Kingdom. As a result, the number of LAS students who were normally resident in Saudi Arabia plunged. In one year, from 1997 to 1998, LAS lost 20 such students (from 78 to 58). By 2000, just two years later, there were only 32 enrolled students living in Saudi Arabia. Americans comprised just 24% of the student body.

Meanwhile, LAS fees had risen. In combination with the demographic changes, this engendered what K. S. Ott described as ‘a more international, rather than American community, with a greater number of “rich kids” than when there was a greater number of expatriate students’. The informality of, and quotation marks around, the phrase ‘rich kids’ contrasts with the formality of ‘expatriate students’. Effectively, this politicised both terms, giving more respect to the latter than the former, likely reflecting power relations and hierarchies within the school.

Yet, K. S. Ott had taken at least two practical steps to actively shift LAS’s target clientele to these international ‘rich kids’. One was through recruitment practices. The Board contracted agents ‘wherever possible’ across the globe. These individuals recruited students and earned a commission per enrolment. In 2002, the Board found that a competitor school had ‘a far more pervasive and successful agent network’. In response, it devised undisclosed strategies for agents operating in Russia, Kazakhstan and the so-called ‘small markets’ of Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Baltics, to attract more students. Hence, the Board deepened its engagement with this market-like structure of recruitment.

The other step that K. S. Ott took was in image management. In 1998, LAS became the first school ever to apply for ISO 9001 status, a worldwide business standard, which it was granted. The family biography describes this award as ‘further validat[ing] the LAS name to their global market’. K. S. Ott therefore framed LAS as a business to legitimise its education, thereby further linking the school to international capitalism.

Students’ everyday experiences seemed to reflect LAS’s uneven transition from a school for Americans abroad to one for the globally wealthy. The 1999 yearbook, for example, shows students in Japanese kimonos and Kazakh koileks, and at a Canadian Thanksgiving celebration and a Scandinavian-themed dinner. This is all before a four-

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86 LASDC, Board Minutes, 1998 (emphasis in the original).
87 Michael Apple, *Educating the ‘Right’ Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006).
88 LASDC, Board Report, 1998; Board Report, 2001.
89 LASDC, Board Minutes, 2000.
90 Lindsay Prior, ‘Using Documents in Social Research’, *Sociology* 42, no. 5 (2003): 52.
91 LASDC, Board Report, 1998.
92 LASDC, Board Minutes, 2002.
93 LASDC, Board Report, 2004.
94 Ott and Ott, *Saga*, 244.
page spread highlighting ‘international activities’ that also revolved around dress and food. Sections showcasing international events at LAS appear in every yearbook thereafter. Yet, photographs of everyday life maintain a distinct Americanness. Students wore T-shirts featuring flags, sports teams and universities of the United States. The student experience thus appeared to be an American-oriented one, peppered with international special events.

In 2001, the global landscape again changed. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September, being American became a more fragile concept. Yet, the effects of ‘September 11’ on LAS were not mentioned in Board reports, though one can imagine that the attacks rippled through an American school abroad. The headmaster during the first Gulf War (1990–1991), for example, remembered that as an unnerving time at LAS. He told me that students’ parents who lived in Saudi Arabia gave him their wills for safekeeping. He also recalled that LAS leadership considered dropping ‘American’ from the school’s name, out of fear of being targeted for violence.95 One would think that September 11 engendered similar moments. Perhaps, however, LAS was no longer American enough to warrant such concerns.

As of 2007, the Board still advocated for the recruitment of so-called ‘corporate students’. These were students whose fees were subsidised by their parents’ employers. In early 2009, however, the global economy crumbled. Corporate student enrolment dropped and privately paying students became essential to the school’s survival. Despite the global recession, those families could still afford LAS. Fees at the school were 67,000 SFr. (£39,000) at this point. The Board reflected that ‘[w]hile this is influencing our school culture, financially it is more profitable to recruit private students’.96 In other words, financial needs won out over institutional values. A later Board report asked and answered: ‘[w]ho is LAS now and in the Future? LAS is in [the] exclusive luxury niche-market of world boarding high school education.’97 This question did not ask what LAS was. It focused on readjusting to a new trajectory within the emerging global framework.

By 2011, LAS was only 12% American. Americans were the second-largest group behind Russians (14%).98 This was a far cry from F. Ott’s vision for a school that served the American Cold War. Fees were 74,500 SFr. (£58,100) per year for privately paying students.99 LAS had thus become like ‘all other private Swiss boarding schools’ – an institution ‘offering luxury-valued services’100 Moreover, it had become less like the schools with which it used to compare itself: American ones. That same Board report continued: ‘[i]ndeed, tuition costs in US $ is now about twice that of the most expensive American boarding schools’. This set the scene for 2011 to be declared the year that LAS became a school for ‘high-end clientele’.101

It was primarily K. S. Ott who adapted LAS to international capitalism, reflecting his own biography and interests. Unlike his father, he was a business-oriented man. When LAS opened in 1961, the Ott family lived in Wiesbaden, Germany. K. S. Ott was

