

“To Make World Culture Our Own:”¹
The Russian Institute and the Development of Area Studies in Postwar U.S.
(1940-1955)

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¹ Widening Our Cultural Horizons by Charles B. Fahs, November 12, 1954, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 166, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC. “In this nuclear and air age our [American] heritage is the whole of human culture...If we wish to build the culture of the future...we must make world culture our own.”

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This thesis is dedicated to Noah Arnold. Memory is greater than the totality of history.

Abbreviations

ACLS	American Council of Learned societies
CC/CCNY	Carnegie Corporation/ Carnegie Corporation of New York
NYT	New York Times
RAC	Rockefeller Archive Center
RBML	Rare Books and Manuscripts Library
RF	Rockefeller Foundation
RI	Russian Institute
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
SIA	School of International Affairs (Columbia University)
SSRC	Social Science Research Council

Introduction

*In the fall of 1946, a year after World War II ended, Columbia University threw open the doors of the Russian Institute...It all began in a row of brownstone houses on 117th Street, where today the fifteen-story International Affairs Building stands.*²

- Marshall Shulman

RI '1948, Director of the Harriman Institute, 1967-74, '76-77, '81-86

Prior to the Second World War, America was blissfully ignorant of the world beyond itself and a few nations in western Europe. The globe was loosely split into vast, ambiguous regions; the “Far East” included Russia, China, and Japan, while Africa was considered one undifferentiated bloc. Until 1940, US universities had produced fewer than sixty PhDs specializing in the non-Western world, and most of these scholars dealt with antiquity.³ Russian language was taught at only three American universities (Columbia, Harvard and the University of California at Berkeley), and Russian history was offered only at the last two. The extent of American understanding of Russia was limited to brief interactions with Russian emigres, who many imagined as “wistful bearers of ineffable sufferings who had somehow landed on our shores.”⁴ For most Americans, who had never met a Russian, the country was “the land of the firebird fairy tales we’d read as children, and the home of the huge threatening armies we saw pictured in Time magazine.”⁵ Russia, as Winston Churchill described in 1939, was “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”⁶ World War II both expanded and shrunk the world; the tiny nations of Japan and Poland were suddenly key areas in American foreign relations while distant Russia, an incredible expanse of previously unconsidered land, suddenly seemed to be on the precipice of transforming everything Americans knew.

² Marshall Schulman, “Neither Inhibition nor Orthodoxy.” Columbia Magazine, 1996.

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record/archives/vol22/vol22_iss1/Coop_Harriman_USSR.html

³ David Szanton, *The Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 6.

⁴ James Cracraft, in Samuel H Baron and Cathy A Frierson ed. *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc), 2003.

⁵ James Cracraft, in Samuel H Baron and Cathy A Frierson ed. *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present*.

⁶ Alan Cowell, “Churchill’s definition of Russia still rings true,” *New York Times*, Aug 1, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/01/world/europe/01iht-letter.1.14939466.html>

“As a nation, we had been living in a relatively isolated existence,” wrote Ernest Simmons, the director of Slavic Studies at Cornell in 1943, “The future America will have to live in much closer contact with the nations of the world than it ever did in the past. This fact will unquestionably have a profound effect on the future development of education.”⁷ Struck by their provincialism, Americans urgently scrambled to create institutes and research centers dedicated to studying the “power” and “problem areas of the earth’s surface.”⁸ Soon after the end of World War II, the academic study of the Soviet Union (USSR) became a sudden priority. Foreign expertise was believed necessary for the U.S. to fulfill its newfound “global responsibility” in the postwar climate. As veterans, supported by the GI Bill, poured into universities after the war, the U.S. scrambled to retain the knowledge and experience earned during the war. Anticipating the possibility of future conflict, the US was anxious to keep veterans with international experience together—especially those with Russian experience. Millions of dollars were suddenly poured into the development of area studies—principally Russian studies. Within a few years after the war, “academic study of the USSR,” as historian David Engerman describes, “went from laughingstock to juggernaut, from a dispersed group of isolated scholars to a vibrant enterprise making headlines, advising presidents, and shaping foreign policy all the while fulfilling the traditional academic roles of teaching and research.”⁹

The development of Russian programs brought together the nation's most preeminent scholars, philanthropists and administrators, and intertwined their careers and missions in a way that would transform the landscape of American universities. Graduate studies in Russian was only the beginning of grand plan for the establishment and integration of what became known as ‘area

⁷ The Study of Russian at the General Education Level, Ernest J Simmons, 1943, Box 280, Fldr 3339 Slavic Studies-Conference Reports, Rockefeller Foundation Records, Projects, SG 1.1., RAC.

⁸ CU Graduate School of Foreign Affairs Sample Courses of Study, Nov 22, 1944, Box 388, Fldr 7 Wallace, Schulyer, Central Files, 1890-1984, CU RBML, New York.

⁹ David Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

studies' into higher education. In the minds of the early visionaries of area studies, the post-WWII global order was a totally new world—one that necessitated new American responsibilities, demanded a new framework for education, and required new generations of “world citizens.”

While the Cold War is typically remembered for its export of American ideas and cultures, it was also a time when Americans scrambled to reaffirm their shared values and ideas in a newly “shrunk and interdependent” world.¹⁰ As the first director of the Russian Institute at Columbia, founded in 1946, Geroid Robinson was not only concerned with gaining expertise on Russia, but also with cultivating a collective “American identity” accurate for an increasingly industrialized and mechanized world. “The United States is facing the crisis of 1949 with the military equipment of 1950 and the ideological equipment of 1775,” Robinson wrote.¹¹ One of the greatest difficulties in dealing with the Russians, Robinson wrote, was that as Americans, “we don’t know what we stand for.”¹² Robinson was anxious that the American identity had not been seriously reconsidered since the nation’s founding even though the American relationship with government, enterprise, and technology had evolved considerably. Since establishing the American republic against British monarchism and parliamentarism, Americans had yet to develop “American theory” and thus were “backing tail-first into the future.”¹³ Lacking a “general statement of the way the country operates,” the American way of life was defined in “negative terms,” according to what it is not, Robinson worried.

While directing an institute dedicated to understanding the most “mysterious and threatening” region to Americans, Robinson was struck, conversely, by the importance of

¹⁰ Widening Our Cultural Horizons by Charles B. Fahs, November 12, 1954, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 166, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹¹ Geroid Robinson, “The Ideological Combat,” July 1949, *Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1949-07-01/ideological-combat>.

¹² Report of Interview with Geroid Robinson by JHW, January 29, 1948, Box 321, Fldr 3823 CU-RI 1948, RF records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹³ Geroid Robinson, “The Ideological Combat,” July 1949, *Foreign Affairs*.

understanding America. The proliferation of area studies coincided with an urgency towards synthesizing and redefining Americanism. While Americanism, contrary to Robinson's worries, had been critically assessed for decades, the sudden "culture war" with Russia certainly thrust the question of Americanism into the very front and center of the minds of policymakers and laymen alike. This kind of "identity crisis" reflects how America grappled with a new global awareness. The immense attention that was thrust into developing area studies at this time was part of how Americans wrestled with new relationships with other regions of the world. As the area specialists wrote histories of other regions, America was certainly also writing its own historical narrative, using certain methodologies and frameworks that established the American system as more modern, developed, and authoritative than their subjects.

Focusing on the creation of the Russian Institute (RI) at Columbia, this thesis examines the development of area studies in the context of postwar ideas about American responsibility and authority, the purpose of academia, and importance of expertise in foreign areas. Founded alongside the School of International Affairs (now known as the School of International and Public Affairs) in 1946, the RI was the first American institute dedicated to regional studies. Renamed the W. Averell Harriman Institute in 1982, the institution remains an international authority on Soviet and Central European studies, claiming preeminent alumni such as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former head of the National Security Council, Zbigniew Brzezinski. The Russian Institute the first of six institutes associated with the School of International Affairs (SIA) at Columbia dedicated to studying "the life and thought" of the "principle regions" of the world. Splitting their coursework evenly between a regional institute and the SIA, students earned a certificate in their region of study, in addition to their degree, which was awarded through the SIA. This was largely in part due to efforts to ensure that expertise of foreign areas would be put to good use in fields like international business and diplomacy. The originally proposed institutes were dedicated to Germany, France,

Russia—and the amorphous “Far East” and “Latin America.”¹⁴ Africa was non-existent in the proposed study of world regions.

Area studies was developed directly out of training programs for military personnel working in foreign intelligence. Americans’ original interest in studying foreign regions was entirely rooted in the context of war, whether that be necessity of understanding America’s adversaries in WWII or the postwar mobilization to win over the “hearts and minds” of nations yet to side with the Western liberal democratic ideals of capitalism or visions of Soviet Marxism.¹⁵ The founding staff of the Russian Institute was selected as much for their expertise on Russia, as for their experience working in the State Department and Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency) during the war. Likewise, the students in the first classes at the RI were veterans forged by their service in the war. The RI trained the students so that they could be swiftly recruited to government service after graduating from the SIA and RI.

My research builds off the David Engerman’s book, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Expert*. Published in 2009, *Know Your Enemy* was the first book written on Soviet studies. In tracing the rapid development of Soviet Studies in the 1940s and 1950s, the institutional strength of area studies in the 1960s, and the decline of the field in the two decades before the collapse of the USSR, Engerman provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Soviet studies. Building off of his earlier book *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development*, published in 2003, Engerman illustrates the shift in Americans’ perception of the Russia and the Soviet Union—from the perception of the USSR as an ally during

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¹⁵ Interest in the study of Russia developed tentatively after the Russia Revolution, which aroused a curiosity towards the region and brought Russian scholars to America. There was a slow developed of Russian studies, primarily in the fields of history and literature during the 1920’s and 1930’s. In 1940, Sir Bernard Pares, founder of the *Slavonic and East European Review* (est. 1922) passed the symbolic torch of Russian studies to the United States. The fire-bombing of London had crippled the journal and Pares thus asked the American historian Samuel H. Cross to carry on the journal in America, as the *American Slavic and East European Review*.

the war to the idea of Russia as a foreboding enemy shortly after the war. To the dismay of many American political scientists specializing in US-Soviet relations (including many alums of the RI), Engerman is quick to point out that in spite of the immense knowledge and authority American institutions claimed to have on Russia, virtually no one predicted the fall of the Soviet Union.¹⁶

Engerman locates the “fall of the experts” in the lively debates in the 1980’s over the nature of the Soviet Union—which ultimately proved reflective of their insularity; prominent Sovietologists continued declaring the strength of the USSR until just weeks before the collapse. Despite the specter of McCarthyism and the academy’s close relationship with government interests, Soviet scholars generally took a more optimistic perspective on the USSR and looked forward to a “convergence” of East and West. Especially in the years following the radicalism that swept through American universities in the 1960’s, scholars resisted cooperation with officialdom and rejected the condemnation of the USSR as “totalitarian.” However, Engerman suggests that these “experts” ultimately misunderstood US-USSR relations. It was the anti-communist traditionalists of the 1950’s and 60’s, who traced Soviet totalitarianism to the Leninist project, who were more keenly perceptive of the fragility of the USSR.

Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States, published in 2016 by Zachary Lockman, also traces the relationship between “Mars and Minerva”—government and the academy—in the development of regional studies. While *Know Your Enemy* more closely rooted in the historiography of US-Soviet relations, Lockman, a specialist on Middle Eastern relations, roots his scholarship in the broader history of area studies. Situating the area studies in the context of neocolonialism and Orientalism, Lockman takes a more explicitly critical approach of its development out of foreign intelligence. He describes the postwar university as a “corporatized

¹⁶ Robert Levgold, director of the Harriman Institute from 1986-1992, reviewed *Know Your Enemy* for Foreign Affairs in 2010. He writes, somewhat bitterly, that the fractious debates amongst Soviet experts and their failure to predict the fall of the Soviet Union does not best represent the continuous development of Sovietology in the 1970’s and 1980’s.

multiversity” produced from the marriage of government, academia, and generous funding. The incorporation of area studies (which was formerly limited to military training) into the mainstream university served what Lockman described as the “military industrial academic complex.”¹⁷

Drawing from the broader critique and history of area studies and US-USSR relations, this thesis offers a closer study of the Russian Institute at Columbia. The RI serves as a clear focal point for examining the development of area studies in the context of postwar ideas about American responsibility and authority, the purpose of academia, and importance of expertise in foreign areas. The analysis of the intimate relationship between academia and national defense is certainly not to suggest that American scholars of Russia had a unified attitude towards Russia and the future of US-USSR relations. However, even while scholars shared diverse and often sympathetic views of Russia and the USSR, the official rhetoric of the institutions of area studies themselves always emphasized the ideal of reinforcing American interests. As many RI directors, including Henry Roberts, director from 1956 to 1962, declared, “The primary object [of the Russian Institute] is to perform a national service.”¹⁸ If this perspective was not shared by RI professors, it was certainly shared by the people hiring professors, funding scholarships, and recruiting graduates.

