

**AMERICANS DISCOVER CENTRAL ASIA: RUSSIAN STUDIES,
SOVIETOLOGY, AND ORIENTALISM**

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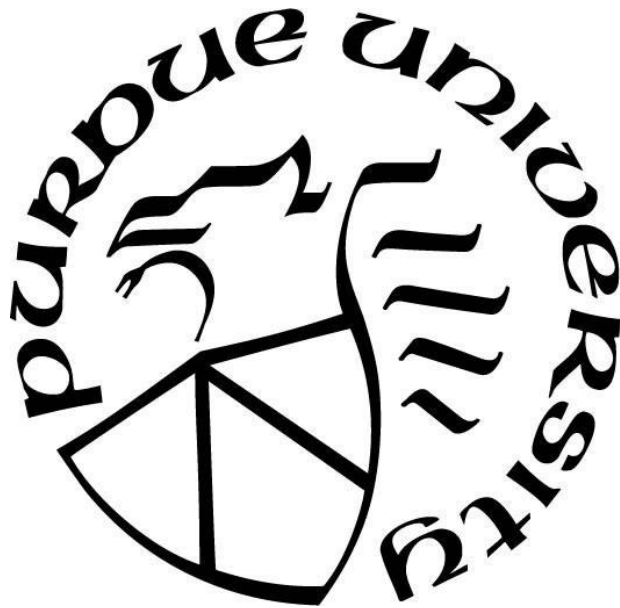
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For my parents; none of these would be possible without you.

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Americans Discover Central Asia: Russian Studies, Sovietology, and Orientalism

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This dissertation investigates the beginning and evolution of Central Asian Studies in the United States. I look at travel accounts, diplomatic missions, popular representations, and scholarly studies of Central Asia primarily for the period between 1860s and 1960s. My main argument is that American understanding and representation of Central Asian politics, history, and culture have almost always been tied to American relations to Russia. How Americans interpreted Central Asia was contingent upon the current American attitudes towards Russia. American attitudes toward the Orient also influenced how Central Asia was viewed and understood in the United States. In addition, I argue that while American understanding of Central Asia generally depended on the political climate and intellectual trends existing at a given time, independent research and scholarship on Central Asian Studies existed since the early Cold War era. As an example, I discuss the development of Central Asian Studies at Indiana University – Bloomington.

INTRODUCTION

Premise

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and the Cold War was officially declared over, it meant there was no Soviet Union for scholars to study and understandably less focus on Soviet Studies than during the Cold War. Less focus on Soviet Studies, however, also meant less focus on area studies since area studies research depended very much on American state and corporate support for Soviet studies, once also known as Sovietology or Kremlinology. Less support for area studies research by state and corporate grant-making institutions also means that there are fewer career opportunities for students and scholars focusing on area studies research.¹ While scholars need to be concerned with academic research for purely academic purposes, one can understand that in real life many students and scholars depend on material support for their research and career opportunities. And although scholars benefiting from state and corporate funding can produce independent and objective research studies—studies that are sometimes at odds with state interests—these same scholars are often dependent on government and corporate structures whose policies they critically examine.² This complicated relationship between scholars and state agencies, to a large extent, characterized the rise and fall of Soviet studies.³

¹ Kenneth Yalowitz and Matthew Rojansky, “The Slow Death of Russian and Eurasian Studies,” *The National Interest*, 23 May 2014, available from <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-slow-death-russian-eurasian-studies10516>> (Accessed: 3 November 2018); Pavel Koshkin, “Fulbright: 40 Years in Russia,” *Russia Direct*, 26 September 2013, available from <<http://www.russia-direct.org/content/fulbright-40-years-russia>> (Accessed: 3 November 2018).

² Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies,” in Noam Chomsky et al. (eds.), *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

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

While much has been written about the end of Sovietology, scholars have not yet properly explored the consequences of the end of Soviet studies on other area studies. Since area studies research on different nationalities within the Soviet Union largely depended on Soviet studies, the end of this gigantic state and corporate supported research area led to a complicated scenario where scholars of Sovietology found themselves unprepared to understand the newly independent states that came out of the former Soviet Union. Scholars now had to contend with the fact that there emerged new states with different nationalities, cultures, languages, religions, and changing institutional structures.⁴ There were two major reasons why American scholars found themselves unprepared to the task of understanding newly independent states. Firstly, Soviet studies during the Cold War had a limited understanding of—and a limited appreciation for—the multi-ethnic nature of the Soviet Union.⁵ The limited study of the nationalities of the Soviet Union was a marginal offshoot of Soviet studies that focused more on understanding the behavior and predicting the future conduct of power centralized at Kremlin. Secondly, there had never been a systematic approach to studying non-Russian nationalities and ethnicities of the former Soviet Union before the Cold War.⁶

This dissertation investigates the origins and development of Central Asian Studies research in the United States from its birth in the second half of the nineteenth century to its formation as an academic discipline during the early Cold War era and seeks to understand what it means to the state of Central Asian Studies today. While there was no systematic scholarly

⁴ Edward W. Walker, “Sovietology and Perestroika: A Post-Mortem” in Susan Solomon, ed., *Beyond Sovietology: Essays in Politics and History*, (Armonk, N.Y., 1993), pp. 227-8.

⁵ Orest Subtelny, “American Sovietology’s Great Blunder: the Marginalization of the Nationality Issue,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1994), p. 141.

⁶ It should be noted that even the study of Russian culture and history was limited in scope, American state officials finding themselves in panic at the early Cold War era because of limited insight and knowledge about Russia. Specialized Russian research centers were not established until 1946 (Columbia) and 1948 (Harvard)—Ronald Grigor Suny, “Reading Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century: How the ‘West’ Wrote its History of the USSR,” in *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume III: the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p 21.

study of Central Asia before the Cold War era, American interest in the region was not totally absent. In fact, an eclectic group of Americans travelled to Tashkent, Samarqand, Ashkhabad, Khiva, and other Central Asian cities before the Cold War, motivated by interest, curiosity, and aspiration. Among this group of Americans were diplomats with state missions, travelers inspired by global activism, curious archaeologists, socialists disillusioned with American labor systems, African American cotton engineers, and scholars interested in the Soviet Union. Central Asian Studies as a sub-discipline of Soviet studies emerged during the Cold War era but its formation cannot be properly understood without understanding the prior historical background of American interest in Central Asia.

I argue that Central Asian Studies in the United States emerged and developed during this period within the context of American culture, intellectual traditions, and geopolitical interests abroad. My argument is threefold. Firstly, the nature of Central Asian Studies for over a century remained almost always contingent upon American relations with Russia. Whether it was to understand the impact of Russian imperial rule to the region, or how the Soviets transformed Central Asian institutions, or the cultural changes that have taken place in Central Asia in the modern era, American interest was almost always tied to American interest and relations with Russia. American interest in Central Asia was pretty much non-existent until the Russian Empire began to conquer the lands under the rule of Central Asian khanates. The earliest American work on Central Asia is a two-volume travel account by American diplomat Eugene Schuyler who explained in his preface what he wanted to accomplish in the following ways: “The chief aim of my journey in Central Asia,” he wrote, “was to study the political and social condition of the regions which had recently been annexed by Russia, as well as to compare the state of the inhabitants under Russian rule with that of those still living under the despotism of

the Khans.”⁷ American interest in the region coincided with Russian military conquest and formal annexation of the region’s lands. And throughout the twentieth century, how Americans wrote about Central Asia changed based on how various groups in the United States viewed Russia. For instance, Russian and Soviet rule in Central Asia could be viewed by American writers and scholars in either positive or negative ways based on how Americans wanted to depict Russia at a given time.

Secondly, I argue that works on Central Asian Studies up until the break-up of the Soviet Union were conducted, with few exceptions, through Russian eyes. American travelers depended on Russian officials when they visited Central Asia and their first impressions were based on how they were introduced to the region by the Russian officials and interpreters. Writers and scholars who never visited Central Asia based their studies on sources in the Russian language. From time to time, American authors briefly introduced their readers to Central Asian history before the Russian incursion, and these introductions were almost entirely based on Russian sources and interpretations. Even at the height of the Cold War, when many American scholars tried to depict Soviet rule in Central Asia in a highly negative manner, the studies were still done through a Russian lens, as the authors of these works on Central Asia were trained Russianists and Sovietologists.⁸ And Sovietologists’ main purpose was to understand and predict the intentions of Soviet leaders, thereby relegating Central Asia, even as subjects of their research study, to a lesser significance.⁹

⁷ Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Khuldja*, (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1877), p. v.

⁸ For a classic example, see Richard Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

⁹ Russians and other Europeans as intermediaries for American understanding of non-European cultures is an interesting and revealing subject some scholars in American Studies and History began to examine. See, Brian T. Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Mark Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Thirdly, as I argue in my dissertation, American culture and intellectual traditions have also influenced the development and formation of Central Asian Studies. Of particular interest here is classical and popular Orientalism that has affected the way American writers and scholars depicted Central Asia in their works. I distinguish between two forms of Orientalisms, as my research has shown that popular Orientalism—views on the Orient expressed in popular culture, the media, and political commentary—better fits the arguments laid out by Edward Said. The classical Orientalism was, despite its flaws, academic and does not easily fit into Said’s thesis. In fact, classical Orientalism often had a moderating effect on how the Orient has historically been viewed in the West. Both the nineteenth- and the twentieth-century American writings about Central Asia contain various cliché-ridden depictions of Central Asian history and culture as well as the practice of Islam in the local Central Asian context. It was, however, during the early Cold War era that scholars of Sovietology gave a new twist to the application of Orientalism. On one hand, scholars doing Russian and Soviet studies depicted the Soviet Union as a form of “Oriental Despotism” and Russian political behavior as a typical representation of primitive and uncivilized Asian traits.¹⁰ On the other hand, these scholars looked at Central Asia as an archetypal Muslim Orient but also as a victim of the Kremlin’s despotism. What came out of this endeavor was a convergence of Russian Studies, state supported Sovietology, and classical and popular Orientalism. This convergence has left an enduring legacy scholars of Central Asian Studies have not been able to extricate themselves from fully yet.

My goal in this dissertation is to critically examine the development of Central Asian Studies in the United States and contribute to present-day scholarship in the fields of American

¹⁰ Discussed in Alfred Rieber, “Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy: An Interpretative Essay” in Hugh Ragsdale, ed., *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 6; James D.J. Brown, “A Stereotype, Wrapped in a Cliché, Inside a Caricature: Russian Foreign Policy and *Orientalism*,” *Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Oct., 2010), pp. 152-6.

Studies, American History, and Central Asian Studies. While examining how Americans studied and imagined Central Asia, I to borrow insights from recent developments in transnational American Studies, transnational history of the United States, and critical introspections by scholars of Central Asian Studies. This multi-disciplinary approach will enrich and broaden the scope of my study.

Parameters of the study

Scholars and lay people ascribe different meanings to the term “Central Asia,” so it is important to point out what is meant by this term in this project. Generally, in English the term refers to the Inner Asian Heartland, stretching from the Ural River and the Caspian Sea in the West to Manchuria in the East, but in most of the present scholarship “Central Asia” refers to the western part of the Heartland. The latter was conquered by the Russian Empire in the course of the nineteenth century, and after the establishment of the Turkestan governor-generalship (*guberniia*), “Turkestan” and “Central Asia” often became interchangeable terms. During the Soviet era, western Turkestan was distinguished from the eastern part (the former referring to Turkestan areas within the Soviet territory and the latter referring to Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China a.k.a. Uyghuristan). Russians before and during the Soviet era used the term “Middle Asia” (*Sredniaia Aziia*), but since the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars and other writers have opted for “Central Asia,” referring to the present-day republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.¹¹ This project uses the term “Central

¹¹ For a succinct introduction to the complicated definition of “Central Asia,” see Yuri Bregel, *Notes on the Study of Central Asia (Papers on Inner Asia)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 1-3. It should also be mentioned that the region is ethnically quite diverse. As Edward Allworth points out, “‘Central Asians’ generalizes a corporate identity embracing many ethnic subgroups of the region, including Dungans, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kirgiz, Tajiks, Turkmens, Uyghurs, Uzbeks and a few smaller entities.”—Edward Allworth, “The New Central Asians” in Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview*, Third Edition (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 527.

Asia” in reference to the area which comprises today these five countries, both in the past and the present. This is done because in the context of American study of Central Asia, these five countries have been viewed in a separate category because of their shared history with Russia.

The dissertation focuses on the time span from the 1870s to 1960s. This specific historical period is not chosen at random. The 1870s was the time when the Americans took official notice of Central Asia for the first time through the writings of Eugene Schuyler. Ending this dissertation with the early Cold War era is also apt because it was a pivotal moment in the formal establishment of Central Asian Studies, albeit as a sub-discipline within Russian and Soviet studies. I nevertheless make occasional comments on the later era to demonstrate the persistence of what methods and approaches developed during the timespan I cover in great details. During the post-Cold War era, scholars began to partially detach themselves from earlier views, methodologies, and assumptions, but they do not disappear easily—which warrants my occasional discussion of the later Cold War period and the present.

The dissertation consists of an introduction that discusses the importance of this study, followed by three main chapters, and a conclusion. Each chapter covers a specific historical period characterized by a different set of American views, studies, and assumptions about Central Asia. The first chapter examines early American writings about Central Asia in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on the writings and the legacy of Eugene Schuyler and to a lesser extent Januarius MacGahan. My research looks closely at the reasons these two Americans decided to make their long trip to Central Asia and what questions they tried to answer with their observations. How did their observations affect American-Russian relations? How did the British and the Russians, the two major imperial players in the region at the time, respond to Americans’ visit? How did they describe politics, traditions, and cultures of

Central Asian natives? Can their writings be analyzed through Said's discussion of Orientalism? These are some of the questions I examine throughout Chapter 1.

Although not as important as Schuyler and MacGahan, some other writers in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries published works on Central Asia, largely based on Russian and European sources.¹² When analyzing these works, I again examine the reasons for publishing these manuscripts and how they approached their subject of study. To better contextualize the American perspective on Central Asia at the time, I also make some comparative analyses vis-à-vis contemporary European and Russian writings on Central Asia. While Americans were influenced by the writings of British colonials in India, Hungarian turkologist and traveler Arminius Vambery, and Russian Orientalists like Vasilii Bartol'd, Schuyler and other Americans offered their own perspective on the events taking place in Central Asia under Russian rule.¹³

The second chapter examines the interwar period and discusses how a diverse groups of Americans, some pro-Bolshevik and some not, ended up justifying and admiring ruthless Soviet industrialization that had devastating effects on ordinary citizens through the country as well as Central Asia. I also discuss Socialist-leaning African Americans who looked at the newly established Bolshevik Russia as a land which built "a national identity putatively free of class, gender, and racial bias," as Kate Baldwin puts it.¹⁴ Since the revolution in Russia had a

¹² John Bookwalter, *Siberia and Central Asia* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1899); Alexis Sydney Krausse, *Russia in Asia: a Record and a Study, 1558-1899* (New York: H. Holt, 1901); Frederick Wright, *Asiatic Russia* (New York: McLure, Philips & Co, 1902).

¹³ There is a large bulk of British publications on Central Asia from that era, many of which are freely available at Google Books. These publications were available for Americans readers at the time, while some of Vambery's works were translated into English and became available to American readers: Ármin Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, (London: J. Murray, 1864); Ármin Vámbéry, *Sketches of Central Asia*, (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1868); Ármin Vámbéry, and F. E. Bunnett, *Central Asia and the Anglo-Russian Frontier Question: a Series of Political Papers* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874).

¹⁴ Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 22.

tremendous influence upon the self-consciousness of many Left-leaning individuals in the U.S., some of them, most notably poet and writer Langston Hughes, traveled to Soviet Central Asia in search of a solution for inequality and racism in the United States.¹⁵ Here I examine how Socialist-leaning African Americans sought the Soviet promise of equality, specifically by referring to Soviet experience in Central Asia. One of the main themes of this discussion is how Americans in search of Soviet promise struggled between their attempts to find the reality behind the Soviet promise and how the Soviet authorities tried to co-opt them for their own propaganda goals, while the lives and experiences of Central Asians were useful insofar as American visitors and Soviet officials could use them to tell their own respective narratives.¹⁶ I also examine the context and implications of a monograph published under the guidance of Franklin Roosevelt's Vice-President Henry Wallace, as part of a government effort to improve relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁷

The third chapter deals with the emergence of Central Asian Studies as a sub-discipline of Soviet studies by scholars whose knowledge production was highly influenced by Cold War politics. Here I talk about how the Cold War impacted scholarship on Soviet Studies and how Sovietologists studied Central Asia within this framework. After World War II ended, general American perception of Soviet rule in Central Asia turned highly negative, primarily because of a conflict with the Soviet Union. American Sovietologists, by and large, tried to depict the Soviets as imperial aggressors in Central Asia. This was also the time formal decolonization was

¹⁵ In addition to contemporary newspaper publications, Hughes's recollections of his travel to Central Asia were published in a monograph dedicated to his travel and his autobiography: Langston Hughes, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* (Moscow: Co-operative Pub. Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1934); Langston Hughes, Hugh H. Smythe, and Mabel M. Smythe, *I Wonder as I Wander: an Autobiographical Journey*, (New York: Rinehart, 1956).

¹⁶ Meredith L. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928-1937*, (Lincoln: UNP – Nebraska, 2012); Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Henry Wallace and Andrew J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia Mission*, (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock Publishers, 1946).

taking place in Asia and Africa. Thus, both the Cold War politics and the politics of decolonization played a role in how Americans constructed Central Asian history under the Russians and Soviets. I therefore also discuss how Americans and Western Europeans debated Soviet rule in Central Asia with Soviet authors. My discussion demonstrates an interesting twist on the how colonialism and Orientalism were defined by these authors within the existing political framework.

In the final chapter, I conduct a case study on the establishment of Central Eurasian Studies Program (CESP) at Indiana University – Bloomington (IUB). Initially founded as an Army Specialized Training Program for Central Eurasian languages in 1943, the center eventually became a premier research institute on Central Asian Studies in the United States. Scholars at IUB were able to achieve this in huge part thanks to the influx of European linguists and Orientalists who escaped repression and persecution under Nazi and Soviet regimes and ended their careers at IUB (scholars such as Thomas Sebeok, Denis Sinor, and Yuri Bregel). The case of CESP at IUB is interesting because it shows how a program, which began as part of the war effort, eventually turned into an independent research institution where scholars have in the last two decades offered the most insightful introspections of their field. This shows that scholars whose research was funded by government and intelligence grant-making institutions did not necessarily surrender to the ideology and politics of the Cold War. Some American scholars, like their Soviet colleagues, worked within the confines set by politics and ideology and exercised a level of independence and later critical introspection in their scholarly works.¹⁸

¹⁸ Noam Chomsky et al., *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York: The New Press, 1997). For a discussion of how Soviet social scientists struggled within the confines set by Soviet ideology in similar manner, see Slava Gerobitch, “Writing History in the Present Tense: Cold War-era Discursive Strategies of Soviet Historians of Science and Technology” in Christopher Simpson, ed., *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1998).

In my concluding remarks, I make a few notes on the current state of Central Asian Studies. Although systematic critique of Central Asian Studies in the post-Cold War era is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a few critical remarks on the legacy of Sovietological approach to present-day scholarship are in order. As Ronald Grigor Suny points out, discussing Western approaches to the study of Soviet history, “even those who claimed to be unaffected by the battles of former generations were themselves the product of what went before.”¹⁹ The scholarly community on Central Asian Studies today is in a much better shape but the legacy of Sovietology shows its face from time to time. Deeply flawed methods reminiscent of the Cold War era, however, are more present in publications by think tanks that deal security issues and the media. The final remarks highlight further the relevance of this study to present-day American scholarship on Central Asia as well as other regions and peoples of the world.

Historiographical context

American encounters with different parts of the world and what these encounters reveal about American culture, politics, and intellectual traditions has become a subject of avid interest for scholars and students of American Studies lately. In particular, American engagement with the Muslim world and popular perceptions of Muslims in America encouraged many American Studies scholars to examine critically the distant and recent history of American relations with Muslim peoples.²⁰ As part of this transnational shift in American Studies, scholars in the field

¹⁹ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Reading Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century: How the ‘West’ Wrote Its History of the USSR,” in *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume III: the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 6.

²⁰ Among these works are the following: Fuad Shaban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: Roots of Orientalism in America*, (Durham, NC: Acorn Press, 1991); Robert J. Allison, *Crescent Obscured: the United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Brian T. Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East*,

began to explore different approaches, looking at American Studies from the perspective of scholars of other countries and paying attention to other disciplines such as Asian Studies and Middle Eastern Studies. In all of these works of American Studies scholars, one can see particular attention given to the way American narratives about distant peoples of the world are influenced and/or shaped by American popular culture, and that American attempts to engage foreign peoples play an important role in forming different facets of American culture.

It is the understanding that American Studies can benefit by critically examining American views, attitudes, and perceptions about other countries that led many American Studies scholars in 1990s to “resituate the United States in a global context,” allowing scholars from and outside the United States to explore multiple terrains and perspectives within the field.²¹ In her Presidential Address to the American Studies Association in 2004, Shelley Fisher Fishkin says that “understanding the multiple meanings of America and American culture in all their complexity” is the goal of American Studies. Moreover, that understanding “requires looking beyond the nation’s borders . . . and how the nation is seen from vantage points beyond its borders.” While American foreign policy has lately been “marked by nationalism, arrogance, and Manichean oversimplification,” Fishkin adds, “the field of American studies is an increasingly important site of knowledge . . . where borders within and outside the nation are interrogated and studied, rather than reified and reinforced.”²² In other words, transnational American Studies has

1945-2000 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Susan Nance, *How the Arabian Nights inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²¹ Jance C. Desmond and Virginia R. Dominguez, “Resituating American Studies in a Critical Internationalism” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Sep., 1996), p. 475.

²² Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures: the Transnational Turn in American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (March 2005), p. 20. For similar points, see Emory Elliot, “Diversity in the United States and Abroad: What Does it Mean When American Studies is Transnational?” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (March 2007), pp. 1-22; and essays in Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (eds.) *Globalizing American Studies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

become essential for the critical examination of American culture, society, history, and foreign policy.

This transnational approach to American Studies has prompted many scholars to emphasize the importance of learning from scholars abroad and to pay greater attention to movements of people, objects, cultural items, and ideas. Sharing her experience of what interacting with international scholars of American studies has revealed, Emory Elliott stated in her Presidential Address to the American Studies Association: “I became embarrassed to realize that I was sadly ignorant of the excellent research in American studies being done abroad, and I was disturbed by how parochial our conception of American studies in the United States had become.”²³ Similarly, Fishkin stated in her Presidential Address that the “complexity of our field of study as we understand it today requires that we pay as much attention to the ways in which ideas, people, culture, and capital have circulated and continue to circulate physically, and virtually, throughout the world, both in ways we might expect, and unpredictably; it requires that we view America, as David Palumbo-Liu put it, as a place ‘always in process itself.’”²⁴ This kind of approach always leaves room for critical self-examination and new broader ideas.

Transnational American Studies, it should be noted, is in a nascent stage and is therefore still limited in its geographical coverage of Americans’ engagement with the globe. For instance, discussions by American Studies scholars of American engagement with the Muslim world are generally limited to the study of the Middle East. Scarce attention has been given to the analysis of American engagement with Muslims in other regions. Central Asia, with the exception of Afghanistan as a territory occupied by the U.S. military, does not feature in the works of American Studies scholars despite the United States’ geopolitical investment in the region. If

²³ Emory Elliott, “Diversity in the United States and Abroad,” p. 7.

²⁴ Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures,” p. 21.

scholars can see the significance of studying American relations with Middle Eastern countries because of American cultural and geopolitical investment there, as Malini Johar Schueller argues, one can certainly see the significance of studying American relations with Central Asia.²⁵ Muslim cultures and experiences differ from place to place and time to time, because “history *does matter*,” as one scholar of Central Asian history argues. A half a century of Russian imperial rule and the subsequent seventy years of Soviet rule in the region “was one of enormous transformation in society and culture—transformation, moreover, in a mold that set Central Asia apart from much of the rest of the Muslim world.”²⁶ Central Asia, and its relationship to the United States, should be studied within its own specificities and peculiarities.

The existing American Studies scholarship on the Middle East and of the role of Middle Eastern Studies in the United States nevertheless can offer insights for investigating American relations with Central Asia and the near-total absence of Central Asia in American Studies scholarship. Analyzing why commentators representing the far right continuously attack scholars of Middle Eastern studies but not those of American Studies (at least, not with the same vigor and energy), though both might be equally critical about American policy in the Middle East, Malini Johar Shueller writes: “If America is ‘in’ the Middle East in ways that the Middle East is not ‘in’ America, America is also ‘in’ Middle East studies in the United States in ways that the Middle East is not ‘in’ American studies.”²⁷ Both American relations with the Middle East and those of American Studies with Middle Eastern studies are influenced by unequal power relations. Schueller’s analysis can be applied to the role of Central Asian Studies as well.

²⁵ Malini Johar Schueller, “Orientalizing American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (June 2008), p. 481.

²⁶ Adeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 2, *emphasis original*.

²⁷ Malini Johar Schueller, “The Borders and Limits of American Studies: A Picture from Beirut,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (Dec., 2009), p. 850.

America today is in Central Asia in ways that Central Asia is not in America, and America is in Central Asian Studies in ways Central Asia is not in American Studies. Indeed, American views of and attitudes toward Central Asia are usually analyzed by scholars of Central Asian Studies and such works appear in *Central Asian Survey*, *Slavic Review*, *Russian Review*, or *Ab Imperio*—but not by American Studies scholars and not in the pages of, say, *American Quarterly* or *Journal of American Studies*.

It is not surprising then that some of the trends in American study of Middle East, as Brian Edwards shows, are similar to the way Americans have studied Central Asia. In his book *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, From Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*, Edwards notes that Americans almost never looked at Maghreb “as an unmediated exotic location, but in relationship to the presence of the French.” “Americans who traveled to the Maghreb,” he argues, “whether physically or via books or visual representations—traveled through French frames: in literature, painting, maps, ethnography, histories and travel accounts, as well as the urban design and theories of exercise of power.” And while “American portraits did not merely extend the constructions and presumptions of European Orientalism,” they did not discard them either.²⁸ In similar fashion, for the last hundred and fifty years Americans traveled to Central Asia, both physically and via texts, through Russian frames. As I argue in this dissertation, Central Asia almost always mattered only in its relation to Russia. In studying or representing Central Asia, Americans did not necessarily embrace Russian visual or intellectual constructions of the region. But because of studying Central Asia through Russian frames, American travelers and scholars consistently produced writings in Russo-centric ways.

Recent American Studies scholarship has also made valuable contributions to the study of Orientalism and Cold War history by examining unexplored aspects of these fields by

²⁸ Edwards, *Morocco Bound*, p. 2.

traditional scholars of the past.²⁹ In my dissertation project, I plan to build upon these new contributions in the field of American Studies by looking at American engagement with the Muslim World, Orientalism, and Cold War history from new angles and perspectives. My dissertation also reveals some of the unexamined aspects of both American Orientalism and Cold War history. In my case, I see the application of American Orientalism not just in a traditional way but in a particular way within the framework of Russian Studies and Sovietology. I also discuss how Cold War studies led to nationality studies intended to understand different national groups within the Soviet Union, however flawed its approaches and methodologies were. In this sense, I see my dissertation as both building upon and contributing to the transnational shift in the field of American Studies. Finally, considering that American engagement with Central Asia is one of the subjects that is largely missing in current American Studies scholarship, my dissertation can be both relevant and help fill a missing gap.

Alongside the development of transnational American Studies, scholars of history have also began paying greater attention to the transnational context of their own discipline. Many professional historians in the last two to three decades have come to a realization that in our increasingly globalized world traditional national history can be too limiting to properly understand historical processes. Many scholars acknowledge that a national history is primarily intended to serve a nation-building process, and as such, may often find itself at odds with the true intention of the historical profession. While transnational history does not guarantee that the

²⁹ On different aspects of Orientalism, see Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890*, (Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press, 2001); and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). On Cold War history, see Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 2003); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: the United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

historical profession becomes complete and perfect, the inclusion of it is obviously a step in the right direction. Transnational histories of the United States aim to place that history within the context of world history by using comparative analysis, more encompassing perspectives and methodologies, and by including insights and voices from distant parts of the world.

The purpose of transnational history is a realization that neither nations nor borders are static; that people, ideas, cultures, values, and commodities move across, along, and over borders set up by states and communities.³⁰ It is a realization that understanding human experience in a globalized world requires that we look at history from multiple perspectives, move beyond the orthodoxies that have traditionally shaped our disciplinary approaches, and reject the notion that one's history is exceptionally and uniquely distinct from all others. As Thomas Bender argues, transnational history aims to rethink and deprovincialize "the narrative of American history" and "integrate the stories of American history with other, larger stories from which, with a kind of continental self-sufficiency, the United States has isolated itself."³¹ The purpose of transnational history then, as Bender further notes, is not to seal "the obituary of national history" but to aim for "'thickening' the history of the United States, making it both more complex and truer to lived experience and the historical record."³²

Mae Ngai argues that transnational history can help us in unmasking "the master narrative of national histories" the way social history challenged master narratives in race, class, and gender studies in the 1960s and '70s. "If social history rewrote history from the bottom up, transnational history proceeds from the outside in," she explains. "By directing attention to the circuits and flows of social forces and discourses that span nations and cultures, we unfasten the

³⁰ David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States history." *Journal of American History*, special edition. Vol. 86, No. 3 (Dec. 1999).

³¹ Thomas Bender, "Historians, the Nation, and the Plenitude of Narratives" in Thomas Bender, *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 5-6.

³² *Ibid*, p. 10.

blindness of national history. In a sense it is an indirect approach, which hopes by way of the broader context to deflate claims of national greatness and to gesture to histories that are more connected, more aware and of a piece with the modern world.”³³ Outside perspective in transnational history helps de-center historical methodologies that have had more in common with nation-building than with the historical profession. It is my contention that the formation of Central Asian Studies during the early Cold War era was part of a larger nation-building project, as was Sovietology in general, although scholars did not always follow the ideological lines of nation-builders. As an outsider to America, it is my hope I can bring a different perspective on how American scholars produced knowledge and scholarship on Central Asia and help enrich our understanding of how shared histories are written. As I argue in my dissertation, most American scholarship on Central Asia—especially during a historical period I cover—was done without consulting a single person from that region. I am a native of Central Asia and my critique of American scholarship on Central Asia can be important as a corrective and balancing voice.

Transnational history is not without challenges. Challenges, in fact, may be greater now as, in the words of one scholar, “without mastery of the historiographies, languages, and archives of, say, India or Egypt, we may hesitate to say it is transnational history.”³⁴ Mastery of historiographies, languages, and archives of other countries is not an easy or a risk-free task. The study of Americans’ engagement with the world may require the knowledge of two or three dozens of languages, exploring the same or greater number of archives (which do not always accurately reflect local realities, it might be added), and proficiency in historiographies (their strengths and weaknesses) of these nations—practically an impossible task for any historian. In

³³ Mae M. Ngai, “Promises and Perils of Transnational History,” *Perspectives on History*, (Dec. 2012), p. 53.

³⁴ Ngai, “Promises and Perils of Transnational History,” p. 54.

such situations, one again has to rely on the works produced in the English language.³⁵ Even if a historian masters foreign languages and studies foreign archives, there is no guarantee that the said historian is free from America-centric or Euro-centric bias. Due to America's wealth, political and economic power, it is unavoidable that U.S. universities are going to be the center of accumulating knowledge on Americans' shared experience with the rest of the world. Thus scholars centered in the United States have more resources at their disposal and their voices can easily overshadow the voices of others who do not have the same privileges and the level of resources to allocate for research purposes.

These challenges and risks notwithstanding, as Mae Ngai argues, "the rewards are potentially great" in doing transnational history.³⁶ There are numerous examples from the recent pool of transnational histories that can illustrate it.³⁷ Some of these works speak directly to my research in this dissertation. For instance, in his study of American and Vietnamese cultural perceptions of each other before what later became known as the "Vietnam War," Mark Bradley argues that part of the reason Americans misrepresented and "orientalized" the Vietnamese was because they relied upon French colonial interpreters of Vietnamese culture. "Notwithstanding

³⁵ Mario Del Pero, "On the Limits of Thomas Zeiler's Historical Triumphalism," *Journal of American History*, 95/4 (March 2009).

³⁶ Ngai, "Promises and Perils of Transnational History," p. 54.

³⁷ Gordon Chang, "Whose 'Barbarism'? Whose 'Treachery'? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871," *The Journal of American History*, 89/4, (March 2003); NoeNoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States & the Philippines*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Alfred McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: the United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Kate Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Jana Lipman, *Guantanamo – A Working Class History between Empire and Revolution*, (California University Press, 2009); Gren Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009); Catherine Lutz, *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts*, (New York University Press, 2009); Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon, *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Mark Gillem, *American Town Building: Outposts of Empire*, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

their anti-French rhetoric,” Bradley writes, “Americans relied almost exclusively on the writings of French scholars, colonial officials, and journalists in forming their judgments of the largely unfamiliar Vietnamese.”³⁸ In my research, I have found that Americans writing about Central Asia before and during the Cold War exclusively relied on Russian and Russian-speaking writers, scholars, journalists, and propagandists.³⁹ Often reliance on Russian-language sources was the reason Americans misconstrued Central Asia’s past and present. Viewing Central Asians through a Russian lens could also reinforce American writers’ Orientalist views because Russians, to a certain degree, shared the wider Euro-American Orientalist discourse.⁴⁰

With all its challenges and potential risks, transnational history is indeed a worthy approach, especially in this dissertation. As I discuss American writings about Central Asia, I can better evaluate their quality and accuracy because of my knowledge of the languages and traditions of Central Asia and my experience of growing up in that region. My examination of the development of Central Asian Studies in the United States is a two-way process where I can assess American writings about my home region, while learning from their insights as outsiders. This goes along with the main objectives of transnational history where both writers and readers try to exchange ideas, insights, and perspectives to enrich each other’s understanding of historical process.

In this dissertation, I make many critical remarks about the state of Central Asian Studies in the past and present. At the same time, I am greatly indebted to critical and valuable introspections done by scholars in this field. Starting from Eugene Schuyler’s work, which offers

³⁸ Mark Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 47.

³⁹ When I talk about propagandists in the Soviet Union, I do not use the word “propagandist” as a way of judging them or making a subjective opinion. Many writers in the U.S.S.R., especially those who wrote on religion, did not make any secret of their true intentions. For instance, introducing books on Islam as “*nauchno-ateisticheskaia propaganda*”—which can be translated into English as “scientific-atheistic propaganda”—was standard practice.

⁴⁰ Michael Smith, “Cinema for the ‘Soviet East’: National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani Film,” *Slavic Review* 56/4 (Winter 1997): 645-678.

a useful anthropological study of everyday traditions in Central Asia in the 19th century, to the works published during the Cold War and after, a lot of valuable work came out of efforts of scholars specializing in Central Asian Studies. At the height of the Cold War, American and other Western scholars somewhat counterbalanced, albeit in an imperfect way, highly partisan and deeply ideological works published by Soviet scholars. Monographs and scholarly articles on Central Asia published by Soviet scholars strictly followed the state party line, while Soviet scholars dismissed their Western colleagues “as bourgeois falsifiers” with malicious intent and uncompromising anti-Communism.⁴¹

Some of the charges leveled by Soviet scholars against American writers were true, as anti-Communism was alive and well in the United States. Nevertheless, there were scholars who began to critically examine their own field even during the early stages of the Cold War. Immigrants from the Soviet Union also made a valuable contribution in this direction. Serge Zenkovsky, a fellow at Harvard’s Russian Research Center and an immigrant from Ukraine, was one of the first to point out that some American observers of Central Asia in the interwar period had a tendency to accept “material supplied by local or central authorities . . . without due critical analysis, while ignorance of local Central Asian mores and dialects prevented these observers from establishing personal contacts with the native population.” He also noted that during the years of World War II alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union, “the enthusiasm of some American travelers in the eastern part of the Soviet Union overshadowed their attempts at impartial scrutiny of conditions.”⁴² Zenkovsky’s observations of American writings about

⁴¹ Consider, for instance, the following titles: *Protiv Burzhnaznykh Fal’sifikatorov Istorii Srednei Azii* (Against Bourgeois Falsifiers of the History of Middle Asia), (Gosizdat TurkmSSR Ashkhabad, 1962); Inoyatov Kh. S., *Velichie Sovetskogo Stroia i Bessilie Ego Fal’sifikatorov* (The Greatness of the Soviet Construction and the Impotence of Its Falsifiers), (Tashkent: Fan, 1975).

⁴² Serge Zenkovsky, “American Research on Russia’s Moslems,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Jul., 1959), p. 200.

Central Asia, however, were ignored by most of his contemporaries, as many Sovietologists continued to produce works on Central Asia without any knowledge of Central Asian languages or traditions, and instead relied on publications in the Russian language and rare visits to Moscow and Leningrad.

A more serious critique of Central Asian Studies did not begin until late 1980s. One of the first to challenge and revise Central Asian Studies at its core was Mark Saroyan, an American scholar of Armenian descent. Equipped with a mastery of Russian, German, French, Azeri, Armenian, Persian, and Uzbek languages, traveling extensively in the Soviet Union, and bringing religious studies to the study of Islam in the Soviet Union, Saroyan had a lot to say about the flaws and misdirection scholars of the Cold War era had undertaken. Saroyan argued that Sovietologists fixated on politics, stripping it of a broader cultural context. Rather than viewing both Communism and Islam in the Soviet Union as static and in opposition to each other, Saroyan viewed both as dynamic and shifting in nature due to varied and complex human experiences. Saroyan also criticized Western uncritical appropriation of Soviet specialized scholarship on Central Asia and its conceptual and theoretical framework that depicted Islamic practices in the Soviet Union as anachronistic and non-modern that would eventually disappear in the face of atheistic propaganda, industrialization, and socialism.⁴³

Yuri Bregel was another immigrant from the Soviet Union who has been a critic of Russo-centric and Sovietological approach to studying Central Asia. He began teaching at the Centre for Uralic and Altaic Studies at Indiana University-Bloomington in the 1980s and urged his students to study at least Russian, Persian, and Turki languages so they could study primary

⁴³ Mark Saroyan and Edward W. Walker (ed.), *Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the former Soviet Union*. [Berkeley, Calif., 1997]: International and Area Studies, University of California.

sources related to Central Asian history.⁴⁴ In his remarks on the state of Central Asian Studies in 1996, Bregel noted that upon coming to the United States he found American scholarship on Central Asian Studies to be a mirror image of what he had been trying to escape: Soviet scholarship shaped by ideology and party lines.⁴⁵ Bregel powerfully criticized the easy route many American scholars took by ignoring Central Asia's history before the Russian arrival, the importance of primary sources in local languages, and, above all, scholars' reliance on propaganda publications in the Soviet Union.

Bregel's American students have also contributed to the critical examination of American and Western historiography on Central Asia. Devin DeWeese, in particular, describes the American approach to studying Muslims in the Soviet Union as "Sovietological Islamology." He defines it as "an approach to Islam in the Soviet context informed more by scholarly expertise in the Soviet system, and in the twentieth-century development of the Soviet-defined 'nations' into which the Muslim communities of the USSR were grouped, than by training in the history or religious culture of the regions of 'Soviet' Islam, let alone of the broader Islamic world."⁴⁶ As a result, DeWeese argues, scholars embracing the Sovietological approach "exerted a stultifying and even pernicious influence on the study of Islam in the Soviet environment."⁴⁷ DeWeese's insightful observation of the approach widely used by scholars studying Islam in the Soviet Union during the Cold War era can be extended to the overall study of Central Asia in the United States. Sovietologists and scholars influenced by their approach studied not only Islam in the

⁴⁴ Turki was one of the two widely used official languages in Central Asia before the Russian incursion, the other being Persian.

⁴⁵ Bregel, "Notes on the Study of Central Asia."

⁴⁶ Devin DeWeese, "Islam and Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaacov Ro'i's *Islam in the Soviet Union*," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), pp. 298-300.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 299.

Soviet context but also the history, cultures, languages, and political structures of Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union.

In my discussion of Cold War scholarship on Central Asia in this dissertation, I broaden the scope of DeWeese's argument. A more inclusive term to describe American scholarship on Central Asia and Muslims of the Soviet Union during the Cold War would be "Sovietological Orientalism": attempts by Western scholars well-trained in Soviet and Russian studies, but with poor or no knowledge of Central Asian languages as well as Islamic Studies and the broader history of Inner Asia, to write about the experiences of Central Asian peoples under Russian imperial and Soviet rules. I also examine American scholarship on Central Asia before and during the early Cold War era and do so in a more systematic way than have Saroyan, Bregel, DeWeese, and others. I build upon the critique offered by these scholars and bring also insights from my study of transnational history and transnational American Studies in my analyses of Central Asian Studies and the way it developed historically.

CHAPTER 1: AMERICANS AND DEBATE OVER RUSSIA'S CIVILIZING MISSION IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1860-1917

In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we are masters. In Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we are Europeans

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The East is, and ever was from time immemorial, the land of the most striking contradictions

Arminius Vambery

Introduction

These Turkomans, before they were with difficulty conquered by Russia, were the terror of Central Asia. Themselves Sunnite Mohammedans, they had . . . the fanatical hatred of the Shi-ite Persians. In swift raids they exterminated Persian villages, saving only women to sell as slaves in Bokhara and Khiva. Since their subjection [by Russia] they have been peaceable, and are esteemed by the Russians for their bravery and honesty, qualities which we, too, had every reason to admire in our workmen. We paid them from 25 to 40 cents a day for labor that was always well and persistently performed.”⁴⁸

It is fitting to begin this chapter with the above quote as it illustrates the general process of how Americans in late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries wrote about Central Asians. The quote belongs to Raphael Pumpelly who, alongside his colleagues from Yale University and with the backing of Carnegie Foundation, went to present-day Turkmenistan in the early twentieth century to carry out scientific and archaeological work. The purpose of their exploration was to unearth “cultures of a remote past and in an untouched field, far distant from the sites of classical civilisation.”⁴⁹ Much of their writing detailing the outcome of their exploration dealt with

⁴⁸ Raphael Pumpelly (ed.), *Explorations in Turkestan: Expedition of 1904, Prehistoric Civilizations of Anau: Origins, Growth, and Influence of Environment, Vol. I* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1908), p. xxix.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. xxviii.

archaeology and other related fields, though from time to time they commented on the natives they encountered.

In Pumpelly's remarks, we can see a three-stage observation process that became a blueprint for American visitors to Central Asia in this period.⁵⁰ We detect how these observers initially imagined Central Asian natives and how their assumptions later evolved as a result of their personal experience of living and interacting with locals as well as with Russians. The first part of Pumpelly's travel observation refers to his initial assumptions about Central Asia. These assumptions were based on general ideas about the Islamic Orient, some knowledge about the medieval glory of Bukhara and Samarkand, fascination with the Arabian Nights, superficial notions about nomadic life, and the writings of previous European travelers whose publications were available to American readers in English. Pumpelly's description of Turkmens as "the terror of Central Asia" and their cruel practice of marauding and raiding Iranians for slavery reflects the first stage of his observation. The second stage of their accounts was based on Russian interpretations of recent and distant local history.⁵¹ Wrapped in a crude colonial language, Russian interpretations usually reinforced the travelers' initial assumptions, but added the notion that Russian colonization forced the natives to become more civilized. Hence, Pumpelly's claim that Turkmens became "peaceable" and "esteemed by Russians for their bravery and honesty." The third stage of traveler accounts was based on their personal observations of culture and society of Central Asia. Often, their personal observations moderated

⁵⁰ Many other travelers, before and after Pumpelly, made similar remarks. For instance, an early twentieth-century American geologist and a traveler to Central Asia said the following about Russian colonization of Kazakh lands: "Advancing into the country during this state of things, the Russians displayed great tact, as well as perseverance, and succeeded in gradually pacifying the tribes; thus acquiring possession of the country by peaceable means."—George Frederick Wright, *Asiatic Russia, Vol. 1*, (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1902), p. 217.

⁵¹ In his acknowledgements, Pumpelly generously thanks Russian colonial officials in St. Petersburg, Tiflis, Krasnovodsk, Ashkhabad, Samarkand as well as members of the Imperial Geological Survey and the Imperial Archaeological Commission for their hospitality and educating the American team about local conditions. Curiously, he expresses no gratitude to local Turkmens, numbered at 120 at one archaeological site alone, and who did the most demanding physical and dangerous job of excavating.

some of their earlier and crasser Orientalist assumptions. As Pumpelly mentioned, the Turkmens they hired did their work well and managed to earn the American explorers' admiration.

There were, of course, variations in the tone and contents of these travel accounts. Some tended to offer relatively nuanced observations, while others embellished their stories with greater exaggeration and fantasy. Russians as interpreters could also offer different impressions of Central Asian culture and society, while previous European travelers could have depicted Central Asians as almost irredeemable barbarians, or, if their political goals dictated otherwise, as hapless victims of Russian cruelty. There was also no guarantee that an American visitor to Central Asia necessarily moderated his crude assumptions about the people whom he considered to be, at best, in a semi-savage state.⁵² A lot depended on the traveler's personal character and erudition. As we will see in the following pages, however, American travel accounts had much in common and generally followed the three-stage observation process discussed above, while their differences were mostly over the content rather than substance; demonstrating their common cultural, political, and intellectual backgrounds.

In this chapter, I will analyze American writings about Central Asia at a time when the latter was gradually incorporated into the territory of the Russian Empire through conquest and colonization. I will particularly focus on two visitors who left extensive written work about their travel and experience: Eugene Schuyler and Januarius MacGahan. Understanding these writings properly require that we look at a larger context of how American perceptions and observations of Central Asia were shaped by various political and social forces as well as intellectual trends of the time. To do this, I will firstly discuss the contemporary visions of Central Asians when imperial competition, particularly between Russia and Britain, and the difficulty of traveling to

⁵² To the best of my knowledge, they were all men. A few women visited Central Asia after the Bolshevik Revolution.

the region led to contending visions. I will follow it up with a brief analysis of American-Russian relations at the time and explore how those relations could affect American writings on Central Asia.

European and American writings about Islam and the Orient inevitably brings up the question of Orientalism thanks to the work of Edward Said, who described it “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” through the production of knowledge (knowledge that was deeply infused with imperial power dynamics).⁵³ I will therefore dedicate a few pages for each of the overlapping—and sometimes competing—Orientalisms (American, Russian, and European). This in turn will place particular American writings on Central Asia within a broader perspective, allowing us to analyze in their proper context the works of Schuyler and MacGahan, two Americans with almost parallel experiences of traveling through Russia and Central Asia in the nineteenth century. Before concluding the chapter, I will also discuss the international furor caused by Schuyler and MacGahan’s writings on Central Asia, namely in Britain where political rivals tried to use American writings on Central Asia for political benefit.

Contending Visions of Central Asia in the 19th Century

Central Asia before Russian conquest was a conglomerate of two Khanates, one Emirate, and tribal chiefdoms with allegiances to adjacent states, enjoying varying degrees of autonomy. The Iranian and Ottoman Empires were mere shadows of their former selves both politically and militarily, while the Mughal Empire by this time had been destroyed and colonized by the British. European and American Empires on the other hand were ascendant and in pursuit of new

⁵³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), p. 1.

lands and spheres of influence in a competition they viewed, in social Darwinist terms, as healthy for human development.⁵⁴ Considering the climate of the time and the conditions facing Central Asians, their colonization was a matter of time. Due to their geographic location, the region fell prey to Russian conquest. Russian expansion into the south deeply worried the British who were concerned Russians might threaten British India. As a result of imperial competition, Russians and the British also began to present Central Asia to their respective audiences by “having authority over them,” to use the words of Edward Said. The question of “who speaks for Central Asia” became an important matter. Russians and the British in the nineteenth century began to deal with this little Orient “by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it”⁵⁵ Consequently, Russian and British commentators contributed to producing contending visions of Central Asia.

Interestingly enough, Russian and British commentators on the state of Central Asian affairs did not always disagree because they shared many of the same imperial assumptions about non-Europeans in general, and Muslims in particular. But their political interests clashed, leading to differing public statements on Central Asians. Consider the case of Turkmens accused of being the “terror of Central Asia,” as mentioned earlier. Russians in the lead-up to the conquest of Central Asia were very vocal about that claim. Writing for the Ethnological Society of London in 1848, a European baron agreed. Turkmens were indeed “the terror of their neighbors,” the baron contended, and were “more inhuman than the other barbarous wandering tribes.” In his opinion, Turkmens wrongly became known as brave warriors which was largely

⁵⁴ Although Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer were against imperialism, their ideas were incorporated by many contemporary thinkers across the Atlantic into their imperialist views. See, in this connection, Rutledge Dennis, “Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), pp. 243-252, and David Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Social Darwinism and Views on Imperialism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1965), pp. 103-118.

