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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

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New as well as old challenges face foreign area scholarship in the United States as the twentieth century draws to a close. Domestic institutional factors shape the resource base of area studies programs, and disciplinary trends influence the theories and methodologies of foreign area research. Developments abroad at the global and nation-state levels, however, play the primary role in shaping the subject matter and intellectual content of foreign area scholarship.

Because foreign area studies have been supported federally since passage of Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958, it is easy to infer that the federal government shapes the content as well as the infrastructure of foreign area studies. Stanley Heginbotham observed in a recent issue of the *Social Science Research Council Items*: "There is widespread recognition that cold war goals were major incentives for federal programs in support of international scholarship, education, and exchanges. A primary motivation has been to know the enemy. A secondary cold war goal has been to know contested areas of the world. The underlying concern that motivated the initial funding of such programs was to strengthen our capacity to mount programs that would undermine Soviet ability to infiltrate and capture those countries on behalf of the Soviet bloc. The ways in which our inquiries have been framed have been shaped by a cold war-dominated world."<sup>1</sup>

But the influence of U.S. cold war security interests on foreign area studies should not be exaggerated. The legislative history of the 1958 NDEA reveals congressional motives that were relatively unrelated to cold war ideology. As documented in the excellent book by Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War*, the NDEA was pushed through

1. Stanley J. Heginbotham, "Rethinking International Scholarship: The Challenge of Transition from the Cold War Era," *Social Science Research Council Items*, 48, nos. 2-3 (June-Sept. 1994), 33-40.

by liberal Democrats led by Representative Carl Elliott and Senator Lister Hill, with help behind the scenes from a liberal Republican, Assistant Secretary of Health Education and Welfare Eliot L. Richardson. They took advantage of the U.S. public hysteria over Sputnik to achieve a long-sought goal: federal aid to higher education.<sup>2</sup> The legislative debate had less to do with the cold war than with whether the federal government should fund higher education. Supporters and opponents of the NDEA were keenly aware of the significance of this precedent. The bill was strongly contested by conservatives, who argued that the NDEA would open the floodgates of federal assistance to higher education. Senator Strom Thurmond denounced the bill for its “unbelievable remoteness from national defense considerations,” declaring it just a ploy by the federal-aid forces.

Regardless of congressional intent, did government funding bring a cold war slant to the content of foreign area studies in the United States? To the contrary, Title VI programs actually resulted in a democratization of foreign area intelligence that fueled opposition to cold war policies of the government. As the dissemination of information about foreign areas expanded, criticism of foreign policies grew, as did exposés of the mistakes made by national security agencies. Two of the most criticized administrations, those of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, responded by attempting to terminate Title VI funding entirely. The U.S. Congress, however, found academic expertise on foreign areas to be useful and therefore rescued Title VI. The relationship of the area studies community to U.S. foreign-policy interests is therefore not simple and supportive but complex and often confrontational, as in the case of strong stands taken by the Latin American Studies Association in opposition to the Central American policy of the Reagan administration.

The point of this discussion of legislative intent and adversarial behavior is to underscore that although the cold war may have served as the backdrop for federal support to foreign area studies, university-based foreign area studies became intellectually independent of federal influence. Accordingly, the end of the cold war may affect federal support for Title VI programs, but it is unlikely to lead to a federal reorientation of the intellectual priorities of foreign area studies.

The research agenda of foreign area scholarship is driven less by its institutional base of support than by foreign developments. The current challenges confronting foreign area scholarship stem from the rapid pace of change at local, national, and global levels. The international system has been assuming a different shape following the collapse of the Soviet Union, rendering obsolete many hallowed generalizations regarding the world order. Among the casualties of this transformation are the

2. Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and the National Defense Education Act of 1958* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

bipolar models of international relations and the related tripartite schemes that offered marginal players in the bipolar system a third-party identity, such as the "Third World" or "nonaligned."

