



Director Mark von Hagen at the exhibit held in Low Library to celebrate the Harriman Institute's fiftieth anniversary

# AREA STUDIES FROM COLD WAR TO CIVILIZATIONAL CONFLICT

## ON LEARNING, RELEARNING, AND UNLEARNING

BY MARK VON HAGEN

**A**lex Cooley's invitation to reflect on the state of our field came at a most opportune time for me to engage in some preliminary comparisons of my experience at the Harriman and, since July 1, 2016, at Arizona State University's Melikian Center, where I stepped "back" into the role of interim director in a field that I thought would be very familiar.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, I quickly learned that this kind of sudden reimmersion in the role of director of an area studies center in a major public research university nearly a decade and a half later requires a lot of learning, relearning, and even some unlearning. We find ourselves in new contexts and often rediscovering scholars, books, and other knowledge that for various reasons we had overlooked in the past. Learning is, after all, what universities and other institutions of higher



*From left to right:* Harriman director Robert Legvold, associate director Mark von Hagen, and Russian president Boris Yeltsin on Low Library Plaza (September 11, 1989)

education are supposed to be about, and it is academic and university-based area studies that I know best and what will be the focus of my remarks. In very important ways, the purpose and mission of those centers remain what they have long been—namely, helping prepare students for global citizenship and introducing them to the best research and teaching about regions of the world through language training and familiarization with the cultures, societies, economics, and politics of the countries constituting the region defined today as Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia.<sup>2</sup>

Arizona State University (ASU), as a large public university, aspires to be the New American University and prides itself on its innovation, entrepreneurial culture, applied research and teaching, and community impact. (Columbia, by comparison, seems a place where pure research and disciplinary tradition is—at least relatively—more esteemed and even institutionalized, for example, in the Core Curriculum

that I taught for nearly all my twenty-four years.) The ASU focus on innovation and entrepreneurship is, in part, a reflection of the political economy of higher education where “state” is less and less appropriate for our universities’ names; instead, “public” better reflects the reliance on student tuition and the decline of state budget transfers. It has also meant the aggressive pursuit of private-public sector partnerships and more vigorous competition for still-substantial U.S. government funding across “critical” or “strategic” areas and issues.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the Harriman Institute and the Melikian Center is its funding sources. The Harriman’s large endowment, built up over seventy years, does not rule out fundraising from outside sources, but does not make it an existential urgency. The Melikian, by contrast, has a small endowment—\$2 million—and depends almost entirely for its operations on grants from the U.S. government:

Department of Defense, State Department, Education, more recently the National Security Agency, and other federal agencies. And that “entangles” ASU’s area studies much more tightly with the national security worlds than is the case for Columbia and other private top-tier universities that support area studies programs.

### **What I Learned at Columbia: From Red Army and Militarized Socialism to Russia as Empire**

Already as a student in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University—majoring in international relations and still considering a career in diplomacy—I made my first trip to the USSR on a summer language program in 1975, under the auspices of the Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE), and four months later won a berth among the thirty Americans studying in Leningrad for the winter semester of 1976. In between Georgetown and Stanford,

I earned an M.A. in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University, where I taught an intensive first-year Russian class and later led the Georgetown group for CIEE's summer language program in 1980. I wrote my doctoral dissertation, in history and humanities at Stanford University, about the Red Army during the 1920s as a laboratory for what I called "militarized socialism." I witnessed (via television and local Leningrad reactions) another beginning of the end when Leonid Brezhnev died, while I spent the year 1982–83 in Moscow and Leningrad on a fellowship from Fulbright and in the leading scholarly research program, the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX). The exchanges, and opportunities for study abroad and language study, were key to my career and to area studies more broadly.

