

**Hot and Cold (War):  
The Area Studies Community  
and the U.S. Government,  
1945-2005**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the intersection of national politics and the academy, and in particular the relationship between the academic field of Area Studies and the U.S. government since World War II. Area Studies blossomed during the early years of the Cold War, with the conceptual, financial, and logistical backing of the federal government. In an American academy that generally defined itself as “united in loyalty to the ideal of learning, to the moral code, to the country, and to its form of government,” Area Studies especially had a civic vocation: to serve the Cold War imperative, recognized by leaders in government and the academy alike, for vast knowledge of foreign languages, peoples, and cultures. By the 1990s and 2000s, however, the Area Studies community and the government agreed on neither the purpose of the field, nor its proper relation to the organs of American national power. Examined here, individually, are two cases which manifested this gulf in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The first—the Area Studies community’s nearly universal and vociferous condemnation of the National Security Education Act of 1991—demonstrates Area scholars’ selective approach to cooperation with government, according to which they refused certain ties, but never withdrew as a matter of principle from political advocacy. The second case—Congress’s 2003 consideration of whether to increase its oversight over appropriations supporting Area Studies—reveals the practical deficiencies of the government’s support for Area scholarship, and how the debate over the subject became highly, and unnecessarily, ideologically-charged.

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## Preface

In early March 2009, on the occasion of her first high-level meeting with Russian officials as U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton decided to give Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov a symbolic yet funny gift. As Clinton and Lavrov stood before international media, she presented him with a box, wrapped in a bow. The gift inside was a large red button on a black base with the Russian word *peregruzka* written atop it. The word, Clinton announced, meant “reset,” an allusion to new American Vice President Joe Biden’s statement about “hitting the reset button” on U.S.-Russian relations, which had become tense during the presidency of George W. Bush. The intended joke, of course, was that for many years red buttons symbolized the gravest of Cold War dangers. Unfortunately for Clinton, however, the joke ultimately was on her. “You got it wrong,” Lavrov said to her as cameras rolled. *Peregruzka*, he explained, meant “overcharge,” not “reset.” Instantaneously, the main news story from Clinton’s diplomatic trip became her language gaffe—to which Lavrov referred twice more, in case anyone had missed it.

Certainly the annals of diplomatic history contain worse mistakes, even in the realm of honest gaffes. Yet it is surprising nonetheless that Clinton, supported by the full resources of the State Department and its embassies, could make such an error. Were there no systems in place to ensure that America’s chief diplomat, with responsibilities spanning the globe, could always avail herself of knowledgeable linguists?

Though Clinton’s gaffe was relatively trivial, the prospect of the American government having insufficient resources for dealing with foreign languages, cultures, and peoples is serious. At its core, this is a matter of education, and education in foreign languages and cultures has been an explicit concern of the government for more than a half century, since the U.S. set out to be the unrivaled power of the post-World War II order.

One manifestation of this concern was the academic field of Area Studies, which bloomed during the early years of the Cold War with the conceptual, logistical and eventually financial backing of the federal government. Area Studies is an interdisciplinary field that comprises the humanities and social sciences. Akin to international studies, Area Studies differs in that it examines the world—and organizes itself institutionally—according to geographic regions (“areas”). During the early Cold War, the field focused on areas considered most relevant to American national security concerns. Area Studies was not, though, a government enterprise such as the Pentagon’s Defense Language Institute. (Founded in 1941 to teach Japanese to servicemen, DLI remains a federal institution meant almost exclusively for training active military and government personnel.) Rather, Area Studies represented a sort of public-private partnership between the federal government and the faculties of American universities.

In the era of its founding, the partners conceived of the field in largely similar terms, as an academic enterprise of national mission and importance. The government persists in this view to today, and seeks accordingly to encourage various types of connections between the Area Studies community and government interests. But that academic community no longer looks upon the government—and its relationship to the government—as it did in the early Cold War era. While in the 1940s and 1950s Area scholars and the government related to each other in a manner characterized by sentiments of mutual cooperation, fellow feeling, and common purpose, by the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Area Studies community identified its sensibilities and aims as separate from, and sometimes opposed to, the government’s. By century’s end there was in many respects a substantial gulf between Area Studies scholars and the government. And yet they remained strongly tied in one vital sense: the financial, which maintained a bond of co-dependence between two camps which were otherwise diverging. As

long as the government retained an interest in promoting certain types of higher education, and the Area Studies community continued to benefit from (and seek ever more) congressional largesse, neither camp sought a clean break from the other.

In three chapters, this thesis analyzes the causes, characteristics, and manifestations of the divergence—unequal parts ideological and practical—between the Area Studies community and the government. Chapter 1 tracks the Area Studies community from approximately 1945 to 1991, as the early Cold War environment initially shaped the field, and the Vietnam era followed soon after with a revision. Chapter 2 examines the Area Studies community’s characteristics thereafter, when it reacted in nearly universal and vociferous condemnation to the National Security Education Act, Congress’s 1991 effort to attract students of Area Studies to serve in the government’s national security apparatus. Chapter 3 assesses a subsequent legislative controversy: the 2003 attempt to modify the terms of “Title VI,” the main program that since 1958 had connected the Area Studies community to the government. The proposed modifications were not enacted, but they sparked a debate which revealed much about how the government managed its relationship to the Area Studies community approximately 60 years after having breathed life into the field.

## Chapter 1: The early Cold War and Vietnam eras

Area Studies was born into an academic community that had, like millions of young Americans, been drafted to participate in World War II. Before then, the government played a limited role in higher education. Most federal appropriations that flowed to universities went for agricultural research projects housed at Midwestern and Western universities founded with public land grants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The crystallization of the Manhattan Project in 1942 was the first time that the government sought out the academic resources of higher education to lead a project of immediate national importance. Its ultimate success—along with that of smaller academic projects to develop radar, miniaturize electronics, and propel rockets—forever changed the posture of government toward higher education.<sup>1</sup> In 1945, Vannevar Bush, the advisor to Franklin Roosevelt who had convened the Manhattan Project, issued his report *Science: The Endless Frontier*. It declared that government should henceforth make it a priority to “increase the flow of new scientific knowledge through support of basic research and to aid in the development of scientific talent.”<sup>2</sup>

Scholars of foreign languages and cultures similarly saw their work used, valued, and hailed as essential during and immediately after World War II. The wartime precursor to the CIA, the Office of Strategic Services, employed so many historians, archaeologists, political scientists, linguists and others from prominent universities that it was called “a veritable galaxy of academic stars.” The Office of War Information, the State Department, and the Intelligence branches of the Army and Navy likewise met their increased war needs by hiring academics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard C. Lewontin, “The Cold War and the Transformation of the Academy,” *The Cold War & the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, ed. Noam Chomsky, et al (New York: The New Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Vannevar Bush, *Science—The Endless Frontier* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Scientific Research and Development, 1945).

<sup>3</sup> Robert McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise: A Chapter in the Enclosure of American Learning*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 115-116.

Their expertise, like that of their colleagues in the hard sciences, came to be considered essential. “Every war agency,” the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) noted in 1943, was hampered by “the scarcity of professional and scientific personnel combining linguistic and regional knowledge with technical proficiency.” In 1947, the SSRC vowed not to repeat mistakes made after World War I, when “a flurry of [wartime] academic interest in Latin America” disappeared with the armistice. “National welfare in the postwar period,” it stated, “more than ever before requires a citizenry well informed as to other peoples, and the creation of a vast body of knowledge about them.”<sup>4</sup>

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When universities readjusted in the years after the war—at Columbia University, this meant the return of 500 faculty and staff from military service and 3,000 others from war-related projects<sup>5</sup>—they continued to manifest a concern for national security. This meant especially concern regarding Communism, abroad and at home. As historian Ellen Schrecker has argued, the academy was “no ivory tower,” and Cold War considerations weighed heavily on personnel, curricular and other matters.<sup>6</sup> At Columbia, the Board of Trustees declared that it “would not countenance the presence of an avowed communist on the teaching staff.”<sup>7</sup> At Yale, President Charles Seymour announced that “There will be no witch hunts at Yale because there will be no witches. We do not intend to hire Communists!”<sup>8</sup> The president of the American Historical Association, University of Pennsylvania historian Conyers Read, used his 1949 plenary address to declare: “The liberal neutral attitude...will no longer suffice. Total war, whether it be hot or

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<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies,” *The Cold War & the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, ed. Noam Chomsky, et al (New York: The New Press, 1998), 195, 202.

<sup>5</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 120.

<sup>6</sup> See Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Lionel Lewis, *Cold War on Campus* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1989), 19.

<sup>8</sup> David Montgomery, “Prosperity under the Shadow of the Bomb,” *The Cold War & the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, ed. Noam Chomsky, et al (New York: The New Press, 1998), xx.

cold, enlists everyone and calls upon everyone to assume his part...[We] can never be altogether free agents, even with our tongue and our pen. The historian is no freer from this obligation than the physicist.”<sup>9</sup> The Association of American Universities, which represented the top American research universities, included in its *The Rights and Responsibilities of Universities and their Faculties* (1953) the statement that, properly conceived, a university is “an association of individual scholars...united in loyalty to the ideal of learning, to the moral code, to the country, and to its form of government.”<sup>10</sup>

Such were the prevailing views in the academic establishment when Area Studies became institutionalized. Sometimes the institutionalization was an act of direct preservation, as when the Office of Strategic Services in 1946 transferred its Soviet division to form the basis of Columbia University’s Russian Institute,<sup>11</sup> or when the staff of the Navy’s School of Military Government and Administration became the core of Columbia’s School of International Affairs.<sup>12</sup> By and large, however, those who institutionalized Area Studies programs intended them to be new bodies, superior to wartime predecessors assembled in haste and to the international studies apparatus that existed before World War II. The chief architects of Area Studies lamented that the government had to enlist experts on an ad hoc basis during the war, and argued further that improper and insufficient university training had adverse effects on Americans as a whole. “The provincialism of the American public, so often bemoaned, is in no small way the fault of the American university,” said Robert B. Hall, a University of Michigan

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 58.

<sup>10</sup> *The Rights and Responsibilities of Universities and their Faculties*, The Association of American Universities, March 24, 1953.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Cumings, “Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies During and After the Cold War,” *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War*, ed. Christopher Simpson (New York: The New Press, 1998), 163.

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Anderson, *Pursuing Truth, Exercising Power: Social Science and Public Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 92.

East Asianist who headed a 1947 Social Science Research Council effort to cultivate Area Studies.<sup>13</sup>

The power to cure provincialism paled before other claims for Area Studies. Hall, for one, asserted that Area Studies was a matter of national life and death: “We must know if we are to survive,” he wrote in 1947.<sup>14</sup> Area Studies had a “civic vocation,”<sup>15</sup> an essential role in fighting the red menace. Accordingly the field internalized not just the government’s sense of urgency but its specific judgments regarding how best to approach the international arena. Universities gave China and Russia initial priority, while Japan and Latin America fell from the relatively high perches they had held in the wartime hierarchy of areas.<sup>16</sup> Students of Africa in Area Studies programs focused almost exclusively on studying the continent’s sub-Saharan region, as North Africa fell outside the U.S. government’s standard working definition of “Africa.”<sup>17</sup> And curricula differed according to world area, to align with the U.S.’s differing political interests across the globe. Students therefore studied North Korea and China in the context of Communism and its threats and vulnerabilities, and studied South Korea and Japan in the context of modernization and market progress.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, as the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives put it when naming a hearing on the subject, the purpose of Area Studies was “winning the Cold War.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 93.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in McCaughey, *International Studies*, 128.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent L. Rafael, “The Cultures of Area Studies in the United States,” *Social Text*, No. 41 (Winter, 1994), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466834>.