⁵⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1.

due to “their enemies being cowards.” The two chief passions Turkmens possessed were thirst for plunder and revenge.⁵⁶ Writing for the offshoot of the same British society, Arminius Vambery offered a strikingly different opinion, praising Turkmens and criticizing their neighbors. While Kazakhs were known for “cunning and fraud,” Turkmens were “known, even among their enemies, for their truthfulness and the rigid observance of a plighted word—a virtue which is used to the disadvantage of the nomads [i.e. Turkmens] by deceitful Persians.” Vambery insisted that the “detestable occupation” of “robbery and man-stealing” were “far from being a common practice” among Turkmens.⁵⁷ What accounted for differing opinion was the timing. Vambery’s work was published in 1880 when Russians were completing the conquest of Central Asia and their rivalry with England became heated.

Contending visions of Central Asia were not only the result of imperial rivalry. Travelers to Central Asia also offered different opinions because of their political and cultural backgrounds. Whereas Raphael Pumpelly believed in the virtues of Western colonialism, his co-traveler from Yale, Ellsworth Huntington, offered a different view in a 1909 article for *The National Geographic Magazine*. Huntington was not in favor of intermingling of races because of his support for eugenics and he believed that indigenous peoples’ societies should not be disrupted.⁵⁸ Thus Turkmens in his opinion were “brave, generous, honest, faithful and industrious, and possessing that greatest of virtues, profound respect for women.” In contrast to Pumpelly who credited Russians for civilizing Turkmens, Huntington lamented that the “contact with Russian civilization is beginning to have the same sad effect which contact with American

⁵⁶ Clement Augustus de Bode, “On the Yamud and Goklan Tribes of Turkomania,” *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London (1848-1856)*, vol. 1 (1848), pp. 67-8.

⁵⁷ Ármin Vámbéry, “The Turcomans Between the Caspian and Merv,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 9 (1880), pp. 342, 343.

⁵⁸ He was the President of the Board of Directors of the American Eugenics Society in 1934-1938.

civilization has had upon the Indians.”⁵⁹ What Pumpelly and Huntington said about Turkmens tells us more about their own views than about Turkmens in this instance.

A prejudice against Islam was behind the following contrasting opinion on Turkmens and Uzbeks by American war correspondent Januarius MacGahan who accompanied Russian troops storming the Khivan Khanate in 1873: “Almost free from Mohamedhan prejudices, and entirely exempt from the disgusting and degrading Mohamedhan vices”—characteristics that better described “degenerate, vice-stricken Uzbeks”—Turkmens were “a better, braver, and nobler race.”⁶⁰ The characterization of Uzbeks as more religious and Turkmens as less so was not always accurate, but what is important to mention here is MacGahan’s view that the one with a stronger attachment to Islam was essentially more inferior. For a French soldier Joseph P. Ferrier who was serving as an adjutant-general in Persian Army and who was opposed to both British and Russian designs in Central Asia and strongly disliked all Central Asians north of the Iranian territory, pro-Iranian stance was the key behind his views on Central Asians. For him there was no distinction between a Turkmen and an Uzbek. Both were “coarse,” “rude as the country in which he lives,” and “insensible to pain and sorrow for himself as well as for others.”⁶¹ Ferrier’s political affiliation with Iranians who saw Turkmens and Uzbeks as troublemakers clearly influenced his opinion.

The point here is not to dismiss these European and American traveler opinions about Central Asians as useless or essentially wrong but to emphasize how their political, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds contributed to these competing views. The charges levelled against

⁵⁹ Ellsworth Huntington, “Life in the Great Desert of Central Asia,” *The National Geographic Magazine*, vol. 20, no. 8 (Aug 1909), p. 753.

⁶⁰ Januarius MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus and the Fall of Khiva*, (London: Sampson Low, 1874), p. 354.

⁶¹ Joseph P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan, and Beloochistan*, trans. Captain William Jesse, (London: John Murray, 1857), p. 89-90.

Turkmens for practicing slave raids and robbery against Iranians were true, but the generalizations they offered were misleading. At the time there was no Turkmen nation in a modern understanding of the term. Turkmens belonged to many different tribes such as Yomut, Teke, Ersari, Salor, Sariq, Goklen, Choudur, Yemreli, Qaradashli, Ali-eli, Khizir-eli, Arabachi, Owlad, and many smaller ones.⁶² Those who practiced slave trafficking primarily belonged to Yomut and Teke tribes. Moreover, even among those groups the majority were sedentary Turkmens who practiced agriculture, raised animals, and engaged in trade—contrary to many traveler accounts which described Turkmens as chiefly nomadic.⁶³ The Turkmen warriors who practiced slave trafficking also received aid from corrupt Persian officials on borderlands who accommodated the former's raids and pillages for money and gifts.⁶⁴

This brief tour across traveler accounts on Turkmen slave trafficking in the nineteenth century shows that these accounts could be confusing and misleading if not analyzed within their proper context. Traveler accounts about other peoples in Central Asia were equally disparate, confusing, and prone to manipulation. As relative late-comers to Central Asia and travel writing about it, Americans also had to grapple with the contending visions of Central Asia produced by Russians and Europeans. Russian and European writings, with varying degrees, evidently influenced Americans in forming their opinions about Central Asia. This was, however, one among many other factors that shaped and/or influenced American opinions. American relations with Russia were another important factor.

⁶² William Wood, "Turkmen Ethnohistory," in H.J. Swinney (ed.) *Vanishing Jewels: Central Asian Tribal Weavings. A Catalog of an Exhibition by the Rochester Museum & Science Center*, (Rochester, NY: Flower City Printing, Inc., 1990), pp. 27-44.

⁶³ Yuri Bregel, "Nomadic and Sedentary Elements among the Turkmens," *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 25, no. 1-2 (1981), pp. 5-37; Adrienne Edgar, "Everyday Life among the Turkmen Nomads," in Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca (eds.) *Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 37-45.

⁶⁴ Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings*, p. 88.

American-Russian Relations in the 19th-century.

American travelers' interpretation of Islam and Central Asian culture was influenced by Russia in two major ways: firstly, Russian colonial administrators and Orientalists shaped the views of American travelers by interpreting Central Asian culture and history; and secondly, the very interest Americans developed in the nineteenth century was contingent upon American relations with Russia.⁶⁵ It was the growing Russian encroachment and gradual conquest of Central Asian Khanates in the 1860s that began to attract American interest in Central Asia. At the time, in American maps Central Asia was known as "Independent Tartary," a misleading name since most of the region's ethnically diverse population were not Tatars.⁶⁶ Following the Russian lead, Americans soon began to call the region "Turkestan," or after Russian conquest was completed, "Russian Turkestan."

The United States also had a particularly complex relationship with Russia in the nineteenth century. As a monarchy with lands stretching throughout Europe and Asia, the Russian political system was not an object of admiration for Americans educated in republican and democratic ideals. However, the Russian Empire offered moral support during the American War of Independence.⁶⁷ During the Crimean War of 1853-56, the United States reciprocated when Russia was opposed by major Western European powers and the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁸ Warm political relations continued during the American Civil War when Russia publicly affirmed its

⁶⁵ Analysis of how European imperial powers have attracted American interest in native cultures and subsequently acted as interpreters of those cultures is a subject, which has begun to attract scholars' attention. For American interest in Muslim North Africa and Indochina due to French colonial presence in those places and the French as interpreters of North African and the Indochinese culture and history, see Brian Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁶⁶ Eugene Schuyler, "The Progress of Russia in Asia," *The Nation*, vol. 2, no. 42 (1866), p. 489.

⁶⁷ Oscar S. Straus, "The United States and Russia: Their Historical Relations," *The North American Review*, vol. 181, no. 585 (Aug., 1905), pp. 237-50.

⁶⁸ Frank Golder, "Russian-American Relations during the Crimean War," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 31, no. 3 (Apr., 1926), pp. 462-76.

support for the Union, at one time stationing two military squadrons on American soil—one under the command of Admiral Popov in San Francisco and the other under the command of Admiral Lesovsky in New York—thus sending a symbolic warning to European powers, lest the British and the French decide to “take hostile action” against the Union.⁶⁹ As one American historian has argued, “Russia came very near becoming our active ally.”⁷⁰ Two years before Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Russia abolished serfdom in the Emancipation Reform of 1861.⁷¹ “Because of our own Emancipation,” one American later reflected, “there existed in the ‘60’s a good deal of interest in Russia, and a considerable desire on the part of Americans to find out in what respects Russian life resembled our own, in what ways it was different.”⁷² The two growing powers also saw much in common by following a route that was, as they saw it, different from the one taken by Europe proper. In 1834, one astute French observer of the United States referred to “the Russians and the Americans” as “two great nations in the world” heading “towards the same end”: “by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.”⁷³ It was Alexis de Tocqueville.

Despite the fact that American ideals about democracy and individual liberty derived from the Enlightenment were in sharp contrast to Russia’s autocratic political reality, there was one area the two growing empires had in common. In the words of Christopher Miller, “the

⁶⁹ Frederick Schuman, *American Policy toward Russia since 1917*, (New York: International Publishers, c1928), p. 20.

⁷⁰ Frank Golder, “The Russian Fleet and the Civil War,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Jul., 1915), p. 809. See also, E. A. Adamov, “Russia and the United States at the Time of Civil War,” *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Dec., 1930), pp. 586-602.

⁷¹ Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁷² Marion Moore Coleman, “Eugene Schuyler: Diplomat Extraordinary from the United States to Russia 1867-1876,” *Russian Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1947), p. 39.

⁷³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America Volume I*, Translated by Henry Reeve (New York, 1939), p. 432.

United States and Russia were frontier states” and built “frontier empires.”⁷⁴ As Steven Sabol argues, a “closer analysis reveals that American expansion, conquest, and colonization of a continental interior paralleled Russian expansion, conquest, and colonization of Siberia and the Kazakh Steppe with similar political, economic, social, and cultural processes and consequences for the indigenous population.”⁷⁵ Sabol shows that American colonization of the Sioux in Plains and Russian colonization of the Kazakhs in the Steppes were two similar processes as both Americans and Russians denigrated and destabilized the social structures in the Plains and in the Steppes respectively, in the process putting relations between settlers and natives on an inevitable collision course. Lands inhabited by the Sioux and the Kazakhs were declared underutilized by their respective colonizers, their leaderships both tyrannical and dysfunctional, and their social mores as vestiges of savagery and fanaticism. Only the civilization of the settler could save the natives and their land from remaining in their eternal barbaric state.

American and Russian colonizers—as well as foreign travelers who sympathized and agreed with the two empires’ colonial subjugation of the Sioux and the Kazakhs—produced cliché-ridden discourses to justify their sense of cultural and racial superiority that were at times almost interchangeable. The natives in these discourses appeared as robbers and plunderers, cunning, vicious, cowardly, ugly, lazy, dirty, and obnoxious creatures who threatened the safety and security of civilized settlers and endangered the advancing civilization. According to a member of the Russian Geographical Society, every Kazakh “without exception was avaricious, false, and faithless,” while an authoritative Russian dictionary defined “Tatar” as “dishonest, cunning, sly, crude, and unclean.” According to a colonel of the United States Army, Sioux

⁷⁴ Christopher Miller, “Prelude to Rivalry: The Frontier Foundations of Two Global Empires,” in Eva-Maria Stolberg (ed.) *The Soviet Union and the United States: Rivals of the Twentieth Century, Coexistence and Competition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2013), p. 15.

⁷⁵ Steven Sabol, “Comparing American and Russian International Colonization: The ‘Touch of Civilization’ on the Sioux and Kazakhs,” *The Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1 (Spring 2012), p. 31.

Indians were the “meanest, most treacherous, and most cowardly of the plains Indians, and . . . the most constant in their aggression on the whites.”⁷⁶ Whereas a British traveler, who believed that the Kazakhs would soon become “extinct” due to their contact with “civilisation,” described the Steppes as something that reminded him “of the best parts of western America,” some American writers described indigenous inhabitants of the Plains as “ruthless Tartars of the desert.”⁷⁷

William Eleroy Curtis, an American journalist who played an important role in the formation of the Bureau of American Republics, the ancestor of the Organization of American States, visited present-day Turkmenistan in the early twentieth century and made similar remarks, comparing Russian colonial policy with American policy toward Native Americans. The “savage-looking barbarians,” as he called Turkmens, reminded him of other “semi-nomadic” peoples such as the “North American Indians and the Bedouins of Arabia.” While he saw many similarities, he also saw the “wisdom” of Russian “autocracy” and “dictatorial powers” that made Russian relations with natives worthy of admiration as compared to “our relations with the aborigines of our soil and that of the English in South Africa.” Central Asia to Curtis looked “exactly like Arizona” and the steppes reminded him of the “prairies of Kansas.” As for the character of the Turkmens, Curtis quoted Russian colonial general who assured him that they were “liars and gluttons,” “frightfully envious,” and “unattractive in any moral respect.” These characteristics again reminded him of America’s natives, as he further wrote: “among semi-savages of their own class, they are masters of the art of war, resembling the North American

⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 36-9. Among Russians, too, it was common to refer to Kazakhs and other Central Asians as “Tatars.”

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 41; reference to “ruthless Tartars of the desert” is quoted in Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 286n13.

Indian more than the Eastern races to which they are related.”⁷⁸ This is not to say that the two colonial processes were identical, but the familiarity with and the sharing of similar political, cultural, and social attitudes was another chapter in American-Russian relations that drew them closer to each other.

Growing imperial competition by the end of the century, however, contributed to the souring of relations. Senator Albert J. Beveridge, an influential voice in the government of President William McKinley, remarked that Russia’s growing expansion into the Pacific was “a circumstance of world-wide significance and it is of especial and practical concern to every people upon whose interests that advance impinges or whose future in any direction that advance affects.”⁷⁹ Lack of industrialization, Russia’s mistreatment of the Jewish minority, and the lingering autocracy prompted many American liberals to embrace Victorian racial categories in their assessment of the Russian Empire and its people.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, there remained throughout the century American fascination with Russian literature, culture, anarchic movements and the radicalism that began to threaten the Romanov Dynasty. “In the American popular imagination,” as Choi Chatterjee writes, “Russia meant imperial romance, the glamorous lifestyle of exotic and privileged nobility, and the possibilities of political adventure in a diverse geographical locale.”⁸¹ Reviewing the first American translation of Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Sons*, *The Catholic World* remarked that “Americans are, whether rightly or wrongly, especially attracted” to

⁷⁸ William Eleroy Curtis, *Turkestan: the Heart of Asia* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1911), pp. 33-45. For Curtis’s career, see Benjamin Coates, “The Pan-American Lobbyist: William Eleroy Curtis and U.S. Empire, 1884–1899,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2014), pp. 22-48.

⁷⁹ Albert Beveridge, *The Russian Advance*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1904), p. 3.

⁸⁰ David Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). By 1880s already, there was concern in the State Department about mistreatment of Jews in Russia. See, correspondence between Colonel Wickham Hoffman and Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen in *Documents relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1882-1883* (hereafter *FRUS*), pp. 443-455.

⁸¹ Choi Chatterjee, “Transnational Romance, Terror, and Heroism: Russia in American Popular Fiction, 1860-1917,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 50, no. 3 (2008), p. 755.

Russia.⁸² American fascination with Russia was eagerly reciprocated by Russians, both on a state level and by the people who were particularly friendly to American tourists. In 1866, popular *Moscow News* declared: “Of all the nations of the earth, the United States without doubt the most popular in Russia.”⁸³ There was admiration for the industrial development taking place in the North, but there was also fascination with American westward expansion as well as exploitation of slaves in cotton plantations. Decades before the Civil War, the manufacturing class and some imperial administrators began to envision Central Asia as a potential cotton-supplying colony modeled on American South. Baron G.V. Rosen, chief administrator of the Caucasus, expressed hope that Central Asian natives could one day become “our Negroes.”⁸⁴

America’s relations with Russia were certainly complicated, but before the Bolshevik Revolution there was a sense of understanding and respect for each other that would be missing in the twentieth century. It is no surprise then that Russians played such a crucial role in the way Americans understood and wrote about Central Asians in the early days. Americans depended on Russians for traveling to the region and understanding Central Asia, but they also trusted them more than the natives in Central Asia. Russians after all were closer to Europeans and in the question of “who speaks for Central Asia,” Russians, in American eyes, had greater authority than the natives. Since Russia was the colonizer and was trying to justify colonization, Russians were no neutral influencers in shaping American views and opinions. That perspective is important to keep in mind in analyzing American writings about Central Asia.

⁸² “NEW PUBLICATIONS,” *The Catholic World, A Monthly Magazine of General Literature and Science* (1865-1906) vol. 5, no. 29 (Aug, 1867): 718. The novel was translated by Eugene Schuyler.

⁸³ Translated into English and published in *FRUS, 1866-1867*, pp. 393-4.

⁸⁴ Steve Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 5 (Dec., 2004), p. 1430.

American Orientalism and Islam.

Even before meeting Russians, however, Americans developed some opinions about the Orient, Islam, and Muslims which were shaped within their own cultural milieu. It is not an exaggeration to state that the history of Islam in America is as old as the history of post-Columbian America. Islam was the second monotheistic religion—after Catholicism and before Protestantism—imported to the Americas. In the case of North America, Muslims arrived to the new land at the same time Europeans were settling and colonizing it. Those Muslims were African slaves. Many African slaves brought to America from West Africa were Muslims who preserved their religion for generations and became part of the American society although their presence was not felt by many.⁸⁵ But American engagement with Muslims existed on multiple levels. European colonizers and settlers of the American hemisphere viewed Islam as their mortal enemy. Columbus's first voyage to the Americas coincided with Spanish *Reconquista*, while he also thanked King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain for financing the trip as “rulers devoted to the Holy Christian Faith and dedicated to its expansion and to combating the religion of Mahomet and all idolatries and heresies.”⁸⁶ English explorer John Smith who helped found the Jamestown colony in 1607 had been a warrior fighting the Ottomans on behalf of the Austrian Hapsburg Empire.

Early European settlers who expressed their enmity toward Islam in religious terms passed on their prejudices to future generations. For instance, the Puritan minister Cotton Mather placed “Mahometan Turks and Moors, and Devils” in the same category and described them as

⁸⁵ According to Sylviane Diouf, the author of *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), research on this particular history is particularly scant. But lately scholars have been unearthing this neglected part of history. Muslims were an important presence among slaves as they were resilient to conversion attempts and left behind plenty of written material as they were more likely to be literate than others.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Karine Walther, *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), p. 10.

“Fierce Monsters of Africa.”⁸⁷ Americans, from the very beginning, were thus predisposed to view Islam in highly negative terms. America’s second president, John Adams, continued this tradition of religious animosity against Islam, declaring that its essence “WAS VIOLENCE AND LUST: TO EXALT THE BRUTAL OVER THE SPIRITUAL PART OF HUMAN NATURE.”⁸⁸ This nevertheless does not mean that American attitudes toward Muslims always consisted of unmitigated prejudice. With the American Revolution, Americans tried to break away from things that were associated with the old Europe. Many loathed Islam as much as they did Catholicism. There was also fascination with the exotic that the Muslim East represented. Even during the conflict with the Barbary pirates in the 1780s, as Robert Battistini notes, popular publications displayed “a surprising variety of attitudes toward Muslims: naïve curiosity, obsessive exoticism, geopolitical calculation, gentle condescension, and unabashed bigotry.”⁸⁹ While bigotry and prejudice did not necessarily disappear; instead, American views grew more varied and complex.

Alongside European Christians’ antipathy toward Islam, Americans also inherited European secularism, which challenged Christianity’s monopoly on defining non-Christians and non-Europeans. In his 1776 *Notes on Religion*, Thomas Jefferson cited John Locke’s 1689 *Letter on Toleration*, which stated that “neither Pagan nor Mahomedan nor Jew ought to be excluded from civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion.”⁹⁰ French enlightenment

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 14.

⁸⁸ Joseph Blunt, *The American Annual Register for the Years 1827-8-9* (New York: E. & G.W. Blunt, 1830), p. 269; capitals by Adams.

⁸⁹ Robert Battistini, “Glimpses of the Other before Orientalism: The Muslim World in Early American Periodicals, 1785-1800,” *Early American Studies: An interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Spring 2010), p. 447.

⁹⁰ Denise Spellberg, “Islam in America: Adventures in Neo-Orientalism,” *Review of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Sum. 2009), p. 27. Jefferson also developed keen interest in understanding Islam and the Orient. He acquired an English translation of the Qur’an, several books on Islam’s history and jurisprudence, and even tried to teach himself Arabic. See, in this connection, Kevin Hayes, “How Thomas Jefferson Read the Qur’an,” *Early American Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2004), pp. 247-261; and Denise Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson’s Qur’an, Islam and the Founders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

philosophers—specifically, Montesquieu in *Persian Letters* and Voltaire in *Mahomet the Prophet* (originally titled *Fanatisme*)—produced caricatures of the Islamic world but the purpose of both works was to satirize Catholicism.⁹¹ In a similar tradition, Benjamin Franklin mocked American slavery in a March 1790 issue of the *Federal Gazette* by writing a fictional letter, authored by a fictional Algerian character named Mr. Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, who listed popular American justifications for slavery to defend Algerian enslavement of Christian captives.⁹² Franklin’s satirical criticism of slavery was directed at American Christians who were outraged at Barbary slavery but were oblivious to the tragedy of a far greater number of African Muslims who were subjected to perpetual bondage in American southern plantations.⁹³

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Muslims became “an ethnic, religious, and cultural Other by which Americans began to imagine themselves.”⁹⁴ Muslims were also viewed as a racialized group in the sense that often the difference between Muslims, Arabs, Turks, and other ethnic groups was conflated. Many therefore referred to all three groups as Mohammedans. Description of the Ottoman Empire by Pliny Fisk, the first American missionary to the Middle East, in a sermon in Boston in 1819 is illustrative of this case. “The Mohammedans,” Fisk wrote, are “the followers of that artful imposter, who arose in Arabia, about the commencement of the seventh century. Their religion was first propagated, and is still defended, by the sword. Cruelty and blood are among its most prominent characteristics. Mohammedan piety consists very much

⁹¹ Walther, *Sacred Interests*, pp. 12-13; D. A. Spelling, “Islam on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Voltaire’s Mahomet Crosses the Atlantic,” in eds., Nequín Yavari, Lawrence G. Potter, and Jean-Marc Ran Oppenheim, *Views from the Edge: Essays in Honor of Richard W. Bulliet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 245-260.

⁹² Robert Allison, *Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 104.

⁹³ Walther, *Sacred Interests*, p. 14.

⁹⁴ Battistini, “Glimpses of the Other before Orientalism,” p. 446.

in fasts, ablutions, pilgrimages to Mecca, and the persecution of infidels and heretics.”⁹⁵ Fisk was able to identify differences between Muslims and Jews and Roman Catholics, but none among Muslims. The Islamic faith became the defining characteristic of all Muslims and the antithesis of what he believed Christian Americans to be. Timothy Marr describes this phenomenon as “Islamicism” of the nineteenth-century America: “a complex configuration of cultural ideologies that reveals more about the constitution of American imagination than it does about the character of Muslim beliefs. . . . a transnational discourse referencing Islamic history and Muslim practices whose source lies neither in the Qur’an nor in Islamic theology but rather in the cultural imaginations of non-Muslims.”⁹⁶ Fisk, however, was a missionary and traveled to the Ottoman Empire to preach the Gospel, and as such he had reasons to contrast Islam with Christianity for the sole purpose of condemning the former and praising the latter. Many Americans writing about Islam and the Orient never left the United States and their purpose of doing so was chiefly to critique domestic issues—or, if they traveled, they were less constrained in assessing Eastern cultures by a religious mission.

Timothy Marr gives two examples of such American engagement with Islam. The first he describes as “domestic orientalism” in which critics of social vices such as slavery and alcoholism likened Americans guilty of these practices to “infidel” Muslims. For instance, the slave-holding South was likened to the Ottoman Empire and the polyandrous Mormonism was dubbed “American Islam” and its founder “American Mahomet.” In this discourse, America was seen as the antithesis of Islam and as the land of freedom, equality, and democracy, reinforcing “the righteousness of their vision of America as a nation with a Christian mission.” The second

⁹⁵ Quoted in Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America: Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), p. 1.

⁹⁶ Timothy Marr, *Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 7-8.

type of orientalism Marr calls “comparative orientalism,” which referred to the writings of travelers, diplomats, and missionaries who visited Muslim lands, and their personal observations helped them challenge fantasies and misconceptions about the Muslim Orient by making meaningful comparisons. As Marr explains, “such comparisons often showed more openness to Islam than they had through earlier stereotypes. But the fact that they used such observations to define American situations precluded an evolving understanding of the full claims of Islam.”⁹⁷ In other words, these observations were more reflective and cosmopolitan, but remained America-centric.

Nineteenth-century American engagement with Islam was complex but the prejudices were strong. Better familiarity with Islam through travel writings and the absence of direct conflict with Muslims for much of the century mitigated earlier prejudices to a degree. A more secular approach among Americans placed Islam on a lower level than Christianity in the hierarchy of civilizations but above non-monotheistic religions. Ultimately, anyone traveling to Muslim lands would arrive with a set of cultural assumptions which did not accurately reflect the realities on the ground and such was the case with Americans traveling to Central Asia. They knew that they would encounter Muslims there and their earlier assumptions were based on prevailing American attitudes toward Islam. And while their first assumptions were homegrown, their next assumptions and opinions were shaped by Russians who served as cultural interpreters and introduced Americans to Central Asia; its people, culture, and history.

⁹⁷ Ibid, pp. 136-139.

Russian Orientalism and the Conquest of Central Asia

Discussion of Russian Orientalism is conspicuously absent in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Robert Irwin, in his lengthy polemic against Said, argues that it was not the West but Russia (and later the Soviet Union) which should be held accountable for using Orientalist scholarship for the purpose of imperial conquest.⁹⁸ In other words, while criticizing Said for unfairly generalizing about Western Orientalists, Irwin suggests Russian and Soviet Orientalist studies were monolithic enterprises in the service of empire. But of course the nineteenth-century Russian Orientalism was a complex phenomenon. Many Russian Orientalists, to use Irwin's own vocabulary, studied the Orient for "lust of knowing."⁹⁹ And even those who were tied to imperial projects by participating in knowledge production on Central Asia after Russia's conquest of the region were not always willful participants in conquest itself.¹⁰⁰ As Nathaniel Knight argues, "to fuse all of these contextual elements into a single overarching discourse with absolute determinative force is an extreme position with disturbing implications for anyone engaged in the production of knowledge."¹⁰¹ The Saidian model nonetheless is useful in analyzing Russian Orientalism vis-à-vis conquest as well as for our purposes which deal with Russian Orientalists' influence on American travelers.

As the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, Russian imperial conquest received support from such Russian luminaries as Fedor Dostoyevsky. Russian imperial designs

⁹⁸ Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Contents* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2006), p. 129.

⁹⁹ *Dangerous Knowledge* was printed in Britain as *For Lust of Knowing: the Orientalists and Their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Nathaniel Knight, "Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851-62: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?" *Slavic Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), pp. 74-100. See also a thoughtful discussion of Alexander Kuhn who, although serving the interests of Tsarist Administration in Central Asia by collecting ethnographic and archeological knowledge on the area, was nevertheless a complex figure, motivated by a zeal to know and was never really interested in conquest itself, in Olga Yastrebova and Arezou Azad, "Reflections on an Orientalist: Alexander Kuhn (1840-1888), the Man and His Legacy," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 5 (2015), pp. 675-694.

¹⁰¹ Nathaniel Knight, "On Russian Orientalism: A Response to Adeb Khalid," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Fall 2000), p. 710.

and conquest were both real and this reality mobilized many intellectuals and scholars for participating in an Orientalist discourse that associated the Orient with “despotism, fanaticism, deceit, violence, and eroticism that were no different than in the rest of Europe.”¹⁰² Those who were weary of imperial expansion and the systematic denigration of Asia were sidelined, while the Tsarist state was receptive to the voices of Orientalists and other intellectuals who offered moral legitimacy to imperial conquest. And these were also the voices that influenced American travelers who could hardly have access to alternative Russian opinions. Also by traveling to Central Asia, Americans entirely relied upon the protection and guidance of Russian colonial officials who were more likely than ordinary Russians to legitimize conquest.

While American travelers were keen observers of the current conditions in Central Asia, they had no way of independently studying Central Asia’s recent and distant history. For these they relied upon Russian published accounts and the opinions of Russians whom they met. But available Russian accounts of recent Central Asian history and why Russia decided to conquer were so skewed and one-sided that they were, as Alexander Morrison points out, “almost impossible to disentangle from the politics of Russian imperialism in the region.”¹⁰³ Whatever conflict or tension existed between Russia and Central Asia was entirely blamed on the latter’s perfidy, treacherousness, unprovoked hostility, and their “Asiatic” nature. Russian imperial historians retold especially the two military expeditions that failed— by Alexander Bekovich-Cherkassky in 1717 and by General Vasilii Perovsky in 1839— with a remarkable degree of uncritical self-righteousness, blaming the failures on anyone but Russians. According to some historians, the Perovsky expedition failed because of the chief of staff who was a Pole, ensuring

¹⁰² Adeeb Khalid, “Russian History and the Debate Over Orientalism,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Fall 2000), p. 697.

¹⁰³ Alexander Morrison, “Twin Imperial Disasters: the Invasions of Khiva and Afghanistan in the Russian and British Official Mind, 1839-1842,” *Modern Asian Studies* (August 2013), p. 4.

deliberate failure to retaliate against Russian acts in Poland.¹⁰⁴ Famed Orientalist G. G. Grigor'ev blamed the failure of 1717 expedition on the fact that Peter the Great entrusted the task to an “Asiatic”—Bekovich-Cherkassky was a Circassian born into a Muslim family who had converted to Orthodox Christianity—assuming “that in dealing with cunning Asiatics it was best to use an equally cunning but perfectly devoted ‘Eastern man.’” Cherkassky’s “Asiatic cunning,” Grigor'ev reasoned, allowed treacherous Khivans to entrap him and destroy his army.¹⁰⁵

Russian scholarly publications complemented the position of the imperial government, which also accused Central Asians of slave raids on Russian territories, pillaging of Russian caravans, lawlessness, superstition, fanaticism, and of always placing power over reason; thus seeing Russian recourse to diplomacy as a sign of weakness. In a memorandum addressed to the British Parliament, Russian Minister Alexander Gorchakov made it clear that the position of Russia in Central Asia was identical to those of the United States, Holland, France, and England in their respective colonies:

The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilised states which are brought into contact with half savage, nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organization.

In such cases it always happens that the more civilised state is forced, in the interests of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character make most undesirable neighbours.

First there are the raids and acts of pillage to be put down. To put a stop to them, the tribes on the frontier have to be reduced to a state of more or less perfect submission.

¹⁰⁴ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, Vol.2, p. 330n1.

¹⁰⁵ V. V. Grigor'ev, *The Russian Policy Regarding Central Asia. An Historical Sketch*. Appended in Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja*, Vol. II, (New York: Scribner Armstrong & Co., 1876), p. 401.

. . . It is the peculiarity of the Asiatics to respect nothing but visible and palpable force; the moral force of reason and of the interests of civilisation has as yet to hold upon them.¹⁰⁶

Partly because they did not have direct access to Central Asian perspectives on these matters and partly because they agreed with Russia's civilizing mission, Americans for the most part embraced these views as perfectly reasonable.¹⁰⁷ Even Russia's critics in England could hardly find fault with these points.¹⁰⁸

In reality, charges leveled at Central Asians by Russian diplomats and scholars, with regard to prior historical relations, were highly ideological and missed several critical components. While both Bukhara and Khiva were guilty of practicing slavery, the overwhelming majority of slaves there were Persians, not Russians. Russia itself was practicing slavery in the Caucasus and Siberia. Many of the Russian captives held in Khiva were prisoners of war put into forced labor in the same way Russians forced Central Asian captives for similar tasks. Attacks on Russian caravans and kidnappings of Russian villagers were carried out by Kazakhs who had found refuge in Khivan Khanate after being forced out of their land by Russian settlers, with full support of the imperial government. Russians routinely exaggerated the number of their captives in Khiva, while ignoring, as one historian put it, that "Russia carried on slave raiding, trading, slavery, and the open purchase and sale of human beings throughout this period on a scale that would make the Central Asian practice seem paltry."¹⁰⁹ Finally, there was no appreciation among Russians of the fact that, given numerous Russian military and intelligence expeditions, Central

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Demetrius Charles Boulger, *England and Russia in Central Asia, Vol. 1* (London: W.H Allen & Co., 1879), pp. 318-9.

¹⁰⁷ Eugene Schuyler expressed his approval of such views in his message to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish—"Mr. Schuyler to Mr. Fish," *FRUS 1872-1873*, pp. 765-7.

¹⁰⁸ Alexis Sidney Krausse believed Russia had no choice but to use force against Khanates whose "favourite occupations" were "robbery, murder, and rapine." Thus, the Russian policy was "fully justified" and every single point made by Gorchakov was based on undeniable fact.—Alexis Sidney Krausse, *Russia in Asia: a Record and a Study, 1558-1899* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1899), pp. 67.

¹⁰⁹ Madhavan K. Palat, "Tsarist Russian Imperialism," *Studies in History*, nos. 1 & 2 (1988), pp. 163-169, 170.

Asia's Khans had good reasons to be apprehensive of Russian designs and be hostile to them.¹¹⁰ Russia's ability to convey its message and Central Asia's failure to do so, in the words of Madhavan Palat, reflected "the 'unequal exchange' of colonial propaganda that no Bukharan or Khivan was able to expose the Russian then."¹¹¹ Central Asians could not in any shape or form compete with Russia in the war of words and ideas.

Also missing from the Russian interpretation of events was the manner of Russian intrusion and the brutality of conquest. The encroachment of Turkmen that eventually ended in military conquest is an illuminating case. Contrary to what Russian colonial administrators told their American and other Western guests, when Russian initially came to Transcaspia, as Yuri Bregel points out, "they were met mostly friendly by the coastal Turkmen, but very soon the behavior of the Russian troops, especially requisitions of great number of camels, tents, and food from the Turkmen, caused growing resistance."¹¹² Much of the Russian advance was justified based on the notion that "the Asiatic peoples respect nothing but visible and palpable force," to quote Minister Gorchakov again. Russian pacification of Turkmen included, among other forays, the indiscriminate massacre of Yomut Turkmen in 1873, carried out on orders of Governor-General Konstantin von Kaufman; bombardment of women and children at Dengil Tepe by troops of General Lomakin in 1879; the and slaughter of between 8,000 to 15,000 Teke Turkmen at Geok-Tepe fortress in 1881 by General Skobelev, the man who banned troops with

¹¹⁰ For instance, a visit to Central Asia in 1858 by Colonel N. P. Ignat'ev, officially designated as a diplomatic mission, was used to gather intelligence for future invasion and stir up conflict between Uzbeks and Turkmen. — John Strong, "The Ignat'ev Mission to Khiva and Bukhara in 1858," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 17, nos. 2/3 (1975), pp. 236-60. Central Asian perspectives on these events can be found in the following publications: Faizulla Ishakov, *Tsentrāl'naia Aziia i Rossiia v XVIII-nach. XX vv* (Tashkent: OzDAVMATBUOTLITI, 2009), in Russian; Muhammad Iusuf Bayonii, *Shazharai Horazmshohii* (Tashkent: 1994), in Turkic with Uzbek transcription; Hamid Ziyoyev, *Turkistonda Rossiia Tazhovuzi va Hukmronligiga Qarshi Kurash* (Tashkent: Sharq, 1998), in Uzbek.

¹¹¹ Palat, "Tsarist Russian Imperialism," p. 170.

¹¹² Yuri Bregel, "Central Asia VII: in the 12th-13th/18th-19th Centuries," in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. 5., (Winona Lake, IN: Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation, 1992), pp. 193-205.

“visionary sentiments” from the battlefield and justified his tactics afterwards in the following words:

I hold it as a principle that in Asia the duration of peace is in direct proportion to the slaughter you will inflict upon the enemy. The harder you hit them the longer they will be quiet afterwards. My system is this: to strike hard and keep on hitting till resistance is completely over; then at once to form ranks, cease slaughter, and be kind and humane to the prostrate enemy.¹¹³

For Western travelers arriving in Central Asia during and after the conquest, it was hard to challenge this Russian narrative, since Central Asian history for them was available only through Russians and their written chronicles.

Russian scholars and diplomats effectively monopolized the shaping of Central Asia’s recent and distant history, but in observing the present American travelers could compare Russian views and opinions with their own. They could also compare Russian opinions with the views of Europeans who had geopolitical interest in the region and produced a good deal of travel accounts and some scholarly publications. The most important of these Europeans were the British who had greater geopolitical investment in Central Asia than any other; however, the European who was most influential in shaping British, and by extension, American audience on Central Asia was a Hungarian named Arminius Vambery.

¹¹³ Quoted in George Nathaniel Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 & the Anglo-Russian Question* (London: Longmans, Green – Publisher, 1889), pp. 85-86. After quoting Skobelev, Lord Curzon engages in his own peculiar self-righteousness, contrasting the Russian general’s method of colonial warfare with the British one, which, he claims, prohibited “all pillage or slaughter”—a claim victims of British colonial violence would, no doubt, find highly questionable.

European Orientalism and Vambéry

European Orientalism is older than both American and Russian Orientalisms. It is also extraordinarily rich and varied in its contents when taken together.¹¹⁴ Hungary produced the father of modern Western Islamic Studies in the form of Ignaz Goldziher, while the German philological tradition of studying the Orient significantly weakened the European sense of cultural superiority by destroying the notion that Christianity and classical antiquity were universal norms by the standards of which all other cultures were to be judged and evaluated.¹¹⁵ Here again, however, the focus will not be on the complexity of European traditions in studying the Orient, but on how specific European writings influenced American travelers to Central Asia. Understandably, publications in the English language were most accessible to the American audience and these were primarily British works. Some French and Russian works were translated into English, but both British and American readers captivated by Central Asia generally turned to the writings of Arminius Vambéry, who specifically wrote for an English-speaking audience.

Of all the European travelers, no one was more popular and influential in shaping European and American perceptions of Central Asia in the nineteenth century than Vambéry who became a famed Hungarian Turkologist and Orientalist. Vambéry's first major publication on the subject was published in New York in 1865.¹¹⁶ His vivid and exotic travel accounts "to forbidden Khiva and Bukhara disguised as a dervish stirred the imagination of readers on both

¹¹⁴ As many critics have noted, Edward Said focused only on France and the Great Britain.

¹¹⁵ Suzanne Marchand, "German Orientalism and the Decline of the West," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 145, No. 4 (Dec., 2001), pp. 465-473.

¹¹⁶ Árminius Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia: Being the Account of a Journey from Tehran across the Turkoman Desert on the Eastern Shore of the Caspian to Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarcand* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1865).

sides of the Atlantic, Schuyler among them.”¹¹⁷ Vambery also shaped the views of Eugene Schuyler and Januarius MacGahan. The latter, for instance, took special measures for self-protection before his travel to different parts of Central Asia based on potential dangers he had read in Vambery’s accounts.¹¹⁸ Given the role played by Vambery in shaping public perceptions of Central Asia in Europe and North America, it is worth looking at who Vambery was and how he presented his subject to his readers.

Born in 1832 to a poor Orthodox Jewish family in St. Georghen, Hungary (presently in Slovakia), Hermann Wamberger later changed his name to Vambery. He had a difficult childhood as a Jewish boy, suffering from anti-Semitism, especially at the hands of Slavs—which may partly explain many of his Russo-phobic writings.¹¹⁹ Vambery had a talent for languages. After mastering several European languages he went to Istanbul where he studied Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and the basics of Islamic sciences. From there he went to Tehran and joined a group of Muslim pilgrims returning from Mecca and traveled through Central Asia as a disguised dervish. Vambery believed that Hungarian and Chagatai (the main dialect of Central Asian Turkic) had the same roots and he wanted to prove it. He became a celebrity figure after publishing his travel accounts in Europe and received a prestigious teaching position in Budapest.

Despite being somewhat controversial during his time, Vambery continued to influence Euro-American perceptions of Central Asia long after his death. His legacy is alive even today as his travel accounts are sometimes taken for granted in respectable scholarship. Commemorating

¹¹⁷ Frank Siscoe, “Prelude to Schuyler’s ‘Turkistan,’” *Asian Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1970), p. 294.

¹¹⁸ Dale L. Walker, *Januarius MacGahan: The Life and Campaigns of an American War Correspondent* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988), pp. 61-79.

¹¹⁹ David Mandler and Touro College, “Introduction to Árminius Vámbéry,” *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2007), p. 4.

the one-hundredth anniversary of Vambery's death, Professor Jacob Landau of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem recently recalled Vambery as a "conscientious scholar" who put morals and honesty above politics.¹²⁰ A careful reading of his writings about Central Asia suggests, however, that Vambery's knowledge of Islam and Chagatai were mediocre at best, and "conscientious scholar" he certainly was not. Evidence actually suggests that he put politics above morals and honesty. He was a quintessential Orientalist, in a Saidian sense, using his knowledge for the advancement of British colonialism, as a double agent for the British and the Ottomans, and presenting his readers a very distorted vision of Central Asian society that continued to reverberate in Western writings about Central Asia throughout the twentieth century.¹²¹ What Vambery did was, in the words of cultural anthropologist Franz Boas, "[prostituting] science in an unpardonable way."¹²² His deception and political machinations render his entire scholarship problematic. On that account alone Vambery's writings cannot be immediately dismissed, but the nature of his writings prove that his political and material agenda severely corrupted his scholarship.

¹²⁰ "Vámbéry and His Age: International Conference in Budapest," summary of conference panels, 18 Sep. 2013. <<http://www.tti.hu/en/events-top/1057-Vámbéry-and-his-age-international-conference-in-budapest.html>> (Accessed: 1 Nov 2014).

¹²¹ In his autobiography, Vámbéry claims that he "never at any time stood in any official relation to the English Government" and that he only offered his services "as an expert," without receiving any "compensation from anybody." Both claims are demonstrably false, as documents proving his services to the English Government and the healthy material benefit he received for those services are available in Foreign Office archives.—Árminius Vámbéry, *The Story of My Struggles: the Memoirs of Árminius Vámbéry*, vol. 2 (New York: Dutton and Company, 1904), pp. 385-6; "From Dracula's Nemesis to Prototype Foreign Spy," *The Guardian*, 31 March 2005, <<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/apr/01/highereducation.artsandhumanities1>> (Accessed: 2 Nov 2014).

¹²² In response to a revelation that four American spies were carrying their foreign espionage disguised as scientists, Boaz wrote to *The Nation*: "A person . . . who uses science as a cover for political spying . . . in order to carry on, under this cloak, his political machinations, prostitutes science in an unpardonable way and forfeits the right to be classed as a scientist."—Quoted in Roberto Gonzalez, *Anthropologists in the Public Sphere: Speaking Out on War, Peace, and American Power* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 24.

Vambery had no qualms about fabricating stories, plagiarizing from earlier travelers without attribution, and changing his narratives whenever it suited his personal agenda.¹²³ He knew his audiences very well; as such, he added fantasy and embellishment to his stories to the extent he “thought his audience was prepared to believe.”¹²⁴ Reviewing Vambery’s book on the history of Bukhara, the *British Quarterly Review* noted: “The chief interest to modern readers of M. Vambery’s history lies . . . in its romantic episodes, which are full of the unfailing charm and picturesqueness of Oriental story.”¹²⁵ It was no coincidence that Vambery’s most enthusiastic audience was not his home country of Hungary, where normally apolitical philologists found his writings problematic, but England, and to a lesser extent, the United States.¹²⁶ The British at the time were very concerned about Russian advances in Central Asia, worrying about its potential incursion into India. Travel accounts by British officers recounting suffering they had experienced at the hands of Central Asian rulers also generated a great deal of interest and outrage among the British public. Among those officers, Colonel Charles Stoddart and Captain Arthur Conolly were charged with espionage and executed by the Bukharan Emir in 1842. Joseph Wolff, an Anglican missionary personally investigated the deaths of Stoddart and Conolly and published his findings, with added stories of Central Asian cruelty and barbarism.¹²⁷ The Indian rebellion of 1857 also contributed to the rising anti-Islamic prejudice in England,

¹²³ His writings are replete with false attributions to the Qur’an, wrong translations of Arabic, Persian, and Turkic terms, mischaracterizations of Islamic rituals, and, above all, stories too outlandish to believe. For a short discussion of such examples, see Lawrence Conrad, “The Dervish’s Disciple: On the Personality and Intellectual Milieu of Young Ignaz Goldziher,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1990), pp. 250-3.

¹²⁴ Conrad, “The Dervish’s Disciple,” p. 252.

¹²⁵ *History of Bokhara, from the Earliest Period down to the Present; composed for the first time, after Oriental known and unknown historical documents* by Árminius Vámbéry, a review. *The British Quarterly Review* (Jan-Apr 1873), p. 515.

¹²⁶ In Hungary, his harshest critic was none other than Ignaz Goldziher. Because of the nature of Vámbéry’s writings and the insidious methods he used to pursue fame and material benefits, Goldziher dubbed him the “most cunning of all liars.”—Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 59.

¹²⁷ John Grover and Charles Stoddart, *The Bokhara Victims* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845); Joseph Wolff, *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara, in the Years 1843-1845, to Ascertain the Fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly* (London: John W. Parker, 1845).

although the role of Islamic authorities in the rebellion was varied.¹²⁸ As a man who understood the British public very well, Vambery knew how to address it. He told the British public exactly what it wanted to hear: that Russia was a semi-barbaric state unfit for spreading Western civilization and that Central Asia was the hotbed of extreme fanaticism and oriental savagery.¹²⁹

According to his travel accounts, Vambery spent some time among Turkmens in the Karakum desert and observed Turkmen slave trafficking. Since slavery indeed existed, it is hard to distinguish between fact and fiction in Vambery's accounts. All of a sudden, a Persian girl of fifteen, freshly kidnapped from her village, starts speaking Turkmen as if it is her native tongue.¹³⁰ Sometimes he showers Turkmens with praise for their bravery, hospitality, and respect for women.¹³¹ At other times, Turkmens' cruelty knows no boundaries, as they are also "the most cruel and least civilized of nomads." Turkmen is so full of superstition and fatalism, Vambery says, "he can easily support the constant dread of danger. Dirt, poverty and privations, he is accustomed to, even at home."¹³² Slavery practiced by Turkmens was much worse than the Atlantic slave trade, Vambery tells us. While Europeans enslaved "negroes" who occupied "the lowest place in the human race," and transported them to the lands of civilized people, Turkmens forced Persians to "exchange . . . comforts of comparative civilization for the miseries of semi-savage life," making their lot "harder than that of a negro."¹³³ Not only did Vambery offer a racist apologia for the Atlantic slave trade, but he reassured his Euro-American readers that, even

¹²⁸ Crispin Bates and Marina Carper, "Religion and Retribution in the Indian Rebellion of 1857," *Leidschrift. Empire and Resistance. Religious Beliefs versus the Ruling Power*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (2009), pp. 51-68.

¹²⁹ Wollf's *Narrative* and Vámbéry's *Travels* became instant best-sellers in England, the latter's book being featured in a lengthy review by *All The Year Round* (Feb 11, 1865), a popular magazine edited by Charles Dickens.

¹³⁰ Árminius Vámbéry, *Sketches of Central Asia. Additional Chapters on my Travels, Adventures, and on the Ethnology of Central Asia* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1868), p. 49.

¹³¹ See p. 5.

¹³² Vámbéry, *Sketches*, pp. 207, 67.

¹³³ *Ibid*, pp. 205-6.

in practicing something they began to increasingly abhor, they were definitely better than barbarian tribes doing the same in the Karakum desert.

If Turkmens of Karakum were cruel and wandering “nomads” notoriously known for robbery and plunder, the Khivan Khanate was, in Vambéry’s eyes, even worse.¹³⁴ Speaking before an English audience in 1864, he described the Khan of Khiva as “‘a sick tyrant with very frightful features,’ who did nothing else but slaughter hundreds of his subjects for mere trifles.”¹³⁵ In his *Sketches*, he provides the “oriental” rationale for this wanton cruelty: “In a country, where pillage and murder, anarchy and lawlessness, are the rule, and not the exception, a sovereign has to maintain his authority by inspiring his subjects with the utmost dread and almost superstitious terror for his person; never with affection.”¹³⁶ The Khan at the same time was a child-like figure, “an imbecile” who could believe the most bizarre superstitions Vambéry could fabricate. He apparently told the Khan that Vambéry’s spiritual master imparted to him the holy breath that allowed him to travel for four-five days with no nourishment at all, and the Khan not only bought the story but also showered Vambéry with gifts. “What a happy fatality,” he tells his readers, “that gloomy superstition often imposes limits to the might and blood-thirstiness of such tyrants!”¹³⁷ As for the ordinary people of Khiva, they do not fare better. Vambéry decided to observe a wedding and upon witnessing that some Khivans expressed happiness and joy Vambéry “felt amazed that the tenderest of feelings should find room in the heart of a man in

¹³⁴ I am making this comparison based on how Vámbéry develops his narrative, recounting his travel taking him through Karakum from the south to the north and from there to Khiva. Otherwise, elsewhere Vámbéry pulls no punches in depicting Turkmens as the worst of the worst. “Turkomans are notorious among all races of Central Asia as the most restless adventurers, and rightly,” he says in his ethnographic sketch of “Turanian and Iranian Races,” “for not only there, but throughout the whole globe, hardly can a second nation be found of such a rapacious nature, of such restless spirit and untamable licentiousness as these children of the desert. To rob, to plunder, to make slaves, is in the eye of the Turkoman an honorable business, by which he has lived for centuries.—Vámbéry, *Sketches*, p. 311.