The integration of economic, political, and military interests that characterized the old blocs is unraveling. As this happens, former client states or marginally viable countries behave with increasing eccentricity. This systemic disaggregation gives rise to improvisational arrangements that are unstable and focused on limited objectives. In this situation, the salient features of the international system become greater complexity and unpredictability.

On the economic front, the notion of capitalist and communist trade blocs is no longer meaningful. The United States has lost its dominant economic status as its erstwhile allies, Western Europe and Japan, have emerged as economic rivals. Trade imbalances and protectionism have led to a proliferation of economic conflicts. Attempts to reduce these conflicts involve a hodgepodge of bilateral negotiations (as with Japan), regional integration efforts (such as NAFTA), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

On the military front, old military arrangements such as NATO and the Rio Treaty are being bypassed in favor of ad hoc alliances cobbled together for interventions under the rubric of peacekeeping and collective security. The list of countries that have recently experienced armed conflict or intervention in the 1990s seems endless: Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Cambodia, Georgia, Haiti, Iraq, Kuwait, Liberia, Ruanda, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, to name only some. The continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons conjures up nightmarish scenarios for conflict. The United States and Russia remain the major military powers but have lost military as well as economic hegemony.

The disaggregation of the global system is marked by the increasing substitution of nongovernmental international networks for government-to-government ties. Subnational actors have discovered that nongovernmental action can be more effective in some areas than government intervention, leading to a proliferation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with such transnational missions as redemocratization, birth control, gender equity, human rights, ecology, and public health. The rise of these sociopolitical NGOs parallels the multinational activities of business and religious organizations and represents an increasing privatization of international relations.

Diverse outcomes result from the ways in which different countries adapt to changes in the world system. In the absence of external support, some nation-states are disintegrating. Others are retreating into a combination of authoritarianism and autarchy. The most common adaptation, however, is a reduction in state size combined with a search for world-market integration and international political respectability.

This third and modal pattern of adaptation emphasizes the divestment of economic functions formerly carried out by the state. The economic role of the state is shrinking, not just in the former socialist bloc but also in Scandinavia, the European Community, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Reductions are occurring in the size and number of state-owned corporations, state subsidies to producers, state controls over prices and trade, and regulatory bureaucracies. Another historic reversal is underway in terms of development strategy: state protection and subsidization of import-substitution industries are being replaced by exported development emphasizing private-sector initiative. Foreign private capital, once viewed as anathema, is now welcomed.

Reductions are also taking place in the social role of the state and its programs of public welfare. Elimination of social subsidies deals a double blow to those who lose in the downsizing of the state and the return to market economics. The losers are the least competitive workers in sectors that were formerly subsidized, along with those whose ecological niches are threatened by development, such as indigenous peoples. In these circumstances, a backlash of social protest or anti-Western religious fundamentalism can be expected.

Despite the social costs of such transformations, reduction of the state is frequently accompanied by a return to democratic forms of governance. Bureaucratic-authoritarian military regimes as well as dictatorships of the proletariat are increasingly phenomena of the past. Contrary to hand-wringing about the fragility of democracy in countries undergoing painful transitions, the newly emerging democracies are proving broadly based and durable. Although specific governing leaders and coalitions often fail politically, their removal from office is being achieved by electoral means that do not compromise the new democratic systems themselves.

The success rate of countries following the modal pattern of adaptation varies broadly, not only in terms of economic growth but also with respect to social costs and the degree of resistance and protest encountered. Increased differentiation and stratification among countries will inevitably result. The successes may come to resemble the European democracies, while the failures may revert to authoritarianism or even collapse. Thus the pace of change and the degree of uncertainty are likely to accelerate. Free markets are unpredictable, and democracy implies an indeterminacy of policy and leadership. Like the changes at the global level, changes at the nation-state level involve the disaggregation of power, an increased systemic complexity, and a loss of predictability. Foreign area scholars face a host of challenges in this brave new world.

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