<sup>16</sup> Wallerstein, 201-202.

<sup>17</sup> David Robinson, “The African Studies Association at Age 35: Presidential Address to the 1993 African Studies Association Annual Meeting,” *African Studies Review* 37 (1994): 1-11, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/524765>.

<sup>18</sup> Cumings, 160.

<sup>19</sup> Irene Gendzier, “Following the Flag”, *Middle East Report*, October-December 1997.

Despite the high stakes supposedly involved, the government was not positioned in the immediate post-World War II years to translate its desire for the field's development into direct support of academic enterprise. Notions of limited government had long restricted the prospects for federal financial support for education. When FDR financed the Manhattan Project, he hid the appropriations within the budget of the Navy. And as president of Columbia University, former general and future U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower openly opposed federal funding of higher education.<sup>20</sup> In lieu of appropriating funds itself for Area Studies, then, the government encouraged wealthy private foundations to do so. Many foundations were independently inclined to support the field, but government encouragement and coordination helped. In 1945, the academic who headed the Eastern European desk of the Office of Strategic Services helped engineer a sizable grant (\$250,000) from the Rockefeller Foundation to Columbia University's Russian Institute.<sup>21</sup> In 1948, though retired from government, former OSS chief William "Wild Bill" Donovan encouraged the Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation to fund Area Studies initiatives. Donovan stressed to the foundations that any government connection ought to remain secret, so that university work could remain—or appear to remain—"impartial and objective."<sup>22</sup> On university campuses, meanwhile, a new type of academic proliferated—well-connected and adept at attracting foundation money to his institution.<sup>23</sup>

The Ford Foundation played by far the most influential role in the post-WWII development of Area Studies. Rooted in broad goals of establishing world peace, democracy and international economic cooperation, the Foundation's prodigious efforts probably caused its anti-intellectual, xenophobic and isolationist namesake to spin in his grave. Just three years after

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<sup>20</sup> Robert McCaughey, *Stand Columbia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 358.

<sup>21</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 134.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Cumings, 164.

<sup>23</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 118.

Henry Ford's death, the Foundation's "Gaither Report" announced that its chief goal, "The Establishing of Peace," could be achieved only if Americans overcome "our own ignorance of other peoples—their traditions, institutions, and aspirations." If not, testified Foundation president H. Rowan Gaither before Congress, the Russians would continue to outpace the United States in international knowledge—and, implicitly, in all else.<sup>24</sup> And how could there be peace if Russia were stronger or more resourceful than the U.S.? By the mid-1960s, operating from a "budget [that] reads like an academic WPA," the Ford Foundation had pumped \$250 million into Area Studies.<sup>25</sup>

The field grew enormously after World War II and the Ford Foundation's initial 1951 investment in it. By 1961, 180 universities offered courses on the Middle East, with eight university centers completely dedicated to studying the region.<sup>26</sup> In the ten years after 1958, students of South Asian languages went from 14 to 350, and of East Asian languages from 1,500 to 10,000; the number of PhDs conferred in Asian fields quintupled in the two decades after 1951.<sup>27</sup> In 1945, the average History Department focused 95% of its resources on American, European, and Greco-Roman history. By the 1960s, after History joined other disciplines in participating in Area Studies, more than 33% of resources shifted to new Areas.<sup>28</sup> In 1966, the Ford Foundation declared victory and ceased funding Area Studies. "We have wrought a revolution," Foundation President McGeorge Bundy wrote, as "the study of Africa, Asia, the

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<sup>24</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 144-145.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>26</sup> Lisa Hajjar and Steve Niva, "(Re)Made in the USA Middle East Studies in the Global Era," *Middle East Report* Oct-Dec 1997, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205/remade.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Ainslee Embree, "Presidential Address: The Tradition of Mission—Asian Studies in the United States, 1783 and 1983," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Nov., 1983), 15, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2054615>.

<sup>28</sup> Wallerstein, 219.

Middle East, and Latin America—above all the study of Russia and China—has become a necessary, built-in element of the American academic establishment...They are here to stay.”<sup>29</sup>

Though area specialists lamented the end of the Ford Foundation’s largesse, they were already benefiting from what would become the longest-lasting and most consistent source of substantial funding for Area Studies: Title VI of the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which in 1980 was incorporated into the Higher Education Act and remains in effect today. The immediate impetus for the NDEA and was the Soviets’ launching of Sputnik in 1957. With the nation fearful that this success represented a wide and growing technological and educational gap between the United States and its rival, Congress overcame hesitations about federal funding for higher education. The era of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society saw federal spending increase in many sectors of society, and Congress tied education spending into the expansive new War on Poverty. By 1966, annual federal aid to universities was \$2.6 billion—six times more than it had been a decade before.<sup>30</sup> After the Johnson era, federal aid to schools was to remain legitimate and ample.<sup>31</sup>

The original Title VI appropriation contained in the 1958 NDEA amounted to approximately \$15 million per year. The law emphasized providing language training to students who could then enter government service and generally increase Americans’ familiarity with foreign cultures.<sup>32</sup> It appropriated money to academic “language and area centers” to teach languages that were “needed by the Federal Government or by business, industry, or education in the United States,” and for which “adequate instruction” was “not readily available in the United

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<sup>29</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 241.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>31</sup> See Hugh Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph: Federal Education Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Years* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

<sup>32</sup> Richard Scarfo, “The History of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays,” *International Education in the New Global Era: Proceedings of a National Policy Conference on the Higher Education Act, Title VI, and Fulbright-Hays Programs* (Los Angeles: International Studies and Overseas Programs), 23.

States.” To encourage “a full understanding of the areas, regions, or countries in which such language[s are] commonly used,” the law authorized funding also for “fields such as history, political science, linguistics, economics, sociology, geography, and anthropology.”<sup>33</sup> Thus Congress launched a financial relationship between the government and the Area Studies community that lasts to this day—though it has gone through major changes since the early Cold War era.

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Congress passed the NDEA at a time of great promise for Area Studies as both an academic enterprise and a partner for the government. The latter role, though, was never embraced unreservedly. In 1951 the State Department convened “Project Troy,” a group of established scholars who would help the military and CIA strategize about avenues for psychological warfare in the Cold War. The academics were eager participants—“I am glad to be in this thing myself because it is so important an experiment that I would rather make even a small contribution to it than a big contribution to anything else I can think of,” noted MIT professor and 1952 Nobel laureate Edward Purcell—who repeatedly stressed in their Final Report the imperative for similar projects in the future. Yet they also issued a warning to their government sponsors about the “potentially corrosive effects of secrecy on the university and more generally of the Cold War on American society.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, to the Project Troy participants, possible future adverse effects were important to consider, but were not sufficient cause for reversing the blossoming relationship between the government and scholars like themselves. This posture was shared by President Eisenhower, who used his farewell address not only to

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<sup>33</sup> “National Defense Education Act,” Public Law 85-864, 1958.

<sup>34</sup> Allan A. Needell, “Project Troy and the Cold War Annexation of the Social Sciences,” *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War*, ed. Christopher Simpson (New York: The New Press, 1998), 25.

warn of the “military industrial complex” but also to state that “the prospect of the domination of the nation’s scholars by Federal employees, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present—and is gravely to be regarded.”<sup>35</sup> This was a powerful statement in a prominent speech, but it was only a caution, not an argument for divorcing government from the academy (such as by repealing the then-fresh National Defense Education Act of 1958, for example). The early Cold War era was such that, faced with the advantages and risks of linking government power to scholarship, academics and government officials alike were inclined to choose linkage.

In the Area Studies community, this inclination would not survive the political turmoil of the late 1960s that swept campuses worldwide. Though the major Area Studies associations originated as apolitical vehicles for developing the field, their operations became increasingly dominated by members—mostly junior—seeking to express political views. Across the various area associations, such members articulated three common lines of protest by the late 1960s. First, they protested against the state of international affairs, especially the U.S. war in Vietnam and covert actions in Africa and Latin America; secondly, against the leaderships of Area Studies associations, which held to their associations’ principles of political noninvolvement and refused to condemn officially the Vietnam War; and thirdly, against the intersection of the first two—that is, against the cooperation of the Area Studies establishment with the American government. At the annual convention of the Association for Asian Scholars in 1968, protest manifested itself in the creation of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars. “We first came together in opposition to the brutal aggression of the United States in Vietnam and to the complicity or silence of our profession with regard to that policy,” the Committee said.<sup>36</sup> A similar split marked the 1969 convention of the African Studies Association (ASA), where the association’s

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<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Mark Selden, Introduction to “Asia, Asian Studies, and the National Security State: A Symposium,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars*, January-March 1997.

Black Caucus broke away and formed the African Heritage Studies Association. (They also accused the ASA's mostly-white leadership of racism.)<sup>37</sup> In 1969 several Africa scholars contributed to the volume *African Studies in America: The Extended Family, A Tribal Analysis of U.S. Africanists: Who They Are; Why to Fight them*, "a particularly bitter attack on the alleged intelligence connections of particular African Studies scholars and centers that was directly linked to the national and international antiwar effort of those years."<sup>38</sup> MESA did not experience an official splintering until the founding of the Alternative Middle East Studies Seminar in 1977, but parts of its membership were by the late 1960s similarly disillusioned by "evidence of academic support for counterinsurgency policies in the name of development, democracy and anticommunism."<sup>39</sup>

Quickly, views once held only by a minority of scholars became widely accepted and reflected in new policies of the associations. "What had once seemed to be a virtuous if somewhat arrogant involvement [by scholars] in public service was transmuted virtually overnight into a naïve collaboration with an immoral regime," wrote Lisa Anderson, a prominent Columbia political scientist and scholar of the Middle East, of the social science community's experience.<sup>40</sup> In the case of the African Studies Association, explained association president David Robinson, "the younger and more radical generation of Africanists, shaped by American involvement in Vietnam, pushed the association in the 1970s to clarify its relationship to government." This resulted, he explained, in a new approach regarding government that placed primary focus on the faults and dangers of cooperation. "One resolution of the Board declared

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<sup>37</sup> David S. Wiley, "Academic Analysis and U.S. Policy-Making on Africa: Reflections and Conclusions," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 19 (1991): 38-48, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166335>.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Alpers and Allen Roberts, "What is African Studies? Some Reflections," *African Issues* 30 (2002), 12, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1535083>.

<sup>39</sup> Irene Gendzier, "Following the Flag," *Middle East Report*, October-December 1997.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 31.

that ‘under no circumstances should governmental funds be used for the central administrative purposes of the Association,’” he said.<sup>41</sup> Sentimental and practical developments of this sort throughout the Area Studies field demonstrated the prescience of sociologist Robert Merton’s 1949 remark that “The honeymoon of intellectuals and policymakers is often nasty, brutish and short.”<sup>42</sup>

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But a nasty, brutish and short honeymoon does not necessitate a complete divorce. In the case of the Area Studies community and the U.S. government, the former did not so much seek a divorce as a modified, more limited and selective relationship. Never did the Area Studies community swear off all connections to government as a matter of principle; never did it seek to separate completely “truth” from “power,” as social scientists refer to the vocation of academics and of government policymakers, respectively. Indeed even when the American Heritage Studies Association broke from the African Studies Association in 1969, one of its official founding purposes was: “To form a committee to monitor American foreign policy toward Africa, *to strengthen and support Congressman Diggs as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on African Affairs*”<sup>43</sup> (emphasis mine). Thus even this group—defined as it was by opposition to U.S. policy and to academics who helped craft it and/or were unwilling to condemn it—did not seek a categorical separation between the academy and the state. Rather, they wished to cut some government ties while promoting others. This practice became the norm among Area scholars in the decades after the tumultuous Vietnam era, and the decisive criterion was policy consonance:

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<sup>41</sup> Robinson.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 8. (Merton is credited with coining the phrase “self-fulfilling prophecy.”)