This thesis also takes into consideration the immense role of the “Big Three” foundations, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford, which served as an intermediary between the interests of the government agencies and the decisions of the university in the preparation and institutionalization of area studies. Several studies, including *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy* by Edward H. Berman examine the major—and

¹⁷ Zachary Lockman, *Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 55.

¹⁸ “Columbia Names Head of its Russian Institute: Henry L. Roberts,” April 13, 1956, *New York Times*, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1956/04/13/84932003.html?pageNumber=4>

perhaps undue—influence of the foundations’ seemingly endless wealth.¹⁹ Correspondences between the foundations’ presidents and Columbia staff regarding funding for Russian studies make clear that the foundations and the university are foremost united in the shared cause of serving the nation. While this is particularly explicit in the letters exchanged between Charles Dollard (President of the CCNY) and Columbia University President from 1948 to 1953, Dwight Eisenhower—whose career at Columbia was sandwiched between serving as Army Chief of Staff (1945–1948) and president of the United States (1953–1961)—all the men most critically involved in shaping the RI frequently exchanged positions between the foundations, the government, and Columbia University.²⁰ The major foundations, which have been critically entwined with government affairs since their establishment, helped decide which subjects received funding and which did not—i.e., what nations were given their own institutes (Russia) and what nations were relegated to an amorphous region (the Far East).

The absence of greater literature on relationships between academia and national interests may be due to the fact that the cultivation of area studies during the war is seen as a reasonable move. Some scholarship, such as *Politics of Knowledge*, edited by David Szanton, pushes back against the “know our enemy” narrative of this history. Szanton provides a volume of essays responding to several critiques of area studies, essentially arguing that while area studies’ wartime origins are

¹⁹ While products of the Progressive Era, the foundations have oft been criticized for perpetuating the inequalities they sought to correct—in fact seeking to stabilize a corporate political order that precludes structural change. Through generous philanthropy, the foundations sought to mitigate the consequences of the economic and social transformation in the early 20th century while in doing so, legitimizing the structures that allowed for the accumulation of their immense wealth. As Berman writes, “The major American foundations were established to accomplish certain ends in the heyday of capitalist accumulation. These included the stabilization of the rapidly evolving corporate and political order and its legitimation and acceptance by the majority of the American population; the institutionalization of certain reforms, which would serve to preclude the call for more radical structural change; and the creation through educational institutions of a worldwide network of elites whose approach to governance and change would be efficient, professional, moderate, incremental and non-threatening to the class interests of those who established the foundations.” (1)

1. Edward H. Berman, *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1983, 15.

²⁰ Correspondence from Dwight Eisenhower to Charles Dollard, October 19, 1948, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CU-RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

questionable, they were an undeniably useful and necessary development. He aptly argues that area studies cannot be reduced to a “handmaiden” for U.S. foreign policy, especially given its development after the 1960s as an open critic of parochial ways of studying the foreign “Others.” Additionally, the use of American universities for national defense is not a secretive subject—as, say, the CIA funding of modern art museums and galleries might be. Another reason for the lack of greater interest is the fact that, in spite of increased self-criticism within the university, many of the structures that decide who and what gets studied are still in place today.

While area studies were hotly debated in the 1960s and subsequently experienced major changes into the 1990s and 2000s, this thesis will focus on the conversations and ideas surrounding the tentative and experimental beginnings of regional studies. This thesis focuses strictly on the American side of the history of Russian studies. The purpose of the thesis is not to reduce area studies to an arm of American foreign policy building, nor to undermine anyone’s research, but to cast light on the powerful institutions that decided what is worth studying and how to study it. The question driving this thesis is: *How do wartime politics and national interests shape the institutions of knowledge production?* The question that naturally follows is, *How do these institutions and the theoretical frameworks they espouse shape the knowledge that is produced?* While both questions fuel my research, a critical analysis of the way Russian historiography was shaped by wartime and postwar American academic and political structures is saved for someone with far more knowledge of Russian and Soviet history.

The first section of the thesis will trace how wartime military training was adapted into postwar area studies programs. The following section will examine how the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations’ visions of modernization and progress shaped the development of area studies. The military officials and foundation executives’ vision to transform American higher education illustrates the desire to produce a new kind of American citizen, prepared to do work of leadership and influence across the globe. The third section introduces the curriculum of Columbia’s

School of International Affairs and the Russian Institute and considers how ideals of “interdisciplinarity” and “objectivity” served to reinforce American claims to universal knowledge and emphasize the superiority of the American capitalist democracy. The final section of this thesis will examine methodology of area studies, in contrast to the division of study across distinct disciplines. It will tentatively explore how the area studies, as Robinson pointed out, necessitated a deeper understanding of American culture, and in fact, shaped and reinforced American identity in the postwar global landscape.

Chapter 1: National Defense: The Wartime Origins of the ‘Area Method’

The Rockefeller Foundation, Columbia University, and the U.S. military were the three most critical institutions in the formation of Russian studies in the United States. The marriage of these three institutions extended back far before the Second World War. While tracing the theoretical origins of the “area approach,” one can begin with establishment of anthropology at Columbia University. The rise of anthropology as a scientific field in the early 20th century quickly caught the attention of the military. Likewise, in the 1920s, the RF became increasingly active in supporting field training and research in anthropology at Columbia.

In 1946, the year that the Russian Institute opened, Ruth Benedict, published *Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, a groundbreaking and controversial book on Japanese tradition. A groundbreaking theorist of culture interpretation, Benedict had earned her PhD in Anthropology at Columbia before becoming a professor at the university in 1923. Benedict’s research for *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* started in the 1920’s (with Rockefeller funding), as U.S.-Japanese relations were becoming increasingly strained due to disagreements regarding territorial

interests in China and the treatment of Japanese Americans.²¹ The book was written at the request of the Office of War Information (OWI), which had also supported several Japanese studies projects in the early years of World War II. Several other anthropologists, including Margaret Mead, were also recruited to build comprehensive ‘cultural knowledge’ of Japan that would help the US understand and predict Japanese behavior during the war.²² The military-academia alliance regarding Japanese studies was the beginning of partnership that would transform American universities for the rest of the century. As universities were harnessed for foreign intelligence needs, they began to place increased emphasis on relatively new disciplines like social psychology, sociology, and anthropology, which analyzed modern developments rather than focusing on the past.

Research for OWI wartime studies of Japan, including *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, were examples of studying ‘culture at a distance’—in other words, through literature, newspapers, films, or interviews with Japanese Americans—rather than through firsthand ethnographic fieldwork, which was traditionally required. The discipline of anthropology was unusual at the time because it placed the amorphous concept of culture at its core. Foreshadowing the interdisciplinary ideals of area studies, anthropology brought together study of economic, political, and social institutions, as well as the analysis of history and religion, all under the umbrella of studying “culture.” As Marshall Schulman, a graduate of the first class of the RI who later became director of the institute remembers, efforts to study Japanese society “from a distance and ‘in the round,’” was “carried over

²¹ Correspondence from Ruth Benedict to Phillip M. Hayden, August 14, 1936, Box 280, Fldr 1 Benedict, Ruth, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

²² It is worth noting that Benedict wrote *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* in part as a response to rampant anti-Japanese propaganda and prejudice. The OWI’s use for Japanese studies does not undermine the quality of Benedict’s scholarship nor her genuine interest in Japan. This overlap between individual scholarship and government needs embodies the tension within area studies; genuine interest in Russian culture does not exclude the curation of Russian studies for national needs. The Columbia Anthropology department, under the leadership of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, was famous for its focus on field studies and anti-imperialism.

into the ‘area approach’ to Russian studies—the effort to harness multiple disciplines to the task of understanding a distant society that was at that time inaccessible to direct investigation.”²³

Anthropology, like area studies, also traditionally included an implicit or explicit interest in controlling foreign peoples. It is associated with a long history of colonial studies sponsored by European imperialists seeking to justify their “civilizing mission” through implicating their colonial subjects as pitifully primitive and needy. The Eurocentric priorities underlying early anthropology is reflected in mid-20th century American anthropology as well. The career of Julian Steward, Chair of Columbia’s Anthropology department from 1946 to 1952, is particularly illustrative of the irony within many humanistic ideals in Western academia. In famously establishing the anthropological subfield of ‘cultural ecology,’ Steward proposed a more compassionate lens for understanding Native American culture. However, as an advisor to the Department of Justice, Steward used the definitions of ‘sociocultural integration’ he established in ‘cultural ecology’ as evidence to invalidate Native American community and deny federal recognition to certain tribes.²⁴ At the same time, Steward was also a particularly outspoken proponent of area studies. Under the support of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), he published *Area Studies Research: Theory and Practice* which argued that an integration of the disciplines would be effective in better understanding and controlling problems of human affairs. (Clearly implicit in the idealism and confidence towards the potential application of integrated knowledge is the notion that the U.S. can and should solve the world’s

²³ Marshall Schulman, "Neither Inhibition nor Orthodoxy." Columbia Magazine, 1996.

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record/archives/vol22/vol22_iss1/Coop_Harriman_USSR.html

²⁴ Based on Steward’s reports, the Department of Justice concluded that the Paiute Indians were “inherently incapable of acquiring and/or holding ‘original Indian Title’ because they were not a recognized group based on the neo-evolutionary theory of the levels of sociocultural integration” (1).

1. Defendant’s Requested Findings of Fact, Northern Paiute Nation, quoted in Ronaasen 1993:52; c.f. Ronaasen et al. 1999; e.g., Steward 1955a[1954]:102–103, quoted in Marc Pinkoski, “Julian Steward, American Anthropology, and Colonialism,” *Histories of Anthropology Annual*, Volume 4, 2008, pp. 172-204.

problems.) In both Steward's career and his vision for area studies, academic knowledge was to be used by national authorities in order to control people of other cultures.²⁵

While anthropology was being mobilized for wartime foreign knowledge production, ideas for a long-term plan for area studies were also emerging. In 1936, Phillip Mosely, who was to become one of the most important visionaries and architects of Soviet Studies, began teaching courses on Russia at Cornell. Standing squarely at the intersection between scholarship, intelligence and philanthropy, Mosely saw no line between government and academic work. While a graduate student in history at Harvard, Mosely wrote his dissertation on Russian diplomacy in the 1830s and did research in Moscow between 1930 and 1933, during a time of rapid and enforced industrialization in Stalin's Russia.²⁶ For the next two decades, Mosely not only pioneered Russian courses at Cornell but also served in the State Department, the Committee on Slavic Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and the Council on Foreign Relations—all federally funded, national organizations. While serving as Director of Territorial Studies in the State Department, Mosely worked as an advisor on international relations at the Moscow conferences (1941-1945) and the Potsdam Conference in 1945—decisive meetings between the Allies regarding the conditions of the closure of WWII.²⁷ Being involved in both academic and national organizations, Mosely was critical in steering the Rockefeller Foundation, the SSRC, and the ACLS towards area studies. In 1946, Mosely became one of the founding members of the RI, teaching Soviet international relations from within the political science department.

²⁵ Marc Pinkoski, "Julian Steward, American Anthropology, and Colonialism," *Histories of Anthropology Annual*, Volume 4, 2008.

²⁶ David C. Engerman, "The Cold War's Organization Man," *HUMANITIES*, September/October 2009, Vol. 30, no. 5, <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2009/septemberoctober/feature/the-cold-war%E2%80%99s-organization-man>.

²⁷ The Russian Institute in New York, February 1, 1954, Box 322, Fldr 3827 Columbia University–Russian institute, RF records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

Convinced that Soviet Studies needed to be more centrally coordinated in order to best serve national interests, Mosely established the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies in 1948 (which was the precursor to the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, established in 1959). a collaboration between the ACLS and SSRC. As the committee's founding chair, Mosely presided over what Engerman described as "Sovietology's Politburo."²⁸ The committee was critical in developing sources to fund American scholar's research in the USSR. The committee also assembled the first USSR archive in the US and worked to translate materials. Despite promises to join the RF after the war, Mosely succeeded Geroid Robinson as the second director of the RI in 1951. While director, Mosely split his time between Columbia and the White House, spending breaks travelling to Yugoslavia on American delegation and travelling closely with diplomats and admirals.²⁹ He also served on Operation Solarium, the secret project that shaped Eisenhower's defense strategy. From the emergency foreign language courses designed for the military to the expansion of area studies institutes throughout the country, Mosely was involved on the philanthropic, academic, and governmental sides of the entire process.