I started teaching Soviet history at Columbia in January 1985. Two months later, Mikhail Gorbachev became

general secretary and the period of accelerating reforms that led to the breakup of the Soviet empire and the Soviet Union began. After the openings of 1989–91, Columbia was at the center of another arena of area studies that became possible like never before—namely, international conferences and collaborative research projects across former Cold War borders. The end of the Soviet Union opened an era of new and exciting fields of cooperation, mutual learning, and relearning across the former empire, including a vast expansion in student and faculty exchange programs. Those new opportunities often took us to newly independent countries and to cities beyond the capitals, including many where foreign travelers had been banned from entry during the long Cold War decades. One of my early experiences of those new opportunities came in 1988 when Dorothy Atkinson, then executive secretary of the American Association

*The end of the Soviet Union opened an era of new and exciting fields of cooperation, mutual learning, and relearning across the former empire.*

for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (as it was known back then) and one of my advisers at Stanford, asked me to "receive" our first delegation of Soviet academicians to attend an annual convention of the AAASS (today known as the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies) in Hawaii, for an eighteen-hour layover they had in New York City. Our Soviet guests, most all of them historians, arrived in mid-November wrapped in thick coats and fur hats. I organized a bus tour of downtown New York City,

*Left:* With IU Bloomington fellow grad student Carol Sorrenti, recently retired from a long career at IREX-Moscow; *right:* With David Remnick at the Harriman Institute Alumni Conference (April 1997)





Von Hagen teaching the Harriman Institute's "Legacies" seminar

including a dinner at Times Square, and tried to introduce them to what they knew from Soviet propaganda as “the city of contrasts” (*gorod kontrastov*). It was an early lesson in how important our area studies centers were in providing spaces where we could help our Soviet and East European colleagues “translate” America and Americans.

Even though my appointment at Columbia was in history, where I was tenured and eventually promoted to full professor, my office, until my very last year, was not in Fayerweather with most of my colleagues, but at the Harriman Institute in the School of International and Public Affairs with most of my Russian and East European history and political science colleagues.

The Harriman stood for area studies—one of, if not, the earliest versions of what we once called interdisciplinarity, and more recently transdisciplinarity, and usually mean by that something more than old-fashioned comparative studies. We taught together in the conviction that practitioners of different disciplines ought to be able to learn from one another—each discipline brings its own strengths and blind spots to important processes occurring in the world—and also that we can understand something better when we understand similar things in other places and other times.

I began my “imperial turn” under the influence of Michael Stanislawski and his students in Russian and East European Jewish history, such that it is hard for me to imagine Russian history anymore without Jewish history, which, among other features, is the paradigmatic diaspora history. It is also hard to imagine it without Ukraine after my tutoring at the hands of Alex Motyl and Frank Sysyn (with whom I also cotaught a seminar),

or Turks and Islam after I studied modern Turkish for a couple of years and cotaught a seminar with my Ottomanist colleague, the historian-sociologist Karen Barkey. Another sign of the new possibilities for empire and nation studies was marked when the Harriman Institute began hosting the annual convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, which has become the premier international, intergenerational, interdisciplinary group of scholars devoted to problems of empire and nationality and itself grew out of Columbia's long-functioning Cold War-era seminar on Soviet nationality problems.

Philanthropic foundations in the United States, Canada, and Europe also supported collaborative research in the region across all social science and humanities disciplines. Just before the end of the Soviet Union, the Ford Foundation funded a multiyear project with Moscow Memorial for which I served as the PI in the U.S.; with the help of human rights activist Ed Kline and the Chekhov Publishing House, we brought to the U.S. and Europe researchers, including former dissidents, to bring back émigré dissidents' archives and other samizdat and tamizdat collections to Moscow. Also during the first half of the 1990s, the then Estonian foreign minister, Toomas Ilves, a Columbia alumnus, invited a team of Columbia Contemporary Civilization teachers to bring our model of liberal education formed around the classics of Western political and moral thought to Tartu University. I was part of a team of social scientists led by the British sociologist Teo Shanin that helped set up a textbook competition under the auspices of George Soros's Transformation of the Social Sciences



Von Hagen, George Rupp (president of Columbia University), and Ukrainian Ambassador to the United Nations Anatoly Zlenko at the conference “Chornobyl: Ten Years After” (April 1996)

project in Russia. And I worked as a consultant for Primary Source Microfilms (later the Gale Group and still later part of the Thomson publishing empire) for their Russian Archive series, thanks to which I got to know the directors and highlights and histories of major archives in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, and even Warsaw. And all this after I had been denied any archival access for my own work on the Red Army just ten years earlier!