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95Interview with Grant Fiedler, February 21, 2017.
96LASDC, Board Minutes, 2009.
97LASDC, Board Minutes, 2011.
98LASDC, Academic Profile, 2011.
99LASDC, Historical Prices, 2017.
100LASDC, Board Minutes, 2011.
101LASDC, Strategic Plan Meeting, 2016.
a secondary school student at the time, though he was not enrolled at LAS. At his local German school, the family biography recounts, he bought American jeans from his father’s US military base and re-sold them to his classmates at a profit.102

K. S. Ott then went to the United States, earning both a bachelor’s and a doctoral degree in engineering. In 1970, he moved back to Leysin and became LASSA Business Manager, a position he held for five years. Then, in 1977, he moved to Saudi Arabia. He worked first at the new King Faisal University and then in wastewater plant construction. In 1980, as discussed earlier, LASSA tried to sell LAS. As a result of rising Islamic fundamentalism and hostility towards the West in the region, K. S. Ott had apparently been considering moving back to Switzerland.103 The presentation of his life narrative in the family biography thus suggests that his takeover of LAS was providential, neatly slotting into both his and LAS’s trajectories.

The takeover was described in the biography as ‘investing’ K. S. Ott’s future in the school104 – clearly a financial metaphor. Indeed, his approach to LAS seemed informed by his business orientation and his connection to Saudi Arabia. The Middle East became central to his recovery plan for the school. He distributed 600 catalogues and calendars to ‘schools, clubs, Swissair exhibits and conferences’ in Saudi Arabia. In comparison, he sent only 100 brochures and calendars to the United States.105 His financial restructuring plan included recruitment trips to the Middle East.106 The graduation speaker in 1984 was His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed of Jordan.107 Although this choice contrasted with the American dignitaries invited by F. Ott’s administration, recruiting in the Middle East was consistent with the long-standing goal of attracting American families living overseas.

In the early 2000s, the next generation of Otts was incorporated into plans for the school. K. S. Ott’s eldest son, Marc Ott (M. Ott), became LAS Director of External Relations in 2005. That same year, LAS was restructured to become a partially non-profit institution. This was partial because LASSA continued to exist within the newly created Foundation for the Advancement of International Education. The Foundation became the legal owner of both LASSA and 70% of the school’s shares. LASSA owned the other 30%.108

Launching such a foundation was not easy. It required ‘more than a year of negotiations’ with the Swiss government, including a ‘clear threat’ to move to a neighbouring canton (the threat presumably being the lost economic base) and ‘a specialist auditor’ for unspecified tax problems.109 Yet, the same Board report that listed these issues also made the case for persisting nonetheless: setting up political and financial structures that would ease succession.

M. Ott took over from his father in 2007, just two years later. This was the same year that his grandfather, F. Ott, died. A Board report described this transition in financial terms: ‘[t]he fact that we are in the 3rd generation of Otts is a substantial advantage in the markets. . . . It shows ongoing family involvement, stability and a clear vision for excellence.’110 The handover was thus framed as a marketing tool.

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102Ott and Ott, Saga, 137.
103Ibid., 201.
104Ibid., 207.
105LASDC, Progress Report, 1982.
106LASDC, Summary, 1985.
107LASDC, Yearbook, 1984.
108LASDC, LAS Governance Structure, 2016.
109LASDC, Board Minutes, 2005.
110LASDC, Board Minutes, 2010.
At this point, few signs of F. Ott’s original vision for LAS remained. In a report from 2011, M. Ott wrote, ‘[a]ll organizations must adjust to new market realities to survive – often the first lesson learned in business school’. Each successive generation, then, shifted LAS further away from F. Ott’s mission, in order to ‘survive’ in a changing broader climate.

This evolution is particularly clear when looking at the school’s mottos over time. In 1981, in the window between F. Ott’s forced retirement and K. S. Ott taking over, the sitting Board of Directors ran LAS. This Board slightly rewrote LAS’s original objectives. Since F. Ott had just been removed from leadership, it seems probable that the Board meant to distance the school from his vision. However, the fact that the rewording was light-handed suggests that LAS’s stated vision did not change significantly over its first 20 years. The new objectives, with significant changes italicised, were:

To provide, by a synthesis of European and American pedagogic means, *a sound education*;

[compare with: ‘with effective tools to carve successful careers’]  

To guide youth, by quality in education, toward *worthy cultural standards* within the parameters of responsible citizenship;

[compare with: ‘a cultural aristocracy’]  

To inspire youth, in the free environment of a beautiful country, with ideals for lives of useful service.

[no significant change][112]

The revised version of the second objective, the original of which was discussed in the previous section, is of particular interest. The concept of a ‘cultural aristocracy’ may no longer have resonated with prospective LAS families. At this point, the Cold War was seen differently. In the early 1960s, when LAS opened, the United States was enjoying Cold War successes and resultant world political and military leadership. As has been noted, however, the global environment changed in the 1970s. The Vietnam War brought about a fractured US domestic climate, decreased American geopolitical power and the expansion of the USSR.[113] The 1980s also followed two decades in which institutionalised social hierarchies were challenged in the United States, such as by the civil and women’s rights movements. Given this climate, ‘cultural standards’ may have better captured the mood of the times. The phrase implied something that could be achieved through the so-called ‘American Dream’ of social mobility and home ownership rather than something into which someone was born. In this way, it linked LAS to evolving American rhetoric.