¹³⁵ Lory Alder and Richard Dalby, *The Dervish of Windsor Castle: The Life of Árminius Vámbéry* (London: Bachman & Turner Ltd., 1979), p. 221.

¹³⁶ Vámbéry, *Sketches*, pp. 90-1.

¹³⁷ Vámbéry, *Travels*, p. 161.

Central Asia, accustomed as he is from his earliest youth to robbery and murder, and hardened to the tears of widows, orphans and slaves.”¹³⁸ Whether he describes the rulers or ordinary folks, Vambery is relentless in his dehumanization of these Orientals to affirm European moral and racial superiority.

Nowhere is his dehumanization of Central Asians more explicit and emphatic than in his description of Bukhara and its people. In this “center of Mohammedan fanaticism,” shocking levels of hypocrisy and pretension were the rule, as Vambery emphasizes in vivid language, in addition to extraordinary levels of human depravity. Religious fanaticism is taken to such an extreme level in Bukhara that “a certain vice” has swept the population, Vambery says of homosexuality and pederasty (he makes no distinction between the two). Although practiced “among Turks, Arabs and Persians,” this “atrocious crime” among them is a rare occurrence; whereas in Bukhara and Kokand it is “carried to a frightful extent, and the religious of these countries [consider] it a protection against any transgression of the law of the Harem”; so, “fathers feel not the smallest compunction in surrendering their sons to a friend or acquaintance for a certain annual stipend.”¹³⁹ Prohibition of alcohol turned “three-fourth of the learned and official world, or, in other words, the whole intelligent class” into drug addicts, Vambery says, without making a slightest attempt at explaining how he came up with this wild estimate.¹⁴⁰ This is also a consistent pattern in his writings. He often gives numbers and estimates without explaining how he came to these conclusions.

Throughout his evaluation of Central Asian society, Vambery makes frequent comparisons with Muslims of “the West”: Persians, Turks, and Arabs. In all comparisons,

¹³⁸ Vámbéry, *Sketches*, p. 102.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 192.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 194.

Central Asians fare far worse. Even when they do not fight frequently with each other, as was the case among Tajiks of Kokand, Vambery says, it was due to their “notorious cowardice” rather than aversion to warfare as an evil practice.¹⁴¹ At the same time, Vambery warns, his observation should not “be regarded as offering an infallible test of Western Mohammedan advancement.” “We have to be careful, not to mistake for precious metal the tinsel of European civilization and modes of thought, with which Young Turkey and Persia endeavor to garnish their innate barbarism,” Vambery says. “I must confess the result of European influence in these countries is hitherto alas! Very small and ineffectual.” Naïve and inexperienced European travelers might be “deceived” by seeing how Persians, Turks, and Arabs have “partly adopted our dress and furniture, but all else is now just as it was in olden times, and will probably continue so for a very long time to come.”¹⁴² In other words, Vambery felt a special contempt for Islam in all of its manifestations. In Central Asia, however, the majority were not only Muslim but also belonged to ethnic groups Vambery viewed with nothing but disdain. Contempt for Islam and disdain for Asian races could easily complement each other.¹⁴³

If Central Asia was such a hotbed of extreme fanaticism and savagery, one might wonder why Vambery would not support Russian colonization of the region to put an end to this sad state of affairs. The answer lay in Vambery’s ultimate purpose, which was to place his knowledge and authority to speak on Central Asia at the service of the British Empire.

Vambery’s intended audience was chiefly England. For this reason, Vambery warns that growing

¹⁴¹ Elsewhere, Vámbéry says the Tajiks were not that peaceful but “reprobate and vicious” and therefore deserved to be ruled by Uzbeks.—*ibid.*, p. 312. The source of Tajik “cowardice” may also be Russian Orientalist N.V. Khanykov who said that “[m]urder is unknown” among Tajiks but “not because of its heinous nature, but because they have not sufficient courage to commit it,” in his *Bokhara: Its Amir and Its People*, translated from Russian by Baron Clement de Bode (London: James Madden, 1845), p. 71.

¹⁴² Vámbéry, *Sketches*, p. 203.

¹⁴³ His whole chapter titled “Ethnographical Sketch of the Turanian and Iranian Races of Central Asia” is a mixture of anecdotes, prejudice, and pseudo-scientific discussion of ethnic differences in Central Asia.

American-Russian alliance may become “the greatest danger for English interests.” Ungrateful Indian Muslims, he also warns, might conspire “for a Russian occupation,” while Armenians, “zealous subjects of British rule in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras,” must always be “regarded as a secret agent of Muscovite policy.” According to Vambéry, “Russians are Asiatics” and Tsar Nicholas should actually be called “a Khan on the Neva.” While England to its own detriment abstains from “treating Orientals in oriental fashion,” Russia is not bound by such squeamishness. As “the well-known adage” says, “Scrape a Russian and you will lay bare a Tartar,” Vambéry reminds his readers. Finally, the Russian’s “remarkably dirty exterior, his drunkenness, his religion bordering on fetishism, his servility, his crass ignorance, his coarse, unpolished manners—are characteristics which make him show very poorly against the supple, courtly, keen-sighted Eastern.”¹⁴⁴ Russia is therefore unfit for uplifting and civilizing Central Asians.

Such was the portrait of Central Asia and Russia the famous Hungarian Orientalist presented to Europe and the United States. These brief examples of prejudices Vambéry displayed toward Central Asians, Islam, and Russia is symptomatic of all of his writings on these subjects. His writings became a standard reading in Europe and the United States for anyone interested in Central Asian peoples and Russian designs in the region. Anyone reading him could not have a neutral, let alone positive, impression on Central Asians and their cultures. Vambéry was one of the most authoritative figures (the most authoritative before the publication of Schuyler and MacGahan’s travel accounts) whose writings American travelers consulted before traveling and meeting Russians as well as natives. Once they began to observe Central Asia physically, however, they began to re-evaluate Vambéry’s descriptions and challenge some of

¹⁴⁴ Vámbéry, *Sketches*, pp. 411, 414, 419, 427, 435, 437.

the prejudices fed to them by Europeans and Russians. The first impressions generally are longer-lasting, and a combination of American, European, and Russian anti-Islamic and anti-Oriental prejudices made it hard for American travelers to evaluate the Central Asian society from a neutral perspective. As a result, they could not discard their prejudices entirely, but their physical observation and interaction with local populations moderated their views and helped them appreciate some aspects of Central Asian cultures and prompted them to condemn some tragedies that befell the natives as a result of Russian colonial excesses.

Travels of Eugene Schuyler and Januarius MacGahan

In the midst of complex American-Russian relations and a growing interest in each other's affairs in the nineteenth century, some Americans, including members of the State Department, began to follow Russia's advance into Central Asia with keen interest. Americans did not get involved in any political discussions or negotiations on a state level since their role was only that of a relatively neutral observer. Two Americans decided to travel to Central Asia and they covered the expansion of Russia's borderlands into the south from that particular perspective. Those two were scholar and diplomat Eugene Schuyler (1840-1890) and adventurer and military correspondent for *New York Herald* Januarius Aloysius MacGahan (1844-1878). Schuyler and MacGahan traveled to Russia and from there to Central Asia; MacGahan went to Khiva to cover Russian conquest of the Khanate, while Schuyler went to observe political and social transformations taking place in the lands already conquered. Both of these travelers have left behind a significant amount of written material covering recollections of their travel, their

particular views on Russian advances into the region, and their observations and subjective evaluations of Central Asian society.¹⁴⁵

Schuyler and MacGahan were personal friends and there was a parallel in their career developments that eventually took them to Central Asia and their careers afterwards. Both of them had a special attachment to Russia. MacGahan married a Russian woman, while Schuyler was the first American to translate Ivan Turgenev, to befriend and translate Leo Tolstoy, and to write a biography of Peter the Great.¹⁴⁶ They began their travel from St. Petersburg to Russian Turkestan together in 1873, only to split later because MacGahan, as a military correspondent, went on a dangerous route of crossing the Kyzyl Kum desert alone so that he could join Russian troops who were on their way to storm the Palace of Khiva's Khan, while Schuyler went to Tashkent which was already under Russian control. Both Schuyler and MacGahan generally supported Russian colonization of Central Asia although they were critical of many of the methods employed by Russian troops and administrators. Later in their careers, the two Americans met again to cover the Bulgarian uprising and its suppression by Ottoman troops.¹⁴⁷ By producing damning reports about the conduct of both Russian and Ottoman troops, Schuyler and MacGahan also became a source of political intrigue in Britain, especially by Prime Ministers William Gladstone and his nemesis Benjamin Disraeli.

¹⁴⁵ In addition to hundreds of articles published in American and British newspapers, MacGahan and Schuyler published their recollections in book formats. See, Januarius MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus, and the Fall of Khiva* (London: Sampson Low, 1876); Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja* (London: Sampson Low, 1876), in 2 volumes.

¹⁴⁶ For background information of MacGahan, see Dale L. Walker, *Januarius MacGahan: The Life and Campaigns of an American War Correspondent* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988). There is no official biography of Schuyler's, but information about his upbringing and background to his travel to Central Asia can be found in Daniel F. Walsh, *The Public Career of Eugene Schuyler in Russia and Turkey, 1867-1878*. MA Thesis (Catholic University of America, 1965); James Seay Brown, *Eugene Schuyler, Observer of Russia: His years as a Diplomat in Russia, 1867-1875*. PhD Dissertation (Vanderbilt University, 1971); Sue Skaggs Fowler, *Eugene V. Schuyler: First American Specialist on Eastern Europe*. MA Thesis (Georgia State University, 1972). In Russia, Schuyler became also known with his Russianized named Евгений Шулер (pronounced *Evgenii Shuler*).

¹⁴⁷ Januarius MacGahan, *Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*, with an introduction by Eugene Schuyler (London: Bradbury Agnew and Co., 1876).

There were nevertheless significant differences between Schuyler and MacGahan, especially in their character and personality, which were reflected in their writings about Central Asia. Born into an Irish family near New Lexington, Ohio, MacGahan was a born adventurer. He was friends with General Philip Sheridan who helped MacGahan pursue a degree in law, which the Ohioan never completed. In Europe he started a career in journalism, covering the Franco-Prussian war and later General William Tecumseh Sherman's tour of Russia. In contrast, Schuyler was brought up in Calvinist traditions by a wealthy and educated family in New York. His parents were abolitionists and Schuyler himself was a man of deep morals, although in his later years his morals were rooted more in secular humanism than Calvinism. Unlike MacGahan, Schuyler completed his degree in law and earned one of the first three PhDs in America, graduating from Yale with that degree at the age of twenty-one. In Russia, he was first a consul in Moscow and later the Secretary of Legation in St. Petersburg. While MacGahan's journalistic approach to writing emphasized dramatic and unusual events, Schuyler was relatively cautious a writer, his observations and assessments reflecting a more scholarly approach.

MacGahan later confessed that he had to look up Khiva on a map to assure himself that he had an approximate idea of Khiva's geographic location when the *New York Herald* instructed him to cover the impending Russian invasion.¹⁴⁸ Schuyler on the other hand had a fascination for medieval Central Asia from his childhood. The first book he purchased was *Lalla Rookh*, a romance by Irish poet and songwriter Thomas Moore, telling the story of a seventeenth-century Mughal princess engaged to a Bukharan Emir.¹⁴⁹ For both of them, however, Russia was their main interest and had there been no Russian advance into Central Asia there is little evidence to

¹⁴⁸ Januarius MacGahan, "The Oasis of Khiva," *The Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York*, Vol. 6 (1874), p. 117.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh, an Oriental Romance* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1856), reprint of 1817 edition.

suggest they would have embarked on travel to the lands ruled by Oriental Khans. As such, their interest and travel to Central Asia was contingent upon American relations with Russia. Russians were also the intermediaries who spoke to MacGahan and Schuyler as authoritative voices on anything related to Central Asia, and these Americans' views were significantly influenced by Russian opinions.

The contrast between MacGahan and Schuyler can also be seen in how they approached Vambery's writings. MacGahan initially took Vambery's words for granted but challenged him after traveling to Central Asia. Schuyler was a careful and more critical observer from the very beginning. In his introduction to *Turkistan*, Schuyler says, "I have, I trust, followed no authority blindly; I have never accepted a statement without enquiry and comparison with the accounts of others; and if I sometimes state things which seem opposed to all that has been written or printed before, upon any particular subject, it has not been without good reason."¹⁵⁰ Schuyler remained faithful to this principle throughout his life. Schuyler understood that, while Vambery's message fit well into England's apprehensions for Russian expansion and perceived lawlessness in Central Asia, things were a bit more complicated for the United States. On a state level, the United States shared neither of England's apprehensions. Writing for *The Nation*, Schuyler stated that the United States had "the least to fear from the aggrandizement of its mighty neighbor, and is absolutely free from the jealousy of competition; which cannot be said of our cousins across the water."¹⁵¹ Unlike MacGahan, Schuyler had the mind of an intellectual and a skeptic and had reasons to question some of Vambery's arguments from the beginning.

¹⁵⁰ Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja, Vol. I*, (New York: Scribner Armstrong & Co., 1876), p. vi.

¹⁵¹ Schuyler, "The Progress of Russia in Asia," p. 490.

The duo approached Vambéry's writings differently because of differences in their personality and character. MacGahan tended to focus on sensational, unusual, and exotic aspects of the Orient and, although not quite on Vambéry's level, changes the narrative due to the nature of the audience he addressed. For example, in *Campaigning for the Oxus*, MacGahan clearly differentiates between different Turkmen tribes and expresses strong disapproval of General Kaufman's punitive campaign against Yomut Turkmen. He says that Yomut Turkmen "were not implicated in slave-dealing at all" and that Teke Turkmen on the shores of the Caspian Sea were alone guilty of it (actually, there were slave traffickers and slave owners among Yomut Turkmen).¹⁵² MacGahan also has left us a rare eyewitness account of the brutal campaign ordered by Kaufman. At a speech given to the American Geographical Society, however, MacGahan dismissed differences among all Central Asians, saying that, "broadly" speaking, they all belonged "to that branch of Mongolian race known as Tartars" whose descendants "twice swept over Europe like an avalanche, almost annihilating every trace of Western civilization." As for the Yomut Turkmen, in this speech MacGahan did not express any disapproval of the massacre. The same Turkmen whom he defended in his book here appeared as "a fierce and warlike race" whose "marauding habits were the cause of the Russian invasion."¹⁵³ The presence of an audience that included General Sherman, the soldier who had his own share of carrying out brutal punitive campaigns against America's natives, perhaps had something to do with MacGahan's decision to offer a different narrative.¹⁵⁴ The striking difference in two of MacGahan's narratives, both relating the same story is telling.

¹⁵² MacGahan, *Campaigning for the Oxus*, p. 354.

¹⁵³ MacGahan, "Oasis of Khiva," pp. 118, 128.

¹⁵⁴ According to Wolfgang Mieder, General Sherman and General Sheridan, both friends with MacGahan, are credited by historians as originators of the proverbial stereotype "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." They may or may not have said that, but there is ample documentary evidence implicating Sherman in brutal campaigns. In a letter written to President Grant, he bluntly stated: "We must act with vindictive earnestness against Sioux, even to

Schuyler was more principled in this regard and, for the most part, spoke his mind even if he knew he was going to offend his friends by speaking the truth. It did not take too long for him to question Vambery's authority on Central Asia. In 1868, Schuyler visited the city of Orenburg, which was Russia's imperial gateway to the south. There he met and interacted with merchants from Bukhara and Khiva, observed Muslims and their religious rituals. After many discussions with merchants from Russia and Central Asia as well as Russian scholars, Schuyler came to the conclusion that Vambery's travels could be classified as a work "either wholly or in great part of fiction." Schuyler said Vambery's observations and claims contradicted nearly every other report. "In general, Vambery has greatly exaggerated the difficulties of traveling to Central Asia," Schuyler continued. "Russian merchants . . . have traveled freely everywhere with moderate precautions, and say that robbery and violence on the road are things unknown." Schuyler also challenged Vambery's story about Persian captives who were allegedly held in iron chains by Turkmen slave-dealers, saying that, according to Russian officers and geographers, Turkmens had "no iron and very little wood." Vambery's goal, Schuyler said, was more likely to use his knowledge to "stir up a strife between Russia and England."¹⁵⁵ In his view, Vambery clearly put politics above scholarship.

After Schuyler visited Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand, he became even more critical of Vambery's travel accounts, describing them as "nearly worthless," for "errors are so frequent and so great that it would seem impossible for a man to make them who had seen with his own eyes the things of which he speaks." In his criticism, however, Schuyler made his own grave error by delving into philological debate—something Vambery was an expert at—by saying that

their extermination, men, women, and children."—Wolfgang Mieder, "'Every Good Indian is a Dead Indian': History and Meaning of Proverbial Stereotype," *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 106, no. 419 (1993), pp. 38-60. Sherman quoted in George Custer et al., *Wild Life on the Plains and Horrors of Indian Warfare* (St. Louis, MO: Excelsior Pub Co., 1891), p. 119.

¹⁵⁵ Eugene Schuyler, no title, *The Nation*, 17 June 1869, p. 474.

Vambery's Chagatai manual was "utterly useless" since, he said, "there is no name bearing the name of Tchagetai [sic]."¹⁵⁶ Chagatai actually was the literary Turkic Central Asian authors had used for centuries and was the spoken language in Timurid dynasty. The famous *Baburnama*, written by the founder of the Mughal Empire Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur was written in Chagatai dialect of Turkic. Chagatai was also the court and state language in the Khanate of Khiva. Nevertheless, Schuyler's other criticisms, primarily the ones based on personal observations, were valid. While Vambery could not find a single redeeming character among the population of Bukhara, Schuyler noted that Bukharans were "amiable," "had more refined manners" and showed him the great hospitality they were known for.¹⁵⁷ To the first volume of his *Turkistan*, Schuyler also appended a translation of a devastating critique of Vambery's *History of Bokhara* by famous Russian Orientalist Vasilii Vasil'evich Grigor'ev.¹⁵⁸

Although MacGahan did not bother with scholarly debates and restricted his consultations in matters related to Central Asian history to Russian officers and colonial administrators, he, too, ended up questioning Vambery's wisdom. After reading Vambery and listening to Russian officers, he came to expect Kazakhs as savages notorious for robbing and pillaging travelers as well as adjacent neighborhoods. MacGahan lived for about a month among them, and had this to say in one of his honest reflections:

I would here remark that my sojourn with the Kirghiz [i.e. Kazakhs] left a most favourable impression upon me. I have always found them kind, hospitable, and honest. I spent a whole month amongst them; travelling with them, eating with them, and sleeping in their tents. And I had along with me

¹⁵⁶ Eugene Schuyler, "Central Asia," *The Athenaeum*, no. 2397, 4 Oct 1873, p. 431. Schuyler here is referring to Ármínus Vámbéry, *Čagataische Sprachstudien, Enthaltend Grammatikalischen Umriss, Chrestomathie und Wörterbuch der Čagataischen Sprache* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1867), in German. Vámbéry quickly pointed out Schuyler's error in a sarcastic response to *The Athenaeum*.—Ármínus Vámbéry, "Central Asia," *The Athenaeum*, no. 2399, 18 Oct. 1873, p. 498.

¹⁵⁷ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, vol. 2, p. 61.

¹⁵⁸ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, vol. 1, pp. 360-389.

all this time horses, arms, and equipments, which would be to them a prize of considerable value. Yet never did I meet anything but kindness; I never lost a pin's worth; and often a Kirghiz has galloped four or five miles after me to restore some little thing I had left behind. Why talk of the necessity of civilizing such people? What is the good of discussion, as Mr. Vambéry does, the comparative merits of Russian and English civilization for them? The Kirghiz possess to a remarkable degree the qualities of honesty, virtue, and hospitality—virtues which our civilization seems to have a remarkable power of extinguishing among primitive people. I should be sorry indeed ever to see these simple, happy people inoculated with our civilization and its attendant vices.¹⁵⁹

Similar musings exist elsewhere in MacGahan's book. His personal observations and contact with natives moderated his earlier views, but his reflections, as shown above, were not strong enough to discard his belief in Russia's civilizing mission. Eight pages after making the above comment, MacGahan expresses hope "that, with the progress of the Russians in Central Asia, the whole country between [rivers] the Syr and the Amu will one day blossom as the roses."¹⁶⁰ Although his life among Kazakhs contradicted most of the things he had learned about them in the past, MacGahan's belief in the wisdom of the White Man's Burden remained firm. The Kazakh for him was the closest equivalent of the Noble Savage, but not a bona fide civilized human being.

On the subject of civilizational and cultural advancement, MacGahan became convinced that Russians, especially the educated class, were the equals of Europeans and Americans. After observing the initial stage of Russian occupation in Khiva, he acknowledged that in the past he had negative images of Russians, too; but he discarded those images after living and interacting with Russians. MacGahan relayed that he previously imagined the Russian to be a mustached brute with the "ferocious instincts of a savage." "He is neither cruel nor bloodthirsty, as far as I

¹⁵⁹ MacGahan, *Campaigning for the Oxus*, p. 63.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

have seen, but, on the contrary, rather kind and gentle, when not enraged,” he notes, “I saw many soldiers do little acts of kindness to the Turkcoman children, during the campaign against the Yomuds, which greatly struck me.”¹⁶¹ On this question, Schuyler agreed with MacGahan, although the American duo, like many educated Russians at the time, did not think so highly of Russian peasants. After a brief tour across peasant life, Schuyler described the Russian peasant as an “uncivilized” and amicable simpleton. Peasant women, he said, were “densely stupid” but both men and women were capable of cultural progress, if given a chance.¹⁶²

In forming their opinions of Russian peasants and Central Asian natives, both MacGahan and Schuyler borrowed from Russian scholars, officers, and colonial administrators, in spite of Schuyler’s otherwise careful approach of these matters. Russian interpretation was especially powerful since it usually preceded their physical observations, and Americans resorted to Russian authoritative opinion whenever their personal observations could not give satisfactory answers to questions they had. There are examples showing that Russians at times were the source of crassly Orientalist opinions MacGahan and Schuyler made about Central Asians. During his first visit to Orenburg and the nearby Steppes, Schuyler repeated Russian colonial administrators’ low opinion of Kazakhs and described them as having “all the vices and few of the virtues of savages; they are good friends and bad enemies, cowardly, thievish, lazy, and improvident.”¹⁶³ These however were Schuyler’s initial impressions before he observed and interacted with Kazakhs. Commenting on such passages in Schuyler’s writings, David Engerman

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 180. Schuyler makes a similar remark about Russian Cossacks. “. . . in the West . . . [t]hey are thought to be an uncivilized, savage race, given to nothing but plunder and acts of barbarity,” he says. “In reality the Cossacks are mild, amiable, and hospitable. . . . they are in the main peaceful and orderly citizens, brave, industrious, and enduring.”—Schuyler, *Turkistan*, Vol 1, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶² Eugene Schuyler, “The Russian Peasant,” *Hours at Home: a Popular Monthly of Instruction and Recreation* (1865-1870), vol. 9, no. 1 (1869), p. 19.

¹⁶³ Eugene Schuyler, “On the Steppe,” *Hours at Home: a Popular Monthly of Instruction and Recreation* (1865-1870), vol. 9, no. 4 (1869), p. 327.

writes, “Schuyler spent more time on vices than virtues, emphasizing the hedonism, dishonesty, dirtiness, and depravity of the Kirghiz and their neighbors. In his opinion these flaws justified Russian rule in the region.”¹⁶⁴ This is rather a limited reading of the evolution of Schuyler’s views. Recounting these same observations in his book, Schuyler offers a more nuanced opinion of Kazakhs, scrapping the aforementioned quote completely. He mentions a few times that Russian warnings about perceived dangers and threat of robbery by Kazakhs and Turkmens on the way from Orenburg to Tashkent turned out to be “imaginary dangers”: “The road was so safe, in fact, that ladies were traveling on it alone, with only a servant.” As for Kazakhs, “on knowing them more intimately one cannot help liking and even respecting them, and it is the verdict of everyone who has lived in Central Asia that the Kirghiz are superior to all the other races.”¹⁶⁵ This is, of course, an example of stretching his opinion of Kazakhs to the opposite extreme, but this shows that close interaction with them significantly moderated Schuyler’s negative stereotypical views.

Whenever Schuyler did not have a chance to examine his assumptions with personal observation, he deferred to the authority of those Russian orientalists whom he respected. This was most likely the case in his stereotypical depiction of Tajiks. In *Turkistan*, Schuyler writes that the Tajik, unlike the Uzbek, is “fond of adorning himself,” “cunning,” “fickle, untruthful, lazy, cowardly, and boastful, and in every way morally corrupted.”¹⁶⁶ Ordinarily Schuyler follows his ethnographic observations with examples of personal interaction, but here he provides no anecdotes from his experience. A comparison with Russian orientalist Nikolai Khanykov’s ethnographic observations of Tajiks shows uncanny similarities. Khanykov also

¹⁶⁴ Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, p. 33

¹⁶⁵ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, Vol. 1, pp. 21, 38.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 108.

describes Tajiks as cowardly, boastful, lazy, and even makes identical contrast vis-à-vis Uzbeks.¹⁶⁷ Khanykov, alongside V.V. Grigor'ev, appears throughout Schuyler's writings as an authority Schuyler regularly consulted. There is little doubt that the source of Schuyler's stereotypical and negative characterization of Tajiks is Khanykov. When Schuyler discusses other ethnic groups, he is actually more nuanced and tries to bring readers' attention to their positive qualities. As compared to the accounts other contemporary travelers—both European and Russian—produced, Schuyler's observations were noticeably fewer in cultural and racial prejudices.

That was not necessarily the case with MacGahan. As we read through his account of Russian occupation of Khiva, instances of ugly stereotyping appear repeatedly, although from time to time he tries to offer more sophisticated discussion of the society of Khiva. Thus, Uzbeks suffer from “a sinister cast of countenance,” their garment is “the ugliest” he has ever seen, their “monstrous hats” are the clearest indication of the “backward state of their civilisation.” No one “but an Oriental” can demonstrate the kind of “ignorance and cunning” he sees in Khiva. The Khan appears as a child-like figure who is both friendly and a brute, a tyrant. For MacGahan “tricks and wiles of Central Asian warfare” shows that Orientals are really treacherous and backstabbing, but when they fail to offer serious resistance and surrender without any warfare, that definitely demonstrates their cowardice.¹⁶⁸ In Khiva MacGahan is not as eager to communicate and interact with natives as Schuyler is in Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand. He moderates his crude assumptions but to a very limited degree.

One's place in civilizational hierarchy, for MacGahan, depends on how much one gives up Islam's rulings in favor of European traditions. At one instance, MacGahan finds an Uzbek

¹⁶⁷ Khanykov, *Bukhara*, pp. 71.2.

¹⁶⁸ MacGahan, *Campaigning for the Oxus*, pp. 178, 179, 194, 277-9.

whom he finds “quite civilised.” The man, as MacGahan describes him, “speaks Russian,” “spent a winter in St. Petersburg,” “drinks champagne, smokes cigarettes, plays cards,” as opposed to the rest of the population who refuses to consume alcohol and tobacco for religious purposes.¹⁶⁹ In a recent book on Russian Orientalism in Iran in the nineteenth-century as expressed by Russian travelers, Elena Andreeva argues that for these Russian commentators on Iranian society, the words “fanaticism” and “Islam” became virtual synonyms.¹⁷⁰ MacGahan, like Vambery and many others before and after him, follows the same attitude toward Islam in Central Asia, dubbing it “Mohamedhan fanaticism.”¹⁷¹

Many of MacGahan’s writings also fall into the category of travel accounts that were, as Mary Louise Pratt argues, intended for the audience in home country, and, as such, were as much revealing about the culture of the home country as they were about the natives—if not more so.¹⁷² For instance, talking about the mysterious and exotic Khiva he is about to enter, MacGahan compares it to the discovery of the New World by Columbus. Combining the language of contemporary orientalist as well as discoverers of the Americas in the fifteenth century, MacGahan says: “The Newness, the strangeness of the place, the mystery hanging over it, its isolation and impenetrability, made us survey the scene, that was *thus opened for the first time to the gaze of Europeans*, with a delight and admiration only equaled by that of Columbus, when first setting foot in a new world.”¹⁷³ While touring across the gardens of Khiva, like Columbus before him, MacGahan sees the “garden of Eden,” “a veritable paradise.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 315.

¹⁷⁰ Elena Andreeva, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), p. 131.

¹⁷¹ That is MacGahan’s corruption of a more frequently used pejorative term “Mohammedan fanaticism.”

¹⁷² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁷³ MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus*, p. 184, emphasis mine.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 185, 194.

This attitude in MacGahan's writings is most evident in his discussion of women and gender relations in Central Asia. Observing Kazakhs in the Steppes, MacGahan learns that a man wishing to marry a woman has to pay a dowry (*kalym* in local language)—money, jewelry, or other property of worth—that the father of the bride receives and gives his daughter making it her property, although in rare occasions he could keep it as a trust. This is done to offer a measure of material support for the wife in case she gets divorced. Commenting on this practice, MacGahan says, “. . . the husband, instead of seizing the wife's property upon marriage, as is the law in civilized countries, actually protects her against future want. This barbarous custom will no doubt be abolished with the advent of modern civilisation and enlightenment.”¹⁷⁵ Here MacGahan is actually revealing the existence of patriarchal and oppressive attitudes toward women that were the law in his home society and other “civilized countries,” and that he embraced those attitudes as part of enlightened worldview. This nevertheless does not preclude MacGahan from arguing that Central Asian men do not treat their women as well as Westerners do.

On the eve of Russian invasion of Khiva, MacGahan looks at the city from outside and imagines a scene from the Arabian Nights: “Idly I watched it, thinking of all the stories I had ever heard of it; of its cruel and despotic Khans; its wild fanatical Mohamedhan population; its beautiful women; its strange mysterious character; and its isolation, which had rendered it inaccessible to Europeans as the enchanted cave of the mountain.”¹⁷⁶ Notice the contrast between cruel and fanatical men, on one hand, and beautiful women on the other. Contempt for the men, rulers, the society, and the culture goes hand in hand with fascination with women and their perceived beauty. MacGahan has no way of knowing if the women of Khiva are any more, or

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 174.

any less, beautiful than women elsewhere or in his home society, but the allure of a veiled woman, the exotic mystery, and eroticism associated with the harem are the things he is very eager see and uncover. As Reina Lewis writes, harem for men visiting the Islamic Orient was “a cruel polygamous sexual prison” and “a titillating but pitiful emblem of the aberrant sexuality and despotic power that characterized all that was wrong with the non-Christian Orient.”¹⁷⁷ And as Douglas Northrop explains, for many Western travelers in Eastern lands, conditions of women—“their dress, social customs, and particular restrictions—served as emblems of their society, both seductive and repellent; once one understood them, these writers implied, one would understand the East.”¹⁷⁸ MacGahan for sure was determined to understand that and reveal it to his Western audience, as he dedicated two separate chapters to the discussion of Khiva’s harem. In his fascination with the women of Central Asia, MacGahan was certainly not alone among Western travelers. The discussion of harem was generally expected by readers in his home society.¹⁷⁹

In these chapters, MacGahan tells us how, after the Khan’s Palace was stormed and the Khan fled the city, he meticulously observed the Palace and saw a group of screaming women—clearly the women of the Khan’s harem. Among them, he finds a woman of authority who he assumes is the “sultana of the harem.” Although a woman who looked about eighteen years old, she also behaved “in an authoritative, motherly manner,” leaving upon MacGahan a very favorable impression. “She turned her eyes towards me several times in a half-imploring way,” MacGahan tells us further, “as though she would have spoken to me.” He deeply regrets not

¹⁷⁷ Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel, and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) , p. 13.

¹⁷⁸ Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 37.

¹⁷⁹ According to Lord Curzon, for example, the question “an Englishman always seems to ask first” was “what the women of Bokhara were like?”—Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, p. 174.

knowing the native tongue, making communication with the “majestic” woman impossible, but he is “determined to communicate with her and help her, if possible.”¹⁸⁰ With greater determination, MacGahan returns to the Palace the next day, seeing around him “a leaf torn from the enchanted pages of the Arabian Nights.” He finds the harem and knocks on the door, expecting the women “all fly in terror” upon seeing him, but after a deliberation they invite him inside for a *chai* (tea), MacGahan’s sultana, identified as “Zuleika,” taking his “hand in hers” to “the grand court of the harem.”¹⁸¹ Interestingly, MacGahan uses the Russianized pronunciation of the Uzbek name Zulaiha, which gives us clear clues at the real source of his learning of this name. MacGahan offers his readers a very detailed description of the interior, the women’s dress, their physical characteristics, and doing his best to communicate with the women of the Khan. After chatting with them for about two hours, the women walk MacGahan out, and before leaving the building MacGahan makes one final turn around and sees his enchanting hostess kissing her hands to him and disappearing “in the dark corridor.”¹⁸²

We may safely regard this story a combination of some observation from a distance and a creative work of fiction, intended to satisfy the curiosity of MacGahan’s Western audience about the exotic women of the Orient. If secluding and jealously guarding the women of Khiva from strangers was the rule—in rural areas the rules were relatively more relaxed—in the Palace of the Khan that rule was enforced to the strictest levels. There is no way the women of the Khan’s harem could so liberally communicate with a male stranger accompanying Russian troops, let alone invite him to the court of the harem and entertain him for two hours. Ultimately, the story tells us little about the women of Khiva and is all the more revealing about Western curiosity

¹⁸⁰ MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus*, pp. 252-3.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 255, 260-1.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 265.

about oriental women and their mystery. These women, it is implicitly implied, are confined to seclusion by barbarous men and are just waiting to be liberated—a task that can be accomplished by a Western power colonizing these lands. MacGahan is restricted from a direct access to “the most intimate customs of Muslim life,” but he continues nevertheless to claim expertise on this intimate subject, like many travelers before and after him.¹⁸³

Although Schuyler and MacGahan deferred to the Russian authoritative opinion on prior Russian-Central Asian relations, they could remain neither silent nor uncritical when Russian actions contradicted their moral principles right before their eyes. When Schuyler traveled to Central Asia, only the Khivan Khanate and independent Turkmen tribes in Transcaspia were free from direct Russian control. The Kokand Khanate and the Bukhara Emirate were vassal states, while the city of Tashkent was incorporated into the Empire, with a divided European and native parts. By traveling on these lands, Schuyler had a good opportunity to observe the impact of Russian colonial administration. Russian troops meanwhile, under the leadership of General von Kaufman, were on their way to take over Khiva. By joining those troops, MacGahan gained a unique opportunity to observe the behavior of Russian officers and troops. From the warfare that forced Khiva to surrender to the campaign against Yomut Turkmens, MacGahan was among Russians, living with them, sharing their meals, interacting with them, and observing their march against natives.

¹⁸³ Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, p. 38. Vámbéry even becomes amusing by providing intimate details of marriage and birth processes in Khiva. Consider this example: “A new felt or carpet is spread out in the tent or room, and upon this the woman is placed, with her legs doubled under her. As the pains increase, her nearest relations squat round her; and she, flinging both her arms round the neck of two of her most intimate friends, the midwife seizes her by the thighs, and moves her about, until she has been delivered of the child.” No family in Khiva would allow any male but the husband of the woman giving birth to be present in the same room. Vámbéry here must be recounting what he had heard from others and presenting it as his own observation or just using the power of his imagination.”—Vámbéry, *Sketches*, p. 99.

In his detailed accounts of these events in *Campaigning on the Oxus*, MacGahan praises Russian troops for the orderly occupation of the city of Khiva. He however criticizes them for the campaign against Yomut Turkmens who, as warriors, had offered the only serious resistance against Russian invasion of Khiva.¹⁸⁴ MacGahan describes the campaign in great details, including individual instances of butchery, torture, destruction of crops, and cries of women and children in a chapter aptly titled “The Massacre.”¹⁸⁵ As troops continued “burning and ravaging everything” on their way, “applying the torch to everything that would burn, and leaving the country behind us a blackened waste,” MacGahan finds the experience both horrifying and gratifying. “The task was, of course, repulsive,” he says, “but nevertheless had some very exciting and interesting features, combining just enough of lawlessness to make it gratifying to that spirit of destruction which probably exists in a latent state in even the most peaceable and civilised men.”¹⁸⁶ MacGahan also places much of the blame on Cossacks in the service of the Russian military, exonerating General Golovachev entrusted by Kaufman to carry out the campaign. Here again, MacGahan is generous to ethnic Russians many of whom he befriended. In reality, the Cossack troops brutalized Turkmens not because they did not follow the orders, but because they specifically followed them.

The chief value of MacGahan’s account of the campaign lies in its extraordinary level of honesty, whether MacGahan is discussing the behavior of Russian troops or his own inner musings. Despite offering horrifying details of brutality inflicted upon Yomut Turkmens, MacGahan defends Russian troops from potential criticism in Europe. “I must say, however, that cases of violence towards women were very rare,” he says, “and although the Russians here were

¹⁸⁴ General Kaufman decided to punish Turkmens by demanding a war indemnity of 300,000 rubles to be paid in cash within two weeks. Turkmens could not fulfill the demand and Kaufman then decided to punish them with brute force. Other historians put the war indemnity at 600,000 rubles.

¹⁸⁵ MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus*, pp. 362-6.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 367, 369.

fighting barbarians who commit all sorts of atrocities upon their prisoners, which fact might have excused a good deal of cruelty on the part of the soldiers, their conduct was infinitely better than that of European troops in European campaigns.”¹⁸⁷ His honest account is both a window to what he has seen Russian troops doing and to the value system he subscribes to; as a man who believes atrocities and brutality, if only perpetrated occasionally, can be justified in the process of civilizing lesser peoples of the world.

In contrast to MacGahan, Schuyler offers a more substantial criticism of the Russian colonial administration in Central Asia, discussing the instances of corruption, theft, mismanagement of resources, lack of discipline, and abuse the natives suffered at the hands of some officials.¹⁸⁸ The abolitionist in his blood made him expose clandestine slavery that was still going on in Bukhara, despite Bukharan officials’ assurances that it was over. With the help of his native servants, Schuyler secretly purchased a Persian boy from an underground slave market and presented the proof to officials in Samarkand and Tashkent.¹⁸⁹ Schuyler still supported Russian rule because he believed Russia’s civilizing mission could be carried out without the abuses he witnessed. A disgruntled Russian, complaining of the abuses and quoted by Schuyler, said what Schuyler saw as the main problem in Russia’s colonial administration: “Everybody thinks only of making a quick career, of occupying an advantageous post, and of obtaining increased rank, and nobody gives himself the trouble to take into account the duties imposed upon him by the fact of his being a Russian, and by the civilizing mission which Russia pursues in Central Asia.”¹⁹⁰ Schuyler did not entertain the idea that, while the civilizing mission could

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 400.

¹⁸⁸ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, Vol. 2, pp. 202-51.

¹⁸⁹ Schuyler named the boy Hussein and took him to St. Petersburg, eventually apprenticing Hussein to a Court clockmaker of Tatar-Muslim origin—ibid, pp. 100-9.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 226.

sound appealing in rhetoric, the abuses he witnessed were the inevitable result of colonization in practice.

Schuyler never visited Khiva but he did follow the events there carefully. He obtained an anonymous but credible account of the campaign against Yomut Turkmens that was so damning that no supporter of Russian colonization could publicly defend General Kaufman's orders to carry out a massacre. According to the account, Kaufman ordered his subordinates to bring "*Yomuds and their families to complete destruction, and their herds and property to confiscation.*" According to the order, Yomuts could only be spared if they surrendered and became totally submissive. If they did not, Russian troops were at liberty to carry out the "*final extermination of the disobedient tribe.*" Commander of the troops General Golovachev, following Kaufman's instructions, ordered the troops: "I hope you will fulfil all these commands strictly in the Circassian style, without question. You are not to spare either sex or age. Kill all of them." The Cossack troops did not disappoint their commander by "cutting everybody down, whether a small child or an old man."¹⁹¹

After learning about these events, Schuyler sent a confidential message to Washington summarizing his criticism of the colonial administration and the brutality of the campaign against Yomuts. He nevertheless reiterated that Russian colonization of Central Asia was "good" for the natives and the world, and especially for the United States since Russia's advances would counterpoise Britain's expansionism in Asia—thus demonstrating the limits of his impartiality on Anglo-Russian rivalry and his low opinion of natives whose fate was of lesser importance.¹⁹² Schuyler believed that his report was a confidential one but the State Department disagreed and

¹⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 357-60, emphases original.

¹⁹² Schuyler's report appended in "Mr. Jewell to Mr. Fish," *FRUS 1873-1874*, pp. 815-31.

publicized it, as Schuyler told a friend later, “to my great astonishment.”¹⁹³ According to Schuyler, Russians did not hold any ill feelings toward him because of the report and acknowledged his right to express his views freely. Some Russians were outraged, however, with one author suggesting that Generals Kaufman and Golovachev were “so saintly, so noble, and so talented” that their names could not be “tainted” by the “dirty splashes” of “some publicists” (the “publicist” being Schuyler). Russian documents published eight years later, however, totally exonerated Schuyler, confirming his report, including quotes attributed to Kaufman and Golovachev, to be authentic.¹⁹⁴

Schuyler and MacGahan beyond Central Asia

It is important to note that the legacy of MacGahan’s writings has impacted the historiography of Central Asian history both in Russia and Central Asia, albeit both have demonstrated their willingness to pick and choose, depending on particular political and intellectual milieu. About forty years after MacGahan’s publications, his description of the massacre of Yomut Turkmens was used by Muhammad Iusuf Bayani, a court official and a traditional historian in Khiva. In writing the history of Khiva from ancient times to early twentieth century, Bayani took profusely from the Ottoman Turkish translation of *Campaigning on the Oxus*, without citing the original source (which was a common practice in local historiography).¹⁹⁵ Bayani particularly used MacGahan’s account to emphasize the massacre of

¹⁹³ Eugene Schuyler, *Eugene Schuyler: Selected Essays: With a Memoir by Evelyn Schuyler Schaeffer* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901), p. 54.

¹⁹⁴ M.A. Terent’ev, *Istoriia Zavoyevaniia Srednei Azii*, T. II (SPB: Tiplolitografiia Komarova, 1906), pp. 267-75, in Russian.

¹⁹⁵ Januarius MacGahan, *Hive Seyahetnamesi ve Tarihi: Musavver* (Istanbul: Basiret Matbaasi, 1875), in Ottoman Turkish.

Turkmens, present Russia as the enemy, and condemn Cossack troops as true barbarians, selectively choosing from MacGahan to present a particular narrative.¹⁹⁶

In Russia, MacGahan's book was quickly translated into Russian when the interest among the Russian public on the subject was growing.¹⁹⁷ But a recent article in a military journal on MacGahan demonstrates how the resurgent Russian nationalism of recent years can impact the narrative. In an article titled "Journalistic Activity of MacGahan and his role in development of Russo-American relations," the author briefly mentions MacGahan's career in Central Asia, totally ignores the massacre, and focuses on MacGahan's career in Bulgaria where the Ottomans, rather than the Russians, can be implicated in atrocities.¹⁹⁸ The contrast among these discussions of MacGahan's account of the Khiva campaign shows that, with all its value and faults, his account left a lasting and controversial legacy on the historiography of Central Asian studies.

Schuyler's report about the massacre of Yomut Turkmens made a greater furor in England, rather than Russia, where Schuyler and MacGahan's reports about Turkestan and Bulgaria became a source of a debate between British Liberals and Conservatives on the question of who, between Russia and Turkey, was more barbaric. Schuyler's confidential report publicized by the State Department was a shorter version of what he expanded on in *Turkistan*, published three years after his travel to Central Asia. By the time his book was published and its reviews began to appear in the British press, MacGahan's report on Bulgaria with an appendix by Schuyler had already become available. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli accused

¹⁹⁶ Ron Sela, "Invoking the Russian Conquest of Khiva and the Massacre of the Yomut Turkmens: The Choices of a Central Asian Historian," *Asiatiche Studies/Etudes Asiatiques*, LX/2 (2006), pp. 459-77.

¹⁹⁷ Ianuarii Mac-Gahan, *Voyennie Deystviia na Oksuse i Padenie Khivy* (Moskva: Universitetskaiia Tipografiia, 1875), in Russian.

¹⁹⁸ O. Iu. Sementsov, "'Nikogda ne Proiavlial on Bestanktnuiu Boltlivost' ili Bespechnost': Zhurnalistskaia Deiatel'nost' Mak-Gahana v 1870-e gody i Ego Rol' v Razvitii Rossiysko-Amerikanskikh Otnoshenii,'" *Voyenno-Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, no. 5 (2010), pp. 29-34, in Russian.

MacGahan of grossly exaggerating in his report, suggesting that charges leveled at Turks in Bulgaria were not in accordance with the spirit of Oriental behavior.¹⁹⁹ William Gladstone, at the time contemplating retirement, quickly returned to public with a pamphlet criticizing Disraeli's handling of the Eastern Question and denouncing that "great anti-human specimen of humanity" known as the Turk. In a spat between Russia and Turkey, Gladstone was on Russia's side.²⁰⁰

As soon as *Turkistan* became available to the British public, Conservatives decided to attack Gladstone based on the account of Schuyler's whose earlier report Gladstone had used in his own attack of the conservative government. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, a Conservative newspaper, summarized Schuyler's criticism of Russian misadministration and the massacre of Yomut Turkmens, by embellishing it with an inflated tone and manipulation of quotes to depict Russia in darker terms. For instance, by citing Schuyler and MacGahan, the article said General Golovachev "harangued his officers in the presence of Mr. MacGahan" and told them not "to spare either sex or age" in carrying out Kaufman's order.²⁰¹ MacGahan recounts no such thing in his book and Schuyler's account refers to an anonymous eye-witness, not MacGahan. The article also suggested there was a direct parallel between Ottoman and Russian crimes, drawing the ire of Gladstone. In a follow-up article, titled "The Competition of Barbarism," *The Pall Mall Gazette* stretched the argument even further by stating that Schuyler's report "implicates all classes of the Russian community through the acts of representative sections of the Khiva force." The order to slaughter Turkmens, the newspaper said, "was given in writing by the highest officer of the expedition, the idol of Russian military society, a man sometimes said to be stronger than the Emperor himself"—a reference to Kaufman and an obvious exaggeration.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ MacGahan, *Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*, p. 62.

²⁰⁰ William Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (New York: Lovell, 1876), p. 10.

²⁰¹ "Russian Atrocity," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Issue 3629, 5 Oct. 1876.

²⁰² "The Competition of Barbarism," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Issue 3639, 17 Oct. 1876.

These articles were clearly in response to Gladstone's use of the Bulgarian report to undermine the government of Disraeli, for, prior to the publication of MacGahan's Bulgarian report and Schuyler's *Turkistan*, *The Pall Mall Gazette* had carried two articles, summarizing Schuyler's earlier report on Russia in Central Asia.²⁰³ Curiously, neither of those articles said anything about the massacre of Yomut Turkmens.²⁰⁴ In other words, the massacre became an important topic only when the Conservative newspaper needed to attack Gladstone's position.

Gladstone decided to reply to these attacks by means of reviewing Schuyler's *Turkistan*. Upon hearing the news, Schuyler was glad to learn that Gladstone was the one reviewing his book, hoping that Gladstone would speak "as well of it as of my Bulgarian report. . . ."²⁰⁵ Gladstone had no such plan. He wanted to discredit Schuyler's report on Turkestan, privately asking Madame Olga Novikov, known in British circles as the "MP for Russia in England," to request Russian military attaché in London General Gorlov to provide "proofs of errors in Schuyler's book."²⁰⁶ Even with Gorlov's assistance, Gladstone failed to find any substantial evidence against the authenticity of Schuyler's damning report. Gladstone then chose the next best tactic, privately arranging publication of a rebuttal of Schuyler's in the liberal *Daily News* in an anonymous letter signed by "a Russian" a week before his review of *Turkistan* was to appear in *The Contemporary Review*.²⁰⁷ In his review of *Turkistan* then, Gladstone added a veneer of objectivity by counterpoising Schuyler's report with the "anonymous letter" in the *Daily News*, which the Tory press quickly identified was written by the Russian military attaché. Gladstone's review of *Turkistan* caused a sensation, his political foes accusing him of unabashed apologia for

²⁰³ Schuyler's report appended in "Mr. Jewell to Mr. Fish," *FRUS 1873-1874*, pp. 815-31.