I spent most of 1991 in Berlin as a Humboldt Fellow at the Free University of Berlin’s Osteuropa Institut, from where I witnessed the transfer of Germany’s capital from Bonn to Berlin and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Potsdam and East Berlin. During that summer I was part of one of the first meetings of still-Soviet, German, American, and British historians of World War II at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio conference site. In Berlin I cotaught a research seminar with my colleague

Rosalinde Sartorti on Soviet culture and politics in the 1920s.

The new possibilities included teaching together with Russian, Ukrainian, and other colleagues. Some of the most positive memories of my entire career came in the summer workshops, starting with two social science workshops of the Moscow Public Science Foundation, where I taught together with Russian historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists in Yaroslavl and Tarusa; and for several years that now are almost unimaginable I served on the selection committee for the Moscow Public Science Foundation together with Russian scholars.<sup>3</sup>

Another set of international collaborations on the historical encounters of Ukraine and Russia raised hopes for dialogue between historians of a newly independent Ukraine and Russia with their counterparts in Europe and North

America.<sup>4</sup> Not only did scholars attempt to overcome age-old national stereotypes, but also to reimagine both histories in the comparative frameworks of empires and nations. There was even hope of writing a collective history of Ukraine and Russia along the lines of what the French and Germans have done.

Perhaps for me the highlight of these new international relationships and collaborations and the mutual learning that was their outcome was a second Ford Foundation grant (1997–2002) that funded the Russian empire project with Jane Burbank (who was first at Michigan, then NYU); the late Anatolii Remnev, dean of Siberian historians at Omsk State University; and Petr Savel’ev (at Samara). It was during those years and my frequent trips to Russia for conferences and for consulting on archival projects that I realized how much energy we had spent during the Cold War decades in keeping



With President Mikhail Gorbachev, Low Library, Columbia University (March 11, 2002)

our vigilance in contacts with Soviet colleagues, worried that we might get them in trouble in the first place, but also worried about possible repercussions even for us. In Omsk, Samara, and New York, Russians, including several scholars from national republics, and Americans were able to talk freely; we read the same books together and shared drafts of our essays.

During most of the 1990s there were some initial troubling signs of the changes, especially in the economic contraction of the post-Soviet economies and the brutal turn to market economies, that hit academic institutes and universities (not to mention all educational and cultural institutions and much of the working population as well) very hard. The resistance to the brutal reforms grew, as did the increasingly blatant corruption. A particularly stark reminder for me of the incomplete—and, in some cases, failed—reforms

and the initial hopes came from a teaching experience in Minsk, Belarus, in summer 2001. Very much in the spirit of the summer workshops of the 1990s, I cotaught a workshop on postcoloniality in Minsk at the European University, a European- and U.S.-supported liberal arts university that was already under siege from Lukashenka's dictatorial regime. A year later the European University was forced to seek refuge in Vilnius.

But Belarus in 2001 was already an indicator that democratization was not irreversible and that transition was not going to be as smooth or as positive a story as many of us had hoped just ten years earlier. What once was an anomaly has become the norm, and different trends were already evident in most of the Central Asian states, the Caucasian ones as well, but with qualified exceptions at times, such as Mongolia until recently, Georgia at moments, the Baltic states more

generally. One lesson we learned was that we should generalize less about the Soviet legacy while not ignoring or forgetting it entirely.

During my presidency of the International Association of Ukrainianists (MAU)—I was elected at the congress in Chernivtsy and presided over the congress in a still quite peaceful Donetsk—the three years of congress preparations involved me in extensive and sometimes intensive interactions with the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kyiv, as well as with the rector (and his staff) at Donetsk National University. The Association's board led an effort for three years to “internationalize” the association, but we eventually learned the power of old bureaucratic inertia and survival techniques when the Academy of Sciences seized back control of the association with the



With Secretary Cyrus Vance (1998)

next presidential election and wound down our reforms.

### What I Have Been Learning at ASU: From Empire and Colonialism to Civilizational Conflict

I tried to summarize much of what I had learned from the “imperial turn” in an essay in the *American Historical Review* (*AHR*), “Empire, Borderlands, and Diasporas: Eurasia as Anti-Paradigm for the Post-Soviet Era” (2004). I would submit that those themes remain and perhaps have become more important frameworks for the study of “our” region today.