As early as 1941, Phillip Mosely was urgently pitching area studies to the Rockefeller Foundation. (He was familiar with the RF since he had received funding to expand Russian studies at Cornell in the 1930's.³⁰) At this time, the government was quickly developing emergency Russian language programs for military personnel. Intensive courses for government employees "needed to be implemented asap," Mosely wrote to David H. Stevens, chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1941. However, these courses were only "short-range." Mosely insisted that preparations must also be made in order to meet the "long-run problem:" the maintenance and advancement of Slavic

²⁸ Engerman, "The Cold War's Organization Man," *HUMANITIES*..

²⁹ Engerman, "The Cold War's Organization Man," *HUMANITIES*..

³⁰ Engerman, "The Cold War's Organization Man," *HUMANITIES*..

studies in universities.³¹ The most urgent factor in achieving this, Mosely wrote, was the development of “some pattern of coordination for the country as a whole, and particularly between government and the academic world.”³²

The roots of Columbia’s Russian Institute are in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which was launched in 1942 to train junior officers in technical skills including languages and medicine. Through the “wholehearted cooperation” between academia and government, 227 universities were mobilized to host and develop the ASTP. Of the 227 programs, fifty-five were dedicated to language training and an additional thirteen were dedicated to training in the “civil affairs of foreign areas.”³³ At its peak in December of 1943, 13,185 people were enrolled in ASTP language programs.³⁴ While the ASTP was devised in order to meet immediate military needs, it quickly became a blueprint for a new kind of education. Mosely and Ernest Simmons, the chair of the Slavic Department at Cornell, created an intensive four-month course on Russian civilization for members of the navy, army, and marines.³⁵ The military programs fostered interest in the Soviet Union across the university, spurring lectures, movies, and campus radio broadcasts dedicated to the Soviet Union.³⁶ After the war, Mosely and Simmons designed and staffed the first area studies institutes.

Young officers who learned Russian through the ASTP were subsequently recruited to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the OWI. In the words of McGeorge Bundy, an intelligence

³¹ Correspondence from Phillip Mosely to David H Stevens, October 15, 1941, Box 1, Fldr 1 Russian Studies Simmons, Ernest 1939–1953, RF Cox and Reece Investigations, RAC.

³²JG and Phillip Mosely Record of Interview, June 2, 1947, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 Russian Institute Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

³³ “Notes on a discussion of the future of Area Studies in post-war education,” February 28, 1944, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC. (all info from As the war was winding down.)

³⁴ Correspondence from Phillip Mosely to David H Stevens, October 15, 1941, Box 1, Fldr 1 Russian Studies Simmons, Ernest 1939–1953, RF Cox and Reece Investigations, RAC.

³⁵ Cornell Servicemen Assigned to Study Russia: Faculty Contains No Open Critics of Soviet System,” 1944, Box 1, Fldr 1 Russian Studies Simmons, Ernest 1939–1953, RF Cox and Reece Investigations, RAC.

³⁶ “Cornell Servicemen Assigned to Study Russia: Faculty Contains No Open Critics of Soviet System,” 1944, Box 1, Fldr 1 Russian Studies Simmons, Ernest 1939–1953, RF Cox and Reece Investigations, RAC.

officer during war who later served as the United States National Security Advisor under the Kennedy administration, the OSS was “the first great center of area studies.”³⁷ In hindsight, the Russian Division of the OSS Research and Analysis Branch, was described as effectively a “regional institute on the Soviet Union.”³⁸ Indeed, the officers and scholars recruited to the OSS, many of whom returned to the university after the war, became the first postwar generation of Sovietologists and the pioneers of area studies in higher education. This cycle is best embodied by William Langer, the Director of the Research and Analysis Branch of the OSS. Prior to serving in the OSS, he was Chair of Harvard’s History department. After the war, became the first director of Harvard’s Russian Research Center. Similarly, Geroid Robinson, Chief of the Russian Division of the Research and Analysis Branch of the OSS, returned to Columbia University, where he had taught Russian history before the war, to become the first director of the RI in 1946. While Langer and Robinson used their academic connections to make the OSS the largest group of scholars during the war, they subsequently used their military and government connections to develop Russian research institutes after the war.

Alongside the first ASTP programs, Columbia established the Naval School of Military Government and Administration in 1921. Columbia was an obvious place for such a program as it was one of the first universities to mobilize for the service of wartime national interests. Before it became involved in military foreign studies training, Columbia accepted a \$6,000 grant from the U.S. Navy to advance nuclear bomb development.³⁹ Researchers in the “Columbia Group,” many of whom received funding from Rockefeller, were critical to the Manhattan Project; they were the first

³⁷ Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, 3.

³⁸ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

³⁹ The Atomic Bomb and the Rockefeller Boards, 1945, Box 81, Fldr 166 Fldr 166 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

to show that uranium can be split under neutron bombardment.⁴⁰ Additionally, Columbia's East European Languages department had already been quietly training military officers before the creation of the ASTP. "Of course we teach army officers Russian," Professor Clarence A. Manning told *Columbia Spectator* in 1940, "we've been doing it for four years!"⁴¹ Columbia was proud to be supporting National Defense. When the Youth Communist League discovered the "bogey" that Columbia professors were training army officers in Russian, they were met with only "merriment, glee, and pride"—they were not only proud to serve the army but happy that people were finally paying attention to the tiny East European Languages department. "All the army attaches who know Russia learned it here," Manning boasted.⁴²

It was thus not surprising when in 1942, the Political Science department and Parker Institute of International Affairs (the predecessor to Columbia's Law School) at Columbia joined forces to train officers of the U.S. Naval Reserve in "military government" and "international administration."⁴³ The Naval School of Military Government and Administration was established at Columbia with the objective to "aid in the development of personnel capable of performing tasks of an administrative nature which the Americans may be called upon to perform in territories as the United Nations may liberate or occupy."⁴⁴ The school also trained civilians for overseas relief. The program was not interested in the "framing of plans or policies" but solely with the training of

⁴⁰ A List of Former Fellows Who Worked on the Atomic Bomb Project, 1945, Box 81, Fldr 166 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁴¹ "Russian Dept. Battles Bogeys Communist Expose Fails to Worry Teachers," March 1, 1940, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Vol, LXIII, no. 81, <http://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19400301-01.2.10&srpos=40&e=-----en-20--21--txt-txIN-russian+department----->

⁴² Army officers being trained in Russian studied from nine to five, five days a week, and were eligible for M.A. degrees, The *Columbia Daily Spectator* reported. The officers were housed in Livingston Hall (now known as Wallach Hall) and were known simply as the "mysterious Russian students." Manning also boasted that Columbia encompassed the whole Russian department of the army. (See footnote 45.)

⁴³ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

⁴⁴ L. Gray Cowan, *A History of the School of International Affairs and Associated Area Institutes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 11.

personal to “help in administrating whatever plans are adopted.”^{45, 46} Towards the goal of training military people for foreign service, “it became obvious” to the University that in addition to training students in “fundamental techniques of relief and rehabilitation,” emphasis on “what has become known as ‘area and language studies’ was imperative.”⁴⁷ Thus, each trainee was required to specialize in a restricted geographic area and to gain knowledge of the “geography, both physical and political, of the area, its history, and its political social and economic institutions as well as the language.”⁴⁸

The Navy School of Military Government was unique for its “research units.” After the attack on Pearl Harbor, several Yale professors studying Japanese mandated islands were commissioned in the Naval Reserve and in Washington. In 1943, they were ordered to report to Columbia and form the first research unit dedicated to developing the Civil Affairs Handbook and Civil Affairs Guide on the Japanese mandated islands. Benedict’s collaboration with the OWI in Japanese studies made Columbia University an obvious place to continue military-based Japanese studies. Military personnel also established subsequent research units to prepare Civil Affairs Handbooks of other regions of the “Far East, Southwest Pacific and Southeast Asia.” These handbooks were intended to include information about all aspects of a given area, including geography, natural resources, industry, climate, history, laws, social customs and climate.⁴⁹ It was clear that area specialization could not be limited to any department. Faculty were recruited from all branches of social science at Columbia in order to develop a “field which cut across both departmental and faculty lines.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Cowan, *A History of the School of International Affairs and Associated Area Institutes*, 11.

⁴⁶ The Navy School for Military Government also operated at Princeton University while an Army School of Military Government was implemented in Charlottesville, Virginia. Additionally, The CATS program (The Foreign Area and Language Curriculum of the Civil Affairs Division of the Provost- Marshal’s Office) was set up at several institutions including North-western University, Yale University, the University of Chicago, and Stanford University.

⁴⁷ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

⁴⁸ Cowan, 12.

⁴⁹ Cowan 15.

⁵⁰ Cowan 20

The director of the Navy School, Professor Schuyler Wallace, immediately saw potential for the School of Military Government to be developed into permanent school for International Affairs.⁵¹ As the war began to wind down, many scholars and government officials (at this point, they were difficult to separate) urgently discussed plans for retaining the progress in international affairs gained during the war. “The makeshifts and improvisations” in foreign affairs training illustrated “how badly needed such a reservoir of expert personnel really is,” Wallace wrote.⁵² A faculty committee at Columbia was promptly organized to plan for a graduate school in foreign affairs. “The shortage of expert personnel” in area studies “is a problem that will persist throughout the decades which lie ahead and that may indeed become more pressing,” the committee anticipated in 1947.⁵³ At this stage in planning, “concept of area studies” was imagined as a “pool of service courses” in “functional fields.”⁵⁴ While the immediate urgency to study foreign areas was due to war, the impulse to sustain the study of foreign areas was inseparable from the desire to “do work of authority and influence” in foreign areas.⁵⁵ regions.

In 1943, as administrators anticipated the withdrawal of over 110,000 students from ASTP courses, several conferences and meetings were organized in order to get representatives from the the military together with professors from prestigious universities to discuss the plans for area

⁵¹ Prior to the war, Wallace was the chairman of the department of Public Law and Government at Columbia and had published several books on federal and state administration. After serving as the first director of the School of International Affairs, Wallace served as director of the Centers of Iranian, Pakistani, and Turkish studies from 1949 to 1954, the director of the European Institute from 1950 to 1961, director of the Near and Middle East Institute from 1954 to 1962, and director of the Russian Institute from 1955-56. There is little indication that Wallace, being a specialist in American government, knew very much at all about the regions to which these institutes were dedicated. His most important qualification was his proven dedication to academia for the sake of national defense. From 1962 to his retirement in 1967, Wallace served as director of the Foreign Area Fellowship Program of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council.

⁵² Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

⁵³ Cowan, 22.

⁵⁴ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

⁵⁵ CU Graduate School of Foreign Affairs Sample Courses of Study, Nov 22, 1944, Box 388, Fldr 7 Wallace, Schulyer, Central Files, 1890-1984, CU RBML.

studies.⁵⁶ The Army and Navy and numerous civilian war agencies had spent millions in mobilizing educational resources to assist in work abroad and they were anxious not to let this investment go to waste.⁵⁷ “There is a real danger that we shall lose a lot of good younger personnel which has been valuable in the war service because they have no definite connection to go back to,” Mosely, chief of the State Department's Division of Territorial Studies worried, “We can all think of a considerable number of younger men who at the end of the war will suddenly be thrown out on their own.”⁵⁸ The challenge for these officers was to devise a plan to keep the ASTP-trained men together, and to create a university program that could receive them.

The early visionaries of area studies were idealistic—often described as “utopian”—in their hopes for area studies.⁵⁹ Admiring the “great experiment of the League of Nations,” they imagined that that the League could “settle all international problems by the conference method” and likewise resolve all conflicts with an increased knowledge of foreign areas.⁶⁰ Their eagerness to preserve wartime foreign studies training was not only an extension of interest in national defense, but also reflective of a grand vision for the U.S. in the postwar world. Years before WWII officially ended, academics, military officers, and philanthropists were already looking forward to preserving and reinforcing American global hegemony in the postwar period. As Europe’s colonial empires disintegrated, the United States anticipated becoming investors, developers and leaders of Europe’s former colonies. The men developing area studies anticipated that the governments of “China or

⁵⁶ “Notes on a discussion of the future of Area Studies in post-war education,” February 28, 1944, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁵⁷ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, March 10, 1944, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁵⁸ 45r2 Transcript of Slavic Studies Conference: Saturday Morning Session, March 27, 1943, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

⁵⁹ The Reminiscences of Richard S. Wortman, interview by William McAllister, November 4, 2016, interview 24, transcript, *The Cold War and the Academy: An Oral History on Russian and Eurasian Studies*, Columbia Harriman Institute, New York, NY.