<sup>43</sup> John Henrik Clarke, “The African Heritage Studies Association: Some Notes on the Conflict with the African Studies Association and the Fight to Reclaim African History,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 6, 2\3 (Summer\Fall 1976), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166439>.

scholars worked primarily with those government agencies whose general policy approach they supported, and not with those whose policies they opposed.

A 1990 survey of U.S. Africanists analyzed in the journal *Issue* demonstrated this particularly clearly.<sup>44</sup> The survey found that Africanists—after two decades of recoiling from U.S. policies such as the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, support for Portuguese colonial rule, aid to South Africa, and the assumption that “white rule was here to stay” in Rhodesia, South Africa, Angola and Mozambique<sup>45</sup>—had “a firmly negative opinion of the overall effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa.” But they did not consider American actions uniformly wrong, and did not view the U.S. government as a monolith. For example, whereas more than 80% opposed then-U.S. policy on military support for the UNITA faction in Angola’s civil war, Africanists were “less critical of the U.S. administration with regard to economic assistance policy toward Africa.” Asked about the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Africanists “were almost evenly split between a positive evaluation of aid projects (39.5% agree) and an uncertain one (41.6% not sure).”

It is notable, then, that Africanists expressed substantially more willingness to work with aid and economic development agencies than with military or intelligence ones. By large margins, Africanists expressed support for cooperative relationships with the State Department, the U.S. Information Agency, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Congress and USAID. In the case of the State Department, 81%-85% of Africanists supported interaction, while 75%-80% did for the U.S. Information Agency. When asked about establishing the same sort of

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<sup>44</sup> All survey statistics are from Michael Bratton, Reinhard Heinisch, and David S. Wiley: “How Africanists View U.S. Africa Policy: Results of a Survey,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 19 (1991), 21-49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166334>. U.S. Africanists are “defined as any resident of the United States with an ongoing professional interest in the study of Africa.”

<sup>45</sup> David S. Wiley, “Academic Analysis and U.S. Policy-Making on Africa: Reflections and Conclusions,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 19 (1991), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166335>.

cooperative relationships with the CIA or Defense Intelligence Agency, though, only 26%-34% of Africanists supported the notion. The authors of the *Issue* study cited several reasons for Africanists' negative attitudes toward working with the CIA and DIA. The secondary reasons will be addressed below; the primary reason cited for the negative views, though, was "objections to specific policies of these agencies in the past (and perhaps in the present)." Africanists holding such objections, wrote the authors, "tend[ed] to believe that the interests of these agencies are antithetical to African and U.S. interests." Interestingly, Africanists with opposite views on policy also demonstrated the link between policy preference and willingness to cooperate: by "the strongest correlation in the analysis," "those who favor[ed] scholarly funding links with the U.S. intelligence agencies also agree[d] with the substance of U.S. foreign policy in Africa." Thus objections to agencies' policies impeded cooperation, while support for policies bred it. And this was not a new phenomenon in 1990. As the Africanist and historian of African Studies David Wiley wrote of the 1970s, "many scholars looked [away from their previous government partners and] instead to USAID and to Congress, *whose policies seemed less objectionable*"<sup>46</sup> (emphasis mine). And Carl Schorske has explained that the close cooperation between scholars and the U.S. government in the 1940s was helped by the fact that it was "in the service of relatively uncontested policy goals."<sup>47</sup>

That Area Studies scholars cut some ties and promoted others based on pragmatic considerations about supporting desirable political aims demonstrates that they did not withdraw from politics as such—in favor, for example, of a purely inward-focused scholarship or aestheticism. This is further demonstrated by the increasing willingness over time of Area Studies scholars and associations to address, and sometimes advocate for, issues of a political

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Carl Schorske, "The New Rigorism in the Human Sciences, 1940-1960," quoted in Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 28.

nature. The Vietnam-era political expressions of some Area specialists, as noted above, had a quick effect on the tenor and focus of the field. In its early years the Middle East Studies Association was, according to its 2002 president Joel Beinin, governed by a “gentlemen’s agreement: ...discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict would be avoided because it would generate too much controversy and undermine the collegiality of the organization.” Moreover it would “undermine the claim of Middle East studies to objective and scientific knowledge.” “We have come a long way since then,” he concluded in 2002, as topics by then freely and commonly discussed included the Arab-Israeli conflict, the “mass murder of Armenians in the late Ottoman period,” and CIA attempts at regime change in the Middle East, among others.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the African Studies Association, meanwhile, its president David Robinson noted in 1993 that some political positions “were so fundamental to the ASA’s existence that its inertia, or distaste for political action, was overcome” and the association therefore took “positions against the colonial rule of the Portuguese in Guinea, Angola and Mozambique, or of South Africa in Namibia, as well as positions against minority rule in what was then Rhodesia and, of course, South Africa.”<sup>49</sup> This was the case in 1979, when a previous ASA president made permanent the association’s “Current Issues” committee. The committee’s work, Indiana University scholar J. Gus Liebenow explained in his plenary address, included “providing a platform for liberation leaders” at a time when the government and other dominant elements of American society were not doing so.<sup>50</sup>

Area Studies scholars who study their academic community emphasize how exposure to foreign subjects affects academics’ sensibilities. “Many social scientists, especially area

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<sup>48</sup> Joel Beinin, “2002 MESA Presidential Address: Middle East Studies After September 11, 2001,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 37 (2003), 14, <http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/Bulletin/Pres%20Addresses/Beinin.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> Robinson.

<sup>50</sup> J. Gus Liebenow, “Rites of Passage: African Studies Comes of Age, Presidential Address to African Studies Association, 1978.” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* (1979), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166932>.

specialists,” wrote Lisa Anderson, who served as president of the Middle East Studies Association in 2003, “were sympathetic to what they construed as nationalist movements, and some of them would shortly [after the 1960s] find common cause with those in the humanities faculty who rallied to give voice to the excluded, oppressed, and otherwise disadvantaged of the world.”<sup>51</sup> “Area studies communities,” she added, “walked a complex and often conflicted line between their purpose as allies of the government in the fight against communism and their growing sympathy with the peoples of the region.”<sup>52</sup> The authors of the 1991 study of Africanists in *Issue* wrote, “Many Africanists see themselves as advocates for the peoples of Africa and, as such, evaluate U.S. policy in terms of its effects within Africa, rather than in terms of American interests alone.” Scholars became, they wrote, “champions of [their] world region.”<sup>53</sup> Anderson argued that this development was inevitable, as familiarity did not breed contempt. On the contrary, familiarity revealed the folly of scholars’ supposed governmental sponsors. “The better the area studies scholars knew their regions,” Anderson wrote, “the less the imperatives of U.S. foreign policy seemed to capture the aspirations of local populations or the dynamics of regional political and social change.”<sup>54</sup>

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Another factor that contributed to scholars championing their regions of study was the internationalization of the scholars themselves: increasingly, they hailed from the regions they studied, or at least were not American-born. Whereas only 30% of doctoral dissertations in African Studies were written by Africans in 1970, 61% of dissertations were by 1988. In the “more policy-relevant” social science fields, dissertations written by American citizens declined

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<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 62.

<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 96.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Bratton, Reinhard Heinisch, David S. Wiley, “How Africanists view U.S. Africa Policy: Results of a Survey,” *Issue: a Journal of Opinion* 19 (1991), 21-49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166334>.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 96.

by 39% from 1970 to 1988, in political science by 71%, and in economics by 26%.<sup>55</sup> Indeed the dominance of white, American-born scholars diminished across the sub-fields of Area Studies as the 20<sup>th</sup> century developed. Of U.S. doctoral dissertations written regarding Southeast Asian studies in 1989, 2/3 were written by scholars from Southeast Asia.<sup>56</sup> And in Middle East Studies, 50% of MESA members in 1993 were of Middle Eastern origin<sup>57</sup> and 16% lived outside the U.S. in 1994.<sup>58</sup> These trends reflected general developments in U.S. higher education—in economics, for example, the proportion of American doctorate recipients in the U.S. dropped from roughly two-thirds in 1977 to less than one-half in 1989<sup>59</sup>—but they had an outsize effect on Area Studies. After all, the field had been defined in its founding era by affinity to *American* purposes, perspectives, and policies. Internationalization—coupled as it was with the political shifts of the Vietnam era among scholars of all nationalities—further altered the relationship of Area specialists to their subjects, and to the U.S. government.

Indeed as the distance between Area specialists and their subjects narrowed physically and figuratively over time, the space between scholars and government policymakers widened into a sizable gulf. As Association for Asian Studies president Richard Lambert argued as early as 1975, Area scholars who had been alienated by “the McCarthy era, the Vietnam War, and the American government’s ‘tilt’ on Bangladesh” had therefore stopped conducting “examination[s] of long-term American policy with respect to other countries of the world.” This, he said, amounted to “a tendency not to study American foreign policy, except as a sharp critique of current strategy...The withdrawal left the field almost entirely to those who wished to totally

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<sup>55</sup> Wiley, “Academic Analysis.”

<sup>56</sup> Rafael, 99.

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Aswad, “Arab Americans: Those who Followed Columbus,” *MESA Bulletin* (July 27, 1993), 16.

<sup>58</sup> Anne H. Betteridge, “A Case Study in Higher Education International and Foreign Area Needs: Changes in the Middle East Studies Association Membership from 1990 to 2002,” *Global Challenges and U.S. Higher Education*, January 23, 2003, <http://ducis.jhfc.duke.edu/archives/globalchallenges/pdf/betteridge1.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *Pursuing Truth*, 79.

reverse the government's policy posture." The AAS president did not argue that Area specialists were somehow being disloyal, but that they were becoming irrelevant to policymakers. "It is not clear," he said, "that the government will or should accept the views of academic area specialists on foreign policy issues."<sup>60</sup> This prediction was vindicated over time. The 1991 *Issue* survey found, for example, that Africanists represented only 15% of witnesses at Congressional hearings on Africa, and almost 90% of Africanists had never testified before Congress. Only 17% of Africanists had ever contributed an op-ed for publication, and "most Africanists regard[ed] the U.S. public policy-making process as closed, perhaps even impenetrable."<sup>61</sup>

Various structural factors helped explain this state of affairs. For academics, the tenure system and general necessities of career development discouraged, or at least limited the value of, connections with policymakers. The work of scholars seeking tenure was (and remains) judged by other scholars, not by government officials or the public, according to whether it enhanced the academic discourse, not whether it had instrumental value to questions of policy. Meanwhile the language of academic journals—the main fora for demonstrating one's scholarship—was often clear only to the initiated, not to non-academic government officials seeking practical and often quick guidance. To earn tenure was also time-consuming, and in the case of Area Studies usually included spending substantial amounts of time abroad; that earning the ear of policymakers was likewise time-consuming made it difficult or impossible for Area specialists to do both. In general, the climates of academia and government tended to produce denizens whose vocation and approach to knowledge were fundamentally divergent. As Anderson said in her 2003 MESA presidential address, the need of policymakers "to act before

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Lambert, "The Presidential Address: An Action Agenda for Area Studies," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Nov., 1975), 14.