I left Columbia in 2007 as the history department chair and faculty member of the Harriman Institute for a job as the history department chair at ASU; in other words, I moved away from area studies (temporarily) to a history department, where I had a lot of relearning to do in my

disciplinary home, the historical field, but beyond Russia and Eurasia, in a new institutional setting and in a new part of the country. Chairing two departments forced the kind of up close and intensive immersive learning that comes with preparing tenure and promotion cases above all, i.e., learning the field from your colleagues’ work. Before too long my relearning had to take another rapid step forward when my mission transformed from reengaging with history to engaging history with philosophy and religious studies in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies.<sup>5</sup> So again I was relearning the fields of philosophy and religious studies from my undergraduate and graduate introductions and my long teaching at Columbia of Contemporary Civilization in the Modern West. My own life and career paralleled and intersected with the transitions of the countries I studied and with

the careers of so many scholars who now hold positions in American and Canadian universities who have made their own, often difficult, transitions from late Soviet East European academic cultures to new languages, cultures, and academic cultures.

Another theme I proposed in my *AHR* “manifesto” was diasporas, which included the émigré scholars who shaped the fields of Russian and East European history, politics, and literature for many generations, who again after 1991 brought new possibilities of transborder scholarship and teaching and new debates about the fine points differentiating diaspora, émigrés, and refugees from hyphenated hybrid citizenships in a “globalizing” world.

I developed a new appreciation for the theme of diasporas when I began teaching and later serving as dean of the philosophy faculty at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich. I teach, in my own version of *surzhyk* (somewhere between Ukrainian and Russian), about the first period of independence nearly 100 years ago and the world war and civil war that enabled that first Ukrainian state and then crushed it a few short years later. The very history of the University is a mirror of the history of the Ukrainian diaspora (and many other diasporas from our region). After its founding in 1921 in Vienna by Ukrainian intellectuals fleeing Bolshevik dictatorship in Ukraine, the University moved to Prague for most of the interwar years, where it thrived alongside a Russian Free University until German annexation in 1938 and then the arrival in Prague of the Red Army and NKVD in 1944. Most of the faculty and staff were deported to Soviet Ukraine and Moscow along with the archives; those





Debate in fall 1979 cohosted by the Speech Communication Association (USA) and Student Council of Soviet Union, held in Tallinn, Estonia. *From left to right:* von Hagen (taking a year off between IU and Stanford), Diana Bielauskas, James Petrila (then at Stanford)

who managed to escape and survive the journey to Bavaria and the U.S. occupation zone after World War II refounded the University. Many of the current faculty and former rectors are themselves children of Ostarbeiter and others who made their way to Germany; now they teach a new Ukrainian diaspora.

All our students are pursuing graduate degrees; they come from all over Ukraine and remain in constant and frequent contact with families and friends back home, but have decided to try to make it in Germany for as long as the situation in Ukraine does not offer them the kinds of life and opportunities that they have come to expect. To capture the different sort of existentially charged atmosphere in which I teach about Ukraine 100 years ago, I frequently repeat the question of a student, Borys, in my very first class in Munich: What has changed in 100 years that might justify our returning to our native country? At one level, that

*I soon realized that we had dozens of veterans at ASU who had actually seen war themselves and whose stories were also worth hearing.*

was easy to understand; Russia is once again a very threatening neighbor, but Poland and Intermarium nations are now Ukraine's most vocal advocates and partners in European and other international fora.

My next transition after launching the new school at ASU was to learn about the wars that had shaped the United States and our relationship with the world since 9/11—the Afghan and then Iraq wars.<sup>6</sup> Since coming to ASU, I would get questions every year in my Soviet history course about the Soviet Afghan war from students

who had served in the U.S. war in Afghanistan. I soon realized that we had dozens of veterans who had actually seen war themselves and whose stories were also worth hearing. I taught a new course in oral history, America's Most Recent Wars, and with President Crow's blessing I launched the Office for Veteran and Military Academic Engagement. It was in the oral history course that I also first discovered (and taught) Svetlana Alexievich's work—namely, her *Zinky Boys*, about the Soviet Afghan war as told by the men and women who were eyewitnesses and participants. I have also incorporated oral history into my Soviet history course itself, now that there are several excellent translated collections. In the hopes of my students being able to feel some empathy for historical actors in other times and places, I propose that oral history helps them understand the freedoms, the options, the possibilities individuals faced, but also the limits, the bans, the place

of violence in shaping the political and social orders in which they lived. Teaching forms of empathy for human beings who live (and lived) in other lands and other times has also become a major task of area studies (and the humanities more broadly).