⁶⁰ L. Gray Cowan, *A History of the School of International Affairs and Associated Area Institutes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 5.

Iran, or Egypt or Poland” will soon be looking for American assistance in programs of development.⁶¹ Of course, the first challenge was to overcome the competition of the Soviet Union’s Marxist-Leninist world vision.

“The impact of a new world war has made obvious, the need for the well-planned, all around and systematic study of the Slavic world,” Mosely declared at the Conference on Slavic Studies in 1943.⁶² The conference, hosted by the RF, was one of the earliest major meetings on area studies and included representatives from the OSS, State Department, OWI and Library of Congress in addition to university professors.⁶³ The opening question for discussion was: “What should be done immediately in order to carry over into post-war education work the gains made by these people, and how to effect this?”⁶⁴ The discussion centered around ideas for recruiting regional specialists coming out of foreign intelligence, building an archive of Russian documents, and integrating area studies in universities’ curriculum.⁶⁵ Mosely worried that without an adequate program to receive the wartime scholars of Russia, “we would be where we were in 1923 rather than in 1944.”⁶⁶ If the military “Slavicists” were “released from war work in a disorderly and planless way,” Mosely imagined, “the gains of a generation of effort may be among the casualties of demobilization.”⁶⁷ Envisioned in the context of 1943, area studies was intended to maintain and “carry over” the structure of American foreign intelligence and global military influence.

⁶¹ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program And Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁶² 49r2 Transcript of Slavic Studies Conference: Saturday Morning Session, March 27, 1943, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

⁶³ Some Personnel Problems In the Field of Slavic Studies, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports 1943, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

⁶⁴ “Notes on a discussion of the future of Area Studies in post-war education,” February 28, 1944, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁶⁵ Some Personnel Problems In the Field of Slavic Studies, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports 1943, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

⁶⁶ 45r2 Transcript of Slavic Studies Conference: Saturday Morning Session, March 27, 1943, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

⁶⁷ Some Personnel Problems In the Field of Slavic Studies, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports 1943, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

While the men were ambitious about implementing area courses, they still had many questions to consider. *What was the purpose of an area course?* They asked one another. *Would the aim of such an area course be to prepare an undergraduate to enter the country itself for work? Or would it be an end in itself? How might area courses be incorporated in a four-year curriculum?*⁶⁸ One of the major concerns was to include both the humanities and the social sciences in area studies into a “working whole.”⁶⁹ It was agreed that “Administrators, language men, social scientists, historians, etc.” must all integrate their fields.⁷⁰ The area studies planners were very clear in wanting to avoid survey courses. The idea was to have “economists, political scientists, police experts, engineers, or doctors” in order to face “specific tasks confronting military, diplomatic, trade or civil government officials” with respect to foreign nations—not to have Americans working in tourism, as Paul Webbink of the SSRC emphasized.⁷¹

It is certainly clear that area studies were always intended to produce people who might serve national interests, whether in government or in business, and also in anticipation of assisting all the “less developed” regions which were assumed to be eager for American assistance. “We must broaden our understanding as to keep pace with the expansion of [American] responsibilities,” Mosely declared.⁷² The vision of having Americans serve in foreign countries was certainly clear in the mission of Columbia’s SIA. Robinson was planning the SIA’s opening, he emphasized that the goal to produce specialists to “do work of authority and influence” in foreign areas.⁷³ At a national

⁶⁸ “Notes on a discussion of the future of Area Studies in post-war education,” February 28, 1944, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁶⁹ “Notes on a discussion of the future of Area Studies in post-war education,” February 28, 1944.

⁷⁰ “Notes on a discussion of the future of Area Studies in post-war education,” February 28, 1944.

⁷¹ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program And Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁷² Some Personnel Problems in the Field of Slavic Studies, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 280, Fldr 339 Slavic Studies Conference Reports 1943, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects SG 1.1, RAC.

⁷³ CU Graduate School of Foreign Affairs Sample Courses of Study, Nov 22, 1944, Box 388, Fldr 7 Wallace, Schulyer, Central Files, 1890-1984, CU RBML.

conference on world areas and area studies, held at Columbia in 1947, Charles Wagley of SSRC anthro staff declared” there is no conflict between academic and national needs, between scholarship and government objectives... where scholarship and research are involved, the academic and national needs are one and the same thing.”⁷⁴

In all the conversations on the details of area studies programs, there is strikingly little mention of any admiration towards foreign cultures. Not only was it clear that knowledge of foreign areas was to serve explicit American needs, there is hardly a hint of the notion that non-Western regions might be interesting or worth understanding for their own sake. While the area studies planners admired the way British universities studied the literature, history, and language of Greece and Rome as a means of both “enriching” and “setting up contrasts” to their students’ own cultural experience, the study of Greece and Rome was primarily admirable for the way it was used to legitimize and elevate England and its cultural heritage. A brief note in a RF memorandum acknowledges that “Giving undergraduates an opportunity to acquire an insight into the culture and values of the Chinese or Moslem or Russian worlds, in contrast to the usual instruction based solely on ideas and materials drawn from western European civilization should have definite value.”

⁷⁵ However, this instruction should “not be pushed very far” unless understanding foreign cultures becomes more “useful” in the future. The memorandum also immediately warned that the study of foreign cultures could “result in discontentment and dissociation from conventional patterns” and thereby “create culturally dispossessed and generally maladjusted human beings.”⁷⁶ Latent in these concerns was a fear of undermining American superiority.

⁷⁴ Lockman, 60-62

⁷⁵ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program and Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁷⁶ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program and Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

In devising a plan for area programs, the U.S. looked to the foreign studies programs in other nations. In the RF's "National Plan of Work on Foreign Languages, Institutions, and Customs," the RF chairman David Stevens observed that "Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Holland, in descending order of strength, entered war prepared with knowledge of foreign language."⁷⁷ As the London School of Oriental and African Studies assisted the British government during the war, Stevens insisted that the US must develop separate schools to meet the needs of the government, organized business, and education.⁷⁸ While Stevens recognized the strength of German foreign studies programs, he warned against "fostering of the type of nationalistically inspired institutes combining intensive instruction, research, and national propaganda which was characteristic of much of German regional specialization."⁷⁹ He, like other area studies planners, was tiptoeing around praise for the Nazi regime's preparedness for the war. While they claimed to reject Germany's model regional studies, they frequently referred to Germany as an example of a robust and impressive program. Still, some administrators, such as Paul Webbink of the SSRC, were less conscious, explicitly praising the foresight and "great success of Germany" in marrying regional studies with military training prior the war.⁸⁰

The early planners of area studies were not organizing big conferences with the nation's most preeminent scholars and administrators simply for the sake of opening a few institutes; the vision was grand transformation of academia as a whole. Meeting the U.S.'s "new responsibilities" in the postwar era required the production of new citizens. While the war was yet to end in 1944, the SSRC was anticipating a profound need for "economists, political scientists, and police experts" that

⁷⁷ Proposal for a National Plan of Work on Foreign Languages, Institutions and Customs by David H. Stevens, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program And Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁷⁸ Proposal for a National Plan of Work on Foreign Languages, Institutions and Customs by David H. Stevens.

⁷⁹ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program and Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁸⁰ A Review of Far Eastern and Slavic Studies in Five Institutions of the Western States, 1944, Series 200, Box 225, Fldr 2690 Conference on Far Eastern Studies in the Pacific Area Report, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1.

were “prepared to deal with tasks confronting the military, diplomatic, trade, or civil government officials with respect to the French, Italian, Moslem, Japanese and others.”⁸¹ “More regional experts will be needed to staff international agencies and offices and missions of our government advisors...as liaison men, technicians or teachers”, SSRC declared.⁸² Beyond that, regional experts will be “sought by commercial concerns, financial institutions, airlines, press associations”—and “men of high competence” will be required to train them. To meet this need, the SSRC expected the wholehearted cooperation” of universities, insisting that “[Educational] institutions should be the sources of fresh supply of men have sent their regional specialists into government service or training.”⁸³

The RI certainly adhered to this vision of postwar education. As the Carnegie Corporation of New York (which joined the RF in funding the RI in 1947) reported a year after the RI’s opening, “The Department of the Army and the Department of State are making continuous use of the Institute through assignment of officers for special training.”⁸⁴ Besides the officers assigned to the RI by the Army and the Foreign Service, Carnegie reported that RI graduates were actively recruited and hired into federal government agencies including “Military Intelligence, United States Mission to the United Nations, the Office of the U.S. representative to World Federation of Trade Unions, the Economic Cooperation Administration, and the Department of State.”⁸⁵ Columbia articulated, “The national character of the Russian Institute” was “fully demonstrated by the assignment of active duty

⁸¹ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF Records, Administration, Program And Policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁸² Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS.

⁸³ 8 Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research prepared by JWS.

⁸⁴ Report on Grant: Grant of \$30,000 for Fellowships to Students at the Russian Institute, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CU-RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

⁸⁵ Report on Grant: Grant of \$30,000 for Fellowships to Students at the Russian Institute, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CU-RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

officers for training here by the Army, the Air Force” and “by the number of graduates who are already performing significant service in the work for which they were prepared at the Institute.”⁸⁶ Additionally, the research of RI students was geared towards solving issues of foreign policy. Keeping close records of the student’s research, Carnegie noted that much of their work relates to the “capabilities and intentions of the USSR,” and works to answer the questions, “What is the power of the Soviet Union’s resources and morale?” and “What major ideas and policies guide the use of this power?”^{87,88} As the early architects of area studies intended, the RI served as an important training center for men moving both in and out of government service.

Chapter 2: American Global Leadership: The Foundations’ Visions for Postwar Education

In his plea to the Rockefeller Foundation for funding for the School of International Affairs and its prospective regional institutes in 1946, Schuyler Wallace, the dean of the former School of Military Government, argued first for the need of an institute dedicated to Russian studies. “From the point of view of the urgency of the country’s need,” Wallace wrote, “the establishment of the Russian Institute stands first.”⁸⁹ The two “interlocking objectives of national importance” according to Wallace, was the curation of “American specialists who will understand Russia and the Russians” and the training of these specialists to “subsequently do work of authority and influence in the Russian field.”⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Progress Report 1946-1950, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 Russian Institute Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

⁸⁷ Appendix to Columbia University Russian Institute student research, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CU-RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

⁸⁸ Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller all kept consistent and detailed files and progress reports regarding the content and nature of student research, RI classes and coursework, and RI professors’ publications. They also kept track of the careers of RI graduates, taking particular note of how many students became Foreign Service Officers.

⁸⁹ Wallace, Schuyler C., Letter from Schuyler C. Wallace to the Rockefeller Foundation, 1945 February 27,” *100 Years: The Rockefeller Foundation*, accessed November 20, 2019, https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/letter-from-schuyler-c-wallace-to-the-rockefeller-foundation-1945-february-27

⁹⁰ Wallace, Schuyler C., “Letter from Schuyler C. Wallace to the Rockefeller Foundation, 1945 February 27,” *100 Years: The Rockefeller Foundation*.

Still full of patriotism and wartime fervor for supporting the US, many Americans found traditional academia to be stagnant and “inadequate for even most essential national war proposes,” and were excited by the enforcement of practical training alongside academia.⁹¹ As Chester Barnard, the Rockefeller President (1948-1952), quipped, “[O]rthodox disciplines are, I think, at present pretty defective bases for the analysis of concrete situations.”⁹² As such the School of International Affairs and the Russian Institute were born, each critical to one another, as to produce professional Russian specialists without inspiring too many dissertations of Pushkin.⁹³ Area studies, as political scientist Michael C. Desch, describes, “thus emerged as a pillar for the Cold War bridge between the Ivory Tower and the Beltway.”⁹⁴ The aspiration of the School of International Affairs and its regional institutes was to produce a “reservoir” form which “experts capable of handling the increasingly complex and intricate problems of public affairs can be drawn.”⁹⁵ While other Russian studies programs emerged at Harvard, Michigan, and other universities, Columbia was proud to be “the only institution to have worked out on such a broad scale the combination of professional work and area study.”⁹⁶ As Marshall Schulman writes, “the innovation contribution of the Russian Institute was the combine the multidisciplinary ‘area approach’” (inspired by wartime anthropological studies of Japan) with the “traditional departmental structure of the University.”⁹⁷

⁹¹ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

⁹² Memorandum by Chester Barnard, September 12, 1950, RAC, RG 3.2, Series 900, Box 31, Fldr 165.