²⁰⁴ "Russia in Central Asia," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Issue 3131, 1 March 1875; "Mr. Schuyler's Report on Central Asia," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Issue 3345, 6 Nov. 1875.

²⁰⁵ Quoted in Fowler, *Eugene V. Schuyler*, p. 43.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45. On Olga Novikov and her relations with English liberals, see Joseph Baylen, "Madame Olga Novikov, Propagandist," *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Dec., 1951), pp. 255-71.

²⁰⁷ Fowler, *Eugene V. Schuyler*, p. 48.

Russia. Disraeli did not remain silent, suggesting that Gladstone was seduced by Madame Novikov, the woman who was “an extremely accomplished whore” sent to London as an agent by the Tsar himself.²⁰⁸

Disraeli’s vulgar comments undoubtedly were an exaggeration, but Gladstone’s review of *Turkistan* indeed was a hodgepodge of racist apologia, his arguments alternating between ‘Kaufman might not have ordered total destruction’ and ‘Russians had little choice but to use brute force against a barbaric tribe.’²⁰⁹ Gladstone drew a parallel between the British in India and Russians in Central Asia, suggesting that the two Empires were facing the same enemy—the enemy being Islam and “Mahometan communities” who were fanatics beyond reason and did not understand the proper rules of civilized warfare. Their fanaticism forced the Russians “to carry the torch of civilization amidst barrels of gunpowder.” “Schuyler,” Gladstone said, “was not an eye-witness,” “made no local inquiry” and that his report was biased against Kaufman and “in conflict” with MacGahan’s account (a demonstrably false claim, as MacGahan and Schuyler differed in narrative descriptions, but not in substance). Gladstone also expressed anger at conservative newspapers for daring to compare two totally different situations. While Turks in Bulgaria were guilty of “widespread destruction of life with exquisite refinements of torture, and with the wholesale indulgence of fierce and utterly bestial lusts,” Russians in Central Asia were facing “a marauding tribe” who could not be trusted even in a state of submission. It was the peculiarity of “these Asiatic tribes” to be in “the cheerful submission of to-day, followed by the deadly assault of to-morrow,” Gladstone reminded his readers.²¹⁰ Aside from being inaccurate and cynical, Gladstone’s review of *Turkistan* was an abject failure and did nothing to weaken

²⁰⁸ Anne Isba, *Gladstone and Women* (London: A&C Black, 2006), p. 172.

²⁰⁹ W. E. Gladstone, “Russian Policy and Deeds in Turkistan,” *The Contemporary Review*, vol. 28 (Nov. 1876), pp. 873-91.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 877-9, 883, 886, 888.

Schuyler's authority. All it did was to demonstrate how cynical politics, rather than genuine humanitarianism, was behind crocodile tears these politicians, including Gladstone's critics in the Tory press, shed over Bulgarian and Turkmen victims.²¹¹

Ultimately, both Schuyler and MacGahan were supporters of Russia's civilizing mission in Central Asia. At that moment in history, however, one would be hard pressed to find any Western observer who did not support some form of civilizing mission, be it Russian or British, needed to "uplift" Central Asians from their backwardness. Even great Russian Orientalist Vasilii Vladimirovich Bartold, known for his enormous contribution to Central Asian history as an apolitical and empiricist scholar trained in the traditions of Romanticism and German positivist historiography, argued that colonial powers were necessary for eventual world cultural rapprochement.²¹² Consider that Bartold represented the liberal wing of Russian Orientalists, the other side of the Orientalist camp accusing Bartold's school of being "unsuited for our Asiatic areas, since they study the literature, history, and ethnography of the Asiatic peoples objectively, and carry to them their own sympathies"²¹³ That was the intellectual milieu of the time. The value of nineteenth-century works on Central Asia by American authors is understanding how their analysis of twin processes of colonization and civilizing mission, in theory and practice—in

²¹¹ *The Pall Mall Gazette* responded to Gladstone's review and pointed out cynicism and hypocrisy expressed in the review. However, the substance of the response article was a clear indication that the editors of the newspaper did not really care for the plight of an unfortunate tribe in Central Asia. All they cared about was discrediting Gladstone's credibility and depicting Russia as a barbaric state—"Mr. Gladstone Answered," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Issue 3653, 2 Nov. 1876.

²¹² For the same reasons, he spoke about the positive legacy of Mongol rule in Russia and of the Arab conquests of Central Asia.—Yuri Bregel, "Barthold and Modern Oriental Studies," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Nov. 1980), pp. 386-8.

²¹³ Quoted in Richard Fry, "Oriental Studies in Russia" in Wayne Vucinich (ed.), *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on Asian Peoples* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), p. 46.

our case, Russia's in Central Asia—were produced within that intellectual milieu, and the legacy of their writings on both sides of the Atlantic.

While there were other Americans who visited Central Asia in late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, Schuyler and MacGahan were the only two whose purpose was to cover the turbulent events in Central Asia when Russia was in the process of conquering the region. With their honest observations and inner musings on the evolution of their views, their writings offer a glimpse into the societies of Central Asia as seen by these outsiders who, despite their prejudices, were relatively neutral observers. Of these two, Schuyler's legacy was greater and his writings are more extensive, offering almost encyclopedic information about geography, climate, landscape, the physical composition of Central Asian ethnic groups, cultural practices, social norms, religious rituals, lay traditions, and much more. Ninety years after its publication, *Turkistan* was reprinted in London in an abridged version. In the introduction, British scholar Colonel Geoffrey Wheeler described it “by far the best account of contemporary conditions—cultural, political, military and economic—[of Central Asia] that has ever been published in any language.”²¹⁴ That was an exaggeration, but not much. For almost a hundred years in the United States, Schuyler's thesis on Russia's faulty but worthy civilizing mission in Central Asia remained the standard American perspective on Russian relations with Central Asia. Even a century after its publication, *Turkistan* remained influential in shaping new scholars' views on Central Asia.

There were certainly keen observers who saw Russia's advance into Central Asia differently. In the mid-nineteenth-century, it was ironically the man who would inspire the most radical revolution in Russia's history—Karl Marx—who fulminated against Russia's aggressive

²¹⁴ Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Kokand, Bukhara and Kuldja*, edited with an introduction by Geoffrey Wheeler (London: Routledge, 1966), p. xi.

imperialism and “its Asiatic system of cheating and petty tricks” on the pages of the *New York Tribune*.²¹⁵ Such views remained dormant for some time but began to resurface by the end of the century. In a pamphlet published in 1887, literary critic William Dudley Foulke declared the “growth of Russia has been the growth of everything we detest. The great sovereigns of Russia have been greatest in crime and outrage.” The country had “no traditions” and was “ruled by a despot and his army.”²¹⁶ Foulke dedicated a few pages, chronicling Russian conquest of Central Asia. In this narrative, Russia was the clear evil, carrying death and destruction. Describing the tragedy in Geok Tepe, Foulke says that “it was heroically defended by the natives, the women fighting with the men. Its capture was followed by the slaughter of thirty thousand inhabitants.”²¹⁷ These are interesting assertions, as no historian mentions women in Geok Tepe fighting along men against Russians and no historian gives the number of killed in the battle greater than twenty thousand.

Foulke’s views on Russia’s expansions in general continued to gain momentum, but his criticism of Russia’s conquest of Turkestan was an isolated one, most observers continuing to follow Schuyler’s line that, with all its faults, Russian advance into Central Asia was natural and inevitable in the face of perceived lawlessness in the region and rivalry with England. “No civilised modern state submits in the long run to the neighborhood of a jumble of barbarous principalities and tribes, unable and often unwilling to maintain order within their own boundaries or to prevent depredations beyond them,” said Archibald Cary Coolidge, the Harvard

²¹⁵ Karl Marx, *The Eastern Question: a Reprint of Letters Written 1853-56 dealing with the Events of the Crimean War*, edited by Eleanor Marx Aveling and Edward Aveling (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897), p. 146.

²¹⁶ W. D. Foulke, *Slav or Saxon: a Study of the Growth and Tendencies of Russian Civilization* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1887), pp. 66-7.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 51.

scholar generally considered to be the father of Russian history study in the United States.²¹⁸

This view remained dominant for some time. With the advent of the Bolshevik Revolution, however, American interest in—and writings on—Central Asia would begin to take a different turn.

²¹⁸ Archibald Coolidge, “The Expansion of Russia in the Nineteenth Century,” in A.G. Sedgwick et al., *The 19th Century: a Review of Progress* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1901), p. 70.

CHAPTER 2: AMERICANS AND DEBATE OVER SOVIET CIVILIZING MISSION IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1917-1945

All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others.

George Orwell

. . . the working masses of the East are in some places, through no fault of their own, very backward. Illiterate, ignorant, they are sunk in superstition and believe in spirits. They are unable to read newspapers. They do not know what is going on in the world at large. They do not understand the most elementary principles of hygiene.

Grigory Zinov'ev

Introduction.

American understanding of Central Asia during the interwar period mostly followed the familiar pattern of learning about Central Asia through the prism of American-Russian relations, through Russian lens, and through particular Orientalist attitudes that developed within this context. For the most part, Americans in this era followed their predecessors in their approach. That said, the political, cultural, and social landscape in the United States was no longer the same. For example, the devastating World War weakened many people's faith in Western civilization, while the experience of the Robber Baron era and economic crises pushed others to seek alternatives to Capitalism. Numbers of African American intellectuals, literary authors, and artists began to grow, and some of them, disillusioned with American political and economic order, sought alternative systems of governance to solve America's race problems and economic

disparity. These changes have obviously affected intellectual trends in the country, including American writings about Central Asia.

Even more important and influential in affecting American perception and understanding of Central Asia was the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. In the iconic words of American journalist John Reed, the October Revolution in Russia simply “shook the world” for ten days.²¹⁹ The Revolution totally changed the political and economic landscape in Russia, the new leaders of the country ending the legacy of the Romanov Dynasty’s rule and pursuing a new course of history based on Marxist-Leninist ideals. The Revolution also fundamentally changed American-Russian relations, prompting the administration of Woodrow Wilson to pursue “Red Scare” at home and offer military and material support for anti-Bolshevik forces during Russian Civil War of 1917-22 through direct American intervention in the north of Russia and the Far East.²²⁰ American state policies toward Russia and the newly established U.S.S.R., for better or for worse, had a profound effect on how Americans began to view Russia’s southern outskirts.

While many in the United States “saw the U.S.S.R. as the major enemy of Western civilisation . . . a scourge that sought to undermine the fundamental values of decent human societies,” for some other observers, as Ronald Grigor Suny points out, “the Soviet Union promised an alternative to the degradations of capitalism and the fraudulent claims of bourgeois democracy, represented the bulwark of Enlightenment values against the menace of Fascism, and preserved the last best hope of colonised peoples.”²²¹ Thus, politics of the Soviet Union and somewhat conflicted American attitudes toward the Bolshevik state even more profoundly

²¹⁹ John Reeds, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York: Boni & Liversight, 1919).

²²⁰ George F. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene: Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*, Vol. 2 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989); David S. Foglesong, *America’s Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

²²¹ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Reading Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century: How the ‘West’ Wrote its History of the USSR,” in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III, Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 5.

affected American writings on Central Asia, as the Soviet policy in Central Asia could be used to either denounce or vindicate the Soviet Union and Communism. Those who wrote about Soviet Central Asia to do the former remained scant during interwar years, for those who were critical of Communism were not particularly interested in Soviet policy in Central Asia. There emerged however a visible group of Socialist-leaning Americans who looked at Soviet policy of political, economic, and cultural development in Central Asia as a model to learn from and as a vindication of Communist ideals. Between these two extremes, there were also Americans who were ideologically opposed to Communism but justified Bolsheviks' forced modernization of the Orient.

In this chapter, I plan to explore the interwar period and how the changes briefly discussed above have affected and shaped American understandings of Central Asia. I start this by critically analyzing Soviet policy in Central Asia after the Bolshevik Revolution. Like their predecessors, Americans of the interwar era contributed to studies and writings on Central Asia conducted mainly by Russian (Soviet, by this time) scholars. Properly understanding American writings about Central Asia of this era without understanding Soviet policies and dominant narratives is nearly impossible. For this reason, I will discuss what the October Revolution meant for Central Asia and complex changes taking place in Central Asia as a result. Due to revolutionary zeal and censorship imposed by Soviet leaders, Soviet narratives about Central Asia followed strict lines determined by Communist party officials, intended primarily to showcasing how Marxist-Leninist ideals were superior to the triplet of capitalism, imperialism, and racism prevalent in colonies under Western rule.

My discussion of changing American attitudes toward Central Asia start with an analysis of Lothrop Stoddard's views on Bolshevism and Islam. Stoddard was not principally interested

in Central Asia, but his interest in revolutionary changes taking place in Russia and Muslim countries prompted him to address Soviet policies in Central Asia—which he rightly saw as the practical implementation of Soviet intentions in the larger Muslim world. Mostly notorious for his vocal support for racialist classification of world population, Stoddard was also a political science theorist with judicious understanding of international affairs. Although his contemporaries often rejected many of his simplistic and outrageous views, Stoddard's explanation of Bolshevik attitude toward Muslims and Islam held a dominant presence among scholars and policy-makers during the Cold War.

The discussion of Americans who largely viewed Soviet experiment in Central Asia in a positive light represents the lion's share of this chapter. These Americans can be roughly classified into three groups: pro-Bolshevik writers, technocrats and job-seekers, and leftist African Americans. The Bolshevik revolution and the promise of Soviet Communism attracted a fair share of Americans to the Soviet Union some of whom were specifically interested in Soviet policy in Central Asia. They were so fascinated by Soviet experience that they traveled to Central Asia and offered their glowingly positive observations, with little to no criticism directed at the Soviet government. There were others who were indifferent to or opposed to Bolshevism in principle but nevertheless appreciated the modernist zeal that characterized Soviet economic development. They were also attracted to business opportunities Soviets offered. And finally, left-leaning African Americans were inspired by Soviet commitment to equality and decolonization and saw in Soviet Union a solution to America's race problems in the south. By traveling to Central Asia and experiencing it first-hand, they also reflected on their experiences at home, comparing American and Soviet southern outskirts. Soviet officials carefully controlled Americans' travel arrangements, making their observations quite limited and their perspectives

circumscribed, but nevertheless these Americans did offer a different take on what life was like for ordinary Central Asians.

This chapter also discusses the emergence of American interest in Central Asia on a state level. As soon as the Bolshevik revolution took place, the State Department dispatched a diplomat to Tashkent to study the state of Central Asian cotton industry, primarily to thwart German attempts to get hold of the region's "white gold."²²² For a while, American state interest in Central Asia remained dormant but the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union brought that interest back, leading to publications by pro-Soviet writers who largely agreed with other Socialist-leaning observers and declared Soviet experience in Central Asia a great success. For them Soviet policy in Central Asia represented the *bona fide* civilizing mission. Concluding the chapter with the discussion of American state support for Soviet policy in Central Asia is apt, as the next chapter will discuss how the U.S. government encouraged scholars to take an opposite stance on Soviet power in Central Asia.

Bolshevism and Soviet Power in Central Asia

I am compelled to reject Bolshevism for two reasons: First, because the price mankind must pay to achieve Communism by Bolshevik methods is too terrible; and secondly because, even after paying the price, I do not believe the result would be what the Bolsheviks profess to desire.

Bertrand Russell

Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, a prominent Egyptian journalist and a friend of President Gamal Abdel Nasser's, visited Moscow in 1957 to interview the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Unaware of Khrushchev's attitude on this, he lit up a cigar in front of the Soviet leader. "Are you a capitalist? Why are you smoking a cigar," Khrushchev asked. When Heikal

²²² In Central Asia's modern history, cotton has often been referred to as "white gold" because of the importance of it for the region's economy.

said he just liked cigars, Khrushchev explained to him that a cigar was “a capitalist object” and as a friend of Nasser’s, he ought not to consume poison that exemplified bourgeoisie decadence. The eccentric Soviet leader literally snatched the cigar from Heikal’s hand and extinguished it. Six years later the Egyptian journalist met Khrushchev again, this time catching the Premier enjoy Havana cigars which the Premier enthusiastically offered to the Egyptian. Heikal was apparently shocked. He reminded the Soviet leader of the incident six years earlier and asked him why he has changed. Khrushchev’s answer was simple and revealing: “I have not changed. It is these cigars that have changed. Since the revolution in Cuba these cigars have become Marxist-Leninist cigars.”²²³

While this anecdote may be another example demonstrating the typical eccentricity of Premier Khrushchev, it is also illuminating about the entire history of Soviet opposition to Western influence in the former colonial world. Throughout its history, Soviet leaders consistently condemned Western colonial and imperial policies, at the same time declaring the Soviet Union the champion of oppressed colonized peoples. A careful analysis of this opposition, however, shows—especially in light of Soviet policies in Central Asia, Caucasus, and Eastern Europe—that Soviet opposition to Western imperialism was not an opposition to imperialism per se, but to imperialism rooted in capitalism.²²⁴ Had the British and the French been allies of the USSR and had they imposed socialism, rather than capitalism, in India, Algeria, or any other colonized areas, it is doubtful Soviet leaders would be in opposition to them.²²⁵ With their

²²³ The story recounted in John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 176.

²²⁴ The title of Lenin’s famous critique of Western imperialism speaks for itself: Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).

²²⁵ It is worth recalling that in the wake of Abd el-Kader’s surrender to French forces in 1848, Friedrich Engels justified the conquest of Algeria on the grounds that forced introduction of capitalism would eventually pave the way for liberation and enlightenment of Algeria. He wrote in the British newspaper *Northern Star*: “Upon the whole it is, in our opinion, very fortunate that the Arabian chief has been taken. The struggle of the Bedouins was a hopeless one, and though the manner in which brutal soldiers, like Bugeaud, have carried on the war is highly

policies and actions, Soviet leaders have demonstrated that their purpose was not the abolition of Euro-American colonialism but its replacement with a more advanced, as they understood it, system of direct and indirect rule that retained many features of Western imperialism—even if they shunned the word “imperialism” in their official rhetoric.

This is not to say that Soviet criticism of colonialism was never genuine or that Soviet leaders never tried to live up to their ideals and rhetoric on socialist equality. Indeed, the Bolshevik government was markedly different from the Russian Empire as well as traditional colonial powers, and in its affairs with national minorities often acted like a modernist authoritarian nation that used radical, if not often brutal, measures to modernize its peripheries—politically, economically, socially, and culturally.²²⁶ Immediately after the Revolution, the Bolshevik leaders began a campaign of cultivating modern nation-states within the larger federative Soviet republic, partly due to the ethnic diversity of Bolshevik leaders.²²⁷ In his influential essay on Soviet nationality policy, Yuri Slezkine writes: “As I. Vareikis wrote in 1924, the USSR was a large communal apartment in which ‘national state units, various republics and autonomous provinces’ represented ‘separate rooms.’ Remarkably enough, the communist landlords went on to reinforce many of the partitions and never stopped celebrating separateness along with communalism.”²²⁸ Moscow promoted nations that had their fixed geographic territories, national languages, constitutions, flags, and histories out of which fifteen

blameable, the conquest of Algeria is an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilisation . . . after all, the modern bourgeois, with civilisation, industry, order, and at least relative enlightenment following him, is preferable to the feudal lord or to the marauding robber, with the barbarian state of society to which they belong.”—Quoted in Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 15.

²²⁶ Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (2006), pp. 231-51.

²²⁷ Almost two-third of Bolshevik leaders were ethnically non-Russian, although they were from the European (Jewish, Ukrainian, Latvian, Polish) and South Caucasian (Armenian, Georgian) parts of Russia. Turkic peoples (Azeris and Central Asians) were notably absent. See, Lilian Riga, *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 16.

²²⁸ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1994), p. 415.

republics were eventually born. Five of them were established in Central Asia during the interwar period and became what they are known today: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

There were nevertheless methods Bolsheviks embraced that reminded national minorities classical colonial relationships. The Bolshevik leaders intended to build a “communal apartment” but they were also ready to achieve their goals through violence and military conquest. Whatever rights national minorities were promised in official Bolshevik proclamations could easily be revoked for the sake of building a new Soviet empire. The case of Lithuania was illustrative of how the Bolsheviks brought minority nationalities into the Soviet orbit. When the Commissar of Foreign Affairs Georgy Chicherin wrote to Lenin in 1920, explaining that Lithuanians could welcome Bolshevik occupation of Vilna but wanted to run their own civil administration which, Chicherin said, was “impossible” since “our regime is incompatible with theirs,” Lenin replied: “The crux of the matter is: we must occupy and sovietize. Judge, and judge only from this point of view We must ensure that we *first sovietize* Lithuania and then give it back to the Lithuanians.”²²⁹ To paraphrase Khrushchev, when colonial occupation stopped being capitalist and became Marxist-Leninist, it was not only permissible but desirable and could be actively pursued, as it was by Bolshevik leaders. Bolsheviks were masters of condemning others for the actions they officially shunned but internally endorsed. Their condemnation of Western imperialism went hand in hand with their re-conquest of the territories of the Russian Empire they inherited.

The same kind of duplicity was behind Bolsheviks’ attitude toward political terror. As documented by one historian studying the logic of Bolshevik terror, Lenin passionately

²²⁹ Quoted and discussed in Richard Pipes, *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 85-88, emphasis added.

expressed his opposition to terror in his public speeches, while in internal discussions with a small group of trusted Bolshevik leaders he eagerly and nonchalantly championed the exact opposite.²³⁰ Although one-party dictatorship, mass terror, show trials, dekulakization, concentration camps, mass extrajudicial punishment, suppression of free press, and the zealous cult of personality are usually associated with Iosif Stalin, all of it began under Lenin.²³¹ As Robert Gellately writes, the “first dictator of the Soviet Union and his future successor had no major theoretical or political differences in the area of Communist doctrine, least of all on the wholesale and ruthless use of terror.”²³² Stalin did not deviate from Leninist ideals and hijack the Revolution, as many supporters of Lenin have historically claimed, but took them to a new level.²³³ The two leaders however differed in the fact that Lenin was not the type of “Russian chauvinist” Stalin became after Lenin’s death.²³⁴

Lenin’s advocacy of political mass terror against broadly defined groups of state enemies was nevertheless uncompromising. For instance, in a directive given to Nizhnyi Novgorod soviet, he ordered: “*instantly* commence mass terror, *shoot and transport hundreds* of prostitutes who get the soldiers drunk, ex-officers, and so forth. Do not delay.” The same day, he ordered

²³⁰ Sergei Bilokin, “Mekhanizm bol’shevistskogo nasiliia: konspekt issledovaniia” in E. G. Magerovskii, *Gosudarstvennyi terror v sovetskom soyuze, 1917-1984: sbornik materialov* (New York: Russkaia akademicheskaiia gruppa v SSHA, 2011), p. 511.

²³¹ As an admirer of Niccolò Machiavelli, Lenin cited Machiavelli’s dictum that “if it is necessary to resort to certain brutalities for the sake of realizing a certain political goal, they must be carried out in the most energetic fashion and in the briefest possible time because the masses will not tolerate the prolonged application of brutality.” True to his principles, even in a confidential letter to Vyacheslav Molotov, Lenin did not name Machiavelli but referred to him as “one intelligent writer on matters of statecraft.” See *ibid*, p. 513; Robert Service, *Lenin: a Biography* (London: Pan, 2010), p. 376.

²³² Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: the Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), p. 9.

²³³ The myth of “good” Lenin vs “bad” Stalin was first elaborated by Leon Trotsky in his 1937 pamphlet *Stalinism and Bolshevism* (republished as Leon Trotsky, *Bolshevism and Stalinism: Concerning the Historical and Theoretical Roots of the Fourth International* [New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1937]). Trotsky promoting this myth is not surprising, since he was Lenin’s closest ally and supporter in carrying out mass political terror. Alongside Lenin, Trotsky was an enthusiastic supporter of sending “parasitic elements” into concentration camps. When some old Tsarist officers refused to join the Red Army he was forming, Trotsky proposed that their wives and children be locked up in the camps as hostages. See Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler*, p. 55.

²³⁴ Stalin was an ethnic Georgian whose real name was Iosif Vissarionovich Jugashvili, but during the implementation of the five-year plans, Stalin began to actively promote Russian cultural chauvinism.

the Soviet in Penza to “carry out merciless mass terror against kulaks, priests, and white guardians; put doubtful elements in a concentration camp outside the city.”²³⁵ In another instance, Lenin ordered his delegates to be ready to burn the city of Baku in totto and announce their readiness to do so publicly, lest his enemies dared to take control of the Azerbaijani oil.²³⁶ This shows that the people of the Soviet Union began to suffer from political mass terror as an instrument of state control before even Stalin became the undisputed ruler of the nation.²³⁷

So pervasive was terror and repression against ordinary people and state officials alike during Bolshevik rule that almost no one within the country dared to challenge the logic of revolutionary violence. Even Russia’s only two living Nobel laureates—psychologist Ivan Pavlov and literary author Ivan Bunin—were careful in their denunciations of Bolshevik terror. Bunin was so appalled by the terror unleashed during Revolution that he characterized it in his diary in the following ways: “The ‘Great Russian Revolution’ is a thousand times more bestial, filthy and stupid than the vile original which it claims to copy because it exceeds—step by step, item for item, and in a horribly shameless and explicit way—the bloody melodrama that had played itself out in France.” His diary was published abroad after he left the Soviet Union. Pavlov was eighty-five years old at the dawn of Great Terror and internationally recognized as the father of modern psychology. He openly challenged them in a letter to the Council of People’s Commissars in 1934. “You disperse not revolution, but fascism with great success

²³⁵ V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii 5-e izdanie, tom 50* (Moskva, 1965-1975), pp. 142-4.

²³⁶ Bilokin, “Mekhanizm bol’shevistkogo nasiliia: konspekt issledovaniia, pp. 511-2. See also, Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Sem’ vozhdai, kniga 1* (Mosvka: Novosti, 1995), p. 156. For more on the prevalence of terror and the logic behind it in Bolshevik policies and documentary evidences, see *Magerovskii, Gosudarstvennyi terror v sovetskom soyuze*.

²³⁷ Under Stalin and his absolute rule state terror reached its genocidal apogee, as the diary of Comintern leader Georgi Dimitrov recounts Stalin saying the following in a secret meeting with the elite NKVD cadre on 7 November 1937: “whoever attempts to destroy the unity of the socialist state, whoever seeks the separation of any of its parts of nationalities—that man is an enemy, a sworn enemy of the peoples of the USSR. And we will destroy each and every such enemy, even if he was an old Bolshevik; *we will destroy all his kin, his family. We will mercilessly destroy anyone who, by his deeds or his thoughts—yes, his thoughts—threatens the unity of the socialist state. To the complete destruction of all enemies, themselves and their kin!* (Approving exclamations: To the great Stalin!).”—*The Diary of Georgi Dimotrov, 1943-1949*, (ed.) Ivo Banac (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 65, emphasis added.

throughout the world,” he wrote. “You are terror and violence . . . Am I alone in thinking and feeling this way? Have pity on the Motherland and us.” Due to his age and reputation, Soviet officials magnanimously restricted his punishment to just a voluminous collection of denunciatory signatures.²³⁸

What did this mean for Central Asia? For our purposes, it is important to highlight four ways in which the Bolshevik Revolution and implementation of Leninist policies affected Central Asians and how visitors from the United States understood the transformation of Central Asia under Bolshevik rule. Firstly, Central Asians suffered from what the rest of the empire did, experiencing the civil war, Communist dictatorship, terror, collectivization, famine, and the resulting depopulation by about two million (in percentage terms, 27% of the population), not to mention economic and social catastrophe.²³⁹ Secondly, although the Bolshevik government employed similar methods of governance and forced modernization across the entire Soviet territory, differences in the economy or the culture of a given area prompted Soviet leaders pursue a policy specific to the region. In the case of Central Asia, the area represented traditional Orient, and for rulers such as Lenin whose ideology was largely Eurocentric, as Mark Batunsky explains, “the word ‘Asian’ meant something savage, ignorant and self-satisfied, a symbol of destructive pessimism and archaic fanaticism.”²⁴⁰ Thirdly, Soviet officials were the main source of information about Central Asia for foreign visitors who studied and wrote about Central Asians. Since the officials wanted to showcase the progress of Soviet rule in Central Asia, they carefully hid the dark side of the Bolshevik Revolution (conquest, violence, and terror) and its

²³⁸ Quotation and discussion are from Tim Tzouliadis, *Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (New York: the Penguin Press, 2008), pp. 80-1.

²³⁹ The numbers are certainly conservative because they do not include most of Kazakhstan's losses. See, Marco Buttino, “Study of the Economic Crisis and Depopulation in Turkestan, 1917-1920,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1990), pp. 64-5.

²⁴⁰ Mark Batunsky, “Racism in Russian Islamology,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1992), p. 76.

catastrophic impact on Central Asian population during the interwar period. Overly positive evaluation of Soviet policy in Central Asia by American visitors and writers in this era reflects the powerful influence of Soviet propaganda state. And fourthly, the level of terror and violence enthusiastically embraced by Bolsheviks must be kept in mind in the discussion of apologia various American observers demonstrated even at the height of Stalinist terror, lest we become numb to the realities and brutality of the Bolshevik oppression and their ruthless pursuit of forced modernization.

It is worth analyzing in some details how and why Bolshevik leaders treated Central Asia differently from the rest of the USSR.²⁴¹ Central Asia was both geographically and culturally Asian, and despite their condemnation of Western exploitation of the colonized East, Bolshevik leaders subscribed to the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which was Eurocentric at its core. As John Hobson argues, for Lenin and other key Bolshevik leaders the East was “a helpless victim . . . entirely defenseless and . . . stripped of both agency and dignity by a reified Leviathanesque West that struts the world stage like a Behemoth.” The Asians were passive and all they could do was wait for a Western savior: not in the form of “Western bourgeoisie but more [as] the revolutionary vanguard of the Western working classes.”²⁴² Top Bolshevik leaders abstained from speaking in civilizational terms, partly because they prioritized class struggle as the most important feature of their ideology and partly because they wanted to win the hearts and minds of the Easterners. Some Bolshevik intellectuals, however, publicly emphasized European roots of Bolshevism. The first Soviet Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii wrote that the Soviets were “first of all Europeans” and “perhaps . . . the only authentic Europeans,” since

²⁴¹ The purpose here is not to argue whether Bolsheviks treated Central Asia better or worse than the rest, but to highlight crucial differences.

²⁴² John Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 139, 142.

Marxism was the “apogee” of “European civilization.” “Of course, we love ‘Asia,’”

Lunacharskii also wrote. However, the Soviets were not trying to “‘asianize’ Europe” but to “‘europeanize Asia.’”²⁴³ Even when Soviets criticized the imperial Europe as the center of exploitative Capitalism, as one Kazakh scholar notes, “they saw themselves as Europeans in its Asian territory. In Central Asian context, the Europeanness did not seem to mean corrupted political and economic structures, but rather ‘progress.’”²⁴⁴ This was the crux of Soviet Eurocentrism in Central Asia.

What this meant for Central Asians was that they could for the foreseeable future forget about any form of autonomy, let alone sovereignty, although the Constitution of the USSR granted them the right to self-determination and the right to secede if they wanted it. It was therefore not surprising that the natives found it hard to become members of the new Revolutionary government, established in Tashkent in November 1917. Initially, the natives were outright rejected from participation on the following grounds: “allowing Muslims to serve, at the present time, in the highest revolutionary government bodies of Turkistan is unacceptable, because the attitude of native peoples to the power of Labor, Soldier, and Peasant Deputies is totally undetermined, and because there are no proletarian class organizations among the native population.”²⁴⁵ An attempt to establish an autonomous government in Kokand, its membership comprising of thirty-six Muslims and eighteen Russians and non-Muslims failed. Bolsheviks in Tashkent stormed the city and established their rule by using brute force in early 1918.²⁴⁶ “One-third of the old city was reduced to ruins,” as local newspaper *Ulug Turkiston* described the

²⁴³ Anatolii Lunacharskii, “Mezhdu vostokom i zapadom” in *Zapad i vostok: sbornik vsesoyuznogo obshchestva kul’turnoi svyazi s zagranitse* (Moskva, 1926), pp. 12-3.

²⁴⁴ Botakoz Kassymbekova, “Helpless Imperialists: European State Workers in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 2011), p. 34n3.

²⁴⁵ Quoted in Nadira Abdurakhimova, “The Colonial System of Power in Turkistan,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 34 (2002), p. 259.

²⁴⁶ Svatopluk Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 214-5.

conquest. “Piles of corpses, many of them completely burned, are everywhere . . . The exact number of the casualties has not been reported but estimates put the number at no less than ten thousand.”²⁴⁷ Many of the members of Bolsheviks at the time in Central Asia were former Tsarist officials, workers, and settlers, which made it hard for locals distinguish between the two regimes.

The situation changed soon because keeping power at the hands of former Tsarist officials was also against Bolshevik plans. Their plan was two-fold: destruction of Tsarist colonialism on the one hand, and the relics of the traditional society on the other. Much of the malaise Soviets saw in Central Asia at the time was primarily blamed on Tsarist colonialism but in practice the target was the traditional society that had existed for centuries. They aimed at eradicating Russian “great power chauvinism” and their “colonial attitudes.” They also wanted to destroy the natives’ “feudal social structure” and their “traditional believes and customs.”²⁴⁸ But this two-mode attack disproportionately targeted the latter. “To the Bolsheviks,” Christian Teichmann argues, “overcoming the ‘colonial relics of the Tsarist regime’ in Central Asia meant the destruction of the old traditional society and the building of a new ‘modern’ Soviet civilization in its place.”²⁴⁹ Although Central Asians were not passive players during the Revolution and after, rebelling,²⁵⁰ adapting to new realities, and even welcoming the Revolution

²⁴⁷ Quoted in Sergey Abashin et al., “Soviet Rule and the Delineation of Borders in the Ferghana Valley, 1917-1930” in Frederick Starr (ed.), *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia* (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 2011) , p. 98.

²⁴⁸ Christian Teichmann, “Canals, Cotton, and the Limits of De-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924-1941,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Dec., 2007), p. 501.

²⁴⁹ Christian Teichmann, “Cultivating the Periphery: Bolshevik Civilising Missions and ‘Colonialism’ in Soviet Central Asia,” *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2009), p. 41.

²⁵⁰ The armed opposition became known as the *basmachi* movement. The word “basmachi” literally means “conqueror, oppressor” in local Turkic languages. There was no unified front, armed groups failing to form a unified opposition to Bolshevik power due to power struggle among themselves and lack of a winning strategy. The complexity of this movement can be found in the works of Marco Buttino and the only comprehensive but a one-sided study of the movement, besides highly ideological publications by Soviet scholars, was done by Central Asian émigré in Germany Baymirza Hayit. See, Marko Buttino, *Revolutsiia naoborot: sredniaia Aziia mezhdur padeniem*

because of their opposition to their old despotic rulers or various other local factors,²⁵¹ the power ultimately was at the hands of Bolsheviks. Central Asians had to build their future within the confines set by the central government in Petrograd/Moscow.²⁵² They also had to come to terms with the central government's civilizing mission—or as Bolsheviks sometimes called it, sovietization.

In its initial stage of building Socialism, Bolsheviks did not attack Islam with the same ferocity that they did Orthodox Christianity. It was partly due to attempts to rally the Orient against Western imperialism and partly because Bolsheviks did not take the Muslim faith seriously, assuming it would easily wither away in the face of science and atheistic propaganda. Soviet embrace of scientific approach bordered on obsession, assuming that everything, including religion and ideology, could be studied and classified with scientifically observable and testable methods.²⁵³ Thus for them Socialism became “scientific Socialism” and atheism became “scientific atheism.” This dogmatic obsession with science was mocked by Russian writer Evgenii Zamiatin in his pioneering dystopian novel *We*.²⁵⁴ Another Russian literary luminary Maxim Gorky condemned Lenin's dogmatic approach to interpreting Socialism and treating Russia as some sort of a laboratory to have an ideology tested and proven. The way Bolsheviks imposed Socialism gave way to “despotism of Lenin-Trotsky,” Gorky said, and Lenin himself became a “slave of dogma.”²⁵⁵

tsarkoi imperii i obrazovanii sssr (Moskva: Zven'ia, 2007); Baymirza Hayit, *Ruslara karşı basmacılar hareketi: Türkistan Türklüğü'nün milli mücadelesi* (İstanbul : Babiali Kültür Yayıncılığı, 2006).

²⁵¹ See, in this connection, Patryk Reid, *Central Asian Bolsheviks: Mediating Revolution, 1917-24* (Thesis [M.A.]: Carleton University, 2006).

²⁵² St. Petersburg became Petrograd in 1914 and Leningrad in 1924.

²⁵³ See Chapters 6 and 7 in James Andrews, *Science for the Masses: The Bolshevik State, Public Science, and the Popular Imagination in Soviet Russia, 1917-1934* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

²⁵⁴ Evgenii Zamiatin, *We*, translated by Natasha Randall (1921; reprint, New York: Modern Library 2006). George Orwell publicly acknowledged that *1984* was inspired by his reading of Zamiatin's *We*.

²⁵⁵ Maksim Gorky, *Nesvoyevremennye mysli: zametki o revoliutsii i kul'ture* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), pp. 149-50. Gorky expressed these thoughts in newspaper publications in 1917-8.

Within a month after the Revolution, Bolsheviks issued an “Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East,” signed by Stalin and Lenin. The statement appealed to Muslims of Russia “whose mosques and shrines, whose faiths and customs have been violated by the Tsars and oppressors of Russia”: “Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions, are decreed free and inviolable! Build your national life freely and without hindrance.” The appeal also addressed “Muslims of the East, Persians, Turks, Arabs, and Hindus . . . in whose lives and property, in whose freedom and native land the rapacious European plunderers have for centuries treaded,” promising Soviet support in their liberation from the Western imperialist yoke.²⁵⁶ In rhetoric at least, the promise of the proclamation was certainly appealing to the peoples of the East, and in Turkestan many native modernizers known as Jadids joined the Communist Party of Turkestan as soon as it was formed.²⁵⁷ Soon after, the Bolshevik promise began to crack, as the Bolshevik leaders started putting their policies into practice and evolve their revolutionary goals that were not necessarily in line with the interests of Eastern peoples.

The crack began to show its face when the Second Congress of Communist summoned Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920. Muslim representatives from across the country and representatives from neighboring Muslim countries as well as Asia, Europe, and North America gathered in Baku to discuss revolutionary goals of oppressed peoples against imperialism—England being the prime target. Turkish and Persian delegates were fairly large but Soviet representatives who were carefully selected by party officials dominated the gathering. While the Congress itself showed that the Soviet rhetoric on Islam and the East was

²⁵⁶ Quoted and discussed in Ivar Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World, 1917-1958* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1959), pp. 33-4. See also, Harish Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia, 1917-1927: a Study of Soviet Policy towards Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan* (Geneva: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1966).

²⁵⁷ Adeeb Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 288.

not much different from European Orientalism (which the Soviets, long before Edward Said, accused of being at the service of European colonial policies²⁵⁸), the Bolshevik leaders also demonstrated their utter ignorance of Islam, its history, and Muslim sensibilities. For instance, secretary of the Comintern commission on the East declared that the notion of private property was alien to Islam. (He was wrong.) Karl Radek suggested that “Muslim rulers” such as Genghiz Khan invaded Europe not to destroy it but “to create a new civilization, a civilization of the free worker.” Aside from being an absurd application of Marxist historiography on Mongol invasion of Europe, Radek’s statement could hardly impress Muslim delegates for whom, as Michael Kemper writes, “Genghiz Khan was rather an horror than a positive example of Eastern military prowess or civilizational virtues.”²⁵⁹ Ultimately, it was the manifesto of the Congress, chaired by Grigory Zinov’ev, that pretty much guaranteed the failure of the Soviet endeavor by declaring all Muslim holy wars of the past “fraudulent” and summoning the delegates “to the first real holy war, under the red banner of the Communist International.”²⁶⁰ As Ivar Spector writes, the “manifesto urged the Faithful to substitute the red flag of revolution for the green banner of the Prophet, the Third International for Islam, Lenin for Mohammed. The price of liberation from England was the repudiation of religion—Islam.”²⁶¹ Such an appeal doomed to failure and made Muslim representatives particularly wary of Bolshevik goals in their countries.

The Bolshevik rhetoric on Islam was initially infused with some religious terminology, trying to convince Muslims that communism and Islam had much in common. Their purpose

²⁵⁸ According to Vera Tolz, early Soviet criticism of Western Orientalism might have partly inspired Said through the writings of Arab Socialists who studied in Moscow in the 1960s and whose works Said cited in *Orientalism*. See, Vera Tolz, “European, National, and (Anti-) Imperial: the Formation of Academic Oriental Studies in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Russia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 2008), pp. 78-80.

²⁵⁹ Michael Kemper, “Red Orientalism: Mikhail Pavlovich and Marxist Oriental Studies in Early Soviet Russia,” *Die Welts des Islams*, Vol. 50 (2010), pp. 449-50.

²⁶⁰ Manifesto of the Congress to the Peoples of the East, available from <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/ch04a.htmz> (Accessed: 13 March 2016).

²⁶¹ Spector, *the Soviet Union and the Muslim World*, p. 60.

however was not to understand Islam in its own terms but to find the right strategies to replace Islam among Muslims with communism. The people who represented the official mouthpiece of Soviet Oriental scholarship were not real Orientalists with knowledge of Oriental languages and culture, but Marxists who were trained in other areas. Oriental and Islamic studies of the Petrograd/Leningrad school were pushed aside as “old, reactionary, and out-dated,” while scholars such as Vasilii Bartol’d and Ignatii Kratchkovskii were vilified as promoters of bourgeois ideology.²⁶² Nikolai Bukharin, known among the Bolshevik leaders as a voice of moderation, was instrumental in marginalizing the Petrograd/Leningrad school and promoting a new cadre of professional Marxists whose knowledge of Oriental languages was almost non-existent. But they were trained Marxists and understood the goals of Marxism-Leninism, which was what mattered most. For these Marxist Orientalists, Islam could be understood using Marxist methodology of understanding historical development of mankind from primitive, to slave-holding, to feudal, to bourgeois capitalist societies, and find the right strategies to convince Muslims to embrace socialism as the next logical step in human socio-economic development. There would eventually be no place for Islam in the future. Thus, the Soviet discourse on Islam was, rather than being a study of Islam, “*anti-Islamic* Islamic studies,” as Michael Kemper correctly describes it.²⁶³

Ultimately, the initial Soviet attempts to propagandize communism among Muslims using Islamic terminology gave way to militant atheistic propaganda, accompanied by wholesale closure and destruction of mosques, religious schools, shrines and elimination of religious

²⁶² Kemper, “Red Orientalism,” p. 437. More on the marginalization of Petrograd/Leningrad Orientalists in Anna Arkad’evna Dolinina, *Nevol’nik dolga (nauchnaia biografiia vydayushegosia arabista I. Iu. Kratchkovskogo)* (Sankt-Peterburg : Centr ‘Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie’, 1994).

²⁶³ Michael Kemper, “The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923-1933,” *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 49 (2009), pp. 2-3, emphasis original.

authorities and symbols from the public in Central Asia.²⁶⁴ Many local reformers hoping for some form of autonomy under the Bolshevik regime found out that their hopes were nothing but pipe dreams. Herein lies the complexity of the Soviet policy in Central Asia in comparison to traditional colonial policy of the Tsarist Empire and (or other European empires in their territories, for that matter). The new Soviet government tried to transform Central Asia far more radically by introducing new educational methods, raising cultural and national awareness in Marxist-Leninist terms, helping build the economic infrastructure to combat inequality, and treating the region as part of a large state rather than a distant colony. This transformation however can be viewed as the most successful colonial policy as the Soviets achieved these by nearly wiping out the old cultural awareness and instilling the notion that Central Asians were full-fledged members of the new regime though they never truly were.

On the surface Soviet policy in Central Asia could be viewed a spectacular success due to visible transformations in political culture, economy, and education, but there was always the other side of these achievements that were not easily discernable to outside observers—the darker side behind what one Russian scholar calls “the façade of Stalinist abundance.”²⁶⁵ In the words of Botakoz Kassymbekova, the Soviet Union was “an empire with a caveat.”²⁶⁶ For example, a modern political ideology in the form of Soviet socialism was imposed but the people’s attachment to Islam was mercilessly attacked. Soviets cultivated a modern understanding of nationhood—thus Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan were born—with its culture, history, and language. But cultures were re-shaped and histories re-written along Marxist-Leninist ideals, borders were redrawn based on distorted

²⁶⁴ For some of the anti-religious tactics used against Islam, see Fanny Bryan, “Anti-Islamic Propaganda: *Bezbozhnik*, 1925-35, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1986), pp. 29-47.

²⁶⁵ Elena Osokina, *Za fasadom stalinskogo izobilii* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 1999).

²⁶⁶ Kassymbekova, “Helpless Imperialists,” p. 21.

perceptions of Orientalists in Moscow and St. Petersburg, while the language policy of the Soviet Union was the arguably the most destructive force in sovietizing the region.²⁶⁷

In pre-revolutionary Central Asia, the two languages used were Farsi and Turkic, both based on Arabic script. In Soviet Central Asia, each new republic developed its own vernacular with the Latin alphabet as the basis which two decades later was replaced with Cyrillic. As a result, two generations of people were deprived of the ability to read in the languages they grew up understanding. Even then the new vernacular languages were used alongside Russian and relegated to lesser significance. As Michael Smith explains, “the very act of juxtaposing the two languages side by side was to underscore and highlight the superiority of Russian, the language through which . . . legal accommodations were given, the language to which all politically and career-minded nations aspired mastery.”²⁶⁸ And as Benjamin Loring notes, “throughout the Soviet East, Bolshevik goals of social equality and economic advancement—indeed, a complete decolonization—for disadvantaged ethnic minorities frequently clashed with the economic and political priorities of central institutions in Moscow.”²⁶⁹ When those clashed took place, the former had to be sacrificed for the latter.

Similar policies were pursued in the economic realm. With a major push from Moscow, new cities and towns were built and populated. But as Laura Adams notes, “the sedentarization and collectivization of nomadic populations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands and irrevocably changed what it meant to be Kazakh and Kyrgyz.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ For role of Orientalists in redrawing the map of Central Asia, see Alfrid Bustanov, *Soviet Orientalism and the Creation of Central Asian Nations* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

²⁶⁸ Michael Smith, “The Hegemony of Content: Russian as a Language of State Assimilation in the USSR,” *Kampf um Wort und Schrift: Russifizierung in Osteuropa im 19.-20. Jahrhundert* (2012), p. 196.

²⁶⁹ Benjamin Loring, “‘Colonizers With Party Cards’: Soviet Internal Colonialism in Central Asia, 1917-39,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 2014), pp. 78-9.

²⁷⁰ Laura Adams, “Culture, Colonialism and Sovereignty in Central Asia,” in Sally Cummings and Raymond Hinnebusch (eds), *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 207

Soviets introduced massive changes in building up the infrastructure of Central Asia by constructing dams, plants, railroads, and laid the groundwork for developing a native cadre of engineers and technicians. There was however a heavy caveat, as explained by Kassymbekova: “Bolshevik state building was paid for primarily in human lives (bodies and destinies). Repression, terror, and purges characterized the Soviet political system and were the basis of its state building.”²⁷¹ Furthermore, certain economic policies resembled traditional colonial policies, forcing Central Asia to become a provider of raw supplies such as cotton, oil, and gas. Protesting Moscow’s demands to develop cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan, the republic’s Minister of Agriculture Khidir Aliev quipped: “The more the Uzbek cotton economy develops, the more it will become dependent on Moscow, and Uzbekistan will be turned into a red colony of Moscow.”²⁷² Central Asia nevertheless was turned into a giant cotton plantation, with a heavy burden placed upon the local people’s shoulders and disastrous consequences for the ecology of the region.²⁷³

Like many colonial masters, Soviets took it upon themselves to “liberate” the women of Central Asia by banning bride-price, underage marriage, women’s seclusion, and polygyny. The most profound and tragic of these policies was the policy of mass unveiling known as *hujum*.²⁷⁴ While there were partial or full supporters of these policies among the locals, the manner they were enforced left Central Asian women, in the words of Shoshana Keller, “trapped between state and society.”²⁷⁵ Party officials were encouraged to throw off their female relatives’ veils

²⁷¹ Kassymbekova, “Helpless Imperialists,” p. 28.

²⁷² Quoted in Baymirza Hayit, *Islam and Turkestan Under Russian Rule* (Istanbul: Can Matbaa, 1987), p. 279.

²⁷³ Jonathan Thurman, *Modes of Organization in Central Asian Irrigation: The Ferghana Valley, 1876 to Present*, PhD Dissertation (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1999); Teichmann, “Canals, Cotton, and the Limits of De-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan.”