### Most Recent Developments: The Russia-Ukraine War, Civilizational Conflict, and Area Studies

Russia's war in Ukraine, coming on the heels of the Georgian-Russian war (and the longer "frozen conflict" in Moldova), has divided the field (of Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies) along some familiar lines but also with some realignments and often-strange political-intellectual bedfellows. Vladimir Putin has cast himself as the leader of a new Right International that is anti-EU, anti-U.S., antiliberalism, antidemocracy, and antitransparency, but also attracts far-left critics of U.S. imperialism and EU capitalism in a strange amalgam. In Germany, my colleagues Andreas Kappeler and Karl Schloegel debate in the press with so-called *Putinversther*, those who argue against economic sanctions on Russia or otherwise seek to "understand" Russia's motives in its neighborhood (and more recently in Syria).<sup>7</sup>

After a long career of trying to convince Americans that Russians and Soviet citizens more generally were not only human beings (the title of a now forgotten 1950s area studies book) but were diverse, changed over time, and needed to be understood not as a gray mass of *sovki* who seemed to want to stand in lines for basic products or in the Gulag, it has become more difficult in an America (and the West more broadly) where Russophobia

has frequently resurfaced when tensions are heightened between our countries, and now Russian charges of Russophobia present other challenges. The other side, however, is Americaphobia in Russia and among those who identify or affiliate with Russia's presentation. Americaphobia is reinforced by Ukrainophobia, EU-phobia, and other hatreds in the Russian media, against backdrops both in Russia and the West of rising "Islamophobia" and, with some caveats, "Sinophobia."

My closest experience of the Russia-Ukraine war came during a ten-day visit to Kyiv in September 2015. Marko Suprun, a former Columbia student, and his American-Ukrainian wife, Ulana, a doctor from Detroit, founded Patriot Defence ([www.patriotdefence.org](http://www.patriotdefence.org)) to train Ukrainian doctors to train Ukrainian soldiers on the front in trauma medicine. I met one of their colleagues, a thoracic surgeon, who recently had been awarded for his bravery and service on the front lines treating ATO soldiers. Oleksandr Linchevs'kyi came with his wife and two young sons. We had a remarkable conversation about how he tries to explain to his six-year-old, Hrihorii, and his three-year-old, Taras, why their father wears camouflage and is so often away from home. He has decided to tell the truth from the start; the greatest difficulty is how to talk about the enemy; are they "terrorists" or are they Russians? Since boys not only hear Russian around them in Kyiv all the time, but also speak Russian in addition to Ukrainian, Oleksandr worries about prejudicing them against a people as they grow older.

The workshop on "The Russian Military Threat: Myth or Reality?" is another characteristic sign of

the changing times. The workshop was introduced by Volodymyr Ohryzko, former foreign minister of Ukraine (2007–9) and CEO of the independent policy research Centre for Russian Studies (*Tsentr doslidzhenii Rosii*); Ambassador Ohryzko noted that even in Ukrainian official circles the implications of Russia's threats to Ukraine's security took some time to crystallize, but now Russia is identified as a major, if not the major, threat to Ukraine's security in the new military doctrine signed that week by President Petro Poroshenko. Ohryzko also reported that he had very much wanted to have Russian participants at this meeting and had extended invitations to several of his colleagues in the defense and security think tanks and institutes of Russia, but all of them declined out of fears that they would be charged with state treason for any participation in such a forum organized in Ukraine today. Such, Ohryzko lamented, is the sad state of affairs in Russia regarding anything Ukrainian.