⁹³ While institutions and scholars were under pressure to demonstrate policy relevance, Russian studies programs certainly also produced valuable studies on Russian life and culture (unrelated to foreign policy interests) in between the vast amount of research devoted to the Politburo.

⁹⁴ Michael C. Desch, “Early Cold War Research and the Enduring Relevance Question: Area Studies, Behavioralism, and the SSRC,” November 5, 2019, <https://items.ssrc.org/insights/early-cold-war-research-and-the-enduring-relevance-question-area-studies-behavioralism-and-the-ssrc/>

⁹⁵ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

⁹⁶ L. Gray Cowan, *A History of the School of International Affairs and Associated Area Institutes*, The Bicentennial History of Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 1954.

⁹⁷ Marshall Schulman, “Neither Inhibition nor Orthodoxy.” *Columbia Magazine*, 1996.

American philanthropic foundations were the critical link between wartime training in foreign studies and the proliferation of formidable area studies institutes and departments across the country. Communicating closely with State Department officials in efforts to “throw our weight in the same direction,” the foundations were effectively served as an indispensable intermediary between government interests and academic interests.⁹⁸ “It seems pretty certain that we are in fundamental agreement with regard to area studies programs,” Carnegie executive John W. Gardner wrote to William Maddox of the State Department in 1947. This alliance was altogether expected, given that Gardner had served as a captain in the OSS during the war and was a strong supporter of area studies. (He would later become president of the CCNY in 1955.) In addition to the Rockefeller Foundation’s original \$500,000 grant to the RI, The CCNY donated \$100,000 between 1947 and 1951. Likewise, the Ford Foundation spent approximately \$270 million between 1956 and 1966 on multidisciplinary research and training on particular regions of the world.⁹⁹ The foundations regarded the development of area studies as one of their highest priorities. In 1946, Carnegie officers, insisted that their agenda for “enriching and invigorating college and university contributions to international understanding” was the “most important that they have presented to the Trustees thus far.”¹⁰⁰

Without the wealth and visions of the foundations, there would not have even been an opportunity for Russian scholars to come together to discuss a curriculum for regional studies—establishing an institute would be a greater impossibility. Before returning to the establishment of the SIA and RI, it is worthwhile to outline the work of the foundations during the last years of WWII, in preparation for American postwar global leadership. Understanding the visions and ideas

⁹⁸ Correspondence from John W. Gardner to William P. Maddox, Director of the State Department Division of Training Services, February 10th 1947 Carnegie Corporation grant files 42.

⁹⁹ Szanton, 12.

¹⁰⁰ A Program in Area Studies, November 21, 1946, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

of the “Big Three” foundations is necessary for understanding the radical goal for area studies in postwar education.

The foundations shared a consensus on “American responsibility” and the Third World; they believed in the role of the social sciences to “serve the orderly evolution of unindustrialized countries” and to promote world stability through the rehabilitation of “radical regimes.”¹⁰¹ As decolonization movements erupted across the world, colonial empires broke open, opening much of Africa and Asia up to American trade and investment and cultural influence. While cloaked in the rhetoric of progressivism and altruism, foundations effectively sought to align “undeveloped” regions to the world capitalist system and thus prevent the nationalization of foreign holdings and preserve American access to strategic raw materials. As historian Edward Berman argues in detail, the foundations invested in educational and social service programs in Third World countries not simply to fulfill an articulated local need, but also in efforts to “wean these nations away from flirtation with socialist doctrine.”¹⁰² Berman describes the foundations interest in the Third World as a “sophisticated form of cultural imperialism” which also had the advantage of “obfuscating the continuance of discredited and crude forms of economic and military imperialism.”¹⁰³ The views of the social scientists, foundations, and government officials were mutually reinforcing in regard to America’s postwar international role—and the kind of education and research necessary for the U.S. to meet their responsibilities.

Steeped in the spirit of positivism, the foundations were confident that knowledge is the key to solving all the world’s ills. As the historian Lockman describes, the foundations saw themselves as a “network of modernizing and forward-looking academics that connected humanists to the goal of

¹⁰¹ Berman, 119.

¹⁰² Berman, 14.

¹⁰³ Berman, 14.

improving society through rational knowledge and democratic action.”¹⁰⁴ As such, they were certain that postwar institutes dedicated to foreign studies would generate the knowledge and regional experts necessary for the U.S. gain the support of nonaligned, Third World nations and overcome the conflict with the USSR. The foundations imagined that area studies research, coupled with functional training and specialization, would not only advance the American nation, but also help create a peaceful, stable world order under the example and tutelage of the United States.

“Education that is realistic and thorough is our only hope, the CCNY reported, “It will require a generation to prepare to meet [America’s] new responsibilities as a leader an international cooperation an organization.”¹⁰⁵ Insistent that area studies needed to be an integral and permanent part of American higher education after the war, the foundations encouraged the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the American Council Of Learned Societies (ACLS) to find ways of achieving this goal. While the SSRC and ACLS had developed foreign studies training to meet the wartime emergency, their postwar plans for American international business and authority were much broader and far-reaching.

The SSRC, established in 1923 as the world's first coordinating body of the social sciences, occupied a unique position: it was neither a government agency nor an academic association, yet it included personnel from both. The SSRC’s natural institutional counterpart was the ACLS and together they offered research grants to academics and scholarly advice to administrators. Both organizations were particularly strong proponents of area studies as well as ‘modernization theory,’ a model of progressive transition from a ‘pre-modern’ or ‘traditional’ society to a ‘modern’ society. The foundations, through the SSRC, were remembered to be “twisting arms very, very vigorously”

¹⁰⁴ Lockman, 4

¹⁰⁵ A Program in International Education, March 4, 1946, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

to get scholars to focus on modernization theory.¹⁰⁶ The Rockefeller Foundation gave the SSRC 6.6 million between 1924 and 1947, in addition to generous funding from the CCNY and the Ford Foundation, as well as the federal government. With this support, the ACLS and SSRC established the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies (JCSS) in 1947, and Foreign Area Fellowship Training Program in 1952. Under Mosely's directorship and Robinson's support, the JCSS created the first national scholarly community dedicated to Russian studies.

Fulfilling American responsibilities in a "new world" required a new framework of education adequate to produce a new body of "world citizens." While the first experiments in area studies were to be instituted at the graduate level, the goal of the area studies pioneers was to transform undergraduate education. The foundations were not only funding area programs at prestigious Ivy League universities—they invested in countless state schools as well as small liberal arts colleges like Swarthmore College and Bryn Mawr College.¹⁰⁷ In a discussion with the CCNY, William P. Maddox, Director of the State Department's Foreign Service Institute was insistent that "old disciplinary specialties must be replaced by generalized area expertise."¹⁰⁸ While the traditional "conservative" university "exalted departmentalization, "emphasized historical backgrounds rather than modern developments," and "stressed the humanistic disciplines rather than the social sciences," the postwar "progressive" university needed to emphasize approaches like "social psychology and cultural anthropology" which they anticipated being more useful to tackling current international problems. Maddox argued for a "radical," "progressive," and "reformist" approach to the integration of area studies.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Berman, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Correspondance from JWG to Donald McKinnon, June 6, 1947, Box III.A 42, Fldr 12 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹⁰⁸ JG and William P Maddox Record of Interview, February 6, 1947, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹⁰⁹ JG and William P Maddox Record of Interview, February 6, 1947, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

The Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations, in consultation with the SSRC, even considered a “mental reconversion” period to facilitate the implementation of area programs.¹¹⁰ The CCNY proposed “reconversion fellowships” to the SSRC. Gardner wrote,

It has been frequently suggested that the only reasonable speedy means of improving the situation would be to select men who have already demonstrated their competence in a given discipline and to return them into area experts by forced draft. This the reconversion fellowships might attempt to do.¹¹¹

While there was great diversity in the visions for area studies, the foundations and government certainly favored what the State Department itself described as “relatively extreme and uncompromising” approaches.¹¹² “Superficial and makeshift concessions to a current fashion” were condescended as “hardly compatible with our current state of urgency.”¹¹³ United and decided on an aggressive and immediate implementation of area studies, government agencies and the foundations (in particular the CCNY), discussed ways to compel university administrators to act accordingly.¹¹⁴ Like the Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie organized conferences with scholars from many universities where they invited “State Department men to present a non-academic view of the area study approach.”^{115, 116}

The long-term vision for area studies was hand-in-hand with the desire to reinforce and preserve American global hegemony. While regional experts were expected to “staff international agencies and offices and missions of our own government,” everyday Americans would also need

¹¹⁰ Columbia Graduate Institute of Foreign (International?) Affairs Interview Report by JHW and RFE, December 7, 1944, Box 321, Fldr 3820 Columbia Russian Institute 1945, CU-RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹¹¹ Correspondence from John W Gardner to Donald Young, February 19, 1947, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹¹² JG and William P Maddox Record of Interview, February 6, 1947, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹¹³ Correspondence from John W Gardner to Donald Young, February 19, 1947, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹¹⁴ Correspondence from John W Gardner to Donald Young, February 19, 1947.

¹¹⁵ Correspondence from John W Gardner to Donald Young, February 19, 1947.

¹¹⁶ List of Colleges for Area Study Conference, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

basic area studies training in order to serve “commercial concerns and financial institutions, air lines, press associations, etc.”¹¹⁷ The pioneers of area studies anticipated an abundance of exciting career opportunities in international affairs for graduates of area studies programs. Charles B. Fahs, the former chief of the Far Eastern Division of the OSS and the director of the RF from 1940-1961 summarizes the aspiration to stretch American influence into all corners of a newly ‘expanded’ and ‘shrunk’ world: “In this nuclear and air age our [American] heritage is the whole of human culture...If we wish to build the culture of the future...we must make world culture our own.”¹¹⁸

With the foundations’ ambitious vision of American leadership in mind, academia, once regarded as provincial and impotent, was revitalized with a newfound purpose and nobleness in serving national and global needs. “We are now ready to forsake the realm of theory and broad generalization, and to move towards a program of action,” John W. Gardner, a Carnegie official declared.¹¹⁹ The continuation of wartime area programs into postwar higher education was excitedly anticipated as a return to the “‘hard and fine discipline’ which pertained in the days of classical education.”¹²⁰

The RI shared the grand vision of the foundations wholeheartedly. L. Gray Cowan (assistant director of the SIA in 1954) was explicit when writing, “From the beginning, the School has sought to supply the demands of government agencies and private industry for specialists trained in international affairs and with a particular knowledge of a specific area of the world.”¹²¹ Likewise,

¹¹⁷ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research RF Records and Admin SG 3.1 and SG 3.2 Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹¹⁸ Widening Our Cultural Horizons by Charles B. Fahs, November 12, 1954, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 166 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹¹⁹ Memorandum on Postwar Area Studies Programs, John W. Gardner, 1946, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹²⁰ Correspondence from Robert B. Hall to Dr. C. Carmichael, October 31, 1946, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹²¹ Preface, L. Gray Cowan, *A History of the School of International Affairs and Associated Area Institutes*, The Bicentennial History of Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 1954.

from the RI's opening, Robinson declared the "basic purpose of the Russian Institute" to be the analysis of "the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system and the impact of the Soviet state and its network of Communist parties upon world politics."¹²² The RI would produce expertise on "Soviet economics, political and party institutions, administrative control and legal system, the evolution of social ideology, and the use of literature as a means of ideological indoctrination."¹²³ The Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford all maintained extremely close reports and correspondences with the directors of the Russian Institute—they were closely aware of the recruitment, shortlisting, and selection of professors as well as other details of the RI's development and continuation. The foundations often had direct say in the hiring of new faculty members and visiting professors, whose salaries were often funded by foundation grants.¹²⁴

The founding director the Russian Institute, Geroid Robinson wanted the center to follow the OSS model, often invoking OSS achievements in advocating for interdisciplinary area studies. A man consistently praised for his integrity, patriotism, and dignity, Robinson's leadership over the RI was assurance to foundations, government agencies, and students that RI was a good investment. His history in national service and academia was stellar: at the onset of WWI, Robinson left Stanford (without finishing his bachelor's degree) to volunteer in the air section of the Signal Corps, where he served as first lieutenant in Washington. In 1920, Robinson began his M.A and Ph.D. in History at Columbia, where he became a professor in 1938 and ultimately remained until his retirement in 1960. In 1937, Robinson helped establish major national committees which laid the foundation for America's program for research and training on Russia. Robinson also briefly served as an associate at the School of Slavonic Studies in London (one of first Russian programs established in the West)

¹²² Transcript of meeting, April 7, 1954, Box 321, Fldr 3820 CU-RI 1945, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹²³ Transcript of meeting, April 7, 1954.