<sup>61</sup> Wiley, "Congress."

all the answers are known” contrasts diametrically with “the theoretical pretensions of scholars—the reluctance to act in the absence of all the answers.”<sup>62</sup>

Whatever its genealogy, the gulf between scholars and policymakers became perpetuated by elements of mutual distaste. More than three-quarters of the Africanists in *Issue*'s study, for example, believed policymakers fail “to acquaint themselves with the relevant scholarly research on Africa”<sup>63</sup>—an opinion detectable in the assertion made elsewhere by one of the study's authors that policymakers make important decisions “casually,” devoting “little attention” to them.<sup>64</sup> Scholars did not simply disagree with much of U.S. policy (as discussed above), but they often saw policymakers as lazy and ignorant, not simply wrong. American politics, the president of MESA would say in 2002, was characterized by “deeply-rooted,” “willful historical amnesia”<sup>65</sup>; “We have been living in an era in which evidence plays little or no part in policymaking,” his successor would say.<sup>66</sup> Policymakers tended to return the disrespect, at least (and especially) in the view of academics. “It is not uncommon,” wrote one Africanist, “to have senior government officials describe academic Africanists as indiscriminating, U.S.-hating/Africa-loving bleeding hearts, or worse... One highly placed policymaker described the African Studies Association as a ‘Third World lobby of the oppressed engaged in nothing more than irrelevant political wet dreams.’”<sup>67</sup> According to another scholar, government officials tended to stereotype Africanists as “‘soft, woolly headed, ivory tower-bound crybabies’ who care

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<sup>62</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Scholarship, Policy, Debate and Conflict: Why We Study the Middle East and Why It Matters, 2003 MESA Presidential Address,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 38 (2004), <http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/Bulletin/Pres%20Addresses/Anderson.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> Bratton, et al.

<sup>64</sup> Wiley, “Reflections.”

<sup>65</sup> Beinlin.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, “Scholarship.”

<sup>67</sup> Larry W. Bowman, “Government Officials, Academics, and the Process of Formulating U.S. National Security Policy toward Africa,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter, 1990), pp. 5-20, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166961>.

more for the Third World than for ‘real American interests.’”<sup>68</sup> Nor is there cause to discern that such views were reserved only for Africanists and not for their colleagues with other Area expertise.

Due to factors geopolitical, personal and institutional, then, the relationship of the Area Studies community to the U.S. government shifted dramatically, becoming increasingly limited and chilly where it was once broad and warm.

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<sup>68</sup> Wiley, “Reflections.”

## Chapter 2: The National Security Education Act of 1991

The formative era of Area Studies demonstrated how developments in American foreign policy can affect dynamics within the academy. As the U.S. government assessed its performance in World War II and prepared for a Cold War of indefinite duration, it resolved to direct enormous resources into academic sciences such as nuclear physics—and to cultivate Area Studies, among other projects. Perhaps the magnitude of the postwar realignment rendered this a singular moment. But the connection of the government’s national security concerns to its posture toward the academy remained strong in subsequent decades, even after the Cold War wound down. What weakened, however, was the willingness of academics to respond to certain government interests. The enduring controversy over the National Security Education Act of 1991—the first piece of legislation dedicated to international education since 1958’s similarly-named National Defense Education Act—provides a case in point.

Conceived by Senator David Boren, Democrat of Oklahoma, the National Security Education Act (known as the “Boren Bill,” even after its enactment) established the National Security Education Program, a collection of federal grants, fellowships and scholarships to encourage undergraduate and graduate study relevant to national security. As Boren explained,

the Act provides scholarships for American undergraduates to study overseas; grants to colleges and universities to strengthen curricula in foreign languages, area studies, and international studies; and graduate fellowships for students interested in government service in areas where expertise is needed.<sup>69</sup>

National Security Education Program (NSEP) funds supported study “nearly everywhere but Western Europe,”<sup>70</sup> Boren once said, noting that American students already studied that region

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<sup>69</sup> David L. Boren, “The Winds of Change at CIA,” *Yale Law Journal*, 101 (1992), 855.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in George Lardner Jr, “Language Education For National Security; \$180 Million Program Proposed in Senate.” *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1991, Factiva.

sufficiently. The funds came with one major condition: a service requirement according to which recipients of graduate fellowships must work for some time in government, or as teachers. “If a job is offered, a graduate fellowship recipient would be required to accept employment with the Intelligence Community, State Department, Commerce Department, or some other agency, on the basis of three years of service for one year of education.”<sup>71</sup> Upon original passage, the NSEP received an appropriation for a trust fund of \$180 million.

The connection between the NSEP and the government’s national security needs and apparatus was unmistakable. The Program would be administered by the Department of Defense’s National Defense University, under the guidance of a National Security Education Board comprising the Secretaries of Defense, Education, Commerce and State, the directors of the CIA and U.S. Information Agency, and a number of presidential appointees with scholarly and administrative expertise in Area Studies.<sup>72</sup> The Bill stipulated that “the future national security and economic well-being of the United States will substantially depend on the ability of its citizens to communicate and compete by knowing the languages and cultures of other countries.”<sup>73</sup> Fleshing out the theme, Boren announced: “The fact is that America is dangerously ill-prepared to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War era. We urgently need to improve our human intelligence capabilities.” The American national security apparatus was weak, senators argued, and partial blame rested on personnel deficiencies. Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia, explained how the recently-completed Gulf War demonstrated the necessity of the Boren Bill:

We had to put 500,000 American men and women in our armed services in harm's way because our intelligence community failed to anticipate an impending

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<sup>71</sup> Boren.

<sup>72</sup> Wayne Clifton Riddle, *National Security Education Act of 1991: Summary and Analysis, CRS Report for Congress*, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1992).

<sup>73</sup> “David L. Boren National Security Education Act of 1991,” U.S. Code 50 § 37-1901.

military crisis and because our diplomatic and policy communities were unable to avert the need for American military action. The lesson is clear. We need policy-makers, diplomats and intelligence analysts expert in cultures and languages that encompass all regions of the world.<sup>74</sup>

More than 40 years after the birth of Area Studies, the Boren Bill and its NSEP left little doubt that the government still considered the field a matter of great national importance.

But the congressional sponsors of the Boren Bill comprised only one part of the public-private partnership that had invigorated Area Studies in the early Cold War era. As it turned out, the Boren Bill was greeted with intense objection from the partnership's private half—the area specialists teaching in universities across the country. They held sharply different opinions about their field and how it ought to relate to the government.

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Condemnations of the Boren Bill and promises to boycott the NSEP rang out from across the Area Studies landscape after the legislation passed. By February 1992, three of the four main associations of area specialists—the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), the African Studies Association (ASA), and the Latin American Studies Association—announced boycotts of NSEP. The Association for Asian Studies expressed strong opposition through an open letter from its president to Senator Boren.<sup>75</sup> The associations all argued that the NSEP endangered the safety of Area Studies researchers by linking their work to the government's national security apparatus. Such links “create dangers for students and scholars by fostering the perception of involvement in military or intelligence activities,”<sup>76</sup> stated MESA members.

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<sup>74</sup> Lardner Jr.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from Tetsuo Najita to Senator David Boren, March 1, 1993, published in “Asia, Asian Studies, and the National Security State: A Symposium,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars*, (January-March 1997).

<sup>76</sup> “Resolution regarding the National Security Education Program,” Middle East Studies Association, October 28, 1992, <http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/about/resolutions.htm>.

Area scholars argued further that receiving funding from intelligence sources violated the principles of academic life. MESA called upon its members to “reflect carefully upon their responsibilities to the academic profession” before seeking such funding. Congress, said MESA, should revise the NSEP so that “there is a separation of foreign area studies scholars, students and their instructions from military and intelligence organizations and their priorities.” MESA recommended that “the priorities, criteria and funding goals” of a revised program be “developed from within the academic community.”<sup>77</sup> The African Studies Association, for its part, condemned NSEP on the additional grounds that academic “credibility and integrity...depend upon arrangements which ensure the independence of academic research and publication from the military and political interests of the government.” Over 100 scholars, largely of Asia, signed a statement to similar effect published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and the directors of 16 African National Resource Centers (funded by Congress through Title VI) resolved not to seek, accept, or recommend to students any funding from military or intelligence agencies of the government.<sup>78</sup>

To be sure, these various condemnations of the NSEP and statements of academic principle did not necessarily represent the opinion of every area specialist in the United States. No mechanism exists for ascertaining the opinion of every area specialist. Like scholars in other interdisciplinary fields, area specialists hold PhD’s and departmental appointments in disciplines such as anthropology, political science, or history—not “Area Studies.” Ultimately some political scientists, for example, choose to identify primarily as area specialists, others identify and associate largely as political scientists, and some choose both or neither. Moreover, participation in national organizations such as the African Studies Association or the Middle East

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “The CIA, Department of Defense and Africa Scholars.” *Review of African Political Economy* 55 (1992), 107-08, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4006078>.

Studies Association—founded in the early years of Area Studies (at the height of the Ford Foundation’s largesse) and explicitly dedicated to the field—is entirely voluntary, and the organizations have poor records of who tends to join or why. And though members of these organizations vote in referenda, resolutions are non-binding expressions of sentiment alone. They have practical effects, such as generally discouraging professors from recommending the NSEP to their students, but they amount in the end to peer pressure; no formal mechanism stops a given area specialist in a university department from working with a program such as NSEP.<sup>79</sup> Therefore the resolutions, presidential addresses and other such expressions of the Area Studies associations did not reflect a comprehensive range of scholarly opinion regarding the Boren Bill.

Nonetheless, they reflected the dominant strains in the field: the opinions of a probable majority of area specialists; of the most organized and self-consciously committed to the field as an academic community; and of the most prominent and widely-regarded among their peers. The firestorm they unleashed following the passage of the Boren Bill offered a telling manifestation of the developments that, over approximately four decades, had affected how Area Studies scholars conceived of themselves, their field, and their relationship with the U.S. government.

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The Boren Bill’s explicit desire to promote and facilitate the use of educational resources for national security goals, and to locate the NSEP within the national security apparatus of the government, elicited a response from the Area Studies community that was unsurprising, considering its history. Scholars had by 1991 made abundantly clear their aversion, as a matter of taste, to working with military and intelligence institutions. But understandable opposition to American national security policy, past and present, was not the announced reason for the

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<sup>79</sup> See the case of Norman Petersen noted on page 31 below.

scholars' objection to the Boren Bill. In fact the critics' chief refrain was a practical one: that associations with military and intelligence agencies of the U.S. government would endanger scholars and students working abroad.