²⁷⁴ *Hujum* literally means “an attack.” For colonial dimensions of this policy, see Douglass Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

²⁷⁵ Shoshana Keller, “Trapped Between State and Society: Women’s Liberation and Islam in Uzbekistan, 1926-41,” *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 1998).

and women were organized in gatherings where they publicly burnt their veils. Meanwhile the media, cinema, and schools were used to propagate against old religious and cultural rules regulating relations between men and women.²⁷⁶ Although these policies helped raise the position of women in society, the process was traumatic for women as they had to grapple with the demands of conservative society on the one hand, and the needs of the Bolshevik regime on the other.

Colonialism, civil war, revolution, and Bolshevik assault on traditional values made Central Asians view *hujum* as another attempt at removing traditional authority figures from their positions and disrupting their social structures. Unable to oppose the state directly, some men resorted to organized violence and terror directed against women involved in unveiling. Many women joining the campaign or showing their faces in public were beaten, tortured, raped, and outright murdered with symbolical disposal of their dismembered bodies to terrorize others into submission—in essence matching Bolsheviks in employing such terror tactics. Between 1927 and 1929 in Uzbekistan alone, around 2000 women were killed by these forces.²⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Bolsheviks removed women from seclusion and forced them into heavy production. As Uzbek historian Dilarom Alimova says, the tendency to “equalize” productive capacities of men and women “was understood quite literally.” Alongside men, women were deployed into carpentry, brick laying, metal and timber processing industries, railroad construction, and cotton growing under burning sunshine sometimes with their children on their backs. By early 1930s in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, women constituted eighty percent of the cotton-growing

²⁷⁶ For a good discussion of using Cinema as a powerful tool of Soviet Orientalist propaganda, see Michael Smith, “Cinema for the ‘Soviet East’: National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani Film,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Winter, 1997); and Matthew Payne, “Victor Turin’s *Turksib* (1929) and Soviet Orientalism,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2001).

²⁷⁷ See chapter “The Counter-Hujum: Terror and Veiling” in Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

workforce.²⁷⁸ Considering the abject state of sanitary conditions and lack of adequate support for women's needs, these deployments were a heavy burden rather than a liberation for Central Asian women. In other words, Soviets partly liberated women but did so with a caveat.

Overall the Soviet rhetoric of bringing progress and liberation to Central Asia should be viewed with heavy skepticism. There is no doubt many Bolsheviks, local and from the center, genuinely believed that Soviet civilizing mission was for the betterment of Central Asian peoples, but those intentions, like those of French and British colonial officials in their respective terms, were uncannily tainted by the ugly face of Bolshevik Orientalism. "If Soviet civilization was rational, secular, revolutionary," as Alexander Prusin and Scott Zeman explain the dominant attitudes of Bolsheviks, "then Central Asia was superstitious, religious, and counter-revolutionary. Only after the process of Sovietization was complete, could the region be 'elevated' to fill an appropriate niche in the 'brotherly family of the Soviet people.'"²⁷⁹ Because of the nature of the tyrannical political system Bolsheviks established, Central Asians had no chance of offering an alternative narrative to this discourse and basically had no chance of expressing an opinion unless they agreed with the new Soviet reality.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was a monumental event with far reaching consequences. The purpose of this brief discussion of what it meant for Central Asia was to highlight the complexity of it for both Central Asians and contemporary outside observers. A more thorough discussion of Soviet policy in Central Asia during the interwar period is well beyond the scope of this work. But it is worth recalling the points highlighted here because they

²⁷⁸ Dilarom Alimova, "A Historian's Vision of 'Khudjum,'" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1998), pp. 152-3. Arthur Koestler, a Hungarian-born German Communist who traveled with Langston Hughes, observed the oddity of how young Komsomol teachers were trying to teach Turkmen women picking cotton with their babies behind their back the new literacy: "so the women . . . were supposed to learn first the Latin, and then the Cyrillic alphabet; and all that during a half-hour's midday break, in between feeding their babies and drinking their soup."-- Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing: An Autobiography* (New York: MacMillan, 1969), location 2085. Kindle edition.

²⁷⁹ Alexander Prusin and Scott Zeman, "Taming Russia's Wild East: the Central Asian Historical-revolutionary Film as Soviet Orientalism," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2003), p. 260.

were not easily discernable to outside visitors and observers. The outsiders mostly assessed Soviet rule in Central Asia through their political and ideological lens, viewing it as either the scourge of humanity or a source progress, often negligent to the realities on the ground or the plight of the people.

The Legacy of Lothrop Stoddard's Musings on Islam and Bolshevism

“Meanwhile Lenine, surrounded by his Chinese executioners, sits behind the Kremlin walls, a modern Jenghiz Khan plotting the plunder of a world.”

Lothrop Stoddard

Bolshevism and the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union fascinated many in the United States. Even among those who were against Bolshevik ideals, there were people who were attracted to what George Kennan called the “romance of economic development.”²⁸⁰ Negative attitudes towards traditions and pre-modern lifestyles in the Soviet Union further strengthened their belief that the sacrifices endured by Soviet peoples were worth the price of industrial-economic progress. As David Engerman writes, “American observers found the sacrifices worthy because they considered the people sacrificed so unworthy.”²⁸¹ There were however exceptions to this trend. Among them was the Harvard Professor Lothrop Stoddard, the man generally notorious for his views on race and immigration. He could find no justification for Bolshevism and its methods but not necessarily because of concern for the victims of Bolshevik brutality. Stoddard was among intellectuals who thought the revolt of non-white peoples against white man’s world supremacy—and he put Islam among forces behind this revolt—was dangerous but Bolshevism was more dangerous, the scourge of the earth that needed to be

²⁸⁰ David Engerman, “Romance of Economic Development and New Histories of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2004), p. 29.

²⁸¹ David Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 242.

defeated at all costs. And that thinking was the basis for his analysis of Islam and Bolshevism in his writings.

Stoddard was an eccentric writer and he admitted his rumblings about hereditary characteristics of different races could be viewed by others as “the wild figments of a disordered imagination.”²⁸² That was nevertheless the constant theme in his analysis of international relations. Deeply troubled by World War I—which he really saw as the “white civil war”—and which his late twentieth-century intellectual successor Samuel Huntington saw as “Western civil war”—as well as the Bolshevik Revolution, Stoddard published a series of writings warning against “Mohammedan revival” and the worldwide ambitions of Lenin and Trotsky.²⁸³ His analyses were deeply influenced by racist thinking. For example, he saw manifestations of Arab and Turkish nationalism in stages and believed both reached the “‘racial’ stage of development.”²⁸⁴ This was particularly worrying to him. At the same time, he was concerned about supra-national element in Islam which he believed could transcend nationalism and unify all brown people of the Orient in their struggle against supremacy of the Occident.²⁸⁵ He even penned a book on Islam, recounting its rise and fall since the seventh century and its place in contemporary affairs. In the book, he borrows from other scholars to recount the history of Islam and even shows some admiration for its early expansion but his discussion of contemporary Muslims is filled with racist thinking.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Lothrop Stoddard, “Pan-Turanianism,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Feb., 1917), p. 23.

²⁸³ For “white civil war,” see Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against World White-Supremacy* (New York: Scribner’s, 1921), p. 196. For “Western civil war,” see Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 23.

²⁸⁴ Stoddard, “Pan-Turanianism,” p. 15.

²⁸⁵ Lothrop Stoddard, “Islam Aflame with Revolt,” in *The World’s Work: A History of Our Time*, Vol. XLIV (1922), pp. 136-42.

²⁸⁶ Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (New York: Scribner’s, 1921).

Racialist perspective on analyzing “Mohammedan revival” leads Stoddard to odd generalizations. For instance, the Ottoman Turks belonged to the “Uralo-Altaic race,” he writes. Among other people who were part of this racial family were: “the Turcomans of Central Asia and Persia, the Tartars of South Russia and Transcaucasia, the Magyars of Hungary, the Finns of Finland and Baltic provinces, the aboriginal tribes of Siberia, and even the distant Mongols and Manchus.” These people spoke similar languages and, more importantly, their physical characteristics displayed “undoubted affinities.” They all lacked superior intellect and artistic imagination but were masterful warriors and the “greatest conquerors and empire-builders the world has ever seen.” Among these conquerors were “Atilla and his Huns, Arpad and his Magyars, Isperich and his Bulgars, Alp Arslan and his Seljuks, Ertogrul and his Ottomans, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane with their ‘inflexible’ Mongol hordes, Baber in India, even Kubilai Khan and Nurchachu in far-off Cathay.” They were all of the same type: “the Turanian ‘man on horseback.’”²⁸⁷ The idea that Finns, Turks, and Mongols spoke similar languages would, of course, be news to those people. And considering that the empire-builders he categorized as belonging to the same race often historically found themselves on the opposing side of military conflict, they would find Stoddard’s generalizations particularly strange. But this is again more revealing about Stoddard’s racialist worldview than about the people he describes. For him, certain racial characteristics were definitive of human races.

It is not surprising then that he conflates Azeris for “Tartars,” argues that after entering the World War Bulgars “formally renounced Slavism and have embraced the Turanian ethnic gospel,” while Magyars, “conscious of their kinship with the Turks,” sided with Turkey against Slavic Russia.²⁸⁸ On the last point, Stoddard was influenced by none other than Arminius

²⁸⁷ Stoddard, “Pan-Turanianism,” p. 16.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 20-1.

Vámbéry. It should be recalled that Vámbéry also believed in the affinity between Magyars and Turks, which he tried to prove by studying Turkic languages and traveling to Central Asia. The footprints of Vámbéry's influence can be found elsewhere in Stoddard's writings as well. In a piece recounting his trip to recently established Turkish Republic, Stoddard could distinguish between "more or less Western-appearing" parts of Turkish cities and parts of it that made him feel he was in "Central Asia—a region of hard-baked open spaces, low hovels, and crumbling walls of sun-dried brick, and fat cakes of camel-dung drying for fuel"—a region Stoddard never visited.²⁸⁹ He forgot to mention that he borrowed his imagination from Vámbéry's description of the region over half a century earlier. While Vámbéry was no stranger to exaggerations and embellishment for the sake of telling a colorful story, Stoddard added his own flavor to Vámbéry's descriptions of Central Asia and its peoples. For instance, he dubbed the population of Russian Central Asia "a compact block of 7,000,000 fanatical Turcomans."²⁹⁰ Vámbéry at least knew the difference between Turkmens, Uzbeks, and Tajiks even though he considered each more barbaric than the other.

Stoddard's vehement opposition to Bolshevism had nothing to do with the dictatorial nature of Bolshevik rule. Nowhere can this more clearly be illustrated than in his comparative analysis of Bolshevism and Italian Fascism. For him, such sentimental notions as "Democracy, Liberty, Equality, Inalienable Rights, Parliamentary Government" were "idols . . . like Gods in a heathen temple, paralyzing the creative thought and energy of mankind!" Democracy, he suggested, was "an unrealizable absurdity." It was also absurd to suggest that Bolshevism and Fascism sprang "from the same root." While the former preached "doctrinaire egalitarianism," Fascism, "in accord with the trend of scientific discovery," stressed "that men are *not* created

²⁸⁹ Lothrop Stoddard, "Turkish Vistas by Land and Sea," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. LXXV, No. 2 (Feb., 1924), p. 132.

²⁹⁰ Stoddard, "Pan-Turanianism," p. 22.

equal”—something “in no uncertain tones . . . is recognized and appreciated by scientists and well-informed laymen the world over.”²⁹¹ This was key to his opposition to Bolshevism and fascination with Mussolini’s unapologetic defense of *gerarchia*. He loathed Bolshevism not because, in its application in Russia, it was brutal and dictatorial but because it was a formidable challenge to the racial hierarchy he and fascism championed.

It was for this reason that even when Stoddard expressed his disdain for Bolshevism as an ideology and Islam as a religion, his racist concerns were paramount. He was concerned about them because he feared both could threaten white man’s supremacy. In his discussion of Africa, he emphasizes how Islam could threaten white man’s rule there. “Insofar as he [African] is Christianized, the negro’s savage instincts will be restrained and he will be disposed to acquiesce in white tutelage,” Stoddard writes. “Insofar as he is Islamized, the negro’s warlike propensities will be inflamed, and he will be used as a tool of Arab Pan-Islamism seeking to drive the white man from Africa and make the continent its very own.”²⁹² Islam was also a bigger threat because its followers “are not primitive savages like the African negroes or the Australoids, but are mainly peoples with the genuine civilizations built up by their own efforts from the remote past.”²⁹³ Rather than being a mere imitation of the West, Islam was attempting “a new synthesis—an assimilation of Western methods to Eastern ends.”²⁹⁴ As for Bolshevism, Stoddard warned that it “would suck us down into the slattern savagery of the Congo.”²⁹⁵ As if the Oriental awakening (due to social unrest, the flow of Western ideas, displeasure with Western rule, and the loss of Western prestige as a result of World War I) was not concerning enough,

²⁹¹ Lothrop Stoddard, “Realism: The True Challenge of Fascism,” *The Harper’s Monthly* (Oct., 1927), pp. 579, 580, 583.

²⁹² Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against World White-Supremacy*, pp. 96-7.

²⁹³ Lothrop Stoddard, “Unrest in the Islamic World,” *Scribner’s* (July 1921), p. 20.

²⁹⁴ Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*, p. 50.

²⁹⁵ Lothrop Stoddard, “Bolshevism: The Heresy of the Underman,” *The Century Magazine* (June 1919), p. 237.

“there now came the sinister influence of Russian Bolshevism, marshalling all this diffused unrest by systematic methods for definite ends. Bolshevism was frankly out for a world revolution and the destruction of Western civilization.”²⁹⁶ Bolshevism, as Stoddard saw it, was embracing “Western methods to Eastern ends” even more so than Islam did.²⁹⁷

When Stoddard’s analyses were relatively free from his racist perspective, he was certainly capable of producing insightful and useful commentary. While he was off the mark in his more abstract discussions of Bolshevism, his contemporary reading of Bolshevik propaganda and actions was remarkably accurate. He could see the two-stage objective of Bolsheviks’ policy in the East: first respect their customs and nationalist aspirations to mobilize them against Western imperial powers and, once Bolshevik power is established, destroy the upper classes and nationalist leaders. “In the first stage, Bolshevism is quite ready to respect Oriental faiths and customs and to back Orientalist Nationalist movements,” Stoddard explained. “In the second stage, religions like Islam and Nationalists like Mustapha Kemal are to be branded as ‘bourgeois’ and relentlessly destroyed. How Bolshevik diplomacy endeavors to work these two schemes in double harness, we shall presently see.” Stoddard also noted that the “first practical application of Bolshevism to an Eastern people was in Russian Turkestan.”²⁹⁸ Historical development of Soviet rule in Central Asia after the Bolshevik revolution proved Stoddard right in this instance.

Stoddard’s larger points about Islam and Bolshevism, particularly as potential threats to the white man, were consistent with his concern for the racial purity of the West. The idea that

²⁹⁶ Lothrop Stoddard, “Social Unrest and Bolshevism in the Islamic World,” *Scribner’s* (Aug., 1921), p. 163.

²⁹⁷ Him considering Bolshevism outside the realm of Western civilization was also rooted in his racist thinking. It goes without saying that Bolshevism to a large extent was a Western ideology, but this idea of anything threatening the supremacy of Anglo-American entente should be considered “anti-Western” has not lost its appeal among respectable intellectuals. As late as 1990, famous British Orientalist Bernard Lewis could claim that, until the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, “the main forces opposed to the West, both as a way of life and as a power in the world” were “Nazism and communism.” Totally missing from Lewis’s insight was the fact that both Nazism and Communism were Western ideologies.—Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic* (Sep., 1990), p. 52.

²⁹⁸ Stoddard, “Social Unrest and Bolshevism in the Islamic World,” pp. 164, 166.

biological race and heredity defined history was at the core of his analyses. As strange as his racist views may seem today, they nevertheless should not be ignored as “the wild figments of a disordered imagination.” Stoddard was not a marginal figure. His doctoral dissertation advisor was Archibald Cary Coolidge, the founding editor of *Foreign Affairs*, and his works on race and immigration were cited by President Warren Harding in addressing America’s “race problem.”²⁹⁹ Stoddard’s arguments about Islam and Bolshevism could resonate positively with others concerned about preserving Western supremacy. It should be noted that in discussing Islam and Bolshevism he borrowed heavily from Vambery. Stoddard modified Vambery’s views on Russia and Islam in accordance with his understanding of the needs of his time. Both of them viewed Islam’s history similarly: once a dominant force in the world, but beaten and humiliated by Western powers in the last few centuries, was slowly rising up. What could make it worse was Moscow’s insidious hand, fomenting Muslims against the West. Like Vambery before him, Stoddard saw Bolsheviks at play throughout the Oriental world, encouraging them into violence against Western powers. For example, Stoddard was convinced of “Moscow’s hands visible in the epidemic of rioting and seditious violence which swept Northern India in the spring of 1919.”³⁰⁰ For Vambery and Stoddard, Russia belonged to a semi-Asiatic race that possessed both Oriental and Occidental characteristics—which made her particularly dangerous because nothing could be more horrifying than employing Western methods for Eastern ends.

Stoddard’s prescriptions for preserving the racial purity of the West and his warnings against Bolshevism and Islam did not disappear either. During the Cold War era, his writings on Islam resonated well with Bernard Lewis who, despite being a much more erudite scholar of the

²⁹⁹ Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 16, 89.

³⁰⁰ Stoddard, “Social Unrest and Bolshevism in the Islamic World,” p. 164. For an example of Vámbéry seeing Moscow’s hands behind alleged anti-British movements in India, see *Sketches*, p. 414.

history of Islam, generally agreed with the Vambery-Stoddard thesis: Islam once ascendant but later defeated by the Christian West was slowly rising up and challenging Western supremacy. Although he lived in an era when overt racism was discredited, Lewis often looked into the mind of an Arab or a Muslim male and generalized about the entire Muslim world.³⁰¹ As the Cold War was intensifying in early 1950s, Lewis argued that Communism had “a strong appeal” for Muslims, most importantly because of its opposition to the West. “The Communists are against the West and for that reason can at once count on important elements of support in the Islamic world, just as the Nazis were able to do in their time,” Lewis argued, “to a considerable extent the same elements of support and for the same reasons.”³⁰² At a Middle East conference at John Hopkins University in 1957, Lewis argued: “We shall be better able to understand this situation if we view the present discontents of the Middle East not as a conflict between states or nations, but as a clash between civilisations.”³⁰³ He continued to argue along this line throughout the Cold War era.³⁰⁴

During the Cold War, however, Stoddard’s argument that Communism was the main threat became the major element of American foreign policy, effectively relegating Lewis’s obsession with the Islamic threat to a secondary significance. In reality, American cold warriors

³⁰¹ For examples, see Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p. 135; and Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” p. 49.

³⁰² Bernard Lewis, “Communism and Islam,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1954), p. 3. The fact that Lewis’s arguments were highly political became ever more clear in the post-9/11 world when he became an advisor to Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney on Middle East affairs. In an interview to Israeli conservative newspaper *Jerusalem Post* in 2004, Lewis stated: “Islam, which has been weak for two centuries, has always sought backing to help it fight the enemy - Western democracy. First it supported the Axis against the Allies, then the communists against the US: two disasters.” Apparently, neither the fact that the Nazis were primarily Western Christians and Atheists nor the presence of Muslim combatants among both Allied and Axis powers was a matter of importance. And the Muslim warriors flocking to Afghanistan to fight Communists in 1980s would certainly be surprised by Lewis’s odd characterization of them.—Fiamma Nirenstein, “Avoid the Algerian Precedent,” *Jerusalem Post* (12 March 2004), p. 7.

³⁰³ Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, p. 137.

³⁰⁴ Bernard Lewis, “The Return of Islam,” *Commentary*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (1 January 1976), pp. 39-49. For more on Lewis’s obsession with Islam during the Cold War, see Charles Glass, “The Lewis of Arabia,” *Nation*, Vol. 279, No. 7 (13 September 2004), pp. 49-55; and Alain Gresh, “Malevolent Fantasy of Islam,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, (August 2005), available from: <http://mondediplo.com/2005/08/16lewis> (Accessed: 5 September 2016).

saw Islam as a tool that could be used against Communism. As if almost achieving the flip side of Stoddard and Lewis' concerns, it was the West which assisted fundamentalist movements in Muslim countries to rise up against Communism.³⁰⁵ But once Communism collapsed, Lewis renewed his thesis in a famous article for *The Atlantic* when he argued that what "we are facing" now is nothing less "than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular past, and the worldwide expansion of both."³⁰⁶ This argument was further popularized by another scholar from Stoddard's alma mater—Samuel Huntington—in a hugely influential article titled "The Clash of Civilizations?"³⁰⁷ The "white man's world" for Stoddard became the "Western world" for Huntington. If for Stoddard Islam was "militant by nature," for Huntington it had "bloody borders."³⁰⁸ Both became their respective periods' "intellectual middlemen" influencing nonacademic folks responsible for executing foreign policy.³⁰⁹ As John Hobson explains, Huntington's division of the world into seven (or eight if we include Huntington's "marginal case" of Africa), "compares closely with Stoddard's specification of five main 'civilizations,' though these are defined in racial terms. Moreover, while Huntington describes the boundaries of civilizations in cultural terms and as blood-stained, Stoddard talks about the racial frontiers between the white and non-white worlds as marked by flesh and blood."³¹⁰ Stoddard's white man

³⁰⁵ Much of literature on this issue narrowly focuses on American support for Mujahideen in the 1980s. But the process of encouraging and assisting Muslim fundamentalists against Moscow and Moscow-supported governments began as early as during Dwight Eisenhower's presidency. See, Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2011).

³⁰⁶ Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," p. 60.

³⁰⁷ Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?"

³⁰⁸ Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*, p. 102; Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" p. 35.

³⁰⁹ The term "intellectual middlemen" was coined by Bruce Kuklick, which Robert Vitalis defines as people "skilled at getting ideas across to nonacademic audiences in Washington, New York, and points beyond.—Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*, p. 16

³¹⁰ Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, p. 284.

against non-whites eventually became a cultural clash between the West and the Rest, in which Communism and Islam became the feared boogeymen.

Soviet Experiment in Central Asia Through American Eyes

We respect American efficiency in everything—in industry, in technique, in literature, in life. We never forget the United States of America is a capitalist country. But among the Americans are many sound persons physically and mentally, sound in their approach to work, to action.

Iosif Stalin

I often wondered as I read some of the appreciative statements of people who had been in Russia for short visits whether they were blind, or just liars.

Willard Gorton [emphasis original]

Since one of the chief Bolshevik goals to prove the legitimacy of the Revolution was to prove that they were anti-colonial in the eyes of both Western and Eastern nations, Central Asia came to play a vital role in this goal. “Turkestan today is [our] weakest point, the Achilles heel of Soviet power,” said the Commissar of Soviet nationality policy Iosif Stalin, speaking to a group of leading Bolsheviks in 1923. “Our task is to turn Turkestan into a showcase republic, into a revolutionary outpost in the Orient. For this reason, it is necessary to focus all of our energies on Turkestan in order to uplift the cultural level of the masses, to nationalize the state administration, and so forth. This task we should pursue at any cost, sparing no effort, and not shying away from casualties.”³¹¹ Stalin’s machiavellian justification of means to achieve this end is worth mentioning here. It was a policy that assured misery and suffering not only upon Central Asian natives but also upon executioners of Soviet civilizing mission in Central Asia: European

³¹¹ Quoted in Botakoz Kassymbekova and Christian Teichmann, “The Red Man’s Burden: Soviet European Officials in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s,” in Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum (eds.) *Helpless Imperialists: Imperial Failure, Fear and Radicalization* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), p. 166.

officials, workers, and settlers whose task was to transform Central Asia into a showcase experiment.

The example of cotton policy well illustrates the brutality of this experiment. Soviet officials wanted to become independent of cotton import from the United States and thus decided to massively increase the production of Central Asian cotton. At one time, it was expected to increase cotton production by thirty three percent annually, while hundreds of thousands of hectares of land would be converted from rice and grain cultivation to cotton production. In addition, the delivery of grains from Russia and Ukraine were drastically cut, forcing Central Asians to feed their populations more independently. Peasants who disobeyed the commands by cultivating rice instead of cotton could be summarily shot or exiled to Siberia.³¹² Many European officials did not fare better. They often had to deal with the wrath of Central Asian peasants and thus could fall prey to robbery or murder. Their family members often starved and they could not get adequate medical assistance when needed. Worst of all, they were tasked with unrealistic goals such as finding non-existent gold or yielding exorbitant amounts of cotton in the region. For failing to fulfill unrealistic goals they could at best be accused of lacking “class consciousness” or exhibiting “chauvinism”; at worst, they could be declared counter-revolutionary or “enemies of the people”—frighteningly deadly accusations under Stalinism.³¹³

Ruthless though it was, Stalin’s goal was not illogical. He emphasized the need to turn Central Asia into a showcase experiment at any cost because it would help Soviets delegitimize the twin evils of imperialism and capitalism (British in India, French in Algeria, and Americans in their treatment of African Americans) on one hand, and proselytize masses in Asia and Africa into communism on the other. Therefore, alongside political, economic, and cultural

³¹² Ibid, pp. 176-7.

³¹³ Ibid, pp. 183-4.

transformation of Central Asia, they needed mass propaganda to convince outsiders that they were civilizing Central Asia without being colonialist and racist. The propaganda campaign was partly successful as can be seen in the example of American travelers some of whom were impressed, some disillusioned, and yet others complemented Soviet propaganda campaign with their almost hagiographic praise for Soviet civilizing mission in Central Asia.

Among the latter group were Americans who were communist or communist-leaning for ideological reasons only—distinct, for instance, from African American socialists who also saw an alternative in the Soviet Union to the racial inequality in their country. For communist intellectual Joshua Kunitz, whose book *Dawn Over Samarkand: The Rebirth of Central Asia* was dedicated to “the Negro People of the United States,” Soviets were shattering an “anciently entrenched oriental feudalism” with “the vast sweep of modernity.” When he visited Tajikistan he found that, even with the enormous work Soviets were undertaking, the region was “primitive” with “traces of civilization” seen only “here and there.” Native communists Kunitz met were more enthusiastic about the changes than European officials. After all, “[t]hey had dwelt there for centuries, in ignorance, in darkness, isolated from the rest of the world, oppressed by the Czars, exploited by the native rulers, the Emirs, the Khans, the Beys, and the all-powerful and fanatical Mohammedan clergy.” Central Asia’s major cities were lands of tyranny, debauchery, corruption beyond reason, and sexual deviance until Bolsheviks—the Western savior—put an end to the misery. For Kunitz, Soviet experiment in Central Asia was the triumph and ultimate validation of Bolshevism. “The West is carrying its civilization back to its place of origin,” he wrote. “Western revolutionary scientific ideas have been hurled against eastern tradition with unparalleled daring, and the emotional overtones of this collision of two world systems are surely the most dramatic aspects of the epoch-making advance of Bolshevism in the

Orient.”³¹⁴ Unlike capitalist oppressors such as England and France, the Soviet Union was representing the true Western civilization by uplifting and civilizing Central Asians.

These descriptions of the Orient by a Western traveler may sound familiar to the students of Orientalism as described by Edward Said, but Kunitz’s account has a distinctive Soviet accent into it. For him, everything Bolsheviks were doing was right and that their propaganda stories were all grounded in reality. The Soviet accent is clear in Kunitz’s comparative analysis of Tsarist imperial rule and Bolshevism in Central Asia. The Tsar’s imperial expansion into Turkestan was “among the blackest pages in the gruesome history of Czarist imperialism” and the “introduction of cotton-growing in Central Asia” under the Tsar, “as a whole proved disastrous to the well-being of the lower economic strata.” But he was effusive about Bolshevik conquest of the region and fully justified the methods used, including arbitrary executions by employing familiar Bolshevik vocabulary: “only yesterday some beys (rich individual peasants) and some traitorous officials were executed by the Soviets.”³¹⁵ Kunitz was also fine with cotton monoculture being imposed on Central Asia when it was done by the Soviets. More than half of the agricultural production in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan being cotton, constant propaganda about the need to grow the “white gold,” mass mobilization of men, women, and children for cotton-growing all sounded part of the progressive development for him. As Maya Peterson notes, Kunitz apparently saw no irony in dedicating his book to descendants of slaves in America and simultaneously cheering for the “Bolshevik’s wish to liberate the oppressed ‘peoples of the East’ by making Central Asians increasingly dependent on cotton agriculture.”³¹⁶ Similar distinction between the Tsarist and Bolshevik eras can be observed in the writings of American communist

³¹⁴ Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand: the Rebirth of Central Asia* (New York: The Van Rees Press, 1935), pp. 12-14.

³¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 31, 34, 42.

³¹⁶ Maya Peterson, “US to USSR: American Experts, Irrigation, and Cotton in Soviet Central Asia, 1929–32,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 21 (2016), p. 455.

sympathizer Anna Louise Strong.³¹⁷ Both found comparable policies condemnable when done by the Tsarist Russia but laudable when undertaken by the Soviet Union.

Kunitz and Strong were simply reciting Bolshevik propaganda which was often in conflict with closed and specialized discussions within Bolshevik circles. For instance, among Soviet hydraulic engineers in early 1920s there was concern about the consequences of turning Central Asia into a vast cotton field. They predicted that, if the current rate of irrigation projects to make room for more cotton fields continued, the Aral Sea would eventually “dry out”—the prediction which by 1980s virtually realized.³¹⁸ Another familiar theme in the writings of Kunitz, Strong, and other Bolshevik sympathizers is that, whereas Russians under the Tsar treated natives as second- or third-class people, Bolsheviks exhibited no sense of Russian superiority. According to Strong, “Russians mix with Uzbeks, Turcomans, Tadjiks—easily and without flaunting superiority.”³¹⁹ This is again at odds with some of the reports concerned Bolshevik officials were sending to Moscow at the time. One official described the behavior of Russian workers as “crudeness”; workers from European part of the USSR treated the natives “as if they were representatives of a lower race” and considered “themselves as enlightened and progressive-minded people.” Another observer who visited Uzbekistan in 1929 was so disturbed by the “very strange classification of the population into ‘Europeans’ and Uzbeks” that he compared the scenes he saw quite often to racial inequality in America’s south and British India.³²⁰

Often Bolshevik propaganda about pre-revolutionary traditional society complemented European and American fantasies about oriental savagery. Some familiar stories appear over and

³¹⁷ Anna Louise Strong, *Red Star in Samarkand* (New York: Coward-Mcann, Inc., 1929).

³¹⁸ *Vestnik Irrigatsii*, Vol. 3-4 (June-July 1923), p. 15, available from: <<http://www.cawater-info.net/library/rus/hist/vi-03-04-1923/pages/015.htm>> (Accessed: 24 September 2016).

³¹⁹ Strong, *Red Star in Samarkand*, p. 9.

³²⁰ Quoted and discussed in Teichmann, “Cultivating the Periphery,” pp. 45-6.

over in these pro-Bolshevik writings. One such story deals with the last Emir of Bukhara, Said Mir Muhammad Alim Khan, as a libidinous despot whose outlandish display of barbarism was, we are told, a common oriental trait. The Emir allegedly had hundreds of wives whose names he did not even know. He could at whim order dozens of them bath nude in his private pool to enjoy the spectacle, but he was also a predatory sodomite whose thirst for boys vastly exceeded his obsession for women. Thus, when he fled Bukhara he left his wives behind but took “his harem of boys” with him. On his way to Afghanistan he also allegedly massacred a Jewish tribe but kept only their finest looking boys and girls, the former for himself and the latter for his soldiers.³²¹ This depiction of old Bukhara as the land of sexual debauchery and the Emir as a sodomite is consistent with the writings of many European travelers of the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. The oriental as the homosexual “other” was a frequent occurrence in the writings of travelers who examined sexual relations in Eastern lands.³²² Needless to mention, these outlandish stories about the Emir were entirely concocted or realities were vastly exaggerated. Such stories became part of what Tajik historian Kamoludin Abdullaev calls “historiography of the victors.” The purpose was to justify “violence against Alim Khan” and ultimately “moral discreditation” of the last Emir and his associates who fled with him.³²³ For

³²¹ Strong, *Red Star in Samarkand*, pp. 135-7; Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, pp. 19-20. This story also comes up in the writings of Langston Hughes—Langston Hughes and Joseph McLaren, *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes: I Wonder as I Wander Vol. 14* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), p. 151; Langston Hughes and David Mikosz, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* (Moscow-Leningrad: Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1934), p. 21. In a separate article, Hughes imagined a fictionalized story of how women in the harem taking a bath looked like, putting his erotic-filled Orientalist fantasy into writing.—Langston Hughes, “In an Emir’s Harem,” *Women’s Companion Home* (Sep., 1934), pp. 12-4.

³²² On these, see Joseph Boone, “Vacation Cruises; or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism,” *PMLA*, Vol. No. 1 (Jan., 1995); Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). It is interesting to note that, if until a century earlier many Europeans and Americans condemned Muslims for being tolerant of homosexual relations, in the last three decades it has been suggested that homophobia is a defining feature of Muslim barbarism.—See chapter “Pre-Positional Conjunctions: Sexuality and/in ‘Islam’” in Joseph Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

³²³ K.N. Abdullaev, *Ot Sintsiania do Khorasana: Iz Istorii Sredneaziatskoi Emigratsii XX veka* (Dushanbe: “Irfan”: 2009), pp. 29, 151.

American visitors who took orientalist fantasies for granted and believed in truthfulness of Bolshevik propaganda, these stories made perfect sense.

Extremely low educational level of pre-Revolutionary Central Asian population is another issue pro-Bolshevik American travelers emphasized to praise Soviet educational policies. Here is how Strong, citing an unnamed native, describes traditional schools: “picture . . . some thirty boys squatting in front of a teacher, and all shouting aloud different parts of the Koran. Since the pupils are of varying attainments, they are shouting different chapters. The noise is deafening. Except for the word ‘Allah,’ they do not understand a syllable; they learn by rote in Arabic, an alien tongue.”³²⁴ Curiously enough, Strong did not consider Russian “an alien tongue.” Russian language for these American observers was, as Kunitz wrote, one of the “modern languages” that the native school system considered “strictly taboo.”³²⁵ The overall narrative here is that the traditional native schools turned children into brainwashed zombies who lacked imagination and creativity and thus willingly served the exploitative system of Emirs, Khans, and the clergy. The new school system nurtured by Bolsheviks on the other hand liberated the masses and instructed them in necessary tools to become true Bolsheviks (which equated with modern liberated men).

Before addressing the accuracy of such contrasting analyses of old and new schools, it is worth recalling that Bolshevik justification of conquest by systematically disparaging native education and histories and depicting Bolsheviks as the deified savior of Central Asia is, while contextually different, nonetheless similar to the way other colonial empires justified their own conquests. Termed by Edward Said as “the moral epistemology of imperialism,” it was a familiar pattern. As Frantz Fanon described the “colonialist formula” in French rule in Algeria, the

³²⁴ Strong, *Red Star in Samarkand*, p. 214.

³²⁵ Kunitz, *Red Dawn in Samarkand*, p. 22.

colonialist's "irruption into the history of the colonized people" was "deified, transformed into absolute necessity" and the motto known to them was "It is we who have made Algeria." The deification of the colonial savior was further buttressed by what Leonard Thompson calls "political mythology": "a tale told about the past to legitimize or discredit a regime" and how such tales "reinforce one another and jointly constitute the historical element in the ideology of the regime or its rival."³²⁶ And as David Stannard explains in his discussion of colonialist histories of North America, the natives are not just relegated to being "primitive and savage types who actually benefitted from being conquered" but the colonialist myth-making had "the insidious effect of teaching the colonized to view with contempt the contrived histories of their own people and to look with awe at the contrived histories of their conquerors The result is psychological colonization that persists long after the overt political and economic shackles of colonialism have been removed."³²⁷ The point here is not to suggest that the colonialist myth-making practiced by other empires is identical to cultural Bolshevization of Central Asia but to emphasize how the moral imperative of Bolshevik myth-making illustrates uncanny similarities.

Let us now return to the accuracy of pro-Bolshevik depictions of old and new schools. Firstly, pointing at the lack of mass literacy and formal education among Central Asians as an indication of their backwardness was misleading. As a pre-industrial society, Central Asians did not have the same need for the ability to read and write as elsewhere or in contemporary times. In a largely agrarian society, farmers and craftsmen learnt their skills from parents or through apprenticeship. Secondly, Soviets caricatured the conditions of old schools beyond recognition.

³²⁶ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books), p. 18; Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 159; Leonard Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 1. For references to Said, Fanon, and Thompson, I am indebted to David Stannard, "Recounting the Fables of Savagery: Native Infanticide and the Functions of Political Myth," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Dec., 1991), pp. 382-3.

³²⁷ Stannard, "Recounting the Fables of Savagery," p. 383.

The curriculum in native schools emphasized religious knowledge but also taught math, ethics, logic, geography, history, poetry, literature, and calligraphy. During the early Soviet period, as Kamoludin Abdullaev and Ravshan Nazarov explain, people educated in madrasahs “preferred to present themselves in job interviews as the illiterate children of poor peasants” because “the Soviet government considered an illiterate and poor villager dressed in tatters to be more reliable than a neatly dressed and educated mullah”—the fact that contributed to skewing the statistics about the natives’ educational and literacy levels.³²⁸ It is also worth noting that old schools remained relatively more popular among the population of Uzbekistan than the new Soviet-built schools until 1928 when a decree was issued “On the liquidation of all old method schools and madrasahs.”³²⁹ Bolsheviks seeing old schools as a rival and a threat testifies to their resilience, influence, and popularity among the natives.

The highly politicized nature of American pro-Bolshevik writings can be contrasted with the travel accounts of Austrian adventurer Gustav Krist.³³⁰ In his recollections of his time in Central Asia, he is neither a champion nor an opponent of Bolsheviks. He appreciates the architecture of Samarkand without romanticizing its people. Nonetheless, he does not mention any of the outlandish stories about the Emir of Bukhara. His descriptions of old schools are not simplistic. He does not use popular Islamic terms with negative connotations—something given

³²⁸ K. Abdullaev and R. Nazarov, “The Ferghana Valley Under Stalin, 1929-1953,” in Frederick Starr (ed.), *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia* (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 2011), p. 130.

³²⁹ Ashirbek Muminov, Uygun Gafurov, and Rinat Shigabdinov, “Islamic Education in Soviet and post-Soviet Uzbekistan,” in Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, and Stefan Reichmuth (eds.) *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States* (New York: Routledge, 2010) p. 225. For a scholarly discussion of schools for boys and girls in pre-Revolutionary Central Asia, see Dono Ziyaeva, “Education and Culture in Turkestan (19th-20th Centuries),” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, Nos. 3-4 (July-Dec., 2015), pp. 24-45.

³³⁰ Krist was a private in the Austro-Hungarian Army, was captured by Russians in World War I and became a prisoner in Soviet Central Asia for five years. He was released in 1922 and returned to Vienna but two years later he returned to Tabriz, Iran, where he worked as a carpet dealer and eventually found a way to slip into Soviet territories disguised as an Uzbek geologist whose passport he purchased with bribe money in Turkmenistan. He wrote his recollections in Gustav Krist, trans. by E.O. Lorimer, *Prisoner in the Forbidden Land* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938) and Gustav Krist, trans. by E.O. Lorimer, *Alone Through the Forbidden Land: Journeys in Disguise Through Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938).

in pro-Bolshevik writings—unless he mentions specific persons or practices he disapproves of. Krist based his recollections mostly from his observations and they sometimes contradicted myths he had heard from other European travelers. One such myth suggested that Central Asians had a special fondness for animal cruelty when they procured sheep’s skin. But noting that he had spent seven years in different parts of Central Asia, Krist writes: “never once have I seen any process entailing the slightest cruelty to animals.” He investigated the issue and found that the stories about the macabre nature of procuring sheepskin “to preserve the beauty of the skin” was “an absolute myth.”³³¹ If one is to suggest that Gustav Krist was an Austrian and as such from a different intellectual and cultural background than Americans, an Austro-Czech communist Egon Kisch’s Central Asian account has much more in common with the writings of Joshua Kunitz and Anna Louise Strong than that of Gustav Krist.³³²

Given the politicized and ideological nature of pro-Bolshevik travel accounts, it is not surprising that they placed a special emphasis on discussing the position of women in Central Asia. This was one of the issues that especially outraged and repulsed these observers. The sad part of these observations is that Kunitz and Strong could offer a meaningful criticism of Central Asian patriarchal gender relations, which were especially restrictive to young women. The reign of terror unleashed against women in wake of Soviet unveiling campaign of *hujum* was utterly condemnable and is one of the shameful episodes of modern Uzbek history. But exaggerations, distortions, and uncritical recitation of Bolshevik propaganda cloak otherwise some of their legitimate criticisms. The problem was entirely blamed on religion—“an intensely fanatic Mohammedanism”—and a distinctive nature of Oriental mindset.³³³ It did not matter that Islamic regulation of women’s clothing and behavior differed from place to place, even within Central

³³¹ Gustav Krist, *Alone Through the Forbidden Land*, pp. 192-3.

³³² Egon Erwin Kisch, trans. by Rita Reil, *Changing Asia* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935).

³³³ Strong, *Red Star in Samarkand*, p. 234.

Asia. A curious omission in these writings is any discussion of class among Central Asian women, considering Marxist philosophy's emphasis on the role of class conflict behind social problems. And this was important because urban and relatively wealthier women historically distinguished themselves from peasant women by wearing a veil that fully covered their faces.³³⁴

These observers did not care for the opinion of non-Bolshevik women either. Their female interlocutors were carefully chosen Bolshevik activists who added their own flavor to assumptions about Oriental women. The role of female educators in educating girls in old-fashioned manner never appear.³³⁵ The writings depict men and old women as heartless and emotionless beings who viewed even their daughters as property with only economic value. Thus, according to Kunitz, "contempt for the woman seems to be one of the most sacred articles of a Central Asian's faith. . . . To congratulate a father on the birth of a daughter is a mortal insult and may entail a bitter family feud . . . a woman may be bought and sold and transferred from one man to another without herself being in any way consulted. . . . She is a chattel, a slave." The chattel comparison also appears in Strong: "To kill a neighbor's woman is punishable, as it is to kill a neighbor's cattle."³³⁶ A contrast with observations of a non-Bolshevik European here again is revealing. Russian geologist Paul Nazaroff, for instance, did not see oppression of women as a uniquely Oriental behavior.³³⁷ While women enjoyed greater freedom in nomadic and non-urban societies of Kazakhs, the Kyrgyz, and Turkmens, Nazaroff wrote, even the position of women among Uzbeks and Tajiks "was in many respects better than that of

³³⁴ Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, p. 19. For a general discussion of the history of the veil known in Central Asia as *paranji*, see N.P. Lobacheva, "On the History of the Paranja," *Anthropology & Archaeology of Eurasia*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 63-90.

³³⁵ On this, see Habiba Fathi, "O'tines: the Unknown Women Clerics of Central Asian Islam," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1997), pp. 27-43.

³³⁶ Kunitz, *Red Dawn in Samarkand*, pp. 275-6; Strong, *Red Star in Samarkand*, p. 255.

³³⁷ Paul Nazaroff was a Russian geologist who spent many years among Central Asians before joining an anti-Bolshevik plot in 1919 which forced him to flee through Kashgar and eventually settle in London and later in Johannesburg. He wrote his recollections in Paul Nazaroff, trans. by Malcolm Burr, *Hunted Through Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Russian peasant women, who until quite modern times was a creature almost without rights; divorce was quite out of her reach; her husband could treat her as cruelly as he liked; he could flog her to death, and still she was quite unable to leave him.”³³⁸ Nazaroff despite being anti-Bolshevik admits women’s condition has improved after the Revolution, but that raises the question whether patriarchy was necessarily a uniquely Oriental practice.

It is interesting to note that sometimes Western champions of women’s liberation had a practice of actually opposing women’s rights in their home countries. As Joseph Massad notes, in late nineteenth century Egypt’s colonial strongman Lord Cromer “was . . . a misogynist at home and a feminist abroad.” In Egypt he supported unveiling as part of women’s liberation and fulminated against Islam as the barrier to women’s path to liberation but in England he was a founding member and president of the Men’s League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage.³³⁹ In the United States, as Theodore Dreiser wrote in 1929, “the public attitude in America toward women, while on the whole liberal, nevertheless contains a definite disapproval of a married woman, and especially a mother, working outside the home.”³⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Americanizers in southern states with large Mexican immigrants targeted Mexican women for more education, work ethic, greater independence from their husbands, and encouraged them to enter the labor force, chastising “patriarchal, outmoded nature of the Mexican family” for being a barrier to immigrant women’s path to assimilation into American society.³⁴¹

It is clear that the likes of Joshua Kunitz and Anna Louise Strong were ideological supporters of Bolshevik civilizing mission and as such offered little to no constructive criticisms

³³⁸ Nazaroff, *Hunted Through Central Asia*, pp. 82-3.

³³⁹ Massad, *Islam and Liberalism*, p. 118.

³⁴⁰ Theodore Dreiser, “How Russia Handles the Sex Question,” *Current History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Jan., 1929), p. 542.

³⁴¹ George Sanchez, “‘Go After Women’: Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929,” in Rima Apple and Janet Golden (eds.) *Mothers & Motherhood: Readings in American History* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1997), p. 483.

of Bolshevism. What about writers and traveler-observers who were ideologically indifferent or opposed to Bolshevik ideals? It may sound surprising, but many of them were in agreement with Soviet civilizing mission directed at Russian peasants and its Asian heartland. This was true of Hans Kohn, a veteran of Russian civil war and a member of the Czech legion and a refugee to America, who described Soviet policy in its Asian part as the “Europeanization of the Orient”: “industrialization, modernization and diversification of agriculture, the fight against tradition and superstition, the support of mass education to combat the old lethargy and backwardness.”³⁴² It was also true of Bruce Hopper, a Harvard fellow who was a close acquaintance of such luminaries as Walter Lippmann, Walter Duranty, and George Kennan. In his book *Pan-Sovietism*, which Hopper wrote as a warning to America because he feared increasing Soviet power, there is a sub-chapter titled “‘forced’ labor” where the word “forced” is in inverted commas. His reasoning was that the kulaks being forced to work for irrigation projects in Turkestan, and whose children were being “treated kindly,” were no more forced than the rest of the labor population. Either call the entire Soviet Union’s labor population “forced” or don’t.³⁴³ On this question, Hopper might have been influenced by Walter Duranty who described Soviet labor camps “a sort of a ‘commune,’ where everyone lives comparatively free, not imprisoned, but compelled to work for the good of the community.”³⁴⁴

Scholars in this period did not specifically address Soviet policy in Central Asia but the issue was sometimes raised as part of covering the Soviet Union. Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, the

³⁴² Hans Kohn, “The Europeanization of the Orient,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (June 1937), pp. 263-4.

³⁴³ Bruce Hopper, *Pan-Sovietism: The Issue Before America and the World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), p. 192. On Hopper’s career, see Engerman, *Modernization From the Other Shore*, p. 188-9.

³⁴⁴ The whole Soviet policy of exiling “subversives,” according to Duranty, was no different from the British practice of sending “malignants” to colonial Virginia and the West Indies. Nullifying the harmful activities of subversives on the one hand, and helping them to regain their lost citizenship through honest work on the other, was “an admirable work of killing two birds with one stone.”—Walter Duranty, “Millions are Held in Russian Camps, 200,000 in Forests,” *The New York Times* (3 February 1931), p. 1.

son of a Tsarist diplomat and a Professor of History at the University of California, was again not a supporter of Bolshevism. But he found the “irrigation and cotton development in Central Asia” and the building of Turkestan Siberian Railway *Turksib* as some of the “most important achievements” of the Soviet five-year-plan. He wrote that the Soviets gave Central Asians “the widest cultural autonomy possible.” Without elaborating on which ethnic or cultural group he had in mind, he credited Soviets for developing “local cultures and bring[ing] to life certain local native languages which were so primitive that they did not possess a written alphabet.” Furthermore, “the efforts of Soviet scientists to equip the primitive Asiatic races with the cultural means for further development without infringing upon their individuality, has been highly creditable.”³⁴⁵ Note that his appreciation of Soviet modernization and civilizing mission is no less enthusiastic than that of pro-Bolshevik individuals.

What accounts for this broad support and justification Americans offered for Soviet policies in Central Asia (and Soviet forced modernization among its peasant population, in general)? For one, when we lift the memories of the Cold War era when intellectuals from both camps obfuscated “on the differences between Soviet communism and American capitalism and ignored the parallels produced by the industrial-capital expansion of the twentieth century,” we realize that “the Soviet Union and the United States share a great deal in common.”³⁴⁶ In her brilliant comparative analysis of American colonization of Montana and Soviet colonization of Kazakhstan, Kate Brown offers the following parallels in American and Soviet visions of development:

³⁴⁵ Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Asia* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), pp. 276, 274.