¹²⁴ Memorandum on Ford Foundation Visiting Scholars, Box 434, Folder 10, Central Files, 1890-1984: Series I, RBML.

during the interwar years, where he gained insight in the advantages and disadvantages of the British model for regional studies.¹²⁵ In 1941, Robinson was summoned to Washington to serve Chief of the USSR Division of Research Analysis in the OSS. He expanded the USSR Division from three scholars to sixty scholars from a range of disciplines. Robinson's work in Washington earned him a high reputation throughout the government and introduced him to practically every American interested in Russia, especially those who were eager to expand knowledge and understanding of Russian history after the war. In 1947, Robinson was awarded the Medal of Freedom.¹²⁶

Robinson assembled the original Russian Institute faculty, which included John N. Hazard, former director of the USSR branch of the office responsible for Lend-lease (the policy formally known as An Act to Promote the Defense of the United States) as well as Phillip Mosely and Abram Bergson. Besides his service in the State Department, Mosely had served alongside Robinson on the World Area Research Committee of the SSRC (through which they established connections with RF executives). Bergson was a member of the United States Delegation to the Moscow and Potsdam conferences during the war.¹²⁷ Ernest Simmons, who spent the war implementing the pilot program in Soviet Civilization at Cornell (with RF support), covered the RI's Russian literature courses. The "Big Five," also called the "Founding Fathers" of Russian studies, covered the basic disciplines: Robinson in history, Mosely in international relations and political science, Bergson in economics, Hazard in law and public administration, and Simmons in literature.¹²⁸ While the staff of the RI certainly shared experience and expertise on Russia, they came together by virtue of their wartime

¹²⁵ "Robinson: founder of Columbia University Russian Institute," *A History of Russian and East European Studies in the United States: Selected Essays* edited by Robert F. Burns, (Maryland: University Press of America, 1994).

¹²⁶ *1946–2006, Sixty Years of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University*, Trustees of the Columbia University in the City of New York.

¹²⁷ WM with Phillip Mosely, John Hazard, Geroid T. Robinson, and Ernest Simmons, Record of Interview, February 3, 1953, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CC Grant files, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹²⁸ WM with Phillip Mosely, John Hazard, Geroid T. Robinson, and Ernest Simmons, Record of Interview, February 3, 1953, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CC Grant files, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

government service and common dedication to national defense. Their pre-RI careers played no small role in establishing the RI's reputation as well as in shaping the aspirations of RI graduates.

Recognizing that area studies was an “outgrowth of adventures in education undertaken by the various Universities at the request of the military authorities,” Robinson and Schuyler Wallace, agreed that the field's objective was inherently “applied” rather than “cultural.”¹²⁹ The “chief responsibility” of the RI was strictly “the training of Russian specialists to meet a national need.”¹³⁰ The university decided that “membership on the staff should be confined to those interested in the branches of human knowledge concerned with man as a social animal;” specialists in area studies were to be trained in practical affairs aimed at policy, rather than any “lower level of activity.”^{131, 132} Columbia identified the needs for regional experts according to four major categories, the first of which, was of course, government. Area specialists were to be recruited to serve the “diplomatic and consular” needs of the State Department. Secondly, specialists were needed for Department of Commerce, the Treasury and the Federal Reserve. The final categories were international business and finance, and civic and cultural agencies, such as museums.¹³³ The regional institutes were

The two-year curriculum of a candidate in the RI was split equally between coursework within the RI and coursework in the SIA. Towards the aim of offering “wider opportunities” application of specialized training, students of the RI were expected to have “dual citizenship” with the SIA, through which they would be granted a degree in their selected discipline.¹³⁴ A student was required to take two RI courses in his discipline and four RI courses in other disciplines, thus

¹²⁹ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

¹³⁰ CU Graduate School of Foreign Affairs Sample Courses of Study, Nov 22, 1944, Box 388, Fldr 7 Wallace, Schuyler, Central Files, 1890-1984, CU RBML.

¹³¹ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

¹³² Report on a discussion of the proposed School of Foreign Affairs, Central Files, Box 388.

¹³³ Report on the Committee on the Proposed Graduate School of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1944, Box 380, Fldr 2 Wallace, Schuyler C, Central Files, 1890-1984, RBML.

¹³⁴ Cowan 48

providing a well-rounded understanding of Russia. The rest of the course requirements were to be completed through the SIA in accordance with the departmental requirements of his selected discipline.¹³⁵ Studying a discipline outside the field of the USSR would “make the student a better specialist in that discipline as it applied to Russia” while specialization in Russian studies would allow a student to find more job opportunities, the University explained.¹³⁶ In preparation of eventually integrating area studies into the undergraduate curriculum, undergraduate seniors interested in pursuing an M.A. through the SIA were permitted to begin taking RI classes.

The interdisciplinary, region-specific method of area studies was not only designed to streamline training for professional work in foreign regions but also designed in a way that was assumed to be necessary for studying foreign regions, especially Russia. “Because of the nature of a Communist-directed society,” Henry L Roberts, former director of the Russian Institute explained, “all facets of life-economy, literature, politics, and education-are presumably under the guidance and direction of a unified will and political philosophy.” Roberts continued, “It is then necessary to apply an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary lens in understanding Russia as a whole.”¹³⁷ Instead of studying Soviet education, for example, scholars sought the “basic philosophy underlying the Soviet system of education.”¹³⁸ A student who is going to major in Russian literature, Mosely explained, “needs to understand that is operated as a subordinate segment of the Soviet machinery of thought control.” It was assumed that no subject within Russia could or should be studied on its own. “A student of Soviet literature must understand the Soviet economic system, he must be acquainted with Soviet law and government, he must understand Soviet international relations, and he must

¹³⁵ L. Gray Cowan and Geroid Robinson, *History of the Russian Institute Columbia University, 1946–1953*, Columbia University Press, 1954.

¹³⁶ Appendix to Columbia University Russian Institute, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CU–RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹³⁷ Appendix to Columbia University Russian Institute, Box III.A 113, Fldr 12 CU–RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹³⁸ Letter from James Conant to Mr. Fosdick, April 14, 1947.

have a good grasp of Russian history,” Mosely insisted.¹³⁹ A Russian book could not be studied simply in the realm of Literature, as Western books could be, but rather it must be understood foremost as part of “Russia”—and thus excluded from any kind of objective artistic value.

Conflating totalitarianism with communism, the US assumed that all aspects of a state-controlled system were inextricably intertwined. The assumptions about Russia are clear in the titles of some most notable books and articles published by students and professors of the RI. While penning consistent articles like “Anti-American Propaganda in the USSR” and “Controls in Soviet Literature,” Ernest Simmons published *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature: Views of Russian Society* in 1953, a collection of essays written by senior RI students, all of which “bear on the subject of state control of the author.”¹⁴⁰ Likewise, Edward Brown, an RI alumni who became a professor of Russian literature at Brown University, published the *Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature*, which examined the “first all-out attempt to establish a dictatorship in Russian literature.”¹⁴¹ While articles produced by students at the RI generally leaned heavily towards topics like “Soviet political ideology” or “Soviet economic potential,” even articles categorized as “Literature” often included titles like “Is an Agreement with Russia Possible?” and “The Soviet Press on the International Situation.”¹⁴²

Of course, the Soviet Union was indeed a communist and authoritarian state in which only certain histories were allowed to be written. However, the assumption that Americans, with their superior archives and “objective” analytical lens, can understand non-western peoples and cultures better than they can understand themselves was not at all limited to the study of Russia. This

¹³⁹ “Grants from the Foundation: \$786,500 to Columbia University, The Russian Institute in New York,” February 1, 1954, RG 1.1, Box 322, Fldr 3827 Columbia University-Russian Institute

¹⁴⁰ Annex 7 Some Publications of Russian Institute Staff—1946–1953” (200S Columbia University-Russian Institute, RG 1.1, Box 322, Fldr 3827)

¹⁴¹ Annex 7 Some Publications of Russian Institute Staff—1946–1953” (200S Columbia University-Russian Institute, RG 1.1, Box 322, Fldr 3827)

¹⁴² Report on Research and Publication 1950-1951, Phil Mosely Papers, Central Files, Box 434.

outlook was replicated as institutes for Latin America, the Near East, and China emerged, following the framework and example of Russian studies institutes. In the same way that Russian historians were deemed “falsifiers,” Americans could just as easily dismiss other foreign historians as provincial, irrational, lacking in evidence or documentation. Naturally, those who define the nature and purpose of history—as well as the characteristics of “objectivity”—will certainly always have “superior” knowledge of others.

This pride in being an international authority on Russia prevailed despite the fact that Russia was grouped with China and Japan as the amorphous “Far East” hardly a few years before the RI was founded. Despite their “expertise,” academics continued to use the terms “Soviet,” “Russian,” and “Slavic” and sometimes even “Far Eastern,” interchangeably well into the second half of the 10th century. (This conflation reflects misunderstanding about the multi-ethnic nature of the USSR, which ultimately influenced the regime’s collapse—which of course, none of the experts predicted.). American area specialists were convinced they were able to understand Russia better than Russians could understand themselves. Often speaking on behalf of Russia’s needs, Robinson stated that he believed Russia will soon “recognize her crying need for reconstruction” and become open to westernization.¹⁴³

Confident in American progress and development, the foundations and the RI were obsessed with the notion of objectivity and prided themselves on having the most unbiased” and “accurate” knowledge. “The spirit of the institute,” as Robinson declared, “is above everything else, a spirit of objective search for understanding.”¹⁴⁴ The Russian Institute constantly emphasized having a “higher degree of objectivity” than other institutes in the U.S. and elsewhere; Robinson never missed an opportunity to declare, “the methodology of research in the social sciences is

¹⁴³ Luncheon Meeting Notes Geroid Robinson, March 21, 1946, Box 321, Fldr, 3821, CU–RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁴⁴ The Russian Institute, RF Trustees Bulletin Cox and Reece Investigations, Series 1 Box 1 Fldr 22

certainly more highly developed here than in the USSR.”¹⁴⁵ Elevating the RI’s “objectivity” was a way to highlight the superiority of democracy—and to undermine the Soviet system, which was considered “unable” to write in a credible way, not even of their own experience and history. Steeped in a positivistic attitude towards research, scholars consistently sought “more exact” methods of measuring and understanding the USSR. The self-proclaimed “objectivity” effectively qualified their implicit claims to authority over the less capable and less knowledgeable foreign regions.¹⁴⁶ So assured of the power of knowledge and education, by 1950, the Rockefeller Foundation had donated a total of \$762,000 towards the Russian Institute.¹⁴⁷ By 1954, Rockefeller had donated a total of \$8,036,517.40, the rough equivalent of \$85 million 2020, towards area studies in American universities.¹⁴⁸

While the RI met acclaim in the U.S. and secured consistent and generous funding, Soviet newspapers described the RI as a system of “total espionage.”¹⁴⁹ The *Pravda* and *Trud* condemned the institute as a “hotbed of American slanderers, spies and diversionaries” directed by “ignorant professors” who “are systematically poisoning the students’ minds with slander about the Soviet Union.”¹⁵⁰ While Soviet criticism was indeed scathing, so were American reports of these reviews, which largely suggested that the Soviets were characteristically defensive and exaggerative. Soviet publications described the RI simply, if crudely: “This program is inspired and financed by the Wall Street monopolies, V. Minayev, reporter for *The New Times* wrote, “The US intelligence services are trying to establish strongholds in the Scandinavian countries, in the Balkans and the Middle East, in

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Geroid Robinson to J H Willets, July 25, 1946, Box 321, Fldr, 3821, CU–RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum of the Division of the Social Sciences of the Rockefeller Foundation, Feb 25, 1947, Box 1, Fldr 14 Russia–1947 Exchanges USSR and U.S. Social Scientists 1947 –1952, RF Cox and Reece Investigations, RAC.

¹⁴⁷ Meeting Item Columbia University-Russian Institute, April 7, 1954, Box 321, Fldr 3820, CU–RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁴⁸ Rockefeller Foundation Over-All Support for Area Studies, January 1955, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹⁴⁹ Engerman, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Cowan, 47.

China and Japan and to extend its influence to France Italy in Latin America.”¹⁵¹ Quoting Robinson’s assertion that the RI’s intention is to “know everything going on in Russia,” Minayev reveals indignation towards the explicit, unidirectional relationship between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in the area studies method of studying “everything” about a nation. In reversing the perspective back onto Americans, Soviet observers point out the strangeness of defining a field of study by a region, rather than by a discipline (which indeed was unfamiliar to Americans before WWII).