This was a serious charge that cut to the heart of the NSEP, arguing that it hurt the very students and scholars it claimed were its beneficiaries. This charge was central to the letter sent to Senator Boren in February 1992 announcing the boycott of NSEP by the leaderships of MESA, the African Studies Association and the Latin American Studies Association. A series of subsequent messages from the associations reiterated the point. The bill, resolved MESA in October 1992, "can only increase the existing difficulties of gaining foreign governmental permissions to carry out research and to develop overseas instructional programs. It can also create dangers for students and scholars"; MESA's full membership would ratify the resolution in early 1993.<sup>80</sup> At the 1992 annual meeting of the African Studies Association, the ad hoc Association of Concerned Africa Scholars issued a statement warning that the NSEP threatened "the physical safety of scholars and students overseas, and cooperation between African and US scholars."<sup>81</sup> And LASA President Carmen Diane Deere explained in early 1994 that "The fundamental concern of LASA is in assuring the safety of U.S. undergraduate and graduate students overseas and the integrity of academic research. Until all connections between the NSEP and the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense are severed, the program will most likely be perceived abroad as principally intended to serve intelligence-gathering functions."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> "Resolution."

<sup>81</sup> "The CIA, Department of Defense and Africa Scholars."

<sup>82</sup> Carmen D. Deere, "Letters to the Editor: International Program's Ties to U.S. Defense." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 12, 1994 <http://chronicle.com/che-data/articles.dir/articles-40.dir/issue-19.dir/19b00602.htm>.

Such concerns over the propriety of government-connected international research and the safety of those conducting it possessed a certain intuitive persuasiveness. Throughout its history the Area Studies community had been understandably concerned about ensuring and maintaining its ability to conduct research abroad—its basic mission. Though American scholars often cited the many advantages they had over their foreign counterparts, especially in terms of available financial resources and local institutional partners, they also voiced concern that their status as Americans might disadvantage them when they attempted to research in their Areas. “Only someone who is ignorant of history or who does not believe in it can suppose that for a very long time our interest in the countries we study will not be met by suspicion and misunderstanding,” noted the South Asia scholar Ainslie Embree in his 1983 presidential address to the Association of Asian Studies. “Suspicion of the motivations of American scholars will vary, of course, but its reality cannot be doubted,” he concluded.<sup>83</sup> Given such sentiments, it is not surprising that some scholars would react with hesitation or opposition to the NSEP—tied as it was to the military and intelligence community—and even that they would argue that it endangered the safety of researchers. (It should be remembered, however, that recipients of NSEP grants do not work for the U.S. government while conducting their research; the service requirement is such that recipients look for work in the government only upon completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree.)

But the NSEP debate was not merely a matter of abstract speculation, for the Area Studies community’s warning that recipients of NSEP fellowships would be endangered was a testable hypothesis. This was because, notwithstanding the boycotts and condemnations by the major Area Studies associations, a few thousand students did apply for NSEP funds and received money to study overseas. And over the course of approximately a decade, the dire predictions of

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<sup>83</sup> Embree, 15.

NSEP critics were not borne out. By the year 2000, after about 1,900 undergraduate and graduate students had received NSEP support to conduct research in more than 100 countries and 55 languages, “the program ha[d] received no reports of participants’ encountering any hostility abroad,” reported the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.<sup>84</sup> “To date, I am not aware of any serious incidents affecting the safety of NSEP recipients studying abroad,” echoed Terry Hartle of the American Council on Education.<sup>85</sup> Thus the program, said Norman Petersen, who as Vice Provost for International Education at Montana State University had ignored the major Area Studies associations’ boycott and encouraged his students to participate in the NSEP, was “a sheep in wolf’s clothing.”<sup>86</sup> Robert Slater, NSEP’s director, commented meanwhile on how the multi-year statistics affected the debate over NSEP: “When we first were confronted by these issues, we had no data, so we had to say, ‘Trust us, there won’t be any problems.’ But the evidence indicates that getting an award from this program is not problematic for the students.”<sup>87</sup> NSEP’s advocates, then, seemingly believed that the controversy was settled.

NSEP’s critics in the Area Studies community disagreed, and in fact persisted in their criticism as if little or nothing had changed since 1991. When Congress added a new initiative to the NSEP (the National Flagship Language Initiative, to give grants for language study) in 2002, Area Studies associations responded with condemnations and boycotts nearly identical to those of the early 1990s. On April 7, 2002 the African Studies Association board of directors endorsed a resolution categorically opposing “the application for and acceptance of military and

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<sup>84</sup> Paul Desruisseaux, "From Controversy to Quiet Prosperity, Federal Foreign-Study Effort Is a Survivor," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* April 7, 2000 <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v46/i31/31a05901.htm>.

<sup>85</sup> Terry W. Hartle, "Letters to the Editor: The Debate Continues on Federal Grants for Language Training," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 27, 2002 <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v49/i05/05b00402.htm>.

<sup>86</sup> Petersen reported that his decision to ignore the boycott had not earned him any negative response or intimidation from colleagues who opposed NSEP. Some other Area scholars claimed otherwise, including Antonia Y.F. Schleicher, director of the National African Language Resource Center at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. See Anne Marie Borrego, "Scholars Revive Boycott of U.S. Grants to Promote Language Training," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 16, 2002.

<sup>87</sup> Desruisseaux.

intelligence funding of area and language programs, projects, and research in African Studies.”<sup>88</sup> “It can put student life at risk when abroad,” the ASA still maintains regarding NSEP.<sup>89</sup> MESA, for its part, approved a statement on April 28, 2002 stating that “A government-funded program that emphasized cooperation between the U.S. academy and government agencies responsible for intelligence and defense will increase the difficulties and dangers of such academic activities, and may foster the already widespread impression that academic researchers from the United States are directly involved in government activities.”<sup>90</sup> “I don’t think it’s possible to be too careful,” said MESA executive director Anne Betteridge about the association’s stance on NSEP and its new initiative.<sup>91</sup> Commented the Chair of the Near Eastern languages and civilizations department at the University of Chicago in August 2002: “When people from the Department of Defense or the intelligence community decide who gets [grants] and who doesn’t, that’s a red flag for people in foreign countries. The assumption is that there’s an unspoken quid pro quo.”<sup>92</sup>

That these warnings from the Area Studies community failed to take into account nearly a decade of relevant evidence made them appear less expressions of reasonable concern than examples of obduracy or obfuscation. Indeed Slater, NSEP’s director, questioned the purported practical concerns of his program’s critics: “When you have funded close to 2,000 students who have gone abroad and not reported any problems, it really becomes a philosophical issue, not a practical issue,” Slater said.<sup>93</sup> As noted, there was ample evidence in the history of Area Studies to suggest that by the 1990s Area scholars would generally, on grounds of philosophy and

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<sup>88</sup> “Motion of the African Studies Association Board of Directors,” April 7, 2002, <http://www.africanstudies.org/p/cm/ld/fid=107>.

<sup>89</sup> “The NSEP Debate: Overview,” African Studies Association, <http://www.africanstudies.org/p/cm/ld/fid=107>.

<sup>90</sup> Middle East Studies Association. “Statement regarding National Flagship Language Initiative—Pilot Program (NFLI-P),” April 27, 2002, <http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/about/statements.htm>.

<sup>91</sup> Sara Hebel, “National-Security Concerns Spur Congressional Interest in Language Programs,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 15, 2002, <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v48/i27/27a02601.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> Borrego.

<sup>93</sup> Desruisseaux.

political preference, oppose partnerships with the national security apparatus of the U.S. government. Most criticisms of NSEP, however, claimed concerns over its negative *practical* effects. Most, but not all: the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars announced in 1997 regarding the NSEP boycott: “This resistance to linkages with and funding from U.S. intelligence agencies and the Pentagon has been so strong because of the long history of Western interventions, the supporting of repressive rulers, and the ventures against legitimate and elected leaders in Africa.”<sup>94</sup> Thus this group of Area scholars directly acknowledged that its resistance to the Boren Bill was rooted in its political opposition to the record of American military and intelligence policy. There was logic to rejecting the Boren Bill’s financial arrangements on these grounds. Moreover, doing so accorded with the Area Studies community’s decades-old precedent of establishing or spurning government partnerships based on judgments of political consonance or dissonance. And yet, by and large, other Area scholars did not openly embrace this precedent in opposing the Boren Bill, even after the practical objections underlying their case appeared to have been invalidated.

The decades-long history of the Area Studies community makes persuasive the notion that Area associations’ practical claims were, like those of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, vehicles for underlying political-philosophical considerations.

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The fact and prevalence of those considerations, in turn, reflected how much had changed over four decades in the relationship between the Area Studies community and the U.S. government. Though the Boren Bill did not seek a particularly high level of academy-government intimacy—especially compared to instances from the early Cold War era—it proved

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<sup>94</sup> “The Case Against DoD and CIA Involvement in Funding the Study of Africa,” Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, distributed November 1997, <http://acas.prairienet.org/pubs/nsep97.html>.

anathema to the Area Studies establishment. Unlike its early Cold War antecedent, that establishment was comfortably ensconced within the academy, was substantially international in its personnel, and was united by political and philosophical sentiments born of opposition to American excesses in the Vietnam era and beyond. The congressional architects of the NSEP had some knowledge of this state of affairs, but were not significantly focused on or concerned by it; they persisted with their program anyway, perhaps anticipating (correctly) that the NSEP could endure even without the endorsement of the Area Studies establishment. A decade later, however, members of Congress would turn their attention directly to the political character of the Area Studies community.

### **Chapter 3: The International Studies in Higher Education Act of 2003**

Title VI of the 1958 National Defense Education Act initiated the financial relationship between the federal government and the Area Studies community. Enacted after the Soviets' launch of the Sputnik satellite and preserved through LBJ's Great Society, Title VI was incorporated into the 1980 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and has remained in effect through all subsequent reauthorizations of that law. The Department of Education—not any part of the national security apparatus—has administered Title VI, and through it appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars to Area Studies programs. This has made Title VI by far the most sizable and important connection between the government and Area scholarship. For 45 years the connection was also a generally steady one.<sup>95</sup> In 2003, however, it hit choppy waters. That year, the House of Representatives reviewed Title VI and unanimously passed House Resolution 3077, the “International Studies in Higher Education Act of 2003.” While not limiting the funding of Title VI, H.R. 3077 called for the creation of an advisory board to oversee the efficacy of Title VI appropriations as they flowed from Congress, through the Education Department, and to more than 150 college and university programs designated “National Resource Centers” for teaching Area Studies.<sup>96</sup> Though the Senate did not pass the measure or even vote it out of committee, its proposal and passage by the House provoked considerable debate between members of Congress, outside commentators, and Area scholars regarding the record, character, and purpose of Area Studies and its chief point of linkage to the government.

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<sup>95</sup> When Title VI funding was briefly called into question in 1974, Henry Kissinger and Daniel Patrick Moynihan—two of the most prominent PhD-policymakers of their time—defended the program to President Richard Nixon, as did many university administrators; it remained intact. See Lorraine McDonnell, Sue Berryman and Douglas Scott, *Federal Support for International Studies: The Role of NDEA Title VI* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1981), 7.

<sup>96</sup> “Awards—National Resource Centers,” U.S. Department of Education, <http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsnrc/awards.html>. Many universities have multiple NRCs within them; Columbia has NRCs dedicated to Africa, East Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe.

Critics of Title VI drove the debate over H.R. 3077, encouraging Congress to reform the government's relationship with the Area Studies community; Area Studies scholars defended the status quo, encouraging Congress not to reform Title VI. This debate dealt with two main questions: (1) What were the political and ideological dynamics of the Area Studies community, and did they warrant increased government oversight of programs which received Title VI funding? And (2) Had the government partnership with the Area Studies community succeeded concretely in realizing the mandate set out for it by law? Unfortunately, critics of Title VI and its partnership with the Area Studies community tended to focus more on the first question than the second. This made the debate deeply ideologically-charged and accusatory. Worse, it limited the attention paid to the second question, which was actually easier to answer with quantifiable data rather than with subjective characterizations. Indeed, had critics focused on the concrete record of government-supported Area Studies programs vis-à-vis the goals of Title VI, their case for reform would have been more powerful and less debatable.