³⁴⁶ Kate Brown, “Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No. 1 (Feb., 2001), pp. 21-2. In similar fashion, memories of World War II can obfuscate our understanding of broad American support for Franklin Roosevelt’s “great admirable gentleman” in Rome up until the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936. On this, see John Diggins, “Flirtation with Fascism: American Pragmatic Liberals and Mussolini’s Italy,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (Jan., 1966), pp. 487-506; and John Diggins, “Mussolini and America: Hero-Worship, Charisma, and the ‘Vulgar Talent,’” *The Historian*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Aug., 1966), pp. 559-588.

Both Soviet and American proselytizers emphasize origins. What was empty had been filled in, what was barren was made green, the primitive had found sophistication. Europeans arrived, found places empty of history, and gave them a beginning and thus meaning. And they did it, the writers stress, quickly. In these new places, in the dawning age of fossil-fuel technology, civilization did not need centuries to ripen, as it had in Europe. There was no time for that. The promoters of Soviet and American insta-cities were drunk on speed, efficiency, the “magic” of machines. They threw up hospitals, schools, courthouses, and libraries so the new cities would look like “a city,” built not in decades, years, or even months, but weeks.

“Leaders in both countries,” as she further notes, “set out to colonize vast new territories immediately, conquering by consuming land, crops, and minerals in assembly-line fashion.”³⁴⁷ Rapid modernization of pre-industrial societies, despite being destructive to indigenous societies, was equally appealing to both Americans and Soviets despite their differences.

The second reason why many Americans found Bolshevik modernization appealing and justified its ruthless methods was, not only did Americans and Soviets had much in common in their views on economic development of “backward” societies, but they also looked up to each other and learned from their experiences. Relations between the two countries were multivalent, propagandizing against each other’s respective ideologies—capitalism and communism—but also appreciating methods and technology used for economic development. Until the rise of Nazi Germany, both considered each other their principal foes but paradoxically their affinity for each other’s development plans often transcended their ideological animosity. This practice was not necessarily new in Russian history either. Tsarist officials and irrigation engineers in pre-Revolutionary Turkestan learned from the cotton production experiences of Russia’s then main rival Great Britain by sending engineers to India and other British colonies.³⁴⁸ Imperial rivalry did not preclude Russian officials from appreciating British expertise just like their successors

³⁴⁷ Brown, “Gridded Lives,” p. 28.

³⁴⁸ Julia Obertreis, “‘Mertvye’ i ‘kulturnye’ zemli: diskursy uchenykh i imperskaia politika v Srednei Azii, 1880-e-1991 gg,” *Ab Imperio*, Vol. 4 (2008), p. 208.

during the Soviet era understood the importance of learning from American know-how and experience.

Soviet appreciation of American technology and management principles was evenly matched by American fascination with Soviet development. The fascination extended to the social aspect of the development which Soviets approached with the same scientific vigor that characterized their vision of economic development. Attraction to Soviet social experiment sometimes came from an unlikely lot in America: “the religious leader who saw the Social Gospel ignored and disused in Coolidge’s America recognized witnesses to his creed in the party of dedicated political missionaries who despite their atheism were evidently moved by a selfless emotion, unmatched in civilization’s history,” as Lewis Feuer explains,” the crusader for birth control and liberal divorce laws who found himself trammelled and sometimes jailed in his own Puritan-bound and Catholic-contained America saw a land where sexual love was more nearly unfettered.”³⁴⁹ American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey, whose pedagogical methods were embraced by both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, was highly impressed by “probably the first in the world to attempt scientific regulation of social growth.”³⁵⁰ Even the archetype future Cold Warrior George Kennan was not immune to the allure of “a strong government with dictatorial powers, manned by the best brains of the country” and found some Communist leaders’ visions “most impelling and inspiring human conceptions which it has been my lot to encounter.”³⁵¹ So attractive was the Soviet experiment that Stuart Chase, Harvard economist who helped popularize the term “New Deal” by penning a book with the same title,

³⁴⁹ Lewis Feuer, “American Travelers to the Soviet Union 1917-32: The Formation of a Component of New Deal Ideology,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer, 1962), p. 121.

³⁵⁰ Quoted in *ibid*, p. 122. For Dewey’s views on the Soviet experiment, see also Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, chapter 8.

³⁵¹ This fascination however did not last long. Kennan was furious when his friends and close acquaintances among Communist leaders were purged by Stalin.—Frank Costigliola, “Kennan Encounters Russia, 1933-1937,” in Choi Chatterjee and Beth Holmgren (eds.), *Americans Experience Russia: Encountering the Enigma, 1917 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 59-60.

agreed with Bolsheviks' horrifyingly machiavellian conclusion that repression, violence, and "a little bloodshed" was "worth" the price of progress and development.³⁵²

Stalin, whose revolutionary *norms de guerre* literally meant "man of steel," believed in wholesale adoption of steel and machinery to overtake the West. We have "overtaken and outstripped the advanced capitalist countries by establishing a new political system," he said in the wake of first five-year plan. But that was "not enough." It was time to overtake them economically and technologically by "becoming a country of metal, a country of automobiles, a country of tractors."³⁵³ One of way of doing that was by rejecting capitalist commerce but embracing "American machinery, processes, and techniques of industrial organization such as the scientific management principles associated with Frederick W. Taylor and methods of Henry Ford."³⁵⁴ The latter especially reached spectacular popularity in Russia among the Bolshevik elite as well as peasants, becoming as popular as Lenin and Trotsky—more so than Stalin—for making "iron horses," as one American observer of Russian peasant life duly noted.³⁵⁵

Fordizatsia, meaning Fordization, and doing "the Ford way" became buzz words synonymous with technological efficiency, mass production, and rapid industrialization.³⁵⁶ Henry Ford, not a stranger to seeking grandiose ambitions in exotic lands, enthusiastically became the USSR's biggest private business partner in the world.³⁵⁷ It might be argued that Ford's relations with the Soviet auto industry was a microcosm of American-Soviet relations. Soviets loathed commercial

³⁵² Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, p. 165.

³⁵³ Quoted in Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler*, pp. 174, 177.

³⁵⁴ Kendalle Bailes, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917-1941," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (July, 1981), p. 424; Hans Rogger, "Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Jul., 1981), pp. 382-420.

³⁵⁵ Mauris Hindus, "Henry Ford Conquers Russia," *The Outlook* (June 29, 1927), p. 280.

³⁵⁶ David Greenstein, "Assembling *Fordizm*: The Production of Automobiles, Americans, and Bolsheviks in Detroit and Early Soviet Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2014), p. 259.

³⁵⁷ Tzouliadis, *Forsaken*, p. 30. For Ford's plan to build a modern "American" small city in the heart of Amazon, see Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: the Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

aspect of Ford's business and Ford believed Bolshevism to be an insidious Jewish conspiracy, but the movement of immigrants, workers, and ideas between the two, as one scholar argues, affected both.³⁵⁸ Similar exchange of experience and know-how took place in the agricultural sphere.³⁵⁹

The appropriation of such American expertise, efficiency, and machinery was essential, Soviets believed, for building and modernizing Central Asia. The key issue in Central Asia was developing a more efficient cotton production and for that purpose Soviets attracted American engineers and workers to the Soviet Union. Political and economic condition in the United States—depression, disillusionment with capitalism, and the allure of Soviet economic development—was ripe for Soviet recruitment purposes. An opinion poll published by *The Literary Digest* listed the following reasons why Americans lined up at Amtorg, Soviet recruitment agency in New York: “1. Unemployment, 2. Disgust with conditions here, 3. Interest in Soviet experiment.”³⁶⁰ Many interested in going to the Soviet Union were immigrants themselves, seeking another El Dorado after being disappointed with one.³⁶¹ One such figure was former Russian immigrant to Chicago Bill Shatoff (William Shatov) whom the *New York Times* applauded as the “former American anarchist and now in charge of construction of the Siberian-Turkestan Railroad, which will open a Central Asian Golconda to the Soviet Union and add hundreds of millions to the national wealth.”³⁶² Described by *Times*'s Walter Duranty as “one of the most picturesque figures of the modern world” and credited by Anna Louise Strong for

³⁵⁸ Greenstein, “Assembling *Fordizm*,” convincingly argues that the previous scholars' conviction that the relationship was characterized by a one-way transfer of American technology to Russia was incorrect. The transfer was a two-way process.

³⁵⁹ Deborah Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 158; Deborah Fitzgerald, “Blinded by Technology: American Agriculture in the Soviet Union, 1928-1932,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Summer 1996), pp. 459-486.

³⁶⁰ Cited in Tzouliadis, *Forsaken*, p. 7.

³⁶¹ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado: Finnish Immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan University Press, 2014).

³⁶² Walter Duranty, “Chicago Anarchist Builds Soviet Road,” *The New York Times* (12 March 1928), p. 4.

putting “wild tribes of the Asian steppe, untamed since Ghenghis Khan” into productive work, Shatoff ended in the tragic and familiar fashion that characterized Stalinist terror: exiled to Siberia in 1937 and shot the next year for allegedly being among “Trotskyist Wreckers” who deliberately sabotaged locomotives in Tashkent to derail socialist construction.³⁶³

More engineers visited Central Asia to help build irrigation canals and develop the cotton industry. They were also interested in the general cultivation of the land which they believed was being wasted by Central Asians because of their primitive methods and technology.³⁶⁴

“Convinced that only by the adoption of modern American irrigation methods can Russia produce sufficient cotton for its own needs, the Soviet Government today decided upon a gigantic irrigation enterprise in Russian Turkestan,” *New York Times* wrote, and designated Arthur Powell Davis, former head of the United States Reclamation Service, with the task of ridding USSR of dependence on American and Egyptian cotton.³⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Soviet irrigator Fyodor Morgumenkov, hailed by Soviets as “one of the founders of the theory and practice of Soviet irrigation,” dreamed about building a “Russian California and Russian Egypt” in Central Asia.”³⁶⁶ These engineers were not champions of Bolshevism as a political ideology—and their writings were generally free from the kind of pro-Bolshevik enthusiasm we saw in Joshua Kunitz or Anna Louise Strong³⁶⁷—but they appreciated Bolsheviks’ passion for science and technology.

These Americans agreed with their Soviet colleagues that Central Asians were irrational and

³⁶³ Walter Duranty, “Soviet Completing 1,100-Mile Road,” *The New York Times* (15 April 1930), p. 10; Anna Louise Strong, “The Anarchist Who Builds an Empire: Bill Shatoff, Agitator in America, is Driving a Railway Through a Desert to Make New Wealth for Russia,” *The New York Times* (9 March 1930), p. 84; Harold Denny, “More Executions Hinted in Moscow: 7 ‘Trotskyist Wreckers’ are Condemned for Damages to Locomotives in Tashkent,” *The New York Times* (19 June 1937), p. 6.

³⁶⁴ Observations of one such engineer appeared in *National Geographic*—Lyman D. Wilbur, “Surveying Through Khoresm: A Journey into Parts of Asiatic Russia Which Have Been Closed to Western Travelers Since the World War,” *The National Geographic* (June 1932), pp. 753-780.

³⁶⁵ “Soviet to Irrigate Vast Cotton Area,” *The New York Times* (19 September 1929), p. 60.

³⁶⁶ Obertreis, “‘Mertvye’ i ‘kulturnye’ zemli,” p. 208.

³⁶⁷ See, for example, Wilbur, “Surveying Through Khoresm.”

primitive in their methods of development and “appeared in desperate need of Soviet and American assistance,” as Maya Peterson notes.³⁶⁸

Nonetheless there was a crucial difference between pro-Bolshevik writers who praised all aspects of Soviet life and engineers and workers who were attracted to Soviet economic and social experiment. Initial fascination for the latter often turned into a great disillusionment, if not disgust with Soviet policies. Willard Livermore Gorton was an American engineer who, alongside Arthur Davis, was tasked with developing irrigation canals in Central Asia. “Whatever else the government scheme is it is most assuredly a great social experiment,” he initially wrote of Soviet development policies in Central Asia. But the enthusiasm began to crack as soon as he arrived in Tashkent, upon learning that the secret police had arrested and exiled Georgii Konstantinovich Rizenkampf, chief Russian engineer. The stark contrast between Bolshevik proclamations and realities on the ground began to weaken his “objective attitude toward the great experiment.” The more he worked there the hardened his views got. “Russia may be a workman’s paradise,” he later said, “but it is a (Soviet) engineer’s hell.”³⁶⁹ Russian engineer was not his only concern though. Natives of Central Asia “had heard considerable shouting about the glories of communism but could see nothing to indicate that they were getting any nearer to the promised paradise. The people were getting restless and there were sporadic outbreaks of banditry.”³⁷⁰ The promised paradise was nowhere to be found: neither for engineers nor for Central Asians.

This was also true of many foreign workers in the rest of the Soviet Union who became unhappy with living conditions, political repression, lack of quality food, and most importantly

³⁶⁸ Peterson, “From US to USSR,” p. 453.

³⁶⁹ Quoted and discussed in Christian Teichmann, “Wildscapes in Ballyhooland: Shock Construction, Soviet Colonization, and Stalinist Governance,” *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 2016), pp. 224-8.

³⁷⁰ Quoted in Peterson, “From US to USSR,” p. 456.

the disparity between Bolshevik rhetoric and realities on the ground. Many of them returned home to warn against Bolshevism.³⁷¹ Arthur Davis and Willard Gorton did the same upon returning to the United States. Davis said in light of his experience in Central Asia: “advocates of socialism and communism can do their cause no greater damage than to convince the world that the wretched mess in Russia is a sample of what they advocate.” Gorton was even more emphatic: “I often wondered,” he said, “as I read some of the appreciate statements of people who had been in Russia for short visits whether *they were blind, or just liars.*”³⁷² A legitimate question to ask, given the way pro-Bolshevik travelers covered the realities in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Central Asia was the focal point of Soviet decolonization campaign. Modernizing the region and convincing foreigners that Bolsheviks were carrying out a civilizing mission without being colonialist was of utmost importance. For this purpose, the Soviet central government was willing to sacrifice both human resources and human blood. In carrying out their mission, Soviets received considerable backing from the United States in the form of expertise, technical assistance, and ideological support. Pro-Bolshevik travelers were most enthusiastic about their support for Bolshevism regardless of realities on the ground. Engineers and technocrats were mostly enthusiastic about Soviet emphasis on science on progress, while workers were primarily interested in job opportunities. Whereas pro-Bolsheviks remained uncompromising about their support for Soviet policy in Central Asia, engineers and workers were disappointed to see the difference between rhetoric and reality. Yet there was another group of American travelers to Central Asia whose experiences are worth examining.

³⁷¹ Andrea Graziosi, “Foreign Workers in Soviet Russia, 1920-40: Their Experience and Their Legacy,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 33 (Spring, 1988), pp. 38-59.

³⁷² Davis and Gorton quoted in Peterson, “From US to USSR,” pp. 457, 459. Emphasis by Gorton.

Soviet Central Asia and the Color Line

I may be partially deceived and half-informed. But if what I have seen with my eyes and heard with my ears in Russia is Bolshevism, I am a Bolshevik.

W.E.B. DuBois

It might be argued that the United States during the interwar period was the most important foreign country for Soviet Union: both for its development and self-identification. The U.S. was important for Soviet development as a country of machinery, scientific progress, and efficiency. But it also was a nemesis Soviets built their identity against. “The Bolshevik Revolution,” Michael David-Fox writes, “produced a dual radicalization, intensifying a dialectic of rejection and imitation, hostility and engagement”³⁷³ If the U.S. was the bourgeoisie behemoth straddling upon the toiling masses around the world, the Soviets were calling for proletarians to unite against their class oppressors. While Americans were champions of self-centered individuality, the Soviets emphasized community and equality. Racism in American came to play the most important role for Soviets in distinguishing themselves from Americans. “Before the Nazis came to power in Germany, U.S. racism was identified in the Soviet Union as the most egregiously horrific aspect of capitalism,” as Meredith Roman points out, “and the United States was represented as the most racist country in the world.”³⁷⁴ The Soviet denunciation of American racism was appealing to anti-racist African Americans who could benefit from an international platform where they could air their grievances and call for equality among races.

What was the role of Central Asia in this struggle? For both Soviets and African Americans sympathetic to Bolshevism the Soviet policy in Central Asia was the example to

³⁷³ Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 11.

³⁷⁴ Meredith Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928-1937* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), p. 1.

follow. It is important to note here however that both the Bolshevik use of Central Asian case for propaganda against American racism and African American fascination with it were based on fundamental misunderstanding of both Central Asian and American realities. For the Soviets, the two cases looked similar because at the heart of oppression against Central Asians and African Americans was class struggle that could be addressed by strictly applying Marxist theories, other factors being of secondary or tertiary importance. Thus the Communist International, or Comintern, declared African Americans in 1928 an oppressed nation who had the right to national self-determination.³⁷⁵ African Americans for their part looked at Tsarist and Soviet relationship with Central Asians through the prism of racial struggle that characterized their condition vis-à-vis whites in America. But the concept of race in Russia and the Soviet Union was different. Even during the Tsarist era, Central Asians could be depicted as primitive, savage, a non-Christian alien but not people of a dark race. In the words of one scholar who studied Soviet nationality policy, “social conditions, and not racial differences, determine[d] human development” for Russians and Soviet leaders.³⁷⁶ This misunderstanding often led to strange interpretation of realities by both Soviets and African Americans.

There were two aspects of Soviet condemnation of American racism: genuine and propagandistic. The fact that the Soviets used the case of African Americans for propaganda purposes should not nullify the Bolshevik conviction that modernity was to transcend racial hierarchies, at least in theory.³⁷⁷ And as Maxim Matusevich notes, “the anti-racist rhetoric of the government and the lofty internationalism of the Comintern did, in fact, penetrate the fabric of

³⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 7, 14.

³⁷⁶ Francine Hirsch, “Race Without the Practice of Racial Politics,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2002), p. 35.

³⁷⁷ Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow*, p. 10.

Soviet society.”³⁷⁸ Many African Americans, with vivid images of the horrors of Jim Crow, were astounded to experience life without it in the Soviet Union. If anything, they experienced blatant racism at the hands of white workers from Europe and America rather than by Soviet citizens. For instance, Homer Smith recalled how traveling from Leningrad to Moscow in a train he encountered a British lady who was unwilling to share a cabinet with him and requested the conductor a different accommodation. The conductor flatly rejected her request and frowned upon her. In numerous other cases, ordinary Soviet citizens came to their defense when African Americans were subjected to discriminatory behavior.³⁷⁹

The most notable of those cases was that of former Ford Motor company worker Robert Robinson. While working in Stalingrad, he had an altercation with two white Americans and, rather than being a subservient black man he would have been expected to be in American south, he fought back. To his great surprise, the Soviet officials condemned and punished the white workers and turned Robinson into a hero. He also received an outpouring of support from many ordinary citizens through written letters. Yet there was a clear propagandistic side of this story which the Soviet exploited to the maximum. They made a *cause célèbre* out of Robinson and ran series of stories through *Trud* (Labor), the chief newspaper of the trade-union organ, to condemn in strongest terms the “savage, anti-worker, and barbarous misdeeds of a group of backward American workers” and “the ways of the bourgeoisie America,” which the newspaper said would never be allowed in the U.S.S.R., “the fatherland of all workers, including Negroes.”³⁸⁰

Robinson’s cozy relationship with Soviet officials was however short-lived. He became bitterly disappointed with the system and how he was being used for propaganda purposes. It took him a

³⁷⁸ Maxim Matusevich, “An Exotic Subversive: Africa, Africans, and the Soviet Everyday,” *Race & Class*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2008), p. 64.

³⁷⁹ Maxim Matusevich, “Journeys of Hope: African Diaspora and the Soviet Society,” *African Diaspora*, Vol. 1 (2008), p. 62.

³⁸⁰ Walter Duranty, “Americans Essay Color Bar in Soviet,” *The New York Times* (10 Aug., 1930), p. 9.

great deal of effort—and four decades—to get out of the Soviet Union, before making his way back to the U.S. in 1976 via Uganda.³⁸¹

Soviet officials lacked proper understanding of race relations in the United States. There was racism and stereotypical depictions of blacks in magazines and advertisements, and there were instances of racism targeting black students in Moscow—although officials made great efforts to prevent them.³⁸² Sometimes popular depictions of African and African American cultures bordered on blatantly racist. When Langston Hughes was in Moscow, he was asked why was he not a member of the Communist Party. His answer was that he loved jazz which he “wouldn’t give up . . . for a world revolution,” and which Soviets considered “decadent bourgeois music.”³⁸³ But Soviets considered it much worse than that. Maxim Gorky, exiled to France when he wrote it but nevertheless a strongly influential figure in shaping Soviet anti-American views, declared that jazz was music for the sexually immoral, lazy, and obese people.

And idiotic little hammer knocks drily: one, two, three, ten, twenty knocks. Then, like a clod of mud thrown into crystal-clear water, there is wild screaming, hissing, rattling, wailing, moaning, cackling. Bestial cries are heard: neighing horses, the sequel of a brass pig, crying jackasses, amorous quacks of a monstrous toad. . . . Listening to this screaming music for a minute or two, one conjures up an orchestra of madmen, sexual maniacs, led by a man-stallion beating time with an enormous phallos.”³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ Barbara Keys, “An African-American Worker in Stalin’s Soviet Union: Race and the Soviet Experiment in International Perspective,” *The Historian*, Vol. 71 (2009), pp. 31-54.

³⁸² Woodford McClellan, “Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1993), pp. 371-390; Woodford McClellan, “Black Hajj to ‘Red Mecca’: Africans and Afro-Americans at KUTV, 1925-1938” in Maxim Matusevich (ed.), *African in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 61-83.

³⁸³ Hughes and McLaren, *I Wonder as I Wander*, p. 141.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers Since Beethoven’s Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), p. 25. On Gorky’s role in influencing Soviet propaganda campaign against the United States, see Abbott Gleason, “Republic of Humbug: The Russian Nativist Critique of the United States, 1830-1930,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Mar., 1992), pp. 16-9.

The Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii also subscribed to such notions about jazz, following Gorky's lead.³⁸⁵

Soviet treatment of blacks from America and Africa was often deeply paternalistic. They also expected African Americans to embrace the same paternalistic role vis-à-vis Africans because in their conception of human social development, the former was more civilized. Because of such issues, Soviets butted heads with Trinidad-born communist George Padmore and "the first American-born black Communist" Lovett Fort-Whiteman.³⁸⁶ Padmore broke up with Comintern while Fort-Whiteman's fate ended in tragedy. His criticism of U.S. Communist Party and Comintern for not properly addressing racial problems of the American south led to his isolation in the Soviet Union and from the U.S.C.P. In a visit to Bukhara, a group of Jews asked him to speak up on their behalf to improve the conditions of Jewish schools in Uzbekistan. He met with Commissar Lunacharskii but, in addition to speaking on behalf of Bukhara Jews, he also criticized subtle racism he observed in Soviet society. "[I]t is common to notice prints of caricatured faces of Negroes advertising cigarettes, film-pictures, etc," he said. "Though there is no anti-Negro feeling behind it, the results are the same." His American colleagues declared him a "counter-revolutionary," a deadly designation at the time, and Soviets exiled him to Kazakhstan for "Trotskyism" and "anti-Soviet agitation" after denying his repeated requests to return to the United States.³⁸⁷ His sentence was revised later into hard labor in the goldmines of Kolyma, one of the most murderous labor camps near Magadan, where in 1939 he died of

³⁸⁵ Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (Winona, MN: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1994), p. 92.

³⁸⁶ Fort-Whiteman is declared "the first American-born black Communist" by Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 30.

³⁸⁷ Quoted in McClellan, "Black Hajj to 'Red Mecca,'" p. 63.

starvation, torture, and forced labor. He was reportedly beaten severely for failing to meet work quota and had his teeth knocked out.³⁸⁸

There were also two dimensions to African American relationship with Soviet Communism. Communism in interwar years played a pivotal role in challenging the Jim Crow in American south and the extension of it abroad in such places as Haiti.³⁸⁹ “It was Communists,” as Glenda Gilmore argues, “who stood up to say that black and white people should organize together, eat together, to go school together, and marry each other if they chose.”³⁹⁰ Communism as an ideology shunned racism and the experience of living in the Soviet Union contributed to African Americans’ radical activism against American racism. “What I had witnessed, especially in Central Asia, convinced me that only a new social order could remedy the American racial injustices I knew so well,” said activist Louise Thompson Patterson who traveled to Tashkent with Langston Hughes. “I went to the Soviet Union with leftist leanings; I returned home a committed revolutionary.”³⁹¹ In Soviet press, African Americans also found a powerful venue for denouncing American racism for the international audience. Claude McKay’s two manuscripts *Negry v Amerike* and *Sudom Lincha* (*Negroes in America* and *Trial by Lynching*) and Hughes’s *The Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* were published in Moscow.³⁹²

The second dimension of this relationship was that many left-leaning African Americans fundamentally misrepresented Soviet realities. There were several reasons behind their

³⁸⁸ Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken*, p. 85; For a case of Fort-Whiteman based on NKVD documents, see Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 218-27.

³⁸⁹ John Garder, “African Americans in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s: The Development of Transcontinental Protest,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1999), pp. 190-200.

³⁹⁰ Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, p. 25.

³⁹¹ Quoted in Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 58-9.

³⁹² The best discussion of McKay’s writings in the Soviet Union is Kate Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), chapter 4.

misrepresentations. When they traveled to the Soviet Union, the secret police OGPU took great care in ensuring that the visitors saw and read the right materials and talked to the carefully chosen interlocutors in order to show Soviet successes and conceal their problems. Viewing ethnic relations in the Soviet Union through the prism of American race relations obfuscated African American travelers' perspective. And finally presenting the Soviet society in glowing terms was one way of critiquing U.S. racism. As a result of these factors, as Bill Mullen notes, W.E.B. DuBois became "quite often, either public apologist, or ardent defender" of the "brutalities of Stalinism."³⁹³ Such was also the case with singer and actor Paul Robeson. After noting that there were no "slums," "no starvation," and "the bounding life; the feeling of safety and abundance and freedom," in an interview for Communist Party newspaper *Daily Worker* in 1935, Robeson explained why Soviet execution of "counter-revolutionaries" was justified. "From what I have seen of the workings of the Soviet Government, I can only say that anybody who lifts his hand against it ought to be shot! It is the government's duty to put down any opposition to this really free society with a firm hand," he said, "and I hope they will always do it It is obvious that there is no terror here, that all the masses of every race are contended and support their government."³⁹⁴ He also penned a heartfelt eulogy to his "Beloved Comrade" Stalin upon the Soviet tyrant's death in 1953.³⁹⁵

The writings of African Americans who visited and lived in Central Asia should be understood within the context of this background. Their impressions of Soviet policy in Central Asia and the ordinary lives of the natives were consistently contrasted with the horrors of Jim Crow in America. Sadie Roane was among the group of agricultural specialists and their families

³⁹³ Bill Mullen, *W.E.B. DuBois: Revolutionary Across the Color Line* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), location 984. Kindle edition.

³⁹⁴ "I Am Home—Interview by Vern Smith," *Daily Worker* (15 Jan., 1935), republished in Paul Robeson and Philip Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1978), p. 95.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 347-9.

who settled in Uzbekistan to help with cotton cultivation. She later recalled how she was not confined to the “back of the bus” and that she could be served at any restaurant “and treated like any other customer.”³⁹⁶ It should be noted that, as specialists as well as potential promoters of Communism abroad, these African Americans were provided a much higher living standard than was afforded to Central Asians. Sadie’s husband Joseph Roane “received a salary equivalent to six hundred dollars per month,” in addition to free healthcare, childcare, housing food, and servants,” as Allison Blakely explains. “When these circumstances were contrasted with the opportunities available to a ‘colored’ scientist in the United States, and with conditions during the existing Great Depression, it is understandable that the Roanes renewed their contracts until 1937, when they finally returned home.” And their return to the U.S. was not related to Stalin’s purges or facing any economic hardships. By Soviet standards and what African Americans experienced in America at the time, they lived a privileged life in Uzbekistan.³⁹⁷

The organizer of this group of African American cotton specialists in Uzbekistan was Oliver John Golden, the son of a former slave who studied at both Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow. Inspired by what he experienced in Moscow, he returned to the United States with the purpose of gathering specialists to help his “colored brethren” in Uzbekistan. In this endeavor, Golden appealed to the Head of the Agriculture Department of the Tuskegee Institute and renowned scientist George Washington Carver with the following plea: “you owe it to your race.”³⁹⁸ Golden and his Polish-Jewish-American wife Bertha Bialek forever settled in Uzbekistan. Their daughter Lily Golden, who in her later life would become a visible figure as a black Russian accompanying Nikita

³⁹⁶ Quoted in Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008), p. 102.

³⁹⁷ Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1986), p. 98.

³⁹⁸ Peterson, “From US to USSR,” pp. 453-4.

Khrushchev in his visit to the United States to showcase Soviet color-blindness, recalled that her father was “persuaded that help needed to be given to the non-European peoples of the Soviet Union—the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Chuckcha—who had been colonized and who in American terms were ‘colored.’ . . . He believed that Black people could help their own kind.”³⁹⁹ Golden’s experience of racism in America obfuscated his proper understanding of realities in Uzbekistan where race relations did not operate in American way and his good intentions blinded him to the negative sides of the Soviet cotton policy in Central Asia.

The most notable figure among African Americans who traveled to Central Asia and left a significant sum of writings on it was a leading face of Harlem Renaissance: Langston Hughes. Among other things, Hughes had the distinction of becoming the first American whose poetry was translated into any Central Asian languages.⁴⁰⁰ He spent nearly five months in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, meeting with their writers, visiting cotton fields, observing the ruins from Bukhara and Samarkand and Merv, picking a few Russian and Uzbek in the process, and taking considerable amount of written notes. He remained fairly sympathetic to Bolshevism and later distanced himself as can be seen in the differences of his Central Asian recollections in his *The Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* published in Moscow in 1934 and his autobiography *I Wonder as I Wander* just six months after being summoned by the House of Un-American Activities Committee in 1956. As late as 1938, he joined other left-leaning Americans who supported in writing the “Statement of American Progressives on the Moscow Trials”—the same year when Faizulla Khojaye, Uzbek leader whom Hughes described as “a man of great culture and intelligence,” and Sanjar Siddiq, Hughes’s Uzbek translator, were purged in Uzbekistan. The

³⁹⁹ Quoted in Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians*, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁰⁰ David Chioni Moore, “Colored Dispatches from the Uzbek Border: Langston Hughes’ Relevance, 1933-2002,” *Callaloo*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn, 2002), p. 1118.

Nazi-Soviet Pact and the climate of post-World War II era pushed him away from Communist sympathies.⁴⁰¹

Hughes came to the Soviet Union as part of a crew who were invited to feature in a film *Black and White*, an expose and condemnation of American racism. Hughes was to write the script for the film. All participants were black except for a British lady who was white and the only one with acting skills. Soviets stereotypically assumed that all African Americans could sing and act. The initial script was “written by a famous Russian writer *who had never been in America*,” as Hughes recalled it, “and the result was a pathetic hodgepodge of good intentions and faulty facts.”⁴⁰² But that was not the main reason the project eventually failed. The year was 1932 and the Soviets were eagerly awaiting Franklin Roosevelt’s diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. Reportedly Colonel Hugh Cooper, American engineer with lucrative business connections with the USSR and a friend of Stalin’s, learned about the movie and met with Molotov and secured the cancellation of the project in return promising a favor from Washington. Several members of the group denounced Soviet compromise with “the forces of American race prejudice.”⁴⁰³ Others, including Hughes, did not make much out of the failure of the film project and wanted to see more of the Soviet Union. They were particularly interested in seeing Soviet Central Asia and see how it compared to America’s south. Thus began Langston Hughes’s trip to Tashkent, Ashgabat, Merv, Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, and back to Moscow.

⁴⁰¹ Langston Hughes and Christopher de Santis, *Collected Works of Langston Hughes: Fight for Freedom and Related Writings on Civil Rights, Volume 10* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001), p. 9. For Khojayeve, see Hughes, *The Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, p. 48. For Sanjar Siddiq, see Moore, “Colored Dispatches from the Uzbek Border,” p. 1113n12.

⁴⁰² Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, p. 101; emphasis original.

⁴⁰³ “Say Race Bias Here halted Soviet Film: Harlem Writers Who Went to Russia With Negro Troupe Send ‘Inside Story,’” *The New York Times* (5 Oct., 1932), p. 26. For Colonel Cooper’s career in the Soviet Union, see Andrew Steiger, *American Engineers in the Soviet Union* (New York: Russian Economic Institute, 1944), pp. 10-11.

At the time foreigners were officially not allowed into Central Asia but Soviet officials made an exception. According to Arthur Koestler who shared many private discussions with Hughes, Soviets actually proposed him to go and then compare “conditions in the cotton-growing regions of Central Asia with those on the plantations of the American South.”⁴⁰⁴ No wonder Hughes’s initial articles on the subject were published as a monograph in Moscow. In those writings, Hughes was more radical in his criticism of conditions in the U.S. and more sympathetic to Bolshevism than in his autobiography published at the heart of anti-Communism, but there are nevertheless common themes in both. For instance, in both writings Hughes frequently compares Central Asia to Jim Crow America. Complexion of the Soviet citizens’ skin appear fairly often. As David Chioni Moore writes, “Hughes refers to ‘colored’ Soviet citizens, to ‘yellow-brown’ Uzbekis, a ‘parchment-colored’ writer, another man whose ‘complexion was about the color of a canary bird’s feathers,’ the ‘mulatto-brown’ Bokhara desert, a ‘golden little boy,’ ‘a younger Turkoman, quite chocolate of skin,’ ‘colored Orientals,’ and another ‘brownskin’ Uzbek.”⁴⁰⁵ But there are also significant differences between his two recollections of Central Asian trip.

His *The Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* can almost be classified alongside other pro-Bolshevik writings I discussed earlier.⁴⁰⁶ This publication is for the most part an uncritical recitation of Bolshevik propaganda. Hughes differs from them with his American comparisons that grew out of genuine criticism of Jim Crow’s horrors. In his Moscow-Tashkent trip in a train, he recalled how he would have been subjected to specially designated areas for blacks and he would have a hard time socializing with whites. He quickly jotted a note he planned to send to

⁴⁰⁴ Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, location 1844.

⁴⁰⁵ David Chioni Moore, “Local Color, Global ‘Color’: Langston Hughes, the Black Atlantic, and Soviet Central Asia 1932,” *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), p. 55.

⁴⁰⁶ I am referring to the writings of Joshua Kunitz and Anna Louise Strong.

African American publications: “There is no Jim Crow on the trains of the Soviet Union.”⁴⁰⁷ His positive evaluation of Central Asian cotton fields, based though on a mixture of reality and misinformation and lies provided to him by his carefully chosen hosts, meant to criticize American hypocrisy. The U.S. was home to an exploitative share-crop system where “black field-hands are kept in slavery,” he says. “And yet American capitalists have the nerve to accuse the Soviet Union of forced labour.”⁴⁰⁸ The main target of his writing was his home country.

A combination of misunderstanding the situation in Central Asia and him uncritically believing his hosts lie behind some of his false and misleading comparisons. For example, he marvels at the “absence of children in the [cotton] fields” whereas in America they “would be picking along with the parents.” His hosts told him they were all at school and were not employed for cotton-picking, which was of course a blatant lie. The use of child labor in Central Asia’s cotton fields was a staple of entire Soviet history.⁴⁰⁹ Hughes celebrates turning old schools into museums based on an assumption that the people who ran them in the past were the equivalents of white racists in America’s south or American stooges in Haiti and Cuba. “In the courtyard of a once famous religious medress [madrasa—A.J.] whose cold little cells were filled with students stupidly learning by rote the books of the Koran,” he says in Bukhara, “the Soviets have built a new museum.” This and the planned destruction of the city’s “physical aspects” such as “old minarets and walls and hovels” to build “a new modern city” in his opinion were commendable acts.⁴¹⁰ A more fitting, though by no means perfect, comparison would be the U.S. federal government shutting down a school run by Native Americans or African Americans and turning it into a museum, forcing former pupils to study in schools that taught the values of

⁴⁰⁷ Hughes, *The Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 14-5.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 15, 35.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

mainstream America. Hughes however would hardly be praising such a destructive act in his home.

The tone of Hughes's autobiography is quite different. Here he admits that Soviet "officials everywhere tried *too* hard to convince us of the progress made under the new regime."⁴¹¹ He also mentions how the OGPU accompanied him everywhere and he dined at OGPU restaurants, "filled mostly with Russians," that were not accessible to ordinary natives—something he never mentions in his Moscow publication.⁴¹² He is more outspoken about the difficulties he experienced as a traveler and natives were experiencing as citizens. He also explains why, unlike white travelers, he tried harder to identify with natives in Central Asia. The difficulties Uzbeks and Turkmens faced reminded him of the difficulties African Americans experienced in the U.S. This difference is pronounced in Hughes contrasting his views with those of Arthur Koestler. Koestler was disgusted with conditions there, especially lack of German hygiene among natives and Russians, and viewed Turkmens as primitive people who did not really deserve the revolution. "If the Revolution had only occurred in Germany," Hughes quotes him saying, "at least it would have been a clean one." Whereas for Hughes: "Dirt without Jim Crow was bad—but dirt *with Jim Crow* . . . would have been infinitely worse."⁴¹³ As a person of color and of an oppressive system, he had a better capacity to sympathize with natives.

Koestler was indeed quite different from Hughes. A better comparison for Koestler would be the familiar Armin Vambery. As another Hungarian Jewish kid, Koestler grew up "devouring" Vambery's Central Asian travel writings.⁴¹⁴ He once was a personal secretary to militant Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky and traveled to Palestine and Iraq. He joined the German

⁴¹¹ Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, p. 126; emphasis original.

⁴¹² Ibid, p. 130.

⁴¹³ Ibid, pp. 134-5, 218; emphasis original.

⁴¹⁴ Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, location. 1788.

Communist Party as a young writer but, after being disillusioned with Stalinism (the seeds of which were sown after he and Hughes observed a little show trial in Turkmenistan⁴¹⁵), he became a British citizen. His disgust directed at the cultures of “semi-barbarian” nomads of the Middle East and Central Asia on the one hand, and his criticism of the Soviet system on the other, addressed to the English-speaking world from London, eerily echoes the writings of Vambery. By coincidence, he ended up in Ashgabat at the same time when Hughes was there. If Hughes tried to identify his lot with Central Asians, Koestler saw Turkmenistan as “a sullen and dejected part of the earth.” As inhabitants of a “Moslem country,” Turkmens shared “the same characteristic attitude” as “Arabs of the Middle East”:

Hidden under a jovial, or polite, or non-committal surface, one felt the surly fanaticism of Islam—that harsh faith, born in the desert, which has never been reformed and liberalized, which became petrified at the stage of development that Christianity had left behind in the days of the Inquisition.⁴¹⁶

Hughes in contrast both tried to understand the natives by imagining himself in their shoes and was sympathetic to Bolshevik policies.

Langston was a man of art and that aspect also attracted him to Bolshevik propaganda against Tsarism and the old society because art and theater were put into good use by Bolsheviks. “To me as a writer, it was especially interesting to observe how art of all sorts—writing, painting, and theatre—was being utilized as a weapon against the evils of the past,” he says. “To be sure art, put to such use, often degenerated into propaganda. But even propaganda in talented hands took on dramatic dimensions. In Tashkent, talented Russian directors were using all the folk elements of Uzbek music, poetry and dance in aiding to create an Uzbek

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, location 1932.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, location 1775-8.

national theatre where there had been none before.”⁴¹⁷ Not quite. He was unaware of this but by the time he visited Uzbekistan and met many writers there in 1932, at least two circles of Uzbek writers and artists—some of them brilliant minds at the forefront of national culture, art, literature, and theater—had been purged for allegedly being “bourgeois nationalists.” The writers Hughes met, many of them Slavic rather than Uzbek, were under absolute control wary of incurring Bolshevik officials’ wrath for slight deviation from established Marxist-Leninist dogma—which, to make matters worse, could change at the whim of a dictator in Moscow.

Yet there is evidence that one young Uzbek poet named Karim Ahmedi who befriended Hughes could have tried to use a literary code language to convey a message to Hughes critical of the Bolshevik regime. The evidence comes via Zohra Saed, an Uzbek-Afghan-American scholar whose great uncles and aunts and great grandparents, regardless of age, were summarily shot by Bolshevik soldiers because one member of the family participated in anti-Bolshevik activity.⁴¹⁸ Saed recently perused Hughes’s Turkestan notes at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale and found a ten-page poem by Ahmedi given to Hughes as “a small memento.” The most interesting part about the poem is that it is in Chagatai, pre-Revolutionary Turkic in Arabic script. Hughes had his own rough translation of the poem which, according to Saed, does not properly convey the meaning of the original. A new translation by Saed’s father, a Turkestani émigré who speaks the same language as Ahmedi did, suggests the Uzbek poet might have tried to convey the parallels between oppression of Ahmedi’s homeland and that of Hughes as a black man in America. But the premier African American poet evidently did not get the message.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, p. 185.

⁴¹⁸ Zohra Saed et al., *Langston Hughes: Poems, Photos & Notebooks from Turkestan* (New York: Center for the Humanities, the Graduate Center, the City University of New York, 2015), pp. 50-56

⁴¹⁹ Saed, *Langston Hughes*, pp. 10-12, 48.

For African American travelers to Central Asia, engineers and artists, their journeys had a special meaning. In addition to having job opportunities, they also sought an escape from the injustice of American Jim Crow. They believed they found a society in the Soviet Union where “people of color” in Central Asia were free from racism they experienced in the U.S. Their observations of Central Asian reality however were hampered by a number of factors. Trying to show the country selectively for propaganda purposes, Soviet officials restricted the ability of American visitors to see the country in an objective way. African Americans also exaggerated Soviet achievements in order to criticize American oppression of blacks. And finally viewing Soviet policy in Central Asia through the prism of race relations in the United States obfuscated their perspectives, contributing to some of their odd observations. Nevertheless, there is appreciative nuance in their writings and one can see they genuinely wanted to identify with Central Asians, help them, and understand them. That nuance and empathy would be lacking in the coming years.

American-Soviet Alliance and Disposable Orientalism

I represented the Office of War Information, whose menial job was to say nice things about our Allies—including the Russians.

Owen Lattimore

In 3 March 1918, the young Bolshevik state signed Brest-Litovsk agreement with Germany. Coupled with the Revolution itself, the event made it quite challenging for the Allied forces to determine what exactly was happening in Russia, especially with regards to its position in the war. Among other things, the fate of Turkestan cotton became an issue of great concern for Allied leaders. Ernest Harris, working simultaneously for the Moscow branch of the National City Bank of New York and the State Department, went to Tashkent to see the situation there in

April. Upon arrival, he was shocked to see the chaos, famine, and bloodshed but he alone could not do much to secure American interests. On 1 May, Roger Culver Tredwell arrived in Tashkent as the official American consul. His purpose was to gather information about cotton and thwart German-Turkish attempts to gain control of that increasingly important commodity. Soon after he was arrested by Bolshevik leaders but released five hours later without adequate explanation. Later in October, however, he was arrested again and kept under house arrest until his release in May 1919. He was then released and returned to America by way of Finland. In later years Soviet historians made much of an issue out of the case, accusing Tredwell of being a sinister agent of American imperialism trying to foment counter-revolutionary forces against Bolsheviks and some even tied him to the *basmachi* movement.⁴²⁰

In reality, the situation was much less dramatic and American concerns in Central Asia at the time were much more uncertain due to lack of information and understanding of what was happening in central Russia, let alone Turkestan. In the words of Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Russia for American officials was “an unanswered and unanswerable riddle.” To understand this increasingly important Russian enigma, Lansing ordered “to spare no expense to keep Department regularly and fully informed of facts in different parts of Russia.”⁴²¹ Tredwell was a victim of unfortunate circumstances and was at the wrong place at the wrong time. After Tredwell’s arrival in Tashkent, the Wilson Administration joined the British and the French in militarily intervening in Arkhangelsk and Vladivostok where they supported anti-Bolshevik forces. In addition, Lenin was shot and wounded in September 1918. As a result, the Cheka

⁴²⁰ Joshua Segal, “The American Mission to Tashkent. An Examination of the Mission of Roger Culver Tredwell, American Consul at Tashkent May 1918-1919,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1992), pp. 51-110. The case of Tredwell is also covered in “Efforts to Obtain the Release of American Citizens Detained in Russia,” in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Russia* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), pp. 167-189. Henceforth, *FRUS*.

⁴²¹ David Langbart, “‘Spare no Expense’: The Department of State and the Search for Information about Bolshevik Russia, November 1917-September 1918,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1989), pp. 318, 321.

agents arrested Xenophon Kalamatiano, American businessman who was secretly collecting commercial as well as political and military intelligence on behalf of the State Department, in connection with the “Lockhart Plot” and sentenced him to death.⁴²² The fact that Kalamatiano was in contact with British spies Robert Lockhart and Sydney Reilly who plotting Bolshevik overthrow and Lenin’s assassination on the one hand, and Tredwell’s good relations with the British intelligence officer Colonel Frederick Bailey on a secret mission in Turkestan on the other—not to mention adventurous British Major-General Wilfrid Malleeson’s brief clash with Bolshevik forces in Merv in early 1919—made things more complicated for Tredwell.⁴²³ Unlike later Soviet historians, Bolshevik officials at the time were much more reasonable with Tredwell. They had good reasons to be suspicious of the American consul but they knew that he was not a threat and eventually released him.⁴²⁴

This episode of the U.S. government getting involved in Turkestan affairs was short-lived and for a reason. The whole affair was tied to war and until another world war erupted, Central Asia did not elicit any foreign policy concern in the United States. To understand this phenomenon, it is worth bringing a little nuance Iranian-American scholar Hamid Dabashi recently added to the concept of Orientalism in American context. In his analysis of post-9/11 Orientalism, Dabashi argues that the new kind of knowledge production in this field is like “manufacturing a communal consensus very much on the model of the social construction of reality as proposed by sociologists”; it is also “spontaneous and disposable—convincing in their

⁴²² David Foglesong, “Xenophon Kalamatiano: An American Spy in Revolutionary Russia?” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1991), pp. 154-195.

⁴²³ Frederick Bailey, “A Visit to Bokhara in 1919,” *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Feb., 1921), pp. 75-87; Wilfrid Malleeson, “The British Military Mission to Turkistan, 1918-1929,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1922), pp. 95-110.

⁴²⁴ Even the British were reserved about their involvement in Russian civil war in Central Asia, partly because their concerns were restricted to the safety of India and partly because they were wary of “pan-Islamic unity” that could form in the place of Bolshevism.—L.P. Morris, “British Secret Missions in Turkestan, 1918-19,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Apr., 1977), pp. 363-379.

self-fulfilling prophecies today, discarded for the next round of the U.S. military adventurism tomorrow.”⁴²⁵ Although Dabashi applies his theory to post-9/11 Orientalism, it may also be applied, as I argue, to the process of constructing Orientalist knowledge in the wake of American-Soviet alliance in World War II. The alliance with the Soviets generated some American writings on Soviet Asia and much of it was politics than independent knowledge. It also turned out to be so easily disposable that these writings were quickly discarded when World War II alliance with the Soviets turned into a cold war struggle against them.

The American state interest in Central Asia, to be sure, was marginal but it did bring a few American dignitaries to the capitals of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The first among them was the flamboyant Republican Senator Wendell Willkie who was touring the world in a bomber named *Gulliver*. Formerly a Republican candidate running against Roosevelt, in September 1942 he arrived in the Soviet Union as a goodwill ambassador on behalf of his former nemesis. Later by way of Tashkent, he flew to China. There is not much available about his intermittent stopover in Tashkent other than his recollection that the city reminded him of southern California and that he was among “the first Americans who had been seen in Central Asian city in many years.”⁴²⁶ His meeting with Soviet officials is interesting nevertheless. Although he considered himself strongly opposed to Communism, he was impressed by what he saw in the USSR and by comrade Stalin. Once he even embarrassed Andrei Vishinski, Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, when he responded to a toast in the following words: “Please help me to see everything in Russia. I want to see the churchmen and the people in every phase of activity. Please help me. I won’t report anything that I don’t like. I want to improve American-Soviet understanding. I

⁴²⁵ Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), pp. 221, 224.

⁴²⁶ Wendell Willkie, *One World* (New York: Shimon and Schuster, 1943), p. 73.

will tell the American people only the good things I see.”⁴²⁷ That was in stark contrast to what he privately wrote to journalist Arthur Krock before embarking on the trip: “I am going without any obligations of any kind except to tell the American people the truth, as I see it, upon my return.”⁴²⁸ The truth apparently could be shaped as he saw fit for the greater sake of American-Soviet understanding.