K. S. Ott kept these revised objectives throughout his administration. He may have done so because it showed consistency during a time of change. It was not until 2007, when M. Ott became Head, that the school’s stated mission changed again, this time in both form and content. The motto became: ‘developing innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world’.

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[111] LASDC, Board Minutes, 2011.  
[112] LASDC, Catalogue, 1981 (emphasis added).  
[113] Saull, *The Cold War*, 117, 119–20.
At this point in time, LAS faced a marketing crisis. According to internal documents, the leadership did not have a clear sense of the kind of school LAS was, or who it served. The Board wanted to attract privately paying students, as they were better for the school’s financial goals. At the same time, it wanted corporate students to maintain what it called the school’s unspecified ‘middle-class values’. The Board thus decided to ‘rewrite our mission statement and in doing so create an LAS “brand”’. 114 That brand linked to international education.

LAS’s new motto leaned on the language of the IB. The IB developed its mission statement in 1998. 115 This was almost 10 years before LAS changed its motto. The IB’s mission statement is: ‘to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect’. LAS’s new motto clearly paralleled this language and form.

Looking at the changing demographics of LAS, this adaptation is unsurprising. LAS students were no longer primarily Americans who lived abroad. Most students now lived in their home countries and studied abroad, at LAS. By embracing the language of an international educational organisation, the new mission statement appeared to better align LAS with its already changing clientele.

This contention is further supported by the work of Bittencourt and Willetts. 116 These scholars categorised key words from 46 international schools’ mission statements into one of two discourses: ideological internationalism or market-driven multinationalism. They found that 44 of the 46 schools linked to both. LAS, I would add, also did. According to Bittencourt and Willetts’s taxonomy, ‘innovative’ speaks to market-driven multinationalism while ‘compassionate’, ‘responsible’ and ‘citizens of the world’ speak to ideological internationalism. The authors conclude that schools linking to both are navigating between these competing priorities. That also seems to have been the case at LAS.

In 2011, LAS was self-titled ‘A School for the World’. 117 Yet, it was not a school for just any world. It served a particular world, a well-resourced one. This title thus linked LAS to a privileged notion of global circulation. Zygmunt Bauman, for example, distinguishes between tourists who ‘move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly attractive’ and vagabonds who ‘move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably inhospitable’. 118 LAS’s self-given title commodified its students’ mobility. It seemed to say: if you purchase our education, the world is your oyster. This was not just any kind of international education, then. This was an education for the internationally wealthy.

**Conclusion**

The first section of this article explored LAS’s positioning in the first two decades after it was founded in 1961. As has been shown, in an era largely shaped by the Cold War, LAS was fashioned at the intersection between American foreign policy and education. To

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114 LASDC, Board Minutes, 2007.
115 International Baccalaureate, ‘The History of the IB’, 2017, [https://www.ibo.org/digital-toolkit/presentations/](https://www.ibo.org/digital-toolkit/presentations/) (accessed September 3, 2021).
116 Bittencourt and Willetts, ‘Negotiating the Tensions’.
117 LASDC, A School for the World, 2011.
118 Zygmunt Bauman, Globalisation: The Human Consequences (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 92–3 (emphasis in the original).
a large extent, its leadership cultivated ties to an American Cold War elite. The second section then examined the school’s evolution from 1980 to 2011. It traced the LAS leadership’s reorientation of the school to the global economic elite, a group brought into being by the emergence of international capitalism.

The case of LAS thus provides a concrete example of an elite school strategically responding to globalising processes in ways that are financially advantageous. As F. Ott’s 1960s vision for an American Cold War-oriented school became misaligned with the changing sociopolitical and economic world landscape, his son, K. S. Ott, gradually though unevenly positioned LAS within the emerging climate of international capitalism from the 1980s onwards. Drawing on Ong’s theoretical concept of ‘state strategies’, which highlights the strategies deployed by both institutions and individuals in the face of changing global markets and mobilities, LAS’s responses to a rapidly globalising economy can be seen as an exercise in institutional adaptability within certain parameters.

At the time of publication, LAS was still surviving and even apparently thriving. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, enrolment appeared steady. This suggests that perhaps LAS’s changes over time provide a model for other international elite schools looking or needing to adapt to broader social, political and economic shifts. In other words, LAS’s trajectory can be seen as one strategy to stay solvent and relevant in a changing world.

LAS is just one school. It would be useful to know whether it presents an exception to, a counter-narrative to or a reflection of wider trends. More research on other international, economically elite schools is needed to build a more robust understanding of how elite schools responded to changing circumstances in the second half of the twentieth century. Only then can we better understand how such institutions strategically maintain their relevance over time, despite changes in the external global landscape.

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