Against this backdrop, the most recent place my area studies identity and training have taken me is my role in shaping an online master's degree in global security, where I've done most of my learning from two ASU colleagues—an international humanitarian lawyer; and an engineer-lawyer and U.S. Army veteran, Braden Allenby, who coined the phrase "civilizational conflict" to capture what NATO has been calling hybrid warfare, and what the chief of the Russian General Staff, Valerii Gerasimov, has called "new-generation warfare," and what Chinese writers call "unrestricted warfare." He cites Russia's invasion of Crimea as an illustration of how important identity and narratives have become in this conflict; indeed, where identities have

become weaponized. Allenby defines “civilizational conflict” to include “all dimensions of a civilization in a process of long-term, intentional, coordinated conflict, one aspect of which may or may not be conventional combat.” Those dimensions of civilization in today’s world make up what he calls the “ringfenced zeitgeist” and is captured by “the creation of a belief system that can be maintained within a much larger chaotic information system by adroit manipulation of culture, psychology, beliefs, ideology, perceptions and opinions, and religions of subgroups using appropriate levers such as comment boards, blogs, websites, and, yes, even traditional print and broadcast media if necessary.” Whatever is happening between the states of Russia and Ukraine is new and unfamiliar, despite seemingly familiar aspects. The “facts” are indeed being “weaponized” by framing contemporary politics in historical narratives of often-spurious ancestry and veracity, but we also witness new roles for social media and the

multifaceted information or propaganda wars that accompany more traditional forms of armed conflict, diplomacy, and economic competition.

### **What Is to Be Done? Or How Do You Study and Engage with the Region? Area Studies in an Era of Civilizational Conflict: Eurasia as an Anti-Paradigm**

If you find the civilizational conflict framework persuasive or helpful, then we are in for a long, multipronged and multilayered, largely undeclared conflict that will in turn shape funding and to some degree academic priorities in area studies centers like the Harriman Institute and the Melikian Center. At ASU the Critical Language Institute is able to offer a dozen less-commonly-taught languages (from Albanian to Uzbek) with the support of the Department of Defense (under Project Global Officer), the State Department (Title VIII), and, recently, the National Security Agency

(for StarTalk, an intensive summer introductory course in Russian for high school students). Students from across the country and even some from abroad are pursuing careers in academia, but also in the military-security complex and in civilian humanitarian work. The Global Officers (Project GO) program is a good example of how we continue to balance “policy-relevant” teaching and scholarship with the academic and intellectual standards and rigor universities continue to aspire to. My colleague Kathleen Evans-Romaine, director of the Critical Language Institute, recalled a conversation with the Air Force ROTC commander who explained that the ROTC Language and Culture Project, an earlier version of Project GO, “exists to ensure that an officer’s first experience of culture shock does not come when he finds himself in Afghanistan with a gun in his hand.” The Afghan example dates from 2007, but Kathleen updated the commander’s definition: “Project GO

Roz Abrams (Journalist, WABC-TV, New York), Nadia Matkiwsky (Executive Director, Children of Chornobyl Relief Fund), von Hagen, and Yuri Shcherbak (Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States)





With Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma (*front row center*) and Dean John Ruggie (*front row, right*), on the occasion of Kuchma being presented SIPA's Distinguished Service Award.



World War II conference at Rockefeller Center, Bellagio (Summer 1991). With colleagues from Stanford, Cambridge, Harvard, and the Soviet Union.



Teaching the Harriman's "Legacies" seminar with Cathy Nepomnyashchy (*at far end of the table*)

exists so that the first time a young officer faces a foreign culture, it's not with a gun in his hand."

The tensions between impartial scholarship and the funding priorities of the national security agencies have not changed what remains central to our study of the region. Area studies is still about empires (and their legacies), borderlands (and their conflicts), and diasporas (and their challenges to maintain ties to their former homelands while preserving some measure of their identities and communities in new homelands). Area studies is also allied with ethnic studies as they have evolved in American academia. Among our missions is to help fellow citizens to understand the diaspora populations who make up our national mosaics, quilts, or whatever the best metaphor for our hybrid, constantly changing, and contested societies and to understand the histories and cultures of the countries they left, whether for the short or, usually, longer term. Many Americans have a Las Vegas attitude that extends to much of the world outside the United States: what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. But our job is to remind our fellow citizens that

what happens in Ukraine and Russia matters to us in America.