Two years later, the pilots who flew Willkie through Soviet Asia brought even a bigger U.S. representative in the form of Vice President Henry Wallace. Wallace and his team made the trip on the opposite direction, arriving in the Far East and from there traveling to Siberia and Central Asia. Wallace’s recollections of the trip were published in a book he co-authored with a long-time Soviet sympathizer, Stalin apologist Andrew Steiger. Before joining the project with the Vice President, Steiger co-authored a nauseatingly sycophantic ode to Soviet Asia policy where every Soviet slogan, every item in the Soviet Constitution, every word ever said by comrade Stalin, and every court proceeding documenting show trials was embraced as uncontested truth, although none of the flatteries in the book topped the title of their publication.⁴²⁹ Accompanying Wallace was a China expert Owen Lattimore from the Office of War Information for Pacific Affairs whose account of the trip was published by *National Geographic*.⁴³⁰ Lattimore, it shall be recalled, was another Stalin apologist who in 1938 supported Mary Van Kleeck’s description of Moscow show trials as a “victory for democratic nations.” Lattimore further suggested that the rigorous procedure of the trials granted “the

⁴²⁷ Quoted in Mary Earhart Dillon, *Wendell Willkie 1892-1944* (New York: Lippincott Company, 1952), pp. 271-272.

⁴²⁸ Quoted in Sarah Thompson, *Wendell Willkie: A Hoosier Liberal*. PhD Dissertation (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1980), p. 200.

⁴²⁹ Raymond Davies and Andrew Steiger, *Soviet Asia: Democracy’s First Line of Defense* (New York: The Dial Press, 1942).

⁴³⁰ Henry Wallace and Andrew Steiger, *Soviet Asia Mission* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock Publishers, 1946); Owen Lattimore, “New Road to Asia,” *The National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (Dec., 1944), pp. 641-676.

ordinary Soviet citizen more courage to protest, loudly, whenever he finds himself being victimized by ‘someone in the Party’ or ‘someone in the Government.’ That sounds to me like democracy.”⁴³¹ In short, Wallace, himself and admirer of Bolshevik Revolution, surrounded himself with an ensemble of willing Soviet sympathizers.

With such a group of visitors, Wallace made Soviet propagandists’ job of building “Potemkin Villages” relatively easy.⁴³² The group landed in Magadan in May 1944 which was nearby gold-mining labor camp Kolyma, run by construction company *Dalstroï* (Far North Construction Trust, administered by NKVD), the same camp where Lovett Fort-Whiteman perished a few years earlier and another American Communist Thomas Sgovio was fulfilling his sentence to hard labor. *Dalstroï* was undoubtedly one of the worst Gulag camps in terms of lethality, described by another former inmate as “a giant Auschwitz without ovens.”⁴³³ The Soviet organization of the tour however was so elaborate and meticulous that neither Wallace nor Lattimore or any other member of the crew suspected it. For Wallace, *Dalstroï* was “a combination of TVA and Hudson’s Bay Company.”⁴³⁴ The American team’s hosts, Sergei Golidze and Ivan Nikishov, were no less deceiving. They were both “high-ranking NKVD administrators . . . personally responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands, if not millions,

⁴³¹ Mary Van Kleeck et al., “Comment and Correspondence,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Jun., 1938), p. 237; Owen Lattimore et al., “Comment and Correspondence,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Sep., 1938), p. 372.

⁴³² Kanif Khakimov, “Potemkinskie derevni stroili i v magadane” [“Potemkin Villages Were Built in Magadan Too”], *Trud*, 4 May 2015, available from: http://www.trud.ru/article/04-05-2005/87219_potemkinskie_derevni_stroili_i_v_magadane.html (Accessed: 2 November 2016). In Russian.

⁴³³ Vadim Birstein, “Three Days in ‘Auschwitz Without Gas Chambers’: Henry A. Wallace’s Visit to Magadan in 1944,” Wilson Center Cold War History Project (30 April 2012), available from: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/three-days-auschwitz-without-gas-chambers-henry-wallaces-visit-to-magadan-1944> (Accessed: 2 November 2016).

⁴³⁴ Lattimore agreed though he inverted the order American companies compared: “a combination of Hudson’s Bay Company and TVA.”—Wallace and Steiger, *Soviet Asia Mission*, p. 33; Lattimore, “New Road to Asia,” p. 657.

of Stalin's victims, in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and now Kolyma."⁴³⁵ What Wallace witnessed in Magadan was an example of what was awaiting him in the rest of his trip in Soviet Asia.

When they arrived in Kazakhstan, they flew over *Karlag*, Karaganda labor camp home to over fifty thousand prisoners forty percent of whom were women, but their hosts convinced them that the constructions were being built by volunteers. In Tashkent, they were greeted by Amayak Kobulov, introduced as the "Vice-President of the Uzbek Soviet Republic." In reality, he was the NKVD Commissar of the Republic and a close associate of Lavrentiy Beria's.⁴³⁶ Soviet organizers also mobilized a great deal of ordinary citizens, including children to make Americans feel they were most welcome. Colonel Richard Kight, the pilot who flew both Willkie and Wallace, visited a store in Tashkent with Lattimore. When they came out, a crowd had already jammed their traffic and a teenage boy "called out, in careful English which he had evidently been practicing, 'Long live America!'" In another instance, when the two were walking in a public park, they were greeted again with a crowd and a girl handed them flowers, saying "We do not have much in time of war, but we wish to give these to our American allies."⁴³⁷ Upon the completion of the trip, Wallace before heading to China penned an official letter to "Comrade Stalin," thanking him for the hospitality of the Soviet people in Siberia and Central Asia whose achievements, no doubt, were made possible by "the most outstanding and gifted political leadership."⁴³⁸

Coinciding with Wallace's travel in Soviet Asia was the visit of Eric Johnston, the head of the United States Chamber of Commerce who wanted "no part of the Communist system for the United States," according to *New York Times* reporter who accompanied him to Alma-Ata

⁴³⁵ Tzouliadis, *Forsaken*, p. 184.

⁴³⁶ Birstein, "Three Days in 'Auschwitz Without Gas Chambers.'"

⁴³⁷ Lattimore, "New Road to Asia," p. 657.

⁴³⁸ Reproduced in "Ambassador Harriman to Secretary of State" in *FRUS 1944, Vol. IV*, pp. 972-973.

and Tashkent. Johnston was so impressed that in Tashkent he offered a toast for “the tremendous progress made here in the last twenty years under Communism and the Soviet system,” and after returning home, began to publicly urge better relations with Stalin’s government.⁴³⁹ The *Times* reporter was even more euphoric about what he saw in Samarkand. Thanks to “the centralized Soviet system, which decides what is best for the natives and then sees to it that they conform,” he wrote, greater “progress has been made in the twenty-one years since Soviet rule was firmly established here in 1923 than in all the other years since Alexander the Great first captured Samarkand in 329 B.C.”⁴⁴⁰ The fact that Samarkand was once the capital of Tamerlane’s vast empire, a gateway to the great Silk Road, and one of the centers of Islamic scholarship for centuries were, in the views of this American reporter, insignificant dots as compared to the progress introduced by Soviets.

The alliance with the USSR and the plethora of writings in praise of Soviet achievements rejuvenated pro-Bolshevik writers who began to justify their recitation of Soviet propaganda in terms of Central Asia’s strategic importance. The American Russian Institute, the pro-Soviet publication vehicle, reached its peak during the war, and an associate at the center, William Mandel, penned a book reciting Soviet statistics without a shred of skepticism. Soviet Central Asian republics, Mandel argued, were located near Southeast Asian countries whose stability was of great importance for the United States. Soviet Central Asian policy could also be studied so that it could be applied elsewhere: “as a nation interested in seeing a satisfactory solution to the problem of India, we cannot but be curious about the means applied in the Soviet Union to eliminate the backwardness and hostility to Moscow which formerly characterized a region that

⁴³⁹ W.H. Lawrence, “Samarkand Lifts Mid-Asia’s Blight: Uzbek and Kazakh Republics Prosper Under Impetus of Vast Soviet Programs,” *The New York Times* (14 July 1944), p. 6; David Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”: The Crusade for a “Free Russia” Since 1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 97-98.

⁴⁴⁰ Lawrence, “Samarkand Lifts Mid-Asia’s Blight,” p. 6.

extends to within nine miles of the Indian border.”⁴⁴¹ Mandel did consult sources other than official Soviet statistics, Pravda, court minutes of show trials, proclamations of Stalin (“himself a member of an oppressed nation”), and the Soviet constitution. Those were unsurprisingly Anna Louise Strong, Joshua Kunitz, and Erwin Kisch—three pro-Bolshevik writers from the early 1930s whose writings on Central Asia did not deviate from official Soviet line.⁴⁴²

Such great sympathy for the Soviet Union by an eclectic group of Americans would not be possible without the support of the acting President of the country. Speaking to an audience of young people sixteen months before Hitler unleashed Operation Barbarossa, Roosevelt acknowledged that he was initially sympathetic to the Bolshevik Revolution, for the new “leaders in Russia were bringing education and better health, and above all, better opportunity to millions who had been kept in ignorance and serfdom under the imperial regime.” He was no fan of Communism as an ideology and “abhorred the indiscriminate killings” but “hoped that Russia would work out its own problems and their government would eventually become a peace-loving, popular government with free ballot.” Those hopes were dashed by the public display of Molotov-Ribbentrop handshake in 1939.⁴⁴³ The collapse of the brittle Nazi-Soviet alliance evidently renewed his hope and optimism. At a time when Harry Truman suggested that the U.S. ought to help whoever, between Germany and the USSR, was losing the war, thus “let them kill as many of each other as possible,” Roosevelt embraced Stalin as an important ally in the fight against fascism.⁴⁴⁴

The goodwill and optimism toward the Soviet Union, which generated a good deal of positive writings about the Soviet Union and its policies in Asia, however collapsed as quickly as

⁴⁴¹ William Mandel, *The Soviet Far East and Central Asia* (New York: The Dial Press, 1944), p. xiii.

⁴⁴² Ibid, pp. 105, 115n10.

⁴⁴³ Quoted in Feuer, “American Travelers to the Soviet Union,” pp. 147-148.

⁴⁴⁴ Truman quoted in “Our Policy Stated,” *The New York Times* (24 June 1941), p. 1.

it formed. With a new post-war policy that began to see the Soviet Union as an enemy, the pro-Bolshevik writings on Soviet development of Central Asia were discarded into dust bin of history, and non-Bolshevik supporters of the Soviet Union either isolated themselves out of embarrassment and fear or joined the new anti-Communist crusade. That is what happened to some of the writers discussed in this chapter. The American Russian Institute, William Mandel, Owen Lattimore were investigated by Senator Joe McCarthy and/or the House of Un-American Activities Committee.⁴⁴⁵ Eric Johnston became the President of the Motion Picture Association of America and actively participated in prosecuting “subversives” (aka “Communist sympathizers”) in Hollywood.⁴⁴⁶

Upon revelations that the Kolyma was a slave labor camp, especially after the publication of a personal account by a Swiss citizen Elinor Lipper who specifically chided Henry Wallace for being duped by sadistic NKVD administrators in Magadan, Wallace publicly acknowledged his sin in September 1952 in an article titled “Where I Was Wrong” (Lipper’s time at Kolyma coincided with Wallace’s visit and she named Nikishov as a particularly psychotic sadist). Wallace condemned Communism as an evil ideology, dubbed Soviet leaders ruthless and fanatic, and acknowledged that he was “altogether too much impressed by the show put on by high Russian officials.”⁴⁴⁷ Owen Lattimore responded differently. In a letter written to *New Statesman* in 1968 from his new residence in Britain, Lattimore scoffed at his and Wallace’s critics for failing to understand that Wallace then “was on an official goodwill mission.” Lattimore meanwhile “represented the Office of War Information, whose menial job was to say nice things

⁴⁴⁵ James Cotton, *Asian Frontier Nationalism: Owen Lattimore and the American Policy Debate* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 79.

⁴⁴⁶ “‘Political’ Blacklisting in the Motion Picture Industry: A Sherman Act Violation,” *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (Jan., 1965), p. 567.

⁴⁴⁷ John Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry Wallace* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), p. 329. For Lipper’s criticism of Wallace, see Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 158.

about our Allies—even the Russians,” the same people, Lattimore reminded his forgetful critics, “were saving us all.”⁴⁴⁸ In other words, false information and misleading knowledge produced about Soviet Asia, in the views of this preeminent Orientalist, was justified because of a military and strategic necessity.

⁴⁴⁸ Owen Lattimore, “Letters to the Editor: Left-Wing Consciences,” *New Statesman* (11 Oct., 1968), p. 461.

CHAPTER 3: SOVIETOLOGY, THE COLD WAR, AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Introduction

The immediate post-war era was a pivotal period for the development of Central Asian Studies in the United States. On one hand, Soviet Central Asia was mostly closed to American travelers, researchers, and government officials alike. On the other hand, researchers began to study the Soviet Union in a systematic and scholarly manner. Political and logistical conditions made it very challenging for researchers to study the Soviet Union and its peoples. They were also operating within the climate of Cold War when political officials and theorists wanted to understand the Soviet Union as an enemy. They could not access Central Asia physically or read source materials in local languages. Nevertheless, scholarship produced on Central Asia in the first two decades after World War II—the period covered in this chapter—was not simply a story of success or failure; it was a bit of both. Scholars succeeded because they countered Soviet propaganda narratives and brought Americans' attention to the multi-ethnic nature of the Soviet Union. They failed because the methods they used to study Central Asia were deeply flawed. They were Russo-centric and ignored insights from Islamic studies and the greater history of Inner Asia.

This chapter is divided into five parts. I start the chapter by discussing Sovietology, its complexity, and its relevance for the development of Central Asian Studies in the United States. Some scholars have argued that Sovietology was part of an American anti-communist crusade that propagandized against communist countries abroad and helped crush radical dissent at home. Others have insisted that American study of the Soviet Union was free from the dogmatic,

state-controlled, top-down approach symptomatic of the methods employed by the Soviet government. But Sovietology, also known as Soviet Studies and Russian Studies, was simply too large a phenomenon to be described in such narrow terms. People who participated in the study of the Soviet Union came from a variety of backgrounds and had different goals—as did the U.S. government and corporate agencies that funded Sovietological studies. My analysis of Sovietological approach to Central Asian Studies during the onset of Cold War also shows this complex nature of this enterprise.

This chapter contains extensive critique of Sovietological study of Central Asia but one cannot ignore the fact that scholars involved in the study of Central Asia made a significant contribution to understanding Central Asia's place in world history from a different angle. The second part of the chapter therefore discusses American Sovietological experts' contributions and achievements. The body of scholarly publications by these experts cannot be fully analyzed in the relatively short space here, but my analysis emphasizes two areas where American experts excelled: countering Soviet propaganda through critical analyses of official Soviet publications, and bringing Americans' attention to the multi-national and multi-ethnic nature of the Soviet Union at a time when for many Americans the term "Russians" and "Soviets" were interchangeable and synonymous.

To fully grasp the complexity of Sovietological approaches to Central Asian Studies, we also need to critique and discuss the flaws of American experts in understanding Central Asia. It is especially relevant as later scholars in late- and post- Cold War eras learned from their predecessors who laid the foundation of modern Central Asian Studies in the United States. There were several flaws in American approaches to studying Central Asia in early Cold War era that I will discuss in this chapter. The most obvious flaw was that scholars often gave in to the

pressure of Cold War politics, sacrificing scholarly integrity and objectivity. Most scholars were political science theorists with expertise in behavioral sciences that were popular at the time, with no specialized knowledge of Central Asian languages, histories, and Islam. Despite their insistence that Americans should not ignore the multi-ethnic nature of the Soviet Union, these experts approached their subject of study through Russian eyes, as they relied upon publications in the Russian language. In their attempts to read official Soviet publications “against the grain,” American experts ended up embracing Soviet political and ideological terms and concepts in their analyses.

Central Asian Studies in the Soviet Union was formed during the era of formal decolonization. Therefore, the question of colonization and decolonization was a subject American experts of grappled with in their works. American Central Asian Studies experts borrowed- and learned from their European colleagues, namely in Great Britain and France, in their analyses of Soviet colonialism as the question of colonialism loomed large in those two European countries. The question of whether Soviet rule in Central Asia could be described as colonialism had important political implications due to the rising tide of decolonization in Europe’s former colonies and the growing intellectual discreditation of colonialism in the Western world. Thus, for some scholars in Europe and North America who wanted to discredit the Soviet Union, depicting Soviet rule in Central Asia as the worst form of colonial abuse was one way of doing so. While the question of colonialism was a valid inquiry to discuss in the Soviet context, some scholars sacrificed scholarly objectivity in their zeal to prove the Soviets were the most egregious imperialists. If pre-war Soviet sympathizers used the case of Central Asia to declare Soviet rule in the region a successful civilizing mission, early Cold War experts took the exact opposite position, using Central Asia to prove a point about the Soviet

government. In both cases, politics of American-Soviet relations corrupted what could otherwise be a more objective scholarly study of Central Asia.

The final topic discussed in this chapter is the question of Orientalism. Examining how Orientalism played out in American study of Central Asia during the Cold War demonstrates a different angle of the field widely criticized by Edward Said and his supporters. Firstly, in much of the American writing on Central Asia from this era Central Asians appear as victims of Moscow's oppression and Russia itself is viewed through orientalist lens. Secondly, unlike the Middle East or the Far East, Central Asia did not garner American geopolitical interest until the end of the twentieth century. As such, Americans cannot in this case be accused of using their scholarship to justify colonial or neo-colonial endeavors in Central Asia. If anything, it can be argued that scholarship was used to construct an enemy in Russia and the Soviet Union. At the same time, depictions of Central Asians as oriental Muslims with stagnated civilization and a fanatical religion appeared over and over in the writings of American scholars and their European colleagues. Americans could not avoid the trap of orientalist attitudes because of two reasons: (a) their own intellectual and social upbringing, and (b) they often internalized Russian and Soviet colonialist vocabulary.

Sovietology and Central Asian Studies

Explaining the complexity of Sovietology is no easy task because, among other things, from the very beginning it was deeply infused with politics. There was as much collaboration between and among the government, security agencies, and academia as there were contentions, meaningful debates, and dissent among these groups. The threat of the Soviet Union was real but so was the myth—or the “rumor” of the Soviet communism being an existential threat to western

civilization and American way of life. The image of the Soviet “enemy was derived from an uneven mixture of fragmented information and unauthenticated presumptions,” as Ron Robin argues. “Its resonance was derived from, and coincided with, the collective codes and values of the time.”⁴⁴⁹ It was also a gigantic project that involved experts who tried to understand all aspects of Soviet life. In the words of David Engerman, Sovietology intended “to serve both the Mars and Minerva, both the national security state and academic life.” It brought together an eclectic group of enthusiasts whose purpose was “to analyze an entire nation: its people and its past, its economy and its politics, its rulers and its ruling ideas.”⁴⁵⁰ The field—which had barely existed before the war—turned into a juggernaut due to support it received from government and corporate security agencies.⁴⁵¹

The influence and pressure the government and security agencies exerted upon academics was certainly real and profound. To an extent, the connection between the military and security agencies with area studies programs—of which Sovietology was a huge part—was natural since those agencies began to sponsor area studies specialists during World War II. But during the early Cold War years, these agencies also wanted cooperation from academics and specialists in their political and ideological war with Soviet communism. Not only did they sponsor programs that they hoped would help in their ideological struggle, but security agencies sometimes targeted academics for surveillance and harassment in places such as Columbia and Harvard where the first two major Russian Studies programs—the Russian Institute in 1946 and the Russian Research Center in 1948, respectively—were established. The FBI, according to a

⁴⁴⁹ Ron Robin, *Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Industrial Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 4.

⁴⁵⁰ David Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 2.

⁴⁵¹ A rare but systematic study of areas studies programs across the United States during the interwar period, including Russian studies, is available in Stephen Marshall Arum, *Early Stages of Foreign Language and Area Studies in the U.S.: 1915-1914*, EdD Dissertation (Columbia Teachers College, 1975).

former Harvard historian who was targeted for his left-wing views, once considered Harvard “A Most Cooperative and Understanding Association.”⁴⁵² The university’s Dean at the time was McGeorge Bundy who went on to become the president of Ford Foundation as well as the National Security Advisor for presidents Kennedy and Johnson. In his recollections later Bundy actually agreed with critics of Cold War scholarship that “the first great center of area studies in the United States was not located in any university, but in Washington, during the Second World War, in the Office of Strategic Services.” He bluntly stated his hope that there would remain “a high measure of interpenetration between universities with area programs and the information-gathering agencies of the government of the United States.”⁴⁵³ His statement however was not historically accurate. Area studies had existed in American universities before WWII and, contrary to popular assumptions, early Soviet studies were promoted by academics and experts who were pro-Soviet or at least enthusiastic about Soviet modernization programs.⁴⁵⁴

The impact of Cold War politics was similar at Columbia. As one insider from the early development of the Harriman Institute of Russian Studies at Columbia University later recalled, “[t]he entire pedagogical thrust of the institute was to create a body of experts on the Soviet Union for government service and the academy that would guide and educate the American public in the struggle against international communism without engaging in the excesses of Red-baiting or scare tactics. In a word, we were trained to be liberal Cold Warriors.”⁴⁵⁵ In developing area studies programs during the early Cold War era, Christopher Simpson argues, “state and corporate security agencies frequently *initiated* social science concepts and projects, and the

⁴⁵² Sigmund Diamond, *Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community, 1945-1955* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 24.

⁴⁵³ Quoted in *ibid*, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁴ David Engerman, “New Society, New Scholarship: Soviet Studies Programmes in Interwar America,” *Minerva*, Vol. 37 (1999), p. 25.

⁴⁵⁵ “An Interview With Alfred Rieber,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 2009), p. 230.

campus experts *followed*—not the other way around.”⁴⁵⁶ Cooperation between and among the state, corporate security agencies as well as intelligence agencies and the academia became a concern to President Dwight Eisenhower who, in his famous farewell speech, initially planned to warn against the potential dangers of the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex, but dropped the adjective “academic” before making the speech.⁴⁵⁷

The way government, intelligence, and corporate security agencies viewed area studies was aptly described by America’s preeminent twentieth-century political scientist Hans Morgenthau. “Area studies,” he wrote, “both historically and analytically, form a part of that field of knowledge which is called international relations. . . . [it is] frequently motivated by the recognition of America’s predominant place in world affairs, which necessitates a knowledge of the world with which the United States must deal as friend or foe.”⁴⁵⁸ In certain ways Sovietology was a mirror image of American Studies. As Michale Holzman argues in his study of pioneering documents on the establishment of American Studies program at Yale University, the program founders wanted “to construct American studies as something beyond the study of American literature and history, as an enterprise that would be, among other things, an instrument for ideological struggle in what some among them termed the American crusade in the cold war, and what others among them saw as virtually a second Civil War.”⁴⁵⁹ From the perspective of government and security agencies, area studies was needed to help construct the image of both America and its enemies in a certain way and thus play an important role in serving national security services.

⁴⁵⁶ Christopher Simpson, ed., *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. xiv, emphases original.

⁴⁵⁷ Henry Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), pp. 13-15.

⁴⁵⁸ Hans Morgenthau, “Area Studies and the Study of International Relations,” *International Social Science Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1952), pp. 647, 650.

⁴⁵⁹ Michale Holzman, “The Ideological Origins of American Studies at Yale,” *American Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1999), p. 71.

The intentions of state, intelligence, and corporate security agencies however should not be confused with the actual work conducted by social scientists and humanists involved in Soviet Studies. Many recipients of fellowships from the federal government or the Defense Department became critics of the dominant Cold War ideologies, whereas others found ways of developing new paradigms and scholarly approaches while working within the confines of the Cold War scholarship.⁴⁶⁰ Even Soviet social scientists managed to produce works in a similar fashion although the ideological confines imposed by the Soviet state were much stronger.⁴⁶¹ The state-initiated fields of Russian and Soviet studies, as Engerman notes, brought together “a wide-ranging group determined to build expertise and to make itself useful in intellectual life, public debate, and foreign policy.” It served as “a moderating impulse,” containing the excesses of the more “ideologically driven experts,” and there simply “was no single Cold War party line.”⁴⁶² Furthermore, as Vicente Rafael argues, area studies in the United States “reiterate[d] different versions of Orientalism” on the one hand, and produced “multiple repudiations” of it on the other.⁴⁶³ And finally, far from being restricted to producing scholarship, area studies was also “a pedagogical enterprise” which helped educators in high school and college develop new models of teaching and training American college students in foreign languages and cultural competency.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁰ This is admitted by some of the most radical critics of the US-led Cold War policies. For example, see Noam Chomsky, “The Cold War and the University” and Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Unintended Consequences of the Cold War Area Studies,” in Noam Chomsky et al., *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York: The New Press, 1997).

⁴⁶¹ Slava Gerobitch, “Writing History in the Present Tense: Cold War-era Discursive Strategies of Soviet Historians of Science and Technology” in Christopher Simpson, ed., *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1998).

⁴⁶² Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶³ Vicente Rafael, “Cultures of Area Studies in the United States,” *Social Text*, No. 41 (Winter 1994), p. 91.

⁴⁶⁴ David Engerman, “The Pedagogical Purposes of Interdisciplinary Social Science: A View from Area Studies in the United States,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Winter 2015), pp. 78-92.

It is no surprise then that one can easily see traces of cold war politics as well as independent research in the works of American Sovietological experts who wrote about Central Asia. To the question why Central Asian Studies became the domain of experts in Soviet Studies, the obvious answer is that Central Asia at the time was part of the Soviet Union. These experts wanted to understand all aspects of Soviet life. But there was another reason that prompted experts on Sovietology to analyze Soviet policy in Central Asia: the region was home to Soviet Union's largest non-Slavic, Asian population. Moscow was continuously increasing its influence throughout the Middle East and some Middle Eastern governments and political movements were predisposed favorably toward socialist ideals. These developments were a matter of increased concern for Western leaders. Experts in Soviet Studies reasoned that Kremlin officials would draw from their experience of dealing with Central Asian Muslim population in forming their policies toward the Middle East. "The increased interest now being overtly shown by the Soviet government in the Middle East makes the study of Soviet attitudes towards Islam of particular importance," wrote British Central Asian Studies scholar Geoffrey Wheeler.⁴⁶⁵ Wheeler's American colleagues seemed to agree with that assessment.

It should be noted that Central Asia was also interesting to American and European scholars because Islam was the dominant religion in that region. The specter of Islam as a threat to Western dominance did not disappear during the Cold War—it was simply relegated to a lesser significance. Famous British Orientalist Bernard Lewis wanted to highlight the importance of viewing Islam as a major foe when the Cold War began to intensify. Aware of the fact that Americans had a greater concern for Soviet threat, he tried to use Cold War politics to push his "clash of civilizations" theory by linking Islam to Communism. In the early 1950s, Lewis argued

⁴⁶⁵ Geoffrey Wheeler, "Russia and Islam: New Trends in Soviet Policy," *Central Asia Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1956), p. 1.

that Communism had “a strong appeal” for Muslims, most importantly because of its opposition to the West. “The Communists are against the West and for that reason can at once count on important elements of support in the Islamic world, just as the Nazis were able to do in their time,” Lewis wrote, “to a considerable extent the same elements of support and for the same reasons.”⁴⁶⁶ At a Middle East conference at John Hopkins University in 1957, Lewis argued: “We shall be better able to understand this situation if we view the present discontents of the Middle East not as a conflict between states or nations, but as a clash between civilisations.”⁴⁶⁷

Lewis however could not convince his American audience with his talking points. The argument that Communism was the main threat became the staple of American foreign policy for the next four decades, effectively relegating Lewis’s obsession with the Islamic threat to a secondary significance. In reality, American cold warriors saw Islam as a tool that could be used against Communism. As if almost achieving the flip side of Lewis’ concerns, it was the West which assisted fundamentalist movements in Muslim countries to revolt against Communism.⁴⁶⁸ Ultimately, these developments in the Communist world and the Middle East necessitated understanding Central Asia, the role of Islam, and Soviet policy in the region.

⁴⁶⁶ Bernard Lewis, “Communism and Islam,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1954), p. 3. The fact that Lewis’s arguments were highly political became ever clearer in the post-9/11 world when he became an advisor to Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney on Middle East affairs. In an interview to Israeli conservative newspaper *Jerusalem Post* in 2004, Lewis stated: “Islam, which has been weak for two centuries, has always sought backing to help it fight the enemy - Western democracy. First it supported the Axis against the Allies, then the communists against the US: two disasters.” Apparently, neither the fact that the Nazis were primarily Western Christians and Atheists nor the presence of Muslim combatants among both Allied and Axis powers was a matter of importance. And the Muslim warriors flocking to Afghanistan to fight Communists in 1980s would certainly be surprised by Lewis’s odd characterization of them. —Fiamma Nirenstein, ““Avoid the Algerian Precedent,”” *Jerusalem Post* (12 March 2004), p. 7.

⁴⁶⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p. 137.

⁴⁶⁸ Much of literature on this issue narrowly focuses on American support for Mujahideen in the 1980s. But the process of encouraging and assisting Muslim fundamentalists against Moscow and Moscow-supported governments began as early as during Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency. See, Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2011).

Sovietology's Success in Studying Central Asia

It may be argued that Sovietology experts studying Central Asia in the post-war era succeeded when barriers to their subject of study were minimal. As Americans, they understood American society best. They were in position to correct incorrect ideas about the Soviet Union. This is therefore one area where Sovietologists succeeded. As for understanding Soviet life, Sovietologists were best suited to discuss contemporary political and economic issues for which Soviet official publications served as primary sources. American experts understood politics and international relations well, they knew the Russian language, and Soviet publications reflected the thought processes of Kremlin officials and their subordinates. This is the second area where America's Soviet experts succeeded. When Soviet publications served as secondary sources, interpreting Central Asian culture, religion, and history, American experts dealt with an unknown territory and thus often failed to produce quality scholarship. For example, their understanding of Central Asian history was deeply inadequate but their understanding of Soviet historiography of Central Asian history was excellent. Lowell Tillet, who emphasized that his work was "a study of Soviet historiography and not of historical fact" and admitted he could not deal with sources that were "largely unattainable" or in "many exotic languages," best exemplifies this case.⁴⁶⁹ That is why American scholars could counter Soviet propaganda publications dealing with Central Asia.

When he was a Soviet dissident living in the United States, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn complained about "the careless and inaccurate use of the words 'Russia' and 'Russian' in place of 'U.S.S.R.' and 'Soviet.'" He was even more distraught with what he called "a persistent emotional bias against the former: 'Russian tanks have entered Prague,' 'Russian imperialism,'

⁴⁶⁹ Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. vii.

‘Never trust the Russians’ as against ‘Soviet achievements in space’ and ‘the triumph of the Soviet ballet.’”⁴⁷⁰ This assessment was half correct. There was no emotional bias, there was only misunderstanding the difference between the Russians and the Soviets. Soviet non-Russian athletes and artists were routinely called “Russians” in Western commentaries. When Western commentators credited Soviet achievements in industrial development, they often credited the “Russians” rather than the Soviets. But his first complaint was valid. Government officials, media commentators, and even scholars often failed to distinguish between “Russian” and “Soviet.” Part of the reason for this misunderstanding was the fact that Americans understood “Russian” as an equivalent of “American” when its closer equivalent was “Soviet.”

Failing to distinguish between Russians and Soviets was a little like failing to see any difference between Anglo-Saxons and Americans. Ethnic Russians in the Soviet Union comprised about half of the population and they held the dominant positions in political, economic, and cultural institutions, just like men belonging to the Anglo-Saxon race did in America. Conflating Russians with Soviets stemmed from an assumption that national minorities either did not matter or that Soviet claims of completely solving their nationality problems were accurate. This misunderstanding sometimes led to strange assessments among Americans. For example, George Kennan who provided the blueprint for America’s containment policy during the Cold War, in a telegram to the State Department explained contemporary Soviet policy based on his psychological reading of the Russian mind.⁴⁷¹ This was at a time when the Soviet ruler was an ethnic Georgian, born to Georgian parents in Georgia—as was his chief KGB henchman Lavrentiy Beria. The “totalitarian model” popularized by Zbigniew Brzezinski also downplayed

⁴⁷⁰ Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, “Misconceptions about Russia are a Threat to America,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Spring 1980), p. 798.

⁴⁷¹ Kennan’s telegram to the Secretary of State, dated 22 February 1946, is available at the National Security Archive online. < <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>>. (Accessed: 25 October 2016).

the multi-ethnic nature of the Soviet Union, assuming that “total control” held by the Kremlin made nationality differences within the country insignificant.⁴⁷²

This was one of the problems American experts studying Soviet national minorities addressed in their works. Sovietology experts argued greater attention needed to be paid to the study of Central Asia because, they suggested, it was a matter of importance even for specialists focusing on Kremlinology. Central Asia’s population was booming and Islam was incompatible with Communism—the two factors, they argued, could be a potential threat to stability in the Soviet Union.⁴⁷³ The goal was still to understand the actions of the centralized Soviet government but it was a new direction and a realization that the Soviet Union was more than just Russia. Richard Pipes, one of the pioneers of American research on Soviet Muslims, argued that the Soviet Union’s nationality question should be studied on its own terms, rather than assuming that forces of nationalism, or their absence, in the U.S.S.R. were the same as in the U.S.⁴⁷⁴ Following the lead of Sovietologists who stressed the importance of understanding Soviet multi-ethnic composition, the next generation of scholars began to study Central Asia for its own sake, occasionally publishing works that had little or nothing to do with Kremlin’s policies.⁴⁷⁵

Success of American Sovietologists in this area, it should be noted, was limited. Political and media commentators continued to equate “Russian” with “Soviet” throughout the Cold War era, and even scholars studying the Soviet Union often downplayed the importance of Soviet ethnic diversity.⁴⁷⁶ But in countering Soviet propaganda narratives, American Sovietologists achieved a greater success. Soviet scholarship and official state announcements on how Soviet

⁴⁷² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

⁴⁷³ Orest Subtleny, “American Sovietology’s Great Blunder: the Margination of the Nationality Issue,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1914), p. 148.

⁴⁷⁴ Richard Pipes, “Soviet Colonialism: Does it Exist?” *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 8 (1964), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁷⁵ See, for example, David Montgomery, “An American Student in Tashkent,” *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 3, Issue 1 (1972); and the same author’s “Return to Tashkent,” *Asian Affairs*, Volume 10, Issue 3 (1979).

⁴⁷⁶ Subtleny, “American Sovietology’s Great Blunder.”

leadership incorporated Central Asia into larger Soviet orbit politically, economically, and culturally were of great political importance for both the Soviet Union and the United States. If Soviet experience in Central Asia was a great success, as Soviet officials claimed, it meant that Soviets, unlike Western powers, were willing to help the former colonized world develop without exploitation and paternalistic racism which had previously characterized traditional colonial masters. If the Soviet story was not truthful, however, Americans could point out Soviet hypocrisy of criticizing Western colonialism on the one hand and practicing it within their own orbit on the other.

In their publications, American scholars demonstrated how Communist party officials in the Soviet Union dictated Soviet historians to produce “scientific” historical works for “socialist construction.” A brief summary of Soviet historiography of Central Asia here is in order.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution, Bolsheviks intended to totally delegitimize Tsarist imperialism and its legacy. Following Lenin’s dictum, Tsarism was declared “a prison house of nations,” exploiting workers at home and colonial subjects in near abroad. Russian conquest of Central Asia was declared in academic publications, Soviet encyclopedias, newspapers, and school textbooks as the absolute evil, the worst example of colonialism. Central Asians of pre-Revolutionary era, it was generally accepted, suffered from double oppression of local khans, feudal chiefs, and mullahs on one hand, and Tsarist exploitation (which also consolidated the power of the former) on the other. In the writings of Soviet historians, including that of chief Bolshevik historian Mikhail Pokrovskii, British rule in India was depicted as relatively benign, compared to Russian brutality in Central Asia.⁴⁷⁷ “Besides serving as Communist anti-colonial ideology,” as Eli Weinerman writes, “the sharp criticism of tsarist colonial policies conveniently served the Soviet goal of legitimizing its own power over Central Asia; the Kremlin used facts

⁴⁷⁷ Tillet, *The Great Friendship*, pp. 28, 33.

pertaining to the region's suffering under the tsarist administration to justify the power of the New Soviet authorities."⁴⁷⁸ At the time depicting Russian conquest of Central Asia in these terms was compatible with "Marxist-Leninist" periodization of Central Asian history.

In 1934, this historiography began to slowly change. Stalin personally intervened in examining school textbooks explaining Russian relations with non-Russians before the Revolution and began to push for a more benign depiction of Russian rule over non-Russian nationalities during the Tsarist era. Since Marx and Lenin were off limits even for him, Stalin penned an official letter criticizing Engels for the latter's criticism of Tsarist foreign policy.⁴⁷⁹ By late 1930s, Soviet party officials instructed historians to discard the "Tsarism was the absolute evil" thesis in favor of "lesser of two evils" theory. Pokrovskii was no longer alive and his writings were condemned as "anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, essentially liquidatorist and anti-scientific" by Nikolai Bukharin—a view Stalin and other Kremlin officials shared.⁴⁸⁰ While Tsarism was evil, party officials began to argue, it was relatively benign as compared to British, French, and American imperialisms. In the absence of Russian conquest of Central Asia, they argued, a worse destiny could have befallen Central Asians as they could have been colonized by Turks, Iranians, or the British. Soviet encyclopedias and history textbooks were updated, reflecting these changes.

In the 1950s, Soviet party officials went even further. The "lesser of two evils" theory was also dropped and the word "conquest" disappeared from the lexicon of Communist officials and loyal historians in describing Russian imperial expansion prior to Bolshevik Revolution.

⁴⁷⁸ Eli Weinerman, "The Polemics between Moscow and Central Asians on the Decline of Central Asia and Tsarist Russia's Role in the History of the Region," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Jul, 1993), pp. 430-431.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 432.

⁴⁸⁰ David Brandenberger, "Politics Projected into the Past: What Precipitated the Anti-Pokrovskii Campaign?" in Ian D. Thatcher (ed.), *Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia: Essays in Honour of James D. White* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2006), p. 207.

Central Asians joined the elder brother Russia voluntarily, said the new history. If early Bolshevik historiography depicted rebellions against Tsarism—for example, Central Asian revolt of 1916—as popular-revolutionary movements, now anti-Tsarist revolts were condemned as “reactionary.” Between 16th and 19th- centuries, Central Asians were in a state of deep decline and decadence, reaching its nadir in mid-19th century. Tsarist Russia literally saved the region by helping its inhabitants “join” the elder brother. “To a Soviet historian who disappeared in Stalin’s purges in the middle 1930s, and who returned to Khrushchev’s Russia two decades later to resume his work,” as Tillett pointed out, “the new Soviet histories must have seemed to be caricatures concocted by some ‘bourgeois falsifier.’”⁴⁸¹ Indeed, anyone in the Bolshevik Revolution’s wake describing Tsarist era in such glowing terms would be dismissed, if not outright condemned as a “bourgeois falsifier.” But in the 1950s and ‘60s, that popular Soviet demonology was used to describe domestic and foreign critics of the *new* history. British and American experts on Soviet studies in particular became “bourgeois falsifiers” par excellence for their writings on Soviet rule in Central Asia.

Soviet party officials and historians were keenly aware of Western research on Central Asia and did not like Western publications, to put it mildly. Scholarly articles and books were published to refute Western experts. Western writers on Central Asia appeared in these refutations as sinister, cunning, and as deliberate liars. American experts could not simply be mistaken; they must have had evil intentions and deliberately presented Soviet realities in negative terms. Numerous publications were penned by Soviet historians denouncing “bourgeois falsifiers” in publication titles. Such high-ranking officials as Sharaf Rashidov, the first Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, could name American historians Richard Pipes and

⁴⁸¹ Lowell Tillett, “Soviet Second Thoughts on Tsarist Colonialism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Jan., 1964), p0. 309.

Alexander Park, as “bourgeois scribblers for hire,” accusing them of “furiously calumniat[ing] the Soviet reality, perverting the meaning of Leninist nationality policy and deny its success, trying to undermine in this way the sympathy of millions of ordinary people all over the world towards the Soviet country.”⁴⁸² How the Soviets depicted Central Asia was indeed a matter of great significance in international arena.

It should be noted that many Central Asian historians did not quietly accept the new history of 1950s. Many found the new party directives insulting to their national histories and cultures. These new Central Asian historians were thoroughly Soviet-educated but they were old enough to remember histories written two decades earlier. Ironically, it was the Soviet government which was trying to cultivate national cultures and nationalistic sentiments, although defined in Marxist-Leninist terms. Central Asian historians could not, of course, challenge the sanctity of the Bolshevik Revolution. But they loathed the new history which was typical of colonial scholarship Soviet authorities and historians collectively condemned two decades earlier. Some Central Asian historians used an ingenious way of criticizing their Slavic colleagues who were pushing the new history. For example, Uzbek historian Khamid Inoiatov published a polemic directed against Western historians in 1962. The title of the book can be translated as “Answer to the Falsifiers of the History of Soviet Central Asia.” The book however also contained a chapter about Tsarist policy in Turkestan and accused Tsarism of deliberately retarding the development of Central Asia and mercilessly exploiting it for Russia’s benefit.⁴⁸³ Though the ostensible purpose of the book was to denounce Western experts, it was also a not-so-subtle criticism of the new history dictated by the Kremlin.

⁴⁸² Quoted in Michael Rywkin, *Russia in Central Asia: How the Soviet Colonial Policy Operates and What it Portends* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 159.

⁴⁸³ Хамид Иноятлов, *Ответ фальсификаторам истории советской средней азии* (Ташкент, 1962).

American experts on Soviet studies and Central Asia overall did a fine job of exposing Soviet hypocrisies and inconsistencies. “Soviet scholars show righteous indignation about bourgeois ‘pseudo-scholars who try to whitewash and embellish’ the colonial policies of their respective countries,” Michael Rywkin wrote. And Western scholars were justified in exposing the Soviet “double-standard policy of advocating self-determination for British, French and other nations’ possessions, but denying the same to its own”⁴⁸⁴ Such critical analyses of official Soviet publications and proclamations was a valuable contribution to studying Soviet policies in Central Asia. But American experts also wanted to understand Central Asians, their history, culture, and religion, using the same Soviet sources that they used to understand official Kremlin policies. This is where their scholarship became problematic, because by relying on Soviet publications they often ended up internalizing Soviet ideological assumptions and politicized vocabulary as their own.

Sovietology’s Flaws in Studying Central Asia

As discussed earlier, many of the problems American experts on Central Asia encountered stemmed from numerous barriers that they had no control over—barriers such as their inability to easily visit the Soviet Union (especially, Central Asia) or access alternative sources of information other than what was published by Soviet officials. But there were also problems in the way American experts approached their subject of study. Those problems could have been avoided. For example, many experts gave in to the pressure of the Cold War politics, with increased focus on the Kremlin and at the expense of peripheral studies. Apart from a few scholars, most of them ignored sources in languages other than Russian although sources in Central Asian languages were available in North American and European research centers. In

⁴⁸⁴ Rywkin, *Russia in Central Asia*, pp. 153-154.

discussing Islam or pre-revolutionary history of Central Asia, American experts hardly ever consulted existing scholarship on Islam or scholarly literature on the histories of greater Inner Asia. Instead they continued to rely upon Soviet publications on Islam and Central Asian history and culture without properly dissecting the highly politized nature of Soviet interpretations, terminology, and key concepts.

The fact that American attitudes towards the Soviet Union and its development policies in Central Asia took a sharp turn after World War II is the clear example of the Cold War's influence. This did not of course happen overnight. In a publication by the freshly established Russian Research Institute's staff titled *The Soviet Union Today: An Outline Study* in 1946, the authors took a measured, non-polemical stance. The readings suggested on Central Asia were by pro-Soviet authors.⁴⁸⁵ Things began to change as the Cold War intensified. One of the first experts who challenged the conventional pro-Soviet writings on Central Asia was a Harvard fellow and future CIA official Paul Henze.⁴⁸⁶ Reviewing a pro-Soviet book published a few years earlier, Henze lamented the fact that "nearly all the books published in the West on Soviet Central Asia during the past thirty years have been by authors who are Communists or ardent fellow-travelers, for these people are invariably willing to propagate the Utopian tales of Soviet propagandists."⁴⁸⁷ He used some of those sources alongside Soviet publications, too, but came to

⁴⁸⁵ *The Soviet Union Today: An Outline Study, Syllabus and Bibliography* (New York: Russian Research Institute, 1946). The pro-Soviet authors recommended by this work were discussed in Chapter 2.

⁴⁸⁶ Henze is the author of the controversial *The Plot to Kill the Pope* (New York: Scribner's, 1984) in which he accused the Soviet Union and Bulgaria of being behind the assassination attempt at John Paul II. In the late '70s and early '80s, Henze worked for the National Security Council and pushed the Carter and Reagan administrations for a more aggressive policy of exploiting potential rift between Moscow and Muslims of Central Asia. In this connection, see Artemy Kalinovsky, "Encouraging Resistance: Paul Henze, the Benningsen School, and the Crisis of Détente," in Michael Kemper and Artemy Kalinovsky (eds.), *Reassessing Orientalism: Interlocking Orientologies during the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁴⁸⁷ Paul Henze, "Soviets in Central Asia," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 39 (Apr., 1952), p. 174.

“less laudatory and . . . more objective and realistic” conclusions.⁴⁸⁸ After examining both Soviet and Western pro-Soviet publications, his “rather general but very important conclusion” was “that the extremely rosy picture of economic and other developments in Central Asia” depicted in those publications was not warranted. Unlike the British and Americans in their former colonies, Henze wrote, Soviets did not foster Central Asians for the road to independence.⁴⁸⁹

Henze still gave the Soviets credit for industrialization and developing the infrastructure of Central Asia, cautioning that “one must not go to the opposite extreme and minimize the accomplishments of Soviets in Central Asia too much.”⁴⁹⁰ But that was the direction embraced in some government funded- and supported publications. In 1958, at the request of the Senate internal subcommittee, the legislative reference service of the Library of Congress published what was titled *The Soviet Empire: Prison House of Nations and Races; a Study in Genocide, Discrimination, and Abuse of Power*.⁴⁹¹ The study was especially needed, the chairman of the subcommittee said in the forward, as the Soviets were fomenting nationalism and racial hatred of the Western world and even advocating “an effort to establish a Negro Soviet Republic” in the United States, “in which effort there is no doubt thousands would have lost their lives in bloody sacrifice to the interests of Soviet imperialism.”⁴⁹² Citing previous government publications as well as the works of scholars such as Richard Pipes and former British colonial officials who turned experts in Soviet Central Asia, the study charged the Soviet government with a list of egregious abuses, including genocide and slavery in Central Asia.

⁴⁸⁸ Paul Henze, “The Economic Development of Soviet Central Asia to the Eve of World War II,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 36, Nos 3-4 (1949), p. 280.

⁴⁸⁹ Paul Henze, “The Economic Development of Soviet Central Asia to the Eve of World War II, Part II,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan., 1950), p. 39.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁹¹ *The Soviet Empire: Prison House of Nations and Races, a Study in Genocide, Discrimination, and Abuse of Power* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1958).

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

The study concluded that “genocide, massive discrimination and abuse of power have been and continue to be the chief instruments of the Soviet government in carrying out its nationality policy.” The Soviet nationality policy, it said, was nothing but an extension of Russian nationalism and its intention was the destruction of other nationalities. According to one “specialist on Soviet affairs,” quoted in the study, “the Communist road to unity is paved with slavish subordination in controlled uniformity, spelling the ultimate obliteration of nations.”⁴⁹³ The publication also quoted the CIA director Allen Dulles saying that, rather than destroying nations, the Soviet government in reality was sowing the seeds of its own destruction by educating non-Russian nationalities. “Even with all the indoctrination in Communist teaching which they give to their young students,” Dulles said, “it is impossible to prevent education from developing the critical faculties which every thinking human being possesses.”⁴⁹⁴ The overall message of the publication was that Soviet leaders (the worst colonialists humanity has ever seen) and national minorities like Central Asians were on a collision course, leading either to the destruction of the latter or of the Soviet system.

There were apparently such strong “demands” for this study that the committee released a very extended sequel seven years later. The chief goal of the study, the chair of the study wrote in the forward to the sequel, was to demonstrate “that, contrary to the Communist propaganda charge, the old colonialism and imperialism of the West has been in the process of dissolution, while that of the Soviet Union and its Communist allies constitute in reality the new colonialism and the new imperialism.”⁴⁹⁵ If the first publication focused on the genocidal nature of the Soviet Union, the sequel emphasized its colonial nature. The sequel also made a few comparisons with

⁴⁹³ Ibid, p. 66.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 69n41.

⁴⁹⁵ *The Soviet Empire: A Study in Discrimination and Abuse of Power* (Washington, DC: The United States Printing Office, 1965), p. iii.

the United States to emphasize the fundamental difference between the two superpowers. George Kennan was criticized for suggesting that trying to “break-up” the Russian state could be “catastrophic” since Russians valued their unity the same way Americans did. The study suggested comparing the Soviet national formation with “experiences of assimilation through genuine democratic processes as had been the case in America” was foolish.⁴⁹⁶ The former was formed through violence and conquest whereas the latter was a voluntary amalgamation of different cultures and races.