They also might have provided a service which the government, for over 40 years, never had: effective oversight of Title VI. One of the most notable features of the 2003 debate over Title VI reform was its demonstration of how poorly Congress had overseen an appropriation which originally had a narrow, emergency purpose but which became permanent, large, and inefficient.

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When the House Committee on Education and the Workforce's Subcommittee on Select Education held hearings regarding Title VI on June 19, 2003, subcommittee members focused primarily on the ideological and political views of Area scholars supported by Title VI funding.

The witness who most stressed the importance of these views—and their troubling nature, in his opinion—was Stanley Kurtz, a research fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution and a Contributing Editor to the internet magazine *National Review Online*. Kurtz emphasized his personal background in Area Studies, including his PhD in South Asian social anthropology from Harvard and his experience teaching at the University of Chicago and Harvard.<sup>97</sup> Kurtz’s argument to the House subcommittee was that the Area Studies community was “abusing Title VI,” for “Title VI-funded programs in Middle Eastern studies (and other area studies) tend to purvey extreme and one-sided criticisms of American foreign policy.”<sup>98</sup>

To demonstrate the extremity of scholars’ opinions, Kurtz cited the influence on Area Studies of Edward Said, the Columbia professor of comparative literature who authored the 1978 book *Orientalism*. Said was the founder of “post-colonial theory,” Kurtz argued, which became “the ruling intellectual paradigm in academic area studies (especially Middle Eastern studies).” This paradigm, Kurtz told the members of Congress, had led academics to unduly condemn America—here Kurtz noted a 1999 statement by Said that America’s “history of reducing whole peoples, countries and even continents to ruin by nothing short of holocaust deserves to be better known”<sup>99</sup>—and to use federal money for academic programs characterized by “uniformity and extremist political bias.” To demonstrate the latter point, Kurtz cited a workshop organized by UC Santa Barbara’s Title VI-supported Middle East Studies Center. Meant to train K-12 teachers to answer the question “Why do they hate us?” in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the workshop assigned readings only from authors “known as bitter critics of American foreign policy,” Kurtz argued. He also cited the Area Studies associations’ boycott of the NSEP,

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<sup>97</sup> House Subcommittee on Select Education of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, *International Programs in Higher Education and Questions of Bias*, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., June 19, 2003.

<sup>98</sup> All quotes in this paragraph from Kurtz come from his congressional testimony.

<sup>99</sup> See Edward Said, “Barbarians at the gates,” *Al-Ahram Weekly*, March 11-17, 1999, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1999/420/op2.htm>.

saying it was understandable only as a demonstration of “Title VI-funded scholars bitterly opposed to American foreign policy.” He argued further that Area scholars were duplicitous in taking funds from Title VI, a program meant to address national security needs, while opposing the NSEP which too was a national security-geared educational effort. Pointing to these and some other cases, Kurtz argued that the Area Studies community was politically extreme and so were its federally-supported, “ideologically unbalanced” academic programs.

Kurtz encouraged Congress to reform Title VI in order to redress this ideological imbalance—not to banish critical perspectives from Area Studies programs, he said, but to ensure that they were not the only ones presented, as he charged they were. The centerpiece of Kurtz’s proposed reform was the creation of an advisory board which would, in Kurtz’s words, “collect information on program content to make sure that Title VI centers were not shutting out one side of the political debate.”<sup>100</sup> The board’s function, as Kurtz envisioned, would be “to make certain that, over and above questions of peer review, due consideration was given to the national interest.”<sup>101</sup> Kurtz and others (including Martin Kramer, a scholar of the Middle East at Tel Aviv University and Harvard) argued that the proposed Title VI advisory board would be comparable to boards that had long, and without controversy, overseen other federally-funded educational programs, including the Fulbright Grant program, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.<sup>102</sup> Title VI itself, they pointed out, had been overseen by an advisory board until 1989, when the board was disbanded for budgetary reasons. Kenneth Whitehead, the Foreign Service officer who administered Title VI for the Education Department from 1982 to 1986 and was *ex officio* executive director of its advisory board from

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<sup>100</sup> Stanley Kurtz, “Hearing Both Sides of Title VI,” *National Review Online*, June 23, 2003, <http://www.nationalreview.com/script/printpage.p?ref=/kurtz/kurtz062303.asp>.

<sup>101</sup> House Subcommittee, *International Programs*.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, and see Martin Kramer, “Congress Probes Middle East Studies,” *Sandstorm*, June 23, 2003, [http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/2003\\_06\\_23.htm](http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/2003_06_23.htm).

1986-1989, argued in 2004 that “it was a mistake to disband it, and establishing a new one is a necessity.”<sup>103</sup> Howard Berman, a Democratic Congressman from California, embraced these arguments emphatically. “I am encouraged that the creation of this Advisory Board will help redress a problem which is a great concern of mine, namely, the lack of balance, and indeed the anti-American bias that pervades Title VI-funded Middle East studies programs in particular,” Berman said on the House floor. “In establishing the board, we are doing no more than exercising our responsibility to ensure that the Federal funds we authorize and appropriate are expended properly.”<sup>104</sup>

While promoters of a new Title VI oversight board characterized it as an almost mundane matter of due diligence—it would be equivalent to other boards, they said, or simply a matter of Congress exercising its responsibility, or simply a tool for facilitating balance, that great universal value—the Area Studies establishment responded to the notion with contempt and derided the reform effort as a political witch hunt. “Self-appointed guardians of patriotic rectitude,” said MESA president Joel Beinin, “have attempted to prescribe the proper way to study Islam and the Middle East, if not to proscribe it altogether.”<sup>105</sup> “This plan to monitor and evaluate the universities and their area studies programs,” said Lisa Anderson, Beinin’s successor as MESA President, “is not about diversity, or even about truth, but about the conviction of conservative political activists that the American university community is insufficiently patriotic, or perhaps simply insufficiently conservative.”<sup>106</sup> Two prominent Area scholars from the University of California system—one the vice provost and dean of the UCLA International Institute, the other the dean of International and Area Studies at UC Berkeley—

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<sup>103</sup> Kenneth Whitehead, “Learning the Language: Title VI is in need of reform,” *National Review Online*, January 14, 2004, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/whitehead200401140823.asp>.

<sup>104</sup> *Congressional Record*. 2003. 108<sup>th</sup> Cong, 1<sup>st</sup> sess. Vol. 149, No. 148.

<sup>105</sup> Beinin.

<sup>106</sup> Anderson, “Scholarship.”

dismissed Congress's hearings on Title VI as "dominated by false claims that its programs often run counter to American national interests. Nothing could be further from the truth."<sup>107</sup> Scholars were victims of "a McCarthyite-style smear campaign," said Beinín,<sup>108</sup> while Anderson characterized their community as deeply aggrieved: "This has been a difficult year for people who study the Middle East—as it has been for people who live there."<sup>109</sup> She said this in 2003, when parts of the Middle East were ravaged by invasion, insurgency, civil strife, and terrorism.

Kurtz and other proponents of Title VI reform rejected the notion that they were McCarthyite. In response to charges like those above and that of Nezar Al-Sayyad (chair of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley) that the House's effort was "an attempt to silence those who criticize the government," Kurtz stressed again that he and the House were seeking to facilitate balance, not to banish certain viewpoints from classrooms.<sup>110</sup> This claim had grounding, as Section 633(b) of House's reform bill stated that "Nothing in this title shall be construed to authorize the International Advisory Board to mandate, direct, or control an institution of higher education's specific instructional content, curriculum, or program of instruction."<sup>111</sup> And yet, plausible as the distinction between balance and censorship was, Kurtz had chosen to frame his indictment of Title VI and the Area Studies community in a manner which all but invited scholars to respond with harsh denunciations rooted in lofty principles of free speech. By identifying the deficiencies of Title VI as resulting from the politics and ideology of the Area Studies community, Kurtz presented the Title VI reform effort as an ideological project. Even if it did in fact seek balance and not the supremacy of one ideology

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<sup>107</sup> Geoffrey Garrett and David Leonard, "Funding and Overseeing Education: Security's shadow over international studies," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 2003.

<sup>108</sup> Beinín.

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, "Scholarship."

<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Calt Harris, "Hold the 'McCarthyite,'" *National Review Online*, May 5, 2004, <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=YTI1MjMzNzFiNTg2OTk4NzhjYzllNjBiMWJhNGUxN2U>.

<sup>111</sup> "International Studies in Higher Education Act of 2003," H.R. 3077, 108th Cong. (2003).

over another, it seemed to envision the government serving as an arbiter of ideology within higher education. This notion made Area scholars—whatever one thinks about their political views—understandably wary. To be sure, it was hyperbolic and perhaps unfair for scholars to brand as “McCarthyite” a bill that included the provisions of Section 633(b). But the scholars’ objections did highlight the inherent dubiousness of Kurtz’s suggestion that Congress should henceforth measure the success of Title VI by ideological metrics.

Given that H.R. 3077 never made it out of committee in the Senate and therefore died with the expiration of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress in January 2005, one wonders whether the critics of Title VI were wise to make their case an ideological one so liable to set off red flags across the academic community and beyond. Indeed 2004 MESA president Laurie Brand claimed that credit for blocking the bill’s passage in the Senate belonged to “a mobilization by a host of universities, centers, and other concerned actors” to expose the “prevarication that was the hallmark of the advisory board’s most avid sponsors.”<sup>112</sup> Possibly Kurtz thought that the cause of reform would be best served by arousing congressional anger at the inflammatory criticism of American policy by Area scholars—and H.R. 3077 did pass the House with unanimous support. Yet all along there was a better, more substantive, and less contestable case for reforming Title VI: that the Title VI-mandated government partnership with the Area Studies community had, regardless of that community’s politics and ideology, failed over four decades to achieve its concrete goals.

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Title VI established a contractual relationship between the federal government and the Area Studies community—specifically, between Congress and Title VI National Resource

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<sup>112</sup> Laurie Brand, “2004 MESA Presidential Address: Scholarship in the Shadow of Empire,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Summer 2005), <http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/Bulletin/Pres%20Addresses/Brand.htm>.

Centers (NRCs) at colleges and universities nationwide. Congress agreed to provide funding to the NRCs in exchange for the NRCs' provision of a service, the "teaching of any modern foreign language...needed by the Federal Government or by business, industry, or education in the United States," and for which there was not already adequate instruction.<sup>113</sup> But over approximately a half-century, Congress repeatedly appropriated millions of dollars to Title VI NRCs while receiving little concrete evidence of the latter's success in graduating proficient linguists. In fact there was strong evidence that Area scholars had failed in this mission, and even that they had never really aspired to it.

Title VI of the NDEA was marked not only with a roman numeral but with the title "Language Development," for its "original emphasis...was on foreign language instruction."<sup>114</sup> When Congress reviewed the program in 2003, then, its defenders praised it as a great vehicle of language training. This was not an absurd argument—but more compelling data suggested that, on the contrary, Title VI had failed as a language program, or was at least in need of serious improvement.

Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Select Education, Terry Hartle, the Senior Vice President of the American Council on Education, presented Title VI as a successful and necessary program. Roughly 80% of graduate students studying "less commonly taught languages" (a government-designated category) were supported under Title VI, he said.<sup>115</sup> Hartle seems to have accidentally misrepresented a statistic from a 2001 report by the National Foreign Language Center, but in any case the report did reflect well on Title VI. It stated that, of graduate students studying "less commonly taught languages," 59% were in Title VI-supported NRCs, while 81% of those studying the "least commonly taught languages" were. The report

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<sup>113</sup> "National Defense Education Act," Public Law 85-864, 1958.

<sup>114</sup> Scarfo.

<sup>115</sup> House Subcommittee, *International Programs*.

noted also that NRCs “accounted for 45% of all doctorates, the nation’s top-level expertise, in the [less commonly taught languages] from 1993-1995.”<sup>116</sup>

Elsewhere in his congressional testimony, Hartle praised Title VI for providing the government with linguists. He said that 1,000 Title VI graduates from the class of 2001 were then serving in the federal government, while 400 were in the military and 600 in state and local government. “We believe that most of the career security foreign language and area specialists in agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency were trained at institutions with Title VI-funded centers,” Hartle said.<sup>117</sup> A House Appropriations subcommittee heard similar statistics in 2002 from David Ward, the president of the American Council on Education who testified on behalf of the Coalition for International Education, which included MESA, the Association for Asian Studies, and many other organizations. According to Ward, Title VI centers had helped train the former Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, the former Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, and the former Press spokesman of the State Department. “Almost all of the less commonly taught languages would not be taught on a regular basis in the US if it were not for Title VI,” Ward said.<sup>118</sup>

Such figures and claims were credible, but they amounted only to a partial account that hardly reflected a rigorous audit of Title VI. As advocates for a cause often do, Hartle and Ward conflated inputs and outputs: it is indeed a credit to Title VI that it facilitated enrollment in classes of uncommonly taught languages (an input), but what percentage of enrolled students

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<sup>116</sup> Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers, *Language and National Security for the 21st Century: The Role of Title VI / Fulbright-Hays in Supporting National Language Capacity* (College Park, MD: The National Foreign Language Center,) 2000, <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED445516>.

<sup>117</sup> House Subcommittee, *International Programs*.

<sup>118</sup> David Ward, "The Higher Education Act, Title VI and the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act, Section 102(b)(6), International Education and Foreign Language Studies," testimony on Behalf of the Coalition for International Education, Submitted to the House Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations U.S. House of Representatives, April 23, 2002, <http://www.acenet.edu/washington/legalupdate/2002/04april/ward.titlevi.testimony.html>.

achieved an effectively high level of proficiency (the intended output)? It is a notable output that students who studied at Title VI NRCs entered government by the hundreds. But did those absolute numbers represent a high percentage of Title VI graduates, or a low one? Answers to such questions suggest that Title VI funding did not translate into high numbers of proficient linguists, and indeed that Congress appropriated money to many Area scholars who did not share the government's interest in language education.

Richard Lambert's 1975 presidential address to the Association for Asian Studies argued powerfully that, nearly 20 years after the enactment of Title VI, the Area Studies community had serious language deficiencies. The deficiencies began with the Area scholars themselves—those administering and teaching in Title VI centers. According to Lambert—who had recently authored the Social Science Research Council's *Language and Area Studies Review*, one of the many assessments of Area Studies that made him the leading expert on the field<sup>119</sup>—only 58% of Area scholars in 1970 could easily read, write, *or* speak even one language from their area of study. (This statistic was based on scholars' self-reports.) And when Lambert sampled journal articles by American scholars on China, India, Russia, and Africa, “only one-third showed any evidence of the use of indigenous languages.” Lambert lamented these facts, but many scholars did not: in a survey conducted for the *Language and Area Studies Review*, only 60% of scholars said that foreign language skill was necessary for their work, and “a full 30 percent of the Africanists and 20 percent of the South Asianists felt that command of a language was not

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<sup>119</sup> See Richard D. Lambert, *Language and Area Studies Review* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, Monograph No. 17, 1973). See also the “selected writings” listed in the abstract of Sarah Jane Moore and Christine Morfit, eds., *Language and International Studies: A Richard Lambert Perspective*, (Washington, D.C.: National Foreign Language Research Center: Johns Hopkins University, 1993).

important.”<sup>120</sup> Of course this view contrasted sharply with that of the federal government, which funded Title VI because it deemed language proficiency a vital national need.

Scholars’ paucity of—and partial disregard for—language skill affected students of Area Studies. “The most startling fact to emerge from our examination of the transcripts of graduate students from the NDEA VI-supported language and area centers was that, on the average, their language and area training was very skimpy indeed,” Lambert said. On average, students took only 4 semester classes on their area and its language(s).<sup>121</sup> Lambert argued further that Area Studies programs focused on the wrong outputs: “The academic taste for semester units leads to the notion that students’ accomplishments are not measured in terms of their approach to any behavioral goals or final levels of proficiency, but by their performance on the prepared packets of materials and the tests given them,” Lambert said. “This approach measures how far a student has come from the beginning, not how far he still has to go to meet some terminal objective.” Lambert’s account demonstrated the importance of distinguishing linguistic proficiency from mere classroom enrollment. “Most instruction in non-western languages is at first- and second-year levels,” he said, indicating that “many of the students either drop out after the second year or (more commonly) only two years or less of instruction in a language is given.”<sup>122</sup>

Nor did the situation improve in the decades after Lambert’s 1975 address. Kenneth Whitehead, the Foreign Service Officer who administered Title VI in the 1980s from two senior Education Department positions, wrote in 2004 that “Many of those who studied ‘hard’ languages (e.g., Arabic, Persian, Chinese) in Title VI-supported programs turned out to be less proficient than they needed to be to work effectively in diplomacy, intelligence, aid-related work,

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<sup>120</sup> Richard Lambert, “The Presidential Address: An Action Agenda for Area Studies,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Nov., 1975), 11.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

and even international business.”<sup>123</sup> Whitehead and his colleagues came to the working assumption, he wrote, that graduates of the government-operated Foreign Service Institute and Defense Language Institute were far better trained than were their counterparts from Title VI-funded Centers. A 2000 National Foreign Language Center report commissioned by the Department of Education similarly criticized teaching in Area Studies programs. “Over the years, the original focus on language has been replaced with a much broader mandate for area, international, and international business studies,” stated the report, *Language and National Security in the 21st Century*.<sup>124</sup> In turn, “functional linguistic competence in the graduates of the nation’s colleges and universities has tended to diminish.”<sup>125</sup> The report’s authors did state, as Hartle and Ward later would, that “many of the languages most important to our national security would not be taught or researched in our nation’s colleges and universities without the support of Title VI.” But the authors noted that this fact did not in itself vindicate the effectiveness of Title VI funding; on the contrary, the funding had been inefficient and diffuse. The report’s very first recommendation was that the government “Refocus Title VI on language.” The second recommendation, “Improve the supply of proficient candidates to meet federal language requirements for national security and economic competitiveness,” emphasized that Title VI would be successful only if students achieved language proficiency—not simply if they passed a certain number of semester-long classes.<sup>126</sup> Over decades, Title VI-supported Centers never met such a (reasonable) standard of success.

Institutional characteristics of the Area Studies community contributed to its students’ poor language performance. According to Whitehead, “Academic area specialists generally

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<sup>123</sup> Whitehead.

<sup>124</sup> Brecht and Rivers, 132.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, xii.

[were] less interested in the languages of their world areas than in cultural, economic, political, and social questions.” This was because “they didn’t seem to think that language proficiency would do much to advance their academic careers.”<sup>127</sup> Anne Betteridge, then-executive director of MESA, wrote similarly in analyzing a 2002 survey of the field: “Language faculty positions are often impermanent and non-tenure eligible; this does little to inspire student interest.”<sup>128</sup> Amy Newhall, MESA executive director in 2004, stated that “universities have tended to relegate language pedagogues to the status of lecturers, who don’t get the same salary or tenure rights as professors.”<sup>129</sup> Thus powerful professional incentives worked against pursuing high language proficiency. “Students reasonably choose to pursue courses of study that will lead to more clearly valued and rewarded positions in the academy,” Betteridge wrote. Indeed her survey revealed that from 1990 to 2002, student interest in “language/linguistics” within MESA dropped by 66%.<sup>130</sup> Title VI aimed precisely at affecting the Area Studies community’s incentive structure in a way conducive to the government’s interest in high language proficiency. It failed to do so.

As for the claim that Title VI deserved praise and recognition for supplying the government with linguists, this too was of dubious veracity. Since the Area Studies community began to grow and be institutionalized in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it increasingly served more as a farm program for future academics than as a training ground for government officials. According to Robert McCaughey, the academics “thereby depriv[ed] occupations outside the university of their training.”<sup>131</sup> A 1981 Rand study criticized Title VI-funded Centers on this

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<sup>127</sup> Whitehead.

<sup>128</sup> Betteridge.

<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Lee Smith, “The Shortage of Middle East Linguists,” *Slate*, October 4, 2004, <http://www.slate.com/id/2107625/>.

<sup>130</sup> Betteridge.

<sup>131</sup> See McCaughey, *International Studies*, 212-215.

point, stating that there was “a disjunction between Center focus and national need, as defined by academic, governmental and business employers.”<sup>132</sup> Such disjunctions are not inherently problematic. But the government invested in Title VI to bridge them, and the academic community claimed in its 2003 congressional testimony that Title VI had done so. As the American Council on Education’s Terry Hartle noted, approximately 2,000 graduates from Title VI-supported programs in the year 2001 earned employment in the military and in federal, state, or local government. As it turned out, though, these numbers represented only 4.6% of all NRC graduates. Excluding those in state and local government (for Title VI funding is federal), the proportion was only 3.2%.<sup>133</sup> Since the government was providing NRCs with 10% of their budgets,<sup>134</sup> Hartle’s figures were quite meager as proof that Title VI was an efficient and valuable tool for equipping the government with well-educated personnel.

Thus strong evidence—based on scholars’ accounts of their own field, and on quantifiable data—demonstrated that Title VI was less effective than its supporters claimed both in training students to have high language proficiency, and in channeling students into government service.

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One who considered the Area Studies community to be generally opposed to the U.S. government and its goals might have interpreted the deficient record of Title VI programs as a sign of subversiveness. And some did: as Stanley Kurtz argued, “area-studies programs pocketed millions of federal dollars, even as professors claimed it was immoral to put their

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<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Hajjar and Niva. See also Lorraine McDonnell, Sue Berryman and Douglas Scott, *Federal Support for International Studies: The Role of NDEA Title VI* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1981).

<sup>133</sup> Data posted by Martin Kramer, “Title VI: Turn on the Defogger,” *Sandstorm*, [http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/2004\\_03\\_17.htm](http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/2004_03_17.htm).

<sup>134</sup> See Lorraine McDonnell, Sue Berryman and Douglas Scott, *Federal Support for International Studies: The Role of NDEA Title VI* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1981), p. 7; and Smith.

knowledge at the service of the American government.”<sup>135</sup> But this argument not only hinged on a generalization about the ideology of Area scholars. It also attributed Title VI’s inefficiencies only to the private partner in an effort that was a public-private partnership. In fact the public partner—the federal government—deserved much scrutiny for its deficiencies, especially in terms of oversight.