And this brings me back to the question Borys asked in Munich about what has changed that might make him want to think about returning home to Ukraine. Though few of our colleagues shared the often-caricatured view of the future in Francis Fukuyama's end of history, 1991 did inaugurate a set of reforms that promoted globalization and neoliberal goals of deregulation and austerity. Many of our political science colleagues pursued research projects that came to be known as "transitology," but already in the 1990s there were challenges to the overly teleological and optimistic predictions and questions about how well "transitology" really traveled. And while many citizens were able to take advantage of the greater freedom that came with open borders and the withdrawal of many forms of state controls over movements of goods, peoples, and ideas, for many, many more that was ultimately not the case. Instead of the anticipated freedoms, human trafficking flourished and international criminal empires operated shadow economies in drugs, arms, and people.

War has rendered millions stateless and refugees. And corrupt elites in power, whether the new political economy be called clientelism, crony capitalism, patronalism, or something else, has led to new forms of proletarianization—which has hit many of our academic and cultural colleagues especially hard—and hidden and open forms of unemployment and underemployment.

I doubt I have been alone in receiving requests from endangered scholars and other vulnerable populations, including gay men and lesbians seeking asylum in the United States and the West. I teach Ukrainian students who have chosen to build their futures in

*Our mission continues to be the back-and-forth translation of cultures, primarily translating the cultures of Eurasia for our American students and colleagues.*



With writers Inna Varlamova, Inna Lisnyanskaya, and Semyon Lipkin, in Peredelkino, the writers' colony outside of Moscow, 1980s

Germany, together with many scholars and teachers. This is a situation those of us who experienced the formative parts of our career in the waning decades of the Cold War might recall, but there are still important differences to this round of displacements. All these migrations of individuals and communities have given new meanings for “home” and “former home” and have compelled us once again to start making distinctions between refugees, exiles, émigrés, and diasporas in familiar and not so familiar ways. Area studies centers will be called on to help prepare students who will work in human rights organizations, with refugees and others seeking asylum from dictatorial regimes, from Turkey to Russia to Ukraine, with Hungary and Poland perhaps not far down the line.

I have continued arguing with myself (and several others, especially among the Ukrainian diaspora community) about my introduction and reinterpretation of the concept of

Eurasia to help orient us as area studies folks. I was flattered and humbled when my successor as president of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, my dear friend and esteemed colleague Bruce Grant, proclaimed in his presidential address in 2011 that “we are all Eurasians” and gave a rhetorical footnote to my *AHR* essay. Bruce pointed to a new generation of scholars, “who are offering examples of worlds far less closed, or at least less contained, than we might otherwise have been casting them. . . . Being Eurasian, in this context, is nothing more than a reminder of how difficult it is to do what the best of scholars from our community have long already done for decades—keep our eyes and ears open to the multiple flows of sense, sensibility, context, and experience that constitute the worlds we seek to better understand.” Bruce returned our attention to area studies centers (and humanities scholars more broadly) as

our collective project, “a recognition of the impossibility or, perhaps better put, the quixotic project of living in someone else’s shoes, no matter what part of the world we are from, of occupying other times, other spaces, other knowledges, and other lives.”

Eurasia as an anti-paradigm was meant to capture some of what Edward Said called for in his critique of Samuel Huntington’s 1993 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, “A Clash of Civilizations?” and the book that followed (no longer with a question mark), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996). Said criticized Huntington for his (mis-)understanding of watertight, hermetically sealed, unchanging, and monolithic civilizations that can only exist in a permanent “clash,” eternal conflict, and ever-increasing militarization of our democracies. Instead, Said (and Eurasia in Bruce’s and my interpretation) insisted that civilizations, like cultures or societies, were not one thing, but mixtures, migrations, and boundary crossings and characterized by diversity, complexity, hybridity, and contestation. Huntington’s vision of the West demands that the West keep all the Others at bay, but as the recent debates over the European Union and immigration, or the Brexit vote, should also remind us, what “the West” is, even what Europe means, is not settled and has rarely been settled. Instead of isolation and confrontation, Said called for a “profound existential commitment and labor on behalf of the Other,” a lifelong dedication to humanistic exchange.