There were some particularly detailed and incisive criticisms of the RI. One Soviet journalist wrote, “Under the guise of objective scholarly research and inoffensive literary studies, they [the scholars at the RI] present the reader with slander, adroitly and imperceptibly turning from descriptions of individual Russian writers to definitions of “Russian character” and an evaluation of Soviet life.”¹⁵² Tamara Motyleva, a Moscow historian, editor, and literary critic wrote a particularly detailed critique of specific RI professors and their publications. Her article, “Russian Literature in a Distorting Mirror” published in *Izvestia*, a USSR newspaper, stated, “They [RI professors] make use of the old, rusty, but poisonous weapon: the myth of the mystic, unchanging Russian soul,” wrote Motyleva, “They try to set the Russian people apart from other peoples of the world; they try to present Russian culture as something alien or even immemorially hostile to “Western civilization.”¹⁵³

In examining the works of literature professors Ernest Simmons and Clarence Manning, Motyleva wrote, “The heritage of Russian classics is distorted and belittled. . . . literary scholars are trying with all their might to “render harmless” works of Russian genius, to suppress their realistic, liberating impact.” Motyleva argues that in *An Outline of Modern Russian Literature*, Simmons “speaks in present tense about works of writers who long ago ceased to play any role in Soviet literature,

¹⁵¹ “Columbia University Training Spies Soviet Magazine Charges,” *Toronto, Canada Star*, October 20, 1947, *The Original Romeike Press Clippings*, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹⁵² T. Motyleva, “Russian Literature in a Distorting Mirror,” *Izvestia*, Oct 19, 1947, Box 322, Folder 3826 CU–R1 1951-1953, Central Files, 1890-1984: Series I, RBML.

¹⁵³ T. Motyleva, “Russian Literature in a Distorting Mirror,” T. Motyleva, *Izvestia*, Oct 19, 1947

known at best, 20 years ago” and “refers to persons recently exposed to enemies of the Soviet people and have been cast out of Soviet life and takes these people as typical representations of Soviet literature”—while failing to mention important writers like Shaginyan and Korneichuk. Motyleva quotes Simmons’ review of the novels of Maxim Gorky, a five-time nominee for the Nobel Prize in Literature:

Nearly all of them are concerned with vicious life and immorality of provincial Russia.....Endless talk of the ‘meaning of life’ a penchant for philosophizing that Gorky never rid himself of, is one of the worst features of these novels. This fault makes his plays a rather bad imitation of Chekov.

Motyleva points out that “Gorky’s critical realism was directed not only against the present-day provincial Russia but also against the capitalist world as a whole against the present-day capitalist world.” Calling the RI literary scholars “pseudo-scholarly ‘experts,’” Motyleva declared their work to be “directly connected with the warmonger’s criminal propaganda.”

The RI faculty simply took this criticism as evidence that their research was effective.¹⁵⁴ “It was then that we knew we were getting at the truth about Russia,” Mosely quipped.¹⁵⁵ There was certainly no shortage of praise for the RI as well. “When foreign embassies in Moscow need the real low-down on what’s happening behind the Iron Curtain, they ask a little group of experts right here in the United States,” boasted a *Collier’s* article titled “They Know More about Russia than Anybody.”¹⁵⁶ The article conveys the prevailing idea of the USSR as impenetrable and mysterious, as well as the level of trust people placed in Sovietologists. “Who are these experts who can so easily pierce the Iron Curtain? What magic X-ray eyes do they possess?” the article posited, “They are

¹⁵⁴ *Sixty Years of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University 1946–2006*, Trustees of the Columbia University in the City of New York.

¹⁵⁵ *Sixty Years of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University 1946–2006*, Trustees of the Columbia University in the City of New York, 12.

¹⁵⁶ “The Know More About Russia Than Anybody,” *Collier’s*, June 1953, quoted in *Sixty Years of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University 1946–2006*.

ordinary Americans whose only magic is brain power. Their X-ray eyes are nothing more than the proven methods of good scholarship.”

In the positivist spirit, the confidence in the power of knowledge—and the potential of Russian studies—was raised to unprecedented levels. *The New York Sun* published an article suggesting that the Nazis rise to power could potentially have been curbed by establishing a series of foreign institutes like those at Columbia.¹⁵⁷ Since Hitler came to power, the article stated, “we have seen to what tragic ends a lack of international understanding may lead the world. All praise to Columbia University.” Another newspaper stated, “One is tempted to say that had the vision [of establishing a the SIA and associated regional institutes] to American educational leaders 25 years earlier, we might have escaped from a provincialism that had its part in the gestation of World War II.”¹⁵⁸ Since apparently it was a “lack of international understanding” that allowed for World War II, Americans believed that international understanding and knowledge must be the key to a future of world peace.

The RI indeed appeared successful in its goals, as 40% of the SIA graduates who concentrated in Russian studies between 1948-1952 ended up in government service, in particular, the State Department, CIA, Voice of America, or military intelligence.¹⁵⁹ The American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies originated at the RI as well as the initial housing for the *Slavic Review* and the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*. With support of the Ford Foundation, the RI also housed the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants, which later became IREX, the International Research and Exchanges Board. The RI was very proud of its work and authority. However, in spite of being internationally minded, the institute was sometimes described as insular.

¹⁵⁷ “To Promote Understanding,” *New York Sun*, June 25, 1945, Box 321, Fldr 3820, CU-RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁵⁸ “Russian Institute,” June 30, 1945, August 28, 1945 Miami, FL News

¹⁵⁹ Since its founding, The RI has produced several US ambassadors to Moscow, Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Marshall Schulman, special assistant to the Secretary of State Dean Acheson. (60 yrs of Harriman)

As Elizabeth K. Valkenier, a Russian art historian at Columbia, remembers, President Lyndon B. Johnson once invited Mosely to a meeting which coincided with a seminar Mosely was giving—and so Mosely declined.¹⁶⁰

The Russian Research Center (RRC) at Harvard was founded in 1947, almost immediately after the RI, with the strong encouragement of Robinson and Wallace. “Columbia does not want to maintain an exclusive position,” Robinson reported to the RF, “It cannot take care of the demand.”¹⁶¹ Robinson worried that “the present rush of over one-thousand colleges to institute courses in Russia or on Russia without qualified personnel,” would lower the standards of research on Russia and cause confusion.¹⁶² Additionally, he and Mosely worried about being “branded as red” if the RI stood alone.¹⁶³ As such, he pushed for a second Russian Institute to be established at Harvard, which boasted a strong cohort of Russian scholars. Following Columbia’s Russian Institute, Harvard and Berkeley established similar institutions dedicated specifically to Russian studies in 1948. The first director of the RRC was Clyde Kluckhohn, a leading American anthropologist and the former president of the American Anthropological Association. He was succeeded by William Langer, the former director of the OSS. The RRC maintained close (though informal) ties with the Central Intelligence Agency (which succeeded the OSS in 1947) into the 1960’s, pursuing a “continuous relationship between their organization and ours.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ The Reminiscences of Elizabeth K. Valkenier, interview by William McAllister, October 28, 2016, interview 24, transcript, *The Cold War and the Academy: An Oral History on Russian and Eurasian Studies*, Columbia Harriman Institute, New York, NY.

¹⁶¹ “Interview with Geroid T. Robinson regarding Columbia University’s Russian institute,” January 30, 1944, *100 Years: The Rockefeller Foundation*. https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/interview-with-geroid-t-robinson-regarding-columbia-university-s-russian-institute

¹⁶² Memorandum on Luncheon with Geroid Robinson, March 21, 1946, Box 321, Fldr 3821 CU–RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁶³ Hazard, 91.

¹⁶⁴ Engerman, 46. Quote from a letter from Donald C. McKay to Kluckhohn, 18 November 1947.

By 1950, thirteen major universities operated institutes or centers dedicated to either Russian, Soviet, or Slavic studies.¹⁶⁵ It is clear that these centers would not have been possible without the cooperation between university administrative, philanthropic foundations, and the US government, and sometimes state legislatures.¹⁶⁶ By the end of the 1950s an institutional infrastructure for Soviet Studies had become established by the US. The ties to national needs were not forgotten but continued to be a source of pride. Additionally, universities and foundations maintained their positivistic and idealistic attitude into the 1950's. As the RRC declared in 1952,

The success of our vast international programs, the effective use of billions of American dollars, the ultimate likelihood of war or peace depend to a considerable degree upon our having adequate knowledge of foreign areas to which we have traditionally given little or no attention.¹⁶⁷

1961, Columbia boasted that 60% of all American students trained in the Soviet field were graduates of the Russian Institute.¹⁶⁸

Chapter 3: Objectivity and Authority: Collapsing the Disciplines

The aspiration for comprehensive knowledge of Japan and Russia certainly made sense in the context of war. The attitude fueling area studies development is conveyed in a CCNY memorandum on foreign area studies:

We began to realize that in attempting to foresee developments in enemy countries, to evaluate the behavior of neutrals, and even to understand the reactions and responses of allies—for all these purposes and many more there was really no aspect of a foreign culture that was entirely irrelevant.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Szanton, *Politics of Knowledge*, 219.

¹⁶⁶ Szanton, *Politics of Knowledge*, 220

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum for council, Area Studies: Africa, India, Inner Asia, Russian Research Center, April 14, 1952, Box III.A 42, Fldr 12 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹⁶⁸ 319 Columbia University- Russian Institute Report, May 18, 1961, Box 321, Fldr 3820, CU-RI 1945 , Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁶⁹ The Carnegie Corporation and Foreign Area Studies Programs in the United States, October 14, 1952,

However, outside the language of “enemies,” “neutrals,” and “allies,” the area studies approach much less defensible. Implicit in the methodology of area studies (not to mention the aspiration of “world coverage” in American area studies) is the assumption or anticipation of American superiority. Apart from the language of American national interest, there is strikingly little mention in the records of area studies planning of why foreign areas are interesting and worthwhile subjects on their own. Created to serve American postwar hegemony, area studies continues to be foremost a project of affirming American authority and identity.

Until the first World War, the so-called “civilized world” was only interested in the “civilized world.”¹⁷⁰ Only the West was worth studying since only the West had historically progressed. It was assumed that only by studying the West could a scholar speak usefully to the issues of national identity and rational reform. As the international climate changed after the world wars, priorities in scholarship changed. While a realization of one’s place in the world is often a humbling experience, the unsettling wartime realization of American “provincialism” did not inspire a more self-aware and tentative attitude towards other nations. “Provincialism” was not a reality to be reckoned with but a defect to be swiftly overcome. The sudden interest in foreign regions was not due to a realization that the non-West might provide useful and enriching knowledge to the Western cannon. With the explosion of foreign studies, government and academia alike sought to enrich American expertise with global awareness—in effect, to “overcome provincialism” and expand American intellectual authority over all regions of the globe.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein, "What Are We Bounding, and Whom, When We Bound Social Research." *Social Research* 62, no. 4 (1995): 839-56.

¹⁷¹ Social Science Considerations in the Planning of Regional Specialization in Higher Education and Research, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

Between 1850 and 1915, studies of the “civilized world” were organized into four distinct disciplines: history, economics, political science, sociology.¹⁷² While historians studied the past (idiographic stance), social sciences studied the present (nomothetic stance). Area studies introduced a unique temporal specialization, a unification of the two modes of which is not simple to defend on intellectual grounds, and indeed continues to be debated. The wartime discussions of potential “areas” for study reveals the arbitrary divisions of the world from the American perspective—and the subsequent strangeness of reorienting knowledge production along these arbitrary lines.

In the planning stages for the SIA and regional institutes, Columbia and Rockefeller established the “five principle areas of the modern world” to be granted specialized center study.¹ These areas were Germany, France, Russia, the Far East, and Latin America.¹ While Germany and France were seen as distinct entities, “Latin America” was a singular entity of vague significance, as was the amorphous Far East. Other regional focuses proposed in 1946 included the Islamic Area, the Far East, the Near and Middle East, the Pacific Basin and the British Empire.¹⁷³ While the area studies architects noted some ambiguity in the regional divisions—the questioned, for example, whether to place Greece with the Balkans or with the Near East and whether to group Egypt with the Islamic World or with the rest of Africa—it was generally accepted that “defining areas” could be conveniently decided by individual universities “in terms of the personnel and library resources available.”¹⁷⁴ These divisions of the globe only make sense in the context of war or colonialism, from the perspective of Americans.

The area studies method was reflected both America ignorance and arrogance towards the foreign regions—they knew just enough to deem foreign regions unworthy of specified study. The

¹⁷² Immanuel Wallerstein, “What Are We Bounding, and Whom, When We Bound Social Research.” *Social Research* 62, no. 4 (1995): 839-56.