When Title VI-supported Area Studies programs focused resources not on effective language training but on other instruction, they were safely within the letter of a sloppily-written law. In Title VI’s first section, 601(a), Congress authorized the Commissioner of Education to arrange “contracts with institutions of higher education for the establishment and operation by them...of *centers for the teaching of any modern foreign language*” (emphasis mine). Two sentences later, after explaining that a worthy language was one the Commissioner deemed “needed” and insufficiently taught, the Title stated that contracts with educational institutions “may provide for instruction not only in such modern foreign language but also in other fields needed to provide a full understanding of the areas, regions, or countries in which such language is commonly used.” Clearly Congress’s primary aim in Title VI was to promote language education: this was the explicit purpose of the new Centers, and the “other fields” authorized to receive funds (“such as history, political science, linguistics, economics, sociology, geography, and anthropology”) were presented as means to the end of imparting “full understanding” of languages’ contexts.<sup>136</sup> Of course it was sensible to promote contextualized knowledge of languages. But Congress included no language discouraging or preventing the possibility that federal money might go disproportionately to teaching students the (broad) contexts of languages rather than the languages themselves. This indeed was the result, as noted previously.

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<sup>135</sup> Stanley Kurtz, “Who Will Defend the Defenders?” *National Review Online*, March 31, 2005, <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=NTJmYjJmMzFiYzI5ODI3ZGEzZTg4YjhhNzRhMmNIOWI>.

<sup>136</sup> “National Defense Education Act,” section 601(a).

Not only did Title VI lack clarity regarding the relative priority of language training over other Area Studies instruction, but it also failed to establish an oversight regime to guide its implementation and watch for misallocations of resources. If Title VI established a contractual relationship between the government and Area Studies programs, enforcement terms of the contract were quite weak. For one, Congress asked for no specific deliverables from the Area Studies community—no benchmarks for language proficiency, for example. Secondly, the oversight provisions of section 602 merely stated that the Commissioner of Education (later the Secretary of Education) was “authorized,” not required, to make general inquiries into “the need for increased or improved instruction in modern foreign languages and... the areas, regions, or countries in which such languages are commonly used.”<sup>137</sup> Thus oversight was to focus on the general nationwide “need for increased or improved instruction in modern foreign languages”—not on the particular need for Title VI programs to maintain strict standards or achieve certain goals.<sup>138</sup> To be sure, the legislative reauthorization process provided occasional opportunities for oversight and review of Title VI (usually every 6 years), but neither Congress nor the Education Department ever assigned an auditor to review Title VI. The Government Accounting Office inspected Title VI once, in 1978, but not before or since.<sup>139</sup> A 2007 report of the National Academy of Sciences demonstrated how even a half-century of reauthorizations and slight revisions had not produced valuable oversight mechanisms. The report itself “was hampered by the paucity of rigorous, reliable information on program performance, particularly related to the impacts or outcomes of the programs,” wrote its authors. “More rigorous, periodic evaluations are needed to ensure public accountability [and] inform the process of regular reauthorization,”

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<sup>137</sup> “National Defense Education Act,” section 602.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> “Study of Foreign Languages and Related Areas: Federal Support, Administration, Need,” Comptroller General of the United States, ID-78-46, Sept. 13, 1978, cited in Martin Kramer, “Arabic Panic,” *The Middle East Quarterly*, (Summer 2002), <http://www.meforum.org/208/arabic-panic>.

they added. The National Academy recommended finally that the Department of Education “develop an alternative approach to measuring foreign language proficiency with demonstrated reliability and validity.”<sup>140</sup> If it did so, it would be the first time in five decades.

The government’s failure to track and assess its Title VI appropriations was music to the ears of Area Studies scholars who—like all recipients of government funding—hoped for as little oversight and as few strings as possible. Area Scholars sought freedom from oversight even in the early Cold War era, when they were generally as receptive to government prerogatives as they would ever be. At a 1950 meeting of the Social Science Research Council, a scholar concisely captured the community’s approach to government aid: The job of shifting attention and resources away from commonly-studied regions such as Western Europe, he said, “is so big, and time is short. Only a great federal program can do it. The problem is to find out on what terms federal aid is possible *without federal control*” (emphasis mine).<sup>141</sup> Some years later, African Studies Association president J. Gus Liebenow noted how, considering the “magnitude of research and training funds” provided by the government, “the number of ‘strings’ attached are remarkably few.” Liebenow described the government’s approach as hands-off, even aloof, and celebrated how funds appropriated to Area scholars from Title VI of the National Defense Education Act were “in no way related to ‘national defense.’ We live with an anachronism.”<sup>142</sup> Perhaps these comments were a harbinger of the storm to come 13 years later, with the controversy over the NSEP and its ties to national defense. Indeed the 1993 MESA resolution condemning NSEP called for the government “to ensure that the priorities, criteria, and funding

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<sup>140</sup> Mary O’Connell and Janet Norwood, *International Education and Foreign Languages* (Washington: National Academies Press, 2007), [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=11841](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11841).

<sup>141</sup> Richard J. Heindel, *The Present Position of Foreign Area Studies in the United States: A Post-Conference Report* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1950), 2, quoted in Wallerstein 206.

<sup>142</sup> Liebenow.

goals of the program are developed from within the academic community”<sup>143</sup>—that is, for the government to fund a program fully designed and judged by academics, for academics. (As noted, Congress maintained its restrictions on the NSEP, but that was a deviation from the norm set by Title VI—even a response to Title VI’s laxity, some argued.<sup>144</sup>)

Over the decades, Area scholars not only celebrated Congress’s loosely defined goals and lax oversight, but they learned to take effective advantage of it. In the early Cold War years, when Area Studies was growing rapidly, scholars spoke of their field’s development in a manner which always highlighted enduring needs, rather than objectives already met. If African Studies experienced a few years of strong growth, for example, Area scholars would testify before Congress about the relative—and dire—weakness of Asian Studies, or another sub-field. “In subscribing to the biblical injunction that ‘the last shall be first,’...[scholars] insured themselves against the possibility of ever running out of a ‘neglected’ world area in need of scholarly attention and philanthropic favor.”<sup>145</sup> Congress did not treat Title VI as having concrete goals and deadlines, and neither did Area scholars speak of their field that way. When, early on, their mission was to raise funds for the assimilation of Area Studies into the academic apparatus, no scholar would identify a university or discipline that had sufficiently accommodated Area Studies—because “to do so was to invite curtailment of support.”<sup>146</sup>

After Area Studies became institutionalized within the academy, a chief lobbying strategy of scholars was to tailor their congressional testimony to accord with the government’s particular interest in language training. “Language competencies were always in the forefront of our public presentations,” wrote Richard Lambert. “We always argued that without Title VI the nation

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<sup>143</sup> “Resolution.”

<sup>144</sup> Kurtz, “Defenders.”

<sup>145</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 187.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

would not have enough speakers of, say, Cambodian, or later, Farsi, to meet our national need, and we always had a catalog of horror stories on what that incapacity had done to damage our national interests.”<sup>147</sup> According to John Lombardi, a Latin Americanist who served as president of the University of Florida and the Louisiana State University system, academics capitalized on the government’s failure to distinguish clearly between language instruction and general cultural education. “If you fund language and area studies,” he wrote in a 2006 open letter to Education Secretary Margaret Spellings and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, “we will leverage the language effort to get more resources for area studies, literature studies and culture studies.”<sup>148</sup>

These lobbying efforts succeeded decade after decade because, though it enacted Title VI to respond to a specific challenge in 1958, Congress believed thenceforth that America’s global responsibilities—whatever they happened to be—necessitated such an educational program. No matter the circumstance, Congress was receptive to arguments about the need for protecting American interests through language education. And advocates of appropriations to higher education vigorously reinforced this case. “The demands upon the United States arising out of its involvement in world affairs show no signs of lessening in the decade ahead,” testified University of Kansas East Asianist George Beckmann before Congress in 1966—after the Area Studies field had grown enormously for two decades. “If anything, a greater effort will be required.”<sup>149</sup> In 1979, President Carter’s Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies declared a crisis in the field, saying that the United States direly needed language skills to understand the Arab “oil shock” and the rise of Qaddafi in Libya and Khomeini in Iran.<sup>150</sup> A year later, Congress ensconced Title VI in the well-funded Higher Education Act. By the 1990s

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<sup>147</sup> Quoted in Kramer, “Defogger.”

<sup>148</sup> John V. Lombardi, “Can We Learn the Hard Languages?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 16, 2006, <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2006/01/16/lombardi>.

<sup>149</sup> McCaughey, *International Studies*, 195.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

the Cold War had ended and the specter of Sputnik had receded, but Title VI endured with strength. Congress reauthorized the program in 1998, driven by the “dramatic post-Cold War changes in the world’s geopolitical and economic landscapes,” as the reauthorization legislation said.<sup>151</sup> But although dramatic new challenges purportedly justified the appropriation, “there were no sweeping changes made to Title VI programs in light of post-Cold War realities, in terms of either language or programming.”<sup>152</sup> In August 2001 the National Foreign Language Center declared that the U.S. had a “critical shortage of linguistically competent professionals” in government and noted a joke that held that if the Chinese wished to encrypt their communications from American spies, they had only to speak in Mandarin.<sup>153</sup> Of course the 9/11 attacks followed one month later, demonstrating yet further need for language proficiency. The attacks “underscore[d] the importance of training” and “at the top of the list is adequate support for Title VI,” argued education community representative David Ward—successfully—before Congress in 2002.<sup>154</sup>

Perhaps there truly was a constant need for language education which Congress was wise and mindful to address. But Congress was unwise not to articulate clear, measurable objectives for Title VI, nor to create an effective apparatus for overseeing and improving the program over time. Lombardi, the Area scholar and LSU president, demonstrated this point in his letter to Secretaries Rice and Spelling. “We in the colleges and universities are expert at avoiding effective performance measurement. If the nation needs college educated graduates functionally literate in a number of less commonly taught languages, the only way to get this result is to fund programs that will test the graduates,” he wrote. “You must be specific about what you want,

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<sup>151</sup> “Title VI Programs: Building a U.S. International Education Infrastructure,” U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/title-six.html>.

<sup>152</sup> O’Connell and Norwood, 268.

<sup>153</sup> Brecht and Rivers.

<sup>154</sup> Ward.

specific about how you will know when you get it, and specific about the test you will apply to validate the learning accomplished.”<sup>155</sup>

This, then, should have been the case made most strongly by those who advocated Title VI reform in 2003: both Congress and its Area Studies partners had failed—the scholars in teaching language, and Congress in overseeing the efficacy of its appropriations. And both needed reform—the scholars to better teach language, and Congress to strengthen its oversight efforts.

A responsible advisory board overseeing Title VI would have been kept quite busy without ever examining the ideological character of an Area Studies program.

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When Congress reviewed Title VI in 2003, only limited data existed about it. Its supporters therefore relied on a few poorly contextualized statistics and the strength of positive anecdotal evidence. But their arguments were not rigorous, and there existed hard data suggesting that, in fact, Area Studies scholars who received Title VI money did not share the government’s interest in language education, and sent only a very small proportion of their graduates into government service. Nonetheless, the strong case against Title VI was itself incomplete—a spotty picture of inefficiency that, hindered by the general dearth of clear information on Title VI, failed to convince the House and Senate to reform their longstanding program. Poorly-overseen congressional programs have an unfortunate quality of self-perpetuation, and so it was with Title VI.

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<sup>155</sup> Lombardi.

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