Although the focus of Said’s critique was Huntington’s simplistic portrayal of Islam—and Huntington had very little to say about one of the most important divides in that civilization between

Sunni and Shia—what he has to say about another important “civilization” of our region that he calls Orthodox—and sometimes Slavic—can also be found quite lacking. What Huntington seeks to capture as “Orthodox” civilization has for centuries lived with and among large and diverse Islamic civilizations, later Jewish civilizations and Catholic-Protestant (a.k.a. Western) civilizations. Relations were not always clashes and these cultural exchanges, borrowings, and influences, sometimes forced, also contributed to what are usually considered the Golden Ages of these civilizations.

Any assumed or alleged monolithic unity of Orthodox civilization—something that is part of Vladimir Putin’s challenge to the “decadent” United States and the European Union—might be challenged by this past summer’s aborted effort at unity called for by the patriarch of Constantinople on the island of Crete. Even before that meeting failed, Moscow’s patriarch had been waging a struggle for dominance over the Orthodox world and found allies in the Serbian and Greek Church hierarchies against a loose

coalition of Constantinople, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate, and others. In 2008 “Orthodox” Russia waged war with “Orthodox” Georgia over mixed Muslim-Orthodox populations in Abkhazia and southern Ossetia. Or, in the most dramatic pseudonarrative, “Orthodox” Russia is at war with “Orthodox” Ukraine in part over “Muslim” Crimea, rechristened by Vladimir Putin as the baptismal site for Russian civilization (in Chersonesus).

Returning again to Bruce’s very generous and provocative—in the best sense—rereading of my idea of Eurasia, I think what unites us all is an ethnographic spirit, a comparative framework that almost kicks in automatically and helps keep us more resistant to any kinds of exceptionalisms, whether American or Russian (or Turkish or Ukrainian). And coming back to those all-important scholarly and educational exchanges and discussion fora with our Eurasian colleagues, we should work hard to keep them supported, funded, and open-ended to sustain the important work of dialogue

and, when the circumstances are right, reconciliation between the citizens of formerly hostile or enemy states. Our mission continues to be the back-and-forth translation of cultures, primarily translating the cultures of Eurasia for our American students and colleagues. But we cannot avoid also occasionally—if not often—attempting to translate “our” cultures for outsiders, however we define inside and outside these days, and, in so doing, to help shape “global citizens” for a nation that continues to exercise extraordinary, if declining, power and influence in the world. ■

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*An earlier version of this essay was delivered at the Harriman Institute on September 15, 2016, as part of the Harriman at 70 lecture series.*

<sup>1</sup>Any attempt to capture where we are in area studies can only be a snapshot in a continually evolving and transforming world of rapid and slower change. And I can only lay claim to my experience, which has included listening to and learning from others’ experiences, and my processing of that experience, which has led me to a method or perhaps better sensibility for how I learn, teach, and maybe even live in the world of what we once called area studies, more specifically Soviet studies. Regarding my current disciplinary location at ASU, I am still (or once again) where I have always been—between history, my primary discipline, and the humanities.

<sup>2</sup>A conference in Kazan with Boris Gasparov and Catherine Evtuhov, where my concluding session with Boris Ananich led to my first manifesto in the imperial turn, “Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg: The Multiple Faces of Empire.”

<sup>3</sup>Those meetings were jointly funded (1993–96) by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Alexander-Humboldt Foundation (Bonn), and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies.

<sup>4</sup>This merger was part of a bigger transformational mission of President Michael Crow, who seeks to make ASU a New American University with strong commitments to transdisciplinary units formed around real-world problems.

<sup>5</sup>I was in New York City on leave during 9/11 and still feel like a New Yorker every year on that date.

<sup>6</sup>I’ve had my own analogous discussion in private with my American colleague Stephen Cohen over his commentary on Ukrainian history and the recent war.

<sup>7</sup>Bruce’s own scholarship has been a powerful expression of that vision, ranging from fieldwork on Sakhalin Island among the Nivkhi to Baku in Azerbaijan and elsewhere. Indeed, the “revival” of anthropology treating our region has been one of the most exciting and dynamic developments since 1991.