¹⁷³ Plans for Area Studies, JWG, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹⁷⁴ Memorandum on Postwar Area Studies Programs prepared by John W. Gardner, 1946, Box III.A 42, Fldr 12 CU-RI Fellowships, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

assumption behind the regional framework was that the non-Western world—in particular the colonial world, but also Russia—was stuck in time. Because of their primitivism, their system had not yet been differentiated into economic, political, and social spheres as in the West. As the Orient totally controlled by the whim of despots, so Russian communism permeated all areas of life, thus requiring the region to be studied as a whole. Furthermore, it was believed that some regions were not “coherent” enough to deserve more than specified study. “Coherence,” according to Norman Buchanan, director for the Social Sciences at the RF, was “defined by common memory and the rise of modern nationalism, as well as a common outlook on the rest of the world.” Buchanan declared, rather nonsensically, that “the Near East is a conscious and coherent human region, whereas the Far East or South East Asia are not.”¹⁷⁵

Despite making authoritative statements on swaths of the globe, Americans knew extremely little about other regions, especially Russia. For historians and students in the 1950’s, the very project of studying Russian history was an adventure. Quoting the very dictionary definition of “adventure,” historian James Cracraft simply described research in Russian history as a “very unusual experience,” if not “a bold, even risky undertaking of an uncertain outcome.”¹⁷⁶ In between the “West” and the “Orient,” Russia occupied a space of unpredictable potential. “Russian society was assumed to have little continuity with the old regime, or indeed, with any other society past or present,” historian Priscilla Roosevelt wrote, “Homo Sovieticus was virtually an alien life form.”¹⁷⁷ Russia’s series of tsars was seen as evidence of “Asiatic despotism” and irretrievable backwardness—at the same time, Russia was imagined as a nation within the West’s progressive trajectory of history; as a nation yet to take its place within the West. There was even a sense that

¹⁷⁵ 135 Area Studies and the Near East, John Marshall

¹⁷⁶ James Cracraft, “Reclaiming Peter the Great,” in Samuel H Baron and Cathy A. Frierson ed. *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present*.

¹⁷⁷ Priscilla Roosevelt, “Discovering Rural Russia,” in Samuel H Baron and Cathy A. Frierson ed. *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present*.

scholars could potentially be an influence upon whether Russia westernizes or fall back into Oriental primitivism.¹⁷⁸ As such, Russia was both a fearsome totalitarian Other as well as a romantic, magical place—a place of “adventure,” if not conversion.

Whether or not the Soviet Union was “coherent,” it was to be studied comprehensively because of the state’s totalitarianism. Since the USSR “attempts to control or direct all human activities on the basis of explicitly defined programs,” it was assumed that all aspects of social, political, and artistic life were more or less defined and controlled by the state.¹⁷⁹ It was therefore seen as unnecessary to formally separate the disciplines. This attitude is clear in the RI’s statement of “basic purpose:” in efforts to understand the “Soviet system” and its “impact” on global affairs, RI produces research on “Soviet economics, political and party institutions, administrative control and legal systems, the evolution of social ideology, the aims and impact of Soviet communism on the conduct of international affairs and the control and use of literature as a means of ideological indoctrination.”¹⁸⁰ From Russian law to Russian literature, Russian studies was all about the “Soviet system” of control.

While students of the RI were expected to major in one of five fields (in addition to their major within SIPA), they are required to take lecture courses in all fields of Russia in order to build a necessary “all around approach” to research problems. Mosely explained, students of economics or international relations would be enriched by the study Soviet literature which allows them a necessary understanding of the “Soviet attitude” and the “Party impact.”¹⁸¹ By reading Russian literature, they would see “etched out the Soviet’s attitude towards Americans, and if they someday

¹⁷⁸ Convergence theory

¹⁷⁹ Sixty Years of the Harriman Institute at Columbia, quote by Mosely

¹⁸⁰ 317 Meeting Item Columbia University-Russian Institute, April 7, 1954, Box 321, Fldr 3820, CU-RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

¹⁸¹ 2-105 “Grants from the Foundation: \$786,500 to Columbia University, The Russian Institute in New York,” February 1, 1954 (200S Columbia University-Russian Institute, RG 1.1, Box 322, Fldr 3827)

they relax their anti-American propaganda, the fact will be reflected in their literature.”¹⁸² As such, students in the RI were encouraged to “double major” and write research papers on at least two different fields—for example, history paired with international relations or economics combined with literature. It was assumed that to study a topic in Russia, it was necessary to study Russia as a whole. “Literary production is just as much a part of the disciplined, controlled system as steel production or wheat production,” Mosely insisted. This assumption was based upon the idea that “Russian literature” can hardly enrich the field of “Literature” but could only serve to better understand the region.

At least in the early years of area studies, the collapse of the disciplines reflected the assumption that certain regions cannot contribute to the larger study of Economics or History or Literature. “For the most primitive societies, nothing is served by trying to break up the society into its component parts because too little is known or can be assembled about the parts separately,” Norman Buchanan wrote after a visit to Japan in 1957, “One would not expect a careful study of the “political organization” of the Trobriander Islanders to have any relevance to the political organization of more developed societies.”¹⁸³ In contrast, “when one turns to the developed societies,” Buchanan continued, “Even a cursory treatment of the society’s culture separates out into its geography and history, its language and literature, and at least the rough outlines of its social, political, and economic institutions.”¹⁸⁴ Buchanan is explicit: the culture and organization of inferior systems cannot possibly enrich the economics of literature of developed societies. As such, besides the “adventure” of studying mysterious Russia, there was little reason to study foreign regions

¹⁸² 2-105 “Grants from the Foundation: \$786,500 to Columbia University, The Russian Institute in New York,” February 1, 1954 (200S Columbia University-Russian Institute, RG 1.1, Box 322, Fldr 3827)

¹⁸³ 112 American Studies and the Social Sciences: Some Thoughts on a Visit to Japan, Norman S. Buchanan, Oct 25, 1947, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹⁸⁴ American Studies and the Social Sciences: Some Thoughts on a Visit to Japan, Norman S. Buchanan, Oct 25, 1947, Box 81, Fldr 165 Program and Policy, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

besides for reinforcing American claims to universal knowledge. After all, 'lesser' nations cannot teach anything to the more 'developed' nations.

In tracing the historiography of non-Western regions by Europeans and Americans, some scholars, including Zachary Lockman, identify area studies as a successor to Orientalism and colonial anthropology. The research of scholars in each of these general groups was supported because of its usefulness to state legitimization. Colonial scholars first became interested in primitive cultures in order to understand "Europe's past" or "where Europeans came from," in other words how culture evolved and progressed in European states. This assumption that "civilization" exists on a singular progressive trajectory, with Europeans as "most developed" (i.e. farther ahead in time) and non-Western regions as "developing," was often implicit in discussions of area studies (as it is implicit in contemporary conversations).

For area specialists and Orientalists alike, non-western regions could be studied as whole because they were yet to become sophisticated or modern enough to be studied otherwise. However, while Orientalism was the study of the "past" (the primitive origins of the West), area studies was development-oriented; it took the fledgling nation-state as its subject and operated under the theoretical premises of modernization. The implication was similar: that the non-West was yet to become like the West. "Meeting the need for training in international administration," wrote L. Gray Cowan, the assistant director of the School of International Affairs in 1954, was a "world responsibility" which has been "the lot of the US in the postwar period."¹⁸⁵ (Cowan later went on to become a director of the African Institute.) Whether foreign areas needed to be "preserved" or "developed" in the mind of area specialists, the assumption continued to be that the world has a "crying need" for Western authority, without which it cannot be orderly or peaceful.¹⁸⁶ The repeated

¹⁸⁵ Cowan, 21.

¹⁸⁶ Luncheon Meeting Notes Geroid Robinson, March 21, 1946, Box 321, Fldr, 3821, CU-RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC.

claims that America was “responsible for maintaining the peace of the world” calls to mind rhetoric of the European’s civilizing mission in the colonies.¹⁸⁷ Observing the parallels between the language of imperialism and the language of modernization theory tightly woven into the records of area studies planning, many scholars including Immanuel Wallerstein and Biray Kolluoglu-Kirli understand area studies as a technology of neocolonialism.¹⁸⁸

Conclusion

The proliferation of area studies reflected two contradictory experiences in American identity: profound uncertainty about the character of American identity, and overwhelming assurance in the authority of the U.S. to understand and to ‘lead’ the rest of the world. Emphasizing the urgency of foreign studies, Charles Fahs, the RF director wrote, “The institutions, practices, and values of our democratic society are the product of a long evolution...we ignore their history and origins only at our peril.”¹⁸⁹ He suggests that foreign regions are part of the “past” of ‘modern democratic societies’ and are thereby important to study in order to defend and strengthen American ideals. In identifying the history of foreign regions as critical to reinforcing the difference and implicit superiority of American identity, Fahs reiterates the adage, “History is the historiography of the Other.”

As Robinson realized, the U.S. cannot overcome the Soviet Union without having a clear, unified conception of Americanism. Gardner, of the CCNY agreed: “Without knowing other parts of the world, we have no way of judging our own selves,” he wrote.¹⁹⁰ Likewise, Charles Fahs, the

¹⁸⁷ The Russian Institute, June 25, 1945, Box 321, Fldr 3820 Columbia Russian Institute 1945, CU-RI, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, SG 1.1, RAC. (photocopy of a newspaper clipping)

¹⁸⁸ Biray Kolluoglu-Kirli, "From Orientalism to Area Studies." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 93-111.

¹⁸⁹ Widening Our Cultural Horizons by Charles B. Fahs, November 12, 1954, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 166, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹⁹⁰ Plans for Area Studies prepared by JWG, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

diplomat and director of the Humanities Division at the RF, observed, “Anyone who has lived abroad soon realizes that one of the major obstacles to understanding a foreign culture is ignorance of our own.” Fahs added, “the experience with foreign area studies has re-enforced interest in American studies and more particularly regional studies of the United States.”¹⁹¹ In the planning stages for area studies, the administrators also recognized the need to development programs for American Studies, in which “the demand for teachers already exceeds the supply.”¹⁹² As the United States grappled with foreign regions and foreign cultures through area studies, the U.S. was also forging a narrative of how America is related to other nations.

Columbia’s RI, along with the many institutes for Russian studies that quickly followed, became the model for all subsequent area studies programs and set the pattern for postwar universities.¹⁹³ The regional institutes that subsequently opened at Columbia are the European Institute (founded in 1948), the East Asian Institute (1949), Middle Eastern Institute (1954), African Studies (1961) and the Institute for Latin American Studies (1962). All of the institutes opened with the express intention of providing counsel to foreign and international affairs, a goal that is still noted on the institutes’ websites. Each of the institutes have been designated a National Resource Center by the U.S. Department of Education. By the 1960s, area studies were thoroughly incorporated into the university framework.

There is no question that area studies has changed immensely since the heyday of the RI. Following some fierce debates in the 1960’s, area studies lost its prestige in the 1980s eclipsed by more internationally focused programs within political science and sociology. However, while the

¹⁹¹ Widening Our Cultural Horizons by Charles B. Fahs, November 12, 1954, Series 900, Box 81, Fldr 166, RF records, administration, program and policy, SG 3.1 and SG 3.2, RAC.

¹⁹² Correspondence from Robert B. Hall to Dr. C. Carmichael, October 31, 1946, Box III.A 42, Fldr 11 Area Studies, CCNY Records, circa 1872-2015, RBML.

¹⁹³ *1946–2006, Sixty Years of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University*, Trustees of the Columbia University in the City of New York.

scholarship has become more self-critical, the institutional structures that created area studies remain. Funding for area studies remains contingent on global affairs—on the regions that the U.S., and in turn, the foundations, find most important. While the Harriman and the European Institute rarely lack funding, the African Institute and Institute for Latin American Studies remain underfunded. Concerned about the state of US- Russia relations, Carnegie recently announced three grants of \$1 million each to three universities, including Columbia, in 2016.¹⁹⁴

The history of institutional and intellectual history of area studies remains an important reminder of the political nature of historical writing and knowledge production. History is how we affirm and defend ourselves. The histories that we write of others are also constitutive of who we are. While the U.S. incorporated foreign studies into the structure of American universities, the U.S. was also grappling to shape the narrative of how the U.S. stands in relation to others. In the context of area studies, knowledge of foreign areas served to map out certain relationships with another regions—for the sake of preserving the idea of American superiority, if not for the sake of international affairs.

¹⁹⁴ “Russia Area Studies,” Carnegie Corporation of New York, September 26, 2016. <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/russia-area-studies/>

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