Although a slew of scholars and experts participated in the study, the nature of the publication was unapologetically political. In view of American experience with American Indians and African slaves—as well as American colonial histories in Latin America and the Pacific—an objective scholar could understandably point to the hypocrisy of the following statement: “The American example of assimilation and fusion stands in marked contrast to that of the Soviet Union; for here freedom of choice had been the distinguishing characteristic.” The study said nothing about American colonialism, dismissed “the numerically small indigenous Indian population” as irrelevant since “the basic American stock was by and large English,” and whitewashed the horrors of slave history in racist terms. “Even the American Negro slave,” the authors wrote, “racially dissimilar having come from a primitive African society, and socially inferior by virtue of the imposed system of slavery, had become acculturated into the American environment.”⁴⁹⁷ Condemning the Soviet Union for abusing its power against minorities and at the same time whitewashing American racial history in this study were in line with the views of

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 172.

the chairman of the subcommittee, James O. Eastland, a Mississippi Senator who was a staunch anti-Communist and segregationist opposed to President Johnson's civil rights policies.⁴⁹⁸

There is validity to Alfred Meyer's recollection that the early Cold War studies were "conducted in an atmosphere that was indeed highly charged with partisan politics," and that "Americans—from opinion makers and political leaders to the general citizenry—took it for granted that Marxism was a false and pernicious doctrine preaching the destruction of everything decent and desirable and the creation of a world-wide totalitarian tyranny."⁴⁹⁹ Many individual scholars, however, took a relatively measured and less politicized tone in their writings than what was displayed in the two-volume government publication discussed above. The politics of cold war scholarship nevertheless was there. There seem to have been a consistent pressure or purpose to prove that the Soviet Union was a colonial power, that the Soviet government and Muslims of Central Asia were fundamentally opposed to each other because of their absolutely incompatible values, and that the Soviet narratives on Central Asia were nothing but propaganda even if the evidence unearthed did not always support these assumptions.

These assumptions about the Soviet government were not necessarily unwarranted, but sometimes American scholars used sources in clearly biased ways to validate these assumptions. As Will Myer notes in his retrospective, some American and British scholars who were otherwise skeptical of Soviet official proclamations and the press nevertheless took their words at face value if Soviet statements supported their assumptions about Moscow's relations with Central Asia. Thus, Soviet propaganda publications at the height of World War II about alleged

⁴⁹⁸ In a speech at the United States Senate in 1954, Eastland said that the "southern institution of racial segregation or racial separation was the correct, self-evident truth which arose from the chaos and confusion of the reconstruction period." There was no oppression against the "Negro race," he also stated, "it is the law of nature, it is the law of God, that every race has both the right and the duty to perpetuate itself."—available at <<http://spartacus-educational.com/USAeastland.htm>> (Accessed: 27 December 2017).

⁴⁹⁹ Alfred G. Meyer, "Politics and Methodology in Soviet Studies," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (June 1991), p. 131.

Basmach infiltrators entering Central Asia were viewed as evidence of two absolutes—Communism and Islam—continuing to clash by British scholar Robert Conquest. Citing Soviet sources, Conquest claimed the Basmaschi movement enjoyed “popular support” although by that time the movement had completely disappeared. Likewise, the public admissions of Faizullah Khodzhaev, chair of the Council of the People’s Commissars of Uzbekistan, at the infamous 1938 show trials of plotting to subvert Soviet goals in Uzbekistan and of secretly trying to get independence were taken for granted and as evidence of continuous Uzbek opposition to Moscow. Conquest’s American colleague Michael Rywkin was of the same opinion about the Khodzhaev trial.⁵⁰⁰ This in the face of widespread Western knowledge that the 1938 show trials, which also leveled unbelievable and fantastic charges against several other high-ranking officials, including Secretary-General of Comintern Nikolai Bukharin, were nothing but sham.⁵⁰¹

Selective use of Soviet sources was one example American scholars sometimes tried too hard to prove the Soviets wrong. But more often than not they were simply misled by the available sources in their hands. They mostly worked with sources in the Russian language and continued to repeat the main interpretations of Central Asian history available in Russian sources. For covering events in the nineteenth-century, there were some European sources available, too. One Harvard scholar in a doctoral dissertation discussing Russian relations with Central Asian khanates in the first half of the nineteenth century made some interesting conclusions, revealing more about the sources he used rather than the societies he was discussing. In his descriptions of Bukhara, Kokand, and Khiva from 1800 to 1858 we learn that out of these three Bukhara was especially mired in unmitigated “ignorance and bigotry.” It was

⁵⁰⁰ Michael Rywkin, “Central Asia and the Price of Sovietization,” *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 8 (1964), p. 10.

⁵⁰¹ Will Myer, *Islam and Colonialism: Western Perspectives on Soviet Asia* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 78-85. Some of the charges leveled at the twenty one officials in the trials included successful assassinations of as well as attempts at high-ranking Soviet leaders, working with German and Japanese fascists, deliberately derailing the Soviet economy, and in one specific case even putting nails and glasses in butter to harm ordinary people.

the land of debauchery, hypocrisy, and sheer hatred. For Bukhara's Emir, "no vice was too lurid not to have been experienced," while the population was so habituated to tyranny that men glorified their Emir even if he took their wives by force for his private pleasure.⁵⁰² The author's descriptions of Kokand and Khiva, however, fared much better. He gave these societies some credit for their political, economic, and intellectual developments although was largely critical of their backwardness. He wrote the following about Khiva: "Ignorance and bigotry did exist, but not to the extent that they did in Bukhara under Emir Seid and Emir Nasrullah."⁵⁰³ The reason the author came to these conclusions was because for the latter two he used mainly Soviet sources whereas his descriptions of Bukhara was based on the writings of Arminius Vambery and British publications written in the wake of Emir Nasrullah's execution of two British officials in 1842.⁵⁰⁴ The author clearly was oblivious to this nuance. Had he used Vambery for his descriptions of the two other khanates, they sure would not have fared better.

This does not mean American scholars had no choice in their use of sources and how they used them. The purpose of their studies and approaches they took were significant in deciding how they used Soviet sources. Those who were highly interested in Soviet politics and focused on Central Asia mainly because of its Soviet connection were more likely to rely upon Russian-language sources only and also be misled by them. Two contemporaneous bibliographic publications in the 1960s clearly illustrate the kind of choices made by American scholars in selecting sources on Central Asia. Edward Allworth was a scholar of modern Uzbek literature and often used Uzbek-language sources in his works. In a bibliographic work listing publications available in the New York Public Library, he referenced a long list of Soviet publications in

⁵⁰² John W. Strong, *Russian Relations with Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand, 1800-1858*, PhD Dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1964), pp. 48-49.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, p. 73.

⁵⁰⁴ Pernicious writings of Vámbéry have been covered in Chapter 1. British publications on Bukhara in response to the execution of British officials were understandably very hostile but also full of false and misleading information.

Central Asian languages, some dating as old as 1914 and written in Arabic script.⁵⁰⁵ These and other sources in non-Russian languages were barely referenced by other scholars. For example, in contrast to Allworth, Richard Pierce published a three-volume bibliography of Soviet Central Asia without making any effort to broaden his Sovietological approach. His listings included “only worthwhile materials,” i.e. publications in Russian and European languages that dealt with Russian relations with Central Asia since 1558.⁵⁰⁶

It should also be noted that, while visiting Central Asia was nearly impossible for most scholars and experts interested in studying it, it was not completely closed to visitors. Here again, personal observations were helpful, but scholars and experts came to different conclusions because of their biases and approaches to understanding the Central Asian society. Harvard’s Richard Pipes visited Alma-Ata and Tashkent in the early 1950s and his brief observations made a “dismal impression” on him—if for nothing else but for his impression that everyone in the Soviet Union was an uncompromising liar.⁵⁰⁷ Contrast this with impressions of British scholar Geoffrey Wheeler who was not much friendlier to Communism than Pipes. After attending the Moscow Conference of International Orientalists in 1960, Wheeler was able to briefly visit Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. There Wheeler encountered “a much more real and human and individualistic atmosphere” than in Moscow and found Soviet achievements in education “remarkable.” He noticed that Central Asians “in quite lowly walks of life seemed to be astonishingly well-informed on a variety of subjects.”⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, in the writings of Supreme Court William O. Douglas who traveled through Central Asia with the young Robert F. Kennedy

⁵⁰⁵ Edward Allworth, *Central Asian Publishing and the Rise of Nationalism: An Essay and a list of Publications in The New York Public Library* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1965), p. 41.

⁵⁰⁶ Richard Pierce, *Soviet Central Asia: A Bibliography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), p. 111.

⁵⁰⁷ Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 88-89.

⁵⁰⁸ Geoffrey Wheeler, “Russia and Asia in 1960: The Moscow Congress of Orientalists and a Visit to Central Asia,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan., 1961), pp. 22-23.

in the 1950s, we find a complex picture of Central Asia as well as of the Soviet society in general, with friendly and hospitable people seeking only peace but ruled by an oppressive Communist government which had “done an amazing job in industrializing Central Asia, as good a job if not better than the French did in bringing an industrial plant to North Africa.” That was quite a compliment since Douglas was generally appreciative of Western contribution to “underdeveloped countries and feudal areas” through colonialism.⁵⁰⁹

Visits to Central Asia were still very rare. Written sources and how they were interpreted therefore were chiefly instrumental in shaping how American scholars viewed and represented Central Asia. Nowhere was the use of sources on Soviet Central Asia more problematic than it was in American Sovietological study of Islam and Muslim of the Soviet Union. Devin DeWeese describes this approach as “Sovietological Islamology”: “an approach to Islam in the Soviet context informed more by scholarly expertise in the Soviet system, and in the twentieth-century development of the Soviet-defined ‘nations’ into which the Muslim communities of the USSR were grouped, than by training in the history or religious culture of the regions of ‘Soviet’ Islam, let alone of the broader Islamic world.” According to DeWeese, this approach “exerted a stultifying and even pernicious influence on the study of Islam in the Soviet environment.”⁵¹⁰ This criticism of the Sovietological approach to Islam in the Soviet Union may be broadened to include the study of histories and cultures of Central Asian peoples through the same lens.

The reasons for this Sovietological approach to studying Islam in the Soviet Union were manifold but one of the major factors was Western scholarly reliance on Soviet scholarship in this field. Despite being strongly opposed to each other in defining the Soviet role and legacy in

⁵⁰⁹ William O. Douglas, *Russian Journey* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956), pp. 217, 225; The story is also briefly covered in Arthur Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), pp. 123-125.

⁵¹⁰ Devin DeWeese, “Islam and Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaacov Ro’s’s *Islam in the Soviet Union*,” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), pp. 298-300.

Central Asia, American and Soviet scholars had something in common: neither were scholars trained in proper religious studies, let alone Islamic studies. Soviet authors on Muslim life in Central Asia were dogmatic Marxist-Leninists who never even tried to hide that their purpose was propaganda against religious life in the USSR. Following Lenin's lead, Soviet leaders and officials defined "propaganda" in positive terms (as opposed to "agitation" which was defined negatively). Promoting what they called "scientific atheism" was part of standard education in schools, clubs, workplaces, and any other communal gatherings. Religion was officially the class enemy and as such blatant propaganda intended to erase it from Soviet society was viewed as a positive social development.

Western scholars were generally aware of this reality in the Soviet Union, but that did not preclude them from relying on Soviet literature and extrapolating from it. "The Western literature on Soviet Islam," as Mark Saroyan argues, "would not exist without specialized studies of Islam produced in the Soviet Union." Soviet publications on Islam were "not simply a vast source of empirical data for Western scholars" but also provided them "with concepts and a theoretical framework." The result was that the "Soviet scholarship has effected an intellectual colonization of Western thinking on Soviet Islam."⁵¹¹ For example, Alexandre Benningsen, the most influential figure in developing Western Sovietological study of Islam, and his collaborators coined the terms "official Islam" and "parallel Islam" to designate two Islamic movements within the Soviet Union. The former they defined as Muslims whose activities were officially sanctioned by the government and served as the official mouthpiece of Soviet propaganda at home and abroad; the latter they defined as anti-Soviet Muslims, especially Sufis, who conducted their religious activities clandestinely. As Saroyan notes, Benningsen and his

⁵¹¹ Mark Saroyan and Edward Walker, *Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union*. (Berkeley, CA, 1997: International and Area Studies, University of California), p. 10.

colleagues took this interpretation from the works of notorious Soviet anti-Islamic polemicist Lusitsian Klimovich.⁵¹² This interpretation, it should be noted, fit in well with the general Western approach that viewed Soviet Communism and Islam as two incompatible absolutes.

It was quite a curious development that American scholars, so critical of the Soviet Union and their official experts and often sympathetic to Muslims of Central Asia, nevertheless based their studies of Islam and Muslims almost entirely on Soviet writings. Existing Western scholarship on Islam barely appears in their works even when they addressed general Islamic concepts and terminologies. In Alexander Park's *Bolshevism in Turkestan*, there is an entire chapter discussing relations between Soviet Bolshevism and Islam. The only Western Orientalist cited in the chapter is Henri Lammens (1862-1937), a Jesuit missionary whose works on Islam were criticized by his contemporaries for being polemicist. The rest of Park's references are to Soviet publications. We can see this in basic interpretations of Islamic concepts as well as in descriptions of Central Asians. Thus, "Shaykh al-Islam," an honorific title given to Muslim dignitaries and Islamic jurists in the Ottoman Empire is described as performing "the function of a minister of cults."⁵¹³ Muslim opposition to Bolshevism and forced secularization is repeatedly referred to as "fanaticism." Park gives no qualifiers to this reference, does not elaborate on why he describes opposition to Bolshevik policies as "Muslim fanaticism," but just takes Soviet politicized terminology for granted. In one instance, he gives a revealing citation after referring to "fanatically religious Uzbeks." His citation is *Методы анти-религиозной пропаганды*

⁵¹² Ibid, p. 14. Klimovich, it shall be recalled, was not just a vulgar propagandist. He was also instrumental in Soviet persecution of many Orientalists whose views at one time and another did not fit the official Soviet discourse. As Michael Kemper writes, "Klimovich wrote on, and against, Islam for more than sixty years, from Stalin through Khrushchev and Brezhnev to Gorbachev; by skillfully adapting his views to the changing line of the Party, he was able to become the most influential Soviet Marxist author on Islam. Today, he is above all remembered for his unscrupulous and mean defamations of other Orientalists."—Michael Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923-1933," *Die Welt des Islams* 49, Vol. 49 (2009), p. 28.

⁵¹³ Alexander Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan, 1917-1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 222n30.

среди мусульман [Methods of Anti-Religious Propaganda Among Muslims], a book by Sultan-Galiev which was, as the title suggests, a propaganda guideline.⁵¹⁴

Such borrowing from Soviet publications in describing Muslims of the Soviet Union was pervasive among Western scholars. Lowell Tillet's analyses of Soviet politicization of the historiography of Soviet nationalities to this day remains the best book written on the topic. Yet this insightful scholar of party-dictated Soviet scholarship refers to North Caucasian anti-imperial warrior Imam Shamil's movement as a "fanatical religious sect."⁵¹⁵ Once again, Tillet gives no further elaboration on why they would be considered so; he just takes Soviet ideological interpretation at face value. We can see the same in the writings of travelers who were educated about Islam in Central Asia by their Soviet guides. So, in Justice Douglas's *Russian Journey*, we read that historically "Bukhara's religious schools turned out fanatics who carried the word of the Prophet to the farthest reaches of Central Asia"; that "Bukhara was long the stronghold of Moslem orthodoxy and fanaticism"; that "Islam developed a fanaticism in Central Asia that violated some of the important teachings of the Prophet"; and that "between A.D. 1404 and 1841, Samarkand was visited by only two foreigners," a nonsense claim considering Iranian, Indian, and Chinese merchants were always present in the city. One may certainly argue that some of these assumptions about Islam and Central Asian history were rooted in American views of Islam in general, but Justice Douglas acknowledges his "Uzbek guide" who educated him on these matters. The guide also educated Douglas about the last Emir of Bukhara, the "dissolute" man who "was not satisfied" with "450 wives" and therefore "would send emissaries into

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, p. 247.

⁵¹⁵ Tillet, *The Great Friendship*, p. 29.

Bukhara, searching the town for pretty girls.”⁵¹⁶ The Emir’s harem had clearly been enlarged even further since Langston Hughes inquired about that exotic topic twenty years earlier.

Official Soviet secrecy and restrictions placed on foreign visitors no doubt made the task of American experts to study Central Asia difficult and became a significant problem for their research. But some of the problems in their research were rooted in the politics of cold war struggle as well as methodologies they employed. They used their method of understanding the Soviet government to study Central Asians without grounding their research in Islamic studies or the larger history of Inner Asia. These general problems in the Sovietological approach also contributed to the polemical debate American and European scholars were engaged in with their Soviet nemeses over the nature of Soviet colonialism in Central Asia.

Soviet Rule in Central Asia and the Question of Colonialism

The rise of American expert studies on Central Asia roughly coincided with ongoing decolonization in Latin America, Africa, and Asia and growing opposition among the European public to holding overseas colonies. In much of the world, the words colonialism and imperialism became dirty words, being associated with illegitimate and immoral exploitation. This development thus became part of scholarly discussion on Soviet rule in Central Asia, both among Soviet and American scholars. While the Soviets claimed the example of Soviet Central Asia was proof the Soviet Union was free from colonialism and racism, European and American scholars argued Soviets were not much different from traditional colonial powers; many actually argued the Soviets were the worst examples. American scholars brought up many legitimate points in their criticism of Soviet policies in Central Asia, but they also tended to oppose it not

⁵¹⁶ Douglas, *Russian Journey*, pp. 40-46.

because they were anti-imperialists but because they opposed Communism. In many of their comparative analyses, excesses of European and American colonial histories were glossed over to make the Soviets look particularly egregious—which, in turn, was not practically different from the way the Soviets criticized European and American colonial histories without using the same critical analyses to introspect their own past.

According to Sergei Abashin, there is a wealth of arguments one can bring to accept or reject the claim the Soviets in Central Asia were colonialists. The most legitimate charges, however, apply to the early Soviet period which was characterized by violent conquest, repression, and the radical and forceful introduction of European political, social, and cultural norms. Many of these policies were significantly softened in the post-Stalinist era of '50s and '60s, allowing local leaders gain “sufficiently high degree of autonomy in running internal affairs” while remaining loyal “to the bases of Soviet principles.”⁵¹⁷ Yet the Western charges of colonialism regarding Soviet policies in Central Asia intensified specifically in that later era of Soviet history in Central Asia. This once again attests to the highly politicized nature of the debate. Soviet authors duly reciprocated the politicization of this debate, declaring, as one Soviet author did in his criticism of Western coverage of religious affairs in the Soviet Union, that the main component of “bourgeois publications” was “global falsification.”⁵¹⁸ The Soviet authors refused to even entertain the idea that any form of colonialism took place within the Soviet orbit and routinely accused Western powers of continuing the colonial tradition in new garbs. The result was, as one Swiss scholar noted, a “childish game of throwing a slander back to the

⁵¹⁷ Сергей Абашин, «Советское = колониальное? (За и против)», в Георгий Мамедов и Оксана Шаталова (ред.), *Понятия о советском в Центральной Азии* (Бишкек, 2016), ст. 34.

⁵¹⁸ Э.И. Лисавцев, *Критика буржуазной фальсификации положения религии в СССР* (Москва: издательство «МЫСЛЬ», 1975), ст. 7.

slanderer: “Colonialists!”—“Colonialists yourself!”⁵¹⁹ This does not mean there was no real scholarship involved in this debate. But one cannot properly understand the nature of it without analyzing it within the context of cold war politics and decolonization.

The debate over colonialism no doubt had intellectual and moral grounding that were developing in Britain and France. As William Myer writes, “in the 1960s serious debate about the colonial dynamic became commonplace as British and French scholars absorbed the lessons of their own countries’ retreat from empire.” “The language of this debate came ultimately to dominate all discussion of Central Asia,” he further explains, “as it was predicated on what came to be seen as an irreconcilable conflict between the European and the non-European worlds, which demanded national self-determination for non-European peoples.”⁵²⁰ Among intellectuals in those two former colonial empires the assessment of colonialism was obviously not uniform, ranging from apologia to feelings of guilt. Europeans also had a more significant and longer history of dealing with colonial subjects, were better acquainted with Islam and the Orient; but because of political and cultural affinity with the United States, Americans and Europeans shared similar views, assumptions, and attitudes towards Islam and the Orient. They also often agreed on the necessity of confronting Communism. American formation of the debate on Soviet colonialism in Central Asia therefore was partially rooted in Europe.

Unlike British scholars, the French were less condemnatory of Soviet policies in Central Asia and some were even somewhat sympathetic to it. Scholars such as Vincent Monteil and Marcel Egretaud compared the Soviet experience in Central Asia with French rule in North Africa and suggested that France could learn from the Soviet model and apply some of the Soviet

⁵¹⁹ Herbert Luthy, “Colonization and the Making of the Mankind,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Dec., 1961), p. 487.

⁵²⁰ Myer, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 22.

methods to preserving its own colonial possessions.⁵²¹ These French scholars, however, were not particularly influential in the United States, which also shows that European influence was limited. Americans were more receptive to ideas that complemented their own understanding of Soviet Central Asia. Nevertheless, one important figure who helped build Western study of Islam in the Soviet Union brought French ideas to the American scholarly audience. It was Alexandre Benningsen, a Russian émigré educated in France and eventually settled in the U.S. where he educated a generation of scholars whose scholarship became known as “the Benningsen school.” Benningsen is credited to have “virtually singlehandedly created the field of Russian Islam in the post-1945 period as one meriting serious study and research.”⁵²² Although focused on Islam in a Soviet context, Benningsen also contributed to discussions on colonialism by incorporating what he had learned about French colonial experience in Algeria.⁵²³

British scholars in general were more outspoken in charging the Soviet Union with colonial abuses and found a more receptive audience in the United States. It is noteworthy that the main problem for the British scholars was not that the Soviet Union was a modern empire but an egregiously abusive one, especially as compared to what they saw as a benevolent British Empire. They also called the Soviets out for the hypocrisy of criticizing the West for things that they practiced within their own orbit. The outspokenness of British scholars can partly be explained by the fact that several of them had prior experience working for British colonial administrations and some were tied to government agencies involved in combatting Soviet propaganda efforts. Some were just unapologetic scholars of British colonial history. For example, Mary Holdsworth, born in Voronezh and daughter of a member of Duma Colonial

⁵²¹ Ibid, p. 31.

⁵²² Stephen Blank, “Obituary: Alexandre Benningsen, 20 March 1913—2 June 1988,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1989),” p. i.

⁵²³ Alexander Knysh, “Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: The Issue of the Motivations of Sufi Resistance Movements in Western and Russian Scholarship,” *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2002), p. 161.

Zvegintzov, worked with the British R.A.F. as a teacher and served as the Secretary of the Oxford University Institute of Commonwealth Studies and the Oxford University Colonial Studies Committee. Kathleen Stahl was a Senior Associate Member of St Anthony's College, Oxford, and conducted a series of field and library research in British colonial possessions in Africa.

Others had direct experience of serving the British government in conducting colonial affairs and combating Communism. Geoffrey Wheeler served in the British Indian Army and was also an intelligence officer covering India, Palestine, and Malta. During and after World War II, he was stationed in Tehran to counter Soviet influence by organizing a "Propaganda Department" in collaboration with MI6's head of station Harry Steptoe.⁵²⁴ Wheeler retired from the Indian Army as lieutenant-colonel and founded Central Asian Research Centre in 1953, serving as its director and editing its main publication journal *Central Asian Review*. Sir Olaf Caroe was the last Foreign Secretary for the British colonial administration in India (1939-1945) and was a supporter of dividing India into two nations, partly because he saw future Pakistan as a potential security post in the struggle against Communism. He was the originator of "the wells of power" theses, a reference to oil-rich Gulf states, which, he argued, should be brought into the Anglo-American sphere of influence to contain Soviet expansion. Caroe reportedly was successful in convincing Henry Byroade, Assistant Secretary of State for Asian affairs, and John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, of the soundness of his ideas about the importance of Pakistan and the Middle East for Cold War struggle.⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 535.

⁵²⁵ Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "The Making of U.S. Foreign Policy for South Asia: Offshore Balancing in Historical Perspective," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Feb. 25, 2006).

Walter Kolarz and Robert Conquest did not have colonial experience, but both participated in propaganda activities against Communism. Kolarz worked with BBC, which in its overseas activities at the time was strongly influenced by what Hugh Wilford calls “Britain’s secret Cold War weapon”: The Information Research Department.⁵²⁶ The IRD was an organization linked to the British Foreign Office and set up to counter Communist influence in Western countries (though in practice IRD was engaged in shadier activities such as manipulating public opinion).⁵²⁷ In line with the IRD’s mission, BBC Memorandum for the Cabinet Committee on Colonial Information Policy stated in June 1950: “The Overseas Services of the BBC provide one of the most effective instruments for use by this country in maintaining the stability of the free world in the present struggle with Russian Communism.”⁵²⁸ Conquest worked directly with the IRD and much of the material he used in his scholarly publications on Stalinist terror and Holodomor were collected during his years in IRD.⁵²⁹ It is noteworthy that, with the exception of Wheeler, none of these scholars were specialized in Central Asian Studies but were experts in other areas.

One of the defining features of British criticism of Soviet colonialism was that the scholars did not evaluate Soviet policies in Central Asia by contrasting it with theories and definitions of colonialism. They also largely avoided comparisons with Empires other than the British and the French ones. These two European powers were the measuring stick. On the one hand, they implied that the Soviet policies in Central Asia being not different from the policies of the British in India or the French in North Africa was sufficient to condemn the Soviet Union; on

⁵²⁶ Hugh Wilford, “The Information Research Department: Britain’s Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24 (1998), pp. 364-366.

⁵²⁷ Lennart Samuelson, “A Pathbreaker: Robert Conquest and Soviet Studies during the Cold War,” *Baltic Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (April, 2009), p. 48.

⁵²⁸ Quoted in Alban Webb, *London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service and the Cold War* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 1.

⁵²⁹ Samuelson, “A Pathbreaker: Robert Conquest,” p. 49.

the other hand, they defended the latter two from criticisms directed at them by Soviet officials and scholars. Trying to apply the British model in critiquing Soviet society led to some odd and simplistic conclusions. Thus, for Kolarz, the Soviet *natsionalnaya politika* (“the nationalities policy”) and “colonial policy” could be used “in roughly the same sense.”⁵³⁰ Similar opinion was expressed by Wheeler. “Viewed dispassionately and without regard to the high-sounding moral and ethical claims for and denunciation of it made by supporters and opponents of the Soviet regime,” he wrote, “the Soviet nationalities policy appears simply as a new materially more efficient form of colonialism.”⁵³¹ For Wheeler, the nationalities problem was also the same as “racial problems” in a book in which he intended “to record the facts in so far as they can be determined, without drawing either morals or comparisons.”⁵³² Wheeler made no effort to define racism in Soviet context. He simply decided that nationalities and ethnic problems—not unique to the Soviet Union but prevalent in most multi-ethnic societies—was the same as “racial problems.”

By far, the main issue for British scholars was to prove that in comparing British and Soviet colonial policies, the former had a positive legacy and should be proud of it while the Soviets were abusive and hypocritical imperialists whose colonial efforts were comparatively either inefficient or excessive (the British supposedly knew the right balance). The fact that the British Empire began to grant its former colonies independence after World War II was assumed to be consistent with British colonial policies from the get-go. Commenting on Lenin’s idea of building “a voluntary amalgamation” of nations, Holdsworth writes that the Soviets were trying to achieve it “with a mixture of ruthlessness and patience, foresight and crude mistakes,” which

⁵³⁰ Walter Kolarz, *Russia and Her Colonies* (New York: Praeger, 1953), p. v.

⁵³¹ Geoffrey Wheeler, “Race Relations in Soviet Muslim Asia,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (1960), p. 97.

⁵³² Geoffrey Wheeler, *Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. xi.

is a fair enough description. She then claims that was “the antithesis of the conception evolved by Great Britain, who has set her colonial territories on the difficult road of responsible, individual nationhood.”⁵³³ It is to be assumed that “ruthlessness” and “crude mistakes” did not exist in British colonial experience.⁵³⁴

Kathleen Stahl offered similar conclusions in a more extended study of comparing Soviet and British colonial systems. These are some of the distinctive features of the British Empire as compared to the Soviet Union: it “is infused, in the classical humanist tradition, with the idea that the individual is all-important: its interpretation of democracy is exemplified by liberty and the sanctity of law.”⁵³⁵ We are told that the British colonial rule was largely welcomed, appreciated, and was free from oppression. As an example, she notes that “Britain has never . . . looked upon the empire as a source of military manpower,” not even during world wars; they just “received such a vast voluntary response in men and materials” as a form of gratitude.⁵³⁶ Stahl goes on to claim that officially “no doctrine of race superiority has any place in British colonial policy.” To support this claim, she refers to a speech by the Secretary of State James Griffith.⁵³⁷ Any pro-Soviet writer could, of course, also make lofty claims about Soviet rule in Central Asia by referring to the Soviet officials’ rosy rhetoric. But Stahl is extremely careful to take official Soviet proclamations at face value. Stahl admits racial discrimination exists in the British colonies but the “great bulk of discriminatory legislation and practice has as its object the protection of the less developed sections of the colonial populations.” For examples, “laws preventing the sale of spirits and firearms to Africans.”⁵³⁸ If a similar policy existed in Soviet

⁵³³ Mary Holdsworth, “Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1940,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Jan., 1952), p. 277.

⁵³⁴ At the time of this scholarly publication, both Malaysia and Kenya were under “emergency” rule by the British colonial government.

⁵³⁵ Mary Holdsworth, *British and Soviet Colonial Systems* (New York: Praeger, 1951), p. 11.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Central Asia, it is highly unlikely Stahl would consider it a form of protection granted to Central Asians.

We can see similar selectivity in applying different standards to evaluate Britain and the USSR in the works of other authors. According to Kolarz, the “basic difference between Soviet nationalities policy and British colonial policy springs from the difference between a totalitarian one-party State and a democratic regime.” As proof of this claim, Kolarz refers to the description of the British colonial system as a “practical illustration of democracy under tuition” by the British Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies A. H. Poynton.⁵³⁹ If Europeans “built a new great continent for what became the new nations of America,” the Russians “built Eurasia for their own benefit.”⁵⁴⁰ Soviet leaders and experts, Kolarz writes, are incapable of understanding “the undogmatic, empirical British colonial policy” and thus “engage in arbitrary, naïve comparisons between conditions in backward colonies of tropical Africa, for instance, and conditions in Central Asian and Transcaucasian lands famous for their ancient civilizations.”⁵⁴¹ Unlike his Soviet counterpart in Central Asia, the “British colonial administrator, whether he be a conservative or a socialist, feels he has no right to interfere with the customs of the peoples under his administration beyond what is necessary to maintain order. . . . The British idea is that backward peoples, as they grow into a higher degree of civilization, will themselves throw off the ballast of their more primitive past.”⁵⁴² Ironically, this semi-racist assumption did not necessarily make Britain distinct from the USSR. It was at times a driving force behind Soviet campaigns against Islam, assuming that the introduction of Communist ideals would convince Central Asians to give up the “vestiges of the past,” above all Islam.

⁵³⁹ Kolarz, *Russia and Her Colonies*, p. 308.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 310.

Kolarz however thought that the exact same policies and practices by the Soviets and the British could be characterized differently. For example, while both the Soviets and the British sought “the creation of a lingua franca in their respective domains,” the former can be ascribed to conducting “cultural propaganda for the Russian language,” whereas the latter was an example of “cultural efforts promoted” that “lead almost automatically to a further extension of the influence of English.”⁵⁴³ Absent Kolarz’s biased characterization, it is not clear how these two are different. But even if they are similar, Kolarz further notes, the effects are not the same. “The English language is a genuinely international one and not the language of one country.” For the indigenous peoples, it is “a key to” European civilization and a “link with the outside world.” The adoption of the Russian language—which “cannot claim to be international”—by non-Russians in the Soviet Union “benefits, in the long run, only the Russians, and it increases the power of Russia as the only state where Russian is the language spoken.”⁵⁴⁴ Even in the area where the Soviets were more successful than the British (namely, in raising literacy levels in Central Asia as compared to British efforts in Africa), the moral description still favored the British. The Soviet achievements were due to the “help of a totalitarian state apparatus,” while the British efforts were due to “slow-working democratic mass-education projects.”⁵⁴⁵

Kolarz’s book was published when France was mired in a protracted colonial warfare in Indochina and were to enter what Alistair Horne calls “a savage war of peace” in Algeria.⁵⁴⁶ Kolarz also admits that liberation movements within the French Union were “subject to a number of vexations and in the case of Madagascar even to bloody suppression.” Yet the French Colonial Empire was markedly different from the Soviet Empire: “its principles are democratic. Tolerance

⁵⁴³ Ibid, p. 311.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London: MacMillan, 1977).

and respect for human dignity are its basis and it represents a much higher form of political organization than the Soviet Empire.” Liberation movements within its Union “at least” got “semi-legal existence in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.”⁵⁴⁷ Again and again Kolarz shields European colonial empires from opprobrium and at the same time tries to condemn the Soviet Union for practicing colonialism. Like many of his colleagues, Kolarz condemned Soviet colonialism not for being so but for being rooted in Communism. European colonialism was either assumed to be non-existent or for the benefit of the humanity. It was in this line that Robert Conquest could refer to Soviet Union as “the last empire” at a time when his home country was brutally suppressing a Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya.⁵⁴⁸ And Bernard Lewis, responding to Soviet claims that the Soviet “annexation” of Central Asian Khanates “saved” the region from the tyranny of British imperialism, says the following: “Soviet historians might—but do not—add that the Russians, by preempting a British conquest, saved these peoples from the burdens and hazards of the democracy and independence borne by Britain’s former imperial subjects.”⁵⁴⁹ Soviet historians and Lewis in this debate ignored a great deal of historical facts and reality—above all, the views of conquered peoples—but decided to base their conclusions on apologetic counter-factuals.

While anti-Communist principles significantly factored into these debates, there was also genuine feeling among British scholars that British imperial history had the most positive legacy among all empires. The Soviet empire was the one deserving most opprobrium. The French and the Tsarist Empires had good intentions in colonizing their respective domains but often fell short. In his “tempting” comparison of imperial “Russian attitude towards Islam in Central Asia”

⁵⁴⁷ Kolarz, *Russia and Her Colonies*, p. 314.

⁵⁴⁸ Robert Conquest, *The Last Empire: on Soviet Rule in the Minority Republics* (London: Ampersand Books, 1962).

⁵⁴⁹ Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 95.

and “the British attitude towards it in India,” Wheeler gives his peculiar reasoning for such a conclusion. The British had “relatively good” relations with “the Muslim clergy” and “a far greater respect and understanding of Islam than the Russians.”⁵⁵⁰ Once again, it is just a selective history—as Russians could claim for respecting and understanding Islam in their own way, too—and “understanding” in this context is clearly subjective. As Ron Geaves notes about the British insensitivity and contempt shown to Islam and Hinduism in the nineteenth century that contributed to the uprising of 1857, “even senior and experienced civil servants, who prided themselves on their understanding of the local mind, were guilty of marked insensitivity to local customs.”⁵⁵¹ Among other “factors which made the situations in the two countries quite different,” Wheeler continues, the British among Indian Muslims were in the category of the “Peoples of the Book,” as if the Russians in Central Asia were not. His most interesting comparison to demonstrate relative success of the British colonialism in India is the following: “in Central Asian Muslim society, particularly in the cities, obscurantism, hypocrisy and corruption of various kinds had sunk to depths which were unknown in Muslim India.”⁵⁵² How Wheeler was able to measure the level of “obscurantism” and “hypocrisy” in such diverse, complex, and large areas as Central Asia and Muslim India is a mystery known only to him.

The examples given here on the way the British made their comparative analyses vis-à-vis the Soviet Union is significant for understanding the views of American scholars and experts as British opinions on this matter resonated well with their colleagues across the Atlantic. Americans expressed similar views on the legacies of European empires and Soviet nationalities policies. While “England gave India and Pakistan a degree of political maturity and ultimately

⁵⁵⁰ Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 188.

⁵⁵¹ Ron Geaves, “India 1857: A Mutiny or a War of Independence? The Muslim Perspective,” *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1996), p. 28.

⁵⁵² Wheeler, *The Modern History of Central Asia*, p. 188.

turned them loose as independent nations,” Justice Douglas wrote, “Russia has no such program for her subjugated peoples.” The West in general, he also said, brought “self-determination of peoples, racial equality, the free ballot, due process of law, freedom of conscience” to the formerly colonized lands.⁵⁵³ According to Paul Henze, the British colonialism in such countries as Ceylon, Burma, India, and Pakistan “has developed consistently along” what he contended was “the most widely accepted theory on what the aims of a colonial policy should be”: gradual preparation of colonial areas “for separate nationhood and full freedom if they so desire. . . . gradual evolution of representative government, a gradual turning over of power to native administrators, and a gradual increase in the proportion of the economy controlled by indigenous capital and managed by indigenous personnel.” There were, Henze argued, “hardly any traces of this type of development in Soviet Central Asia.”⁵⁵⁴ American and British views in this case were literally indistinguishable.

Richard Pierce, another American scholar, offered more illuminating details of how his critique of Soviet colonialism was rooted in both colonial apologetics and anti-Communism. In his concluding remarks on the “colonial heritage of the USSR,” Pierce writes that the Tsarist colonization of Central Asia was motivated—besides economic and security reason—by the desire to “share in the task of bringing the fruits of Western civilization to backward lands,” and there can be no “question, from a Western point of view, of the over-all beneficial changes wrought following the conquest.” Imperial Russia’s contributions to the development of Central Asia were “gains of which” not only “any Russian” but also “any Westerner” “could be proud,” “for this was not merely a Russian affair but a facet of the entire Western colonial tradition . . .

⁵⁵³ Douglas, *Russian Journey*, p. 225.

⁵⁵⁴ Henze, “The Economic Development of Soviet Central Asia to the Eve of World War II, Part II,” p. 42.

.’⁵⁵⁵ While there was “exploitation,” Pierce continues, Russians also “expressed humanitarianism and consciousness of the responsibility to be borne.” Russian “lack of effort” in raising the status of women, removing the veil, banning child marriage, or combating “nearly universal illiteracy,” according to Pierce, was not “due to indifference but rather to observance of a principle of Western ‘colonialism’ requiring persuasion and a good example rather than coercion.” Pierce also laments that, unlike the British in India, Russians “never risked training a large body of native troops; and they undertook nothing comparable to the vast educational work undertaken in India by British missionaries.”⁵⁵⁶ The most illuminating feature of Pierce’s conclusions is that he ends up condemning the Soviet Union for having no “lack of effort” in radically transforming Central Asia the way Pierce argues the Tsarist Empire could have. For Pierce, colonization of Central Asia was not necessarily bad in itself, but Soviet rule in Central Asia certainly was. A better example of how Cold War politics dictated the concerns of a Sovietology scholar is hard to find.

It is worth discussing another case of imperial apologetics to demonstrate how pervasive belief in the morality of Western imperialism was at a time when Western scholars were condemning the Soviet Union for being a colonialist regime. David Mackenzie wrote a paper for *Slavic Review* toward the end of the ‘60s, praising Konstantin von Kaufman, the first Russian governor-general to Central Asia, as an honorable Russian imperialist. How he comes to that conclusion is quite illuminating. Mackenzie defends Kaufman from charges levelled at him by his contemporaries and historians, dismissing them as “unfair or malicious.” “The main charges” against Kaufman “were”: “exceeding statutory authority, extravagance, corruption and

⁵⁵⁵ Richard Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 302.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 303-304.

inefficiency, and alienating the native population.”⁵⁵⁷ Interestingly enough, Mackenzie discusses more general criticisms of Kaufman but conveniently ignores the chief among them; namely, Kaufman’s role in massacring thousands of Yomud Turkmens. Perhaps the fate of those was irrelevant to Mackenzie. He admits that “with available evidence, no general assessment of native attitudes toward Kaufman’s regime can be made.” Kaufman was “a conservative, even chauvinistic, patriot, and the political and cultural institutions he established were mainly for Russians.” Nor did he “conceal his Russifying purpose.” Kaufman’s “achievements,” however “clearly outweigh his failures and entitle him to a high place among nineteenth-century Russian statesmen.”⁵⁵⁸ Some of Mackenzie’s reasons for this conclusion are: “Without previous Asian experience, he had to govern a newly conquered region lacking laws or administrative structure”; Kaufman did not “intervene directly in native affairs” unless “Russian benevolence met resistance”; Kaufman “helped undermine Moslem fanaticism” by “banning Orthodox missionaries and largely ignoring Islam”; and, finally, “General Kaufman was a dedicated imperialist with genuine faith in Russia’s civilizing mission.”⁵⁵⁹ The last comment is in his concluding remarks. He takes it for granted that it is supposed to be viewed in positive terms.

Anti-Communism disguised as anti-colonialism expressed by American scholars was a corollary to the U.S. foreign policy. State officials generally expressed and pursued the same policy. “The anti-colonial ideology” of the American policymaking elite, as Kan Hideki argues, “almost always gave way to U.S. security needs and anti-communism.” In addition to that, Americans were skeptical “of dependent peoples’ ability to govern themselves effectively.”⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ David Mackenzie, “Kaufman of Turkestan: An Assessment of His Administration 1867-1881,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Jun., 1967), pp. 276-277.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 282, 285.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 268, 269, 284, 285.

⁵⁶⁰ Kan Hideki, “The Making of ‘an American Empire’ and U.S. Responses to Decolonization in the Early Cold War Years,” in Timohiko Uyama (ed.), *Comparing Modern Empires: Imperial Rule and Decolonization in the Changing World Order* (Sapporo: Hokkaido University, 2018), p. 148.

American policymakers were officially opposed to colonialism, but they would not pursue their opposition to it led to Communist expansion. According to Mason Sears, a State Department official in the Office of Dependent Area Affairs in 1953, Moscow's control over Eastern Europe was "colonialism in its most objectionable and repressive form" and could be dubbed as "extreme colonialism." Sears also noted that the U.S. could not support the other side of the coin in "extreme anti-colonialism." Both "extremes," he contended, were ripe "for communist exploitation."⁵⁶¹ Gradual anti-colonialism was a worthy cause but only if it aligned with American security interests—chief among which was fighting Communism.

One of the remarkable aspects of the debate on colonization was, to borrow from Amy Kaplan, the "absence of empire" in comparisons between the United States and the Soviet Union. Amy Kaplan explains that the "United States expansion is often treated as an entirely separate phenomenon from European colonialism of the nineteenth century."⁵⁶² As noted earlier, Soviet rule in Central Asia was primarily compared to the British and French empires. The relative absence of America from the comparison was due to the general assumption that the United States never had an empire or, if it did, it was given away already.⁵⁶³ Indeed, some of the critics of the Soviet rule in Central Asia sometimes fleetingly mentioned American imperial rule in the Philippines, to make a paternalistic point that the United States nurtured the Filipinos for independence and, once assured the latter was for ready for it, gave them an independence. Other than that, the United States and the Soviet Union were viewed as entirely different societies. It was in this same vein when *The New York Times* editorial team rebuked Nikita Khrushchev, "the

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 148-149.

⁵⁶² Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (eds.), *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 17.

⁵⁶³ William Appleman Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Nov., 1995), p. 379.

head of the greatest colonial empire of the present day,” for speaking “sanctimoniously as the enemy of colonialism” and weeping “crocodile tears” over the fate of nations under colonialism in a speech to the United Nations. Among the peoples who “live in the prison of nations that is the Soviet Union today,” the editorial listed titular nations of the fifteen republics of the USSR as well as Tartars, Yakuts, and Buryats—ethnic groups who had lived as part of Russia for far longer than, say, Hispanics whose lands had been conquered in the nineteenth-century American westward expansion.⁵⁶⁴ The editorial team could not imagine that an analogous approach to understanding the American society would raise questions about empire and colonialism that still existed in American context.

When the U.S. and the USSR were compared, they were in reference to the multi-ethnic nature of these countries. But even here elaborating on the differences between the two nations was “scarcely necessary,” according to Richard Pipes, for they were “fundamentally different.” The United States was a “nation created, as it were, through a voluntary multinational effort,” whereas the Soviet Union was “an ordinary empire of many nations dominated by one.”⁵⁶⁵ Kolarz was of the same opinion, suggesting that Europeans entered the American “melting-pot of their own free will,” while the “Soviet melting-pot” displayed a “strongly compulsory character.”⁵⁶⁶ For scholars who were not invested in cold war politics at the time, it was easy to dispel the double standards displayed by Pipes and Kolarz. In response to Pipes’ piece in *Problems of Communism*, a political science professor from the University of Ghana pointed out that unsophisticated characterization of all aspects of the Soviet nationality policy as colonialism would make it “difficult to think of one major country in the world today that could escape the charge of colonialism.” The professor also noted that Pipes ignored “the Indian question in the

⁵⁶⁴ “Mr. Khrushchev’s Big Lie,” *The New York Times*, 24 September 1960, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁵ Pipes, “Soviet Colonialism: Does It Exist?” p. 3.

⁵⁶⁶ Kolarz, *Russia and Her Colonies*, p. 304.

United States” as well as “the fact that not all the various ethnic groups that migrated to America necessarily wanted to be in a United States where they would be numerically inferior to the Anglo-Saxon elements.” Also missing from the analysis of Pipes, the Professor emphasized, was “that, during the process of expansion of the American Republic across the continent, American leaders were very much aware that they were building an empire.” That was, of course, common sense for an intellectual from a former African colony who nevertheless noted there were certainly elements of colonial dominance in Soviet Central Asia and viewed all forms of colonialism “essentially repugnant.”⁵⁶⁷

Refusing to entertain a proper comparative analysis of the United States and the Soviet Union was a missed opportunity on scholars’ part. In many ways, those two nations were more alike than they were with European empires. Both the United States and Russia once assumed themselves to be distinct from Europe and unique in their missions, expanded along their borders and incorporated their conquered lands into the centralized polity where the minority ethnic and racial groups were subordinated to the authority of the dominant group (the process sometimes described as “internal colonization”), and in both the United States and the Soviet Union Anglo-Saxons and Slavs, respectively, dominated major political, economic, and cultural institutions. There were certainly fundamental differences between American and Soviet empires, but comparison helps us to understand both better; it does not hinder our insight into their nature. As Steven Sabol argues in his insightful comparative analysis of American colonization of the Sioux and Russian colonization of the Kazakh, “comparison clarifies and refutes myths and misinterpretations based upon the isolated analysis in which there is nothing to test the

⁵⁶⁷ B.G.D. Folsom, “Commentaries,” *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 8 (1964), p. 19.

assumptions, theories, or historical explanations.”⁵⁶⁸ But scholars and experts invested in cold war depictions of the United States and the Soviet Union were precisely interested in maintaining the myth of oneself being virtuous and the enemy being evil. That was the essence of quintessential cold war scholarship.

The 1950s and ‘60s was the era of decolonization—not only of former colonies from the shackles of colonial rule but also of the mind that had for centuries justified colonialism as a perfectly justified form of expanding civilization. The former was not complete yet while the latter was only in its nascent stage. It is not surprising therefore to read scholars from that era seeing Western colonialism as a virtuous endeavor. Western insistence on emphasizing the Soviet regime as an oppressive colonial empire was partly a response to Soviet polemicists. “What is insufferable is that the Soviet imperialists should set themselves up as judges of other imperialists. Personally, I would much rather give them credit than denounce them,” British scholar Hugh Seton-Watson said. “But as long as they claim immaculate virtue for themselves and self-righteously denounce others for sins of which they are equally guilty, one is forced to argue with them.”⁵⁶⁹ But the arguing between Western and Soviet writers often rendered the meaning of colonialism meaningless, its interpretation selective and opportunistic, a tool of denouncing each other rather than employing it in a dispassionate, academic manner.

Soviet Rule in Central Asia and the Question of Orientalism

Famous Lebanese-British Historian Albert Hourani, often praised by Edward Said for his scholarship, once expressed “regret” that Said’s book was titled *Orientalism*. Hourani said that

⁵⁶⁸ Steven Sabol, *“The Touch of Civilization”: Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2017), p. 18. For a discussion of Soviet oppression of minority nationalities as a form of “internal colonialism,” see Otto Pohl, “Colonialism in One Country: The Deported Peoples in the USSR as an Example of Internal Colonialism,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion*, Volume 5, No. 7 (May 2014).

⁵⁶⁹ Hugh Seton-Watson, “Moscow’s Imperialism,” *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 8 (1964), p. 18.

“Orientalism has now become a dirty word,” which otherwise was “a perfectly respectable discipline.”⁵⁷⁰ Many critics since have argued that Said’s main arguments were valid insofar his criticism was directed at ideologues with ties to state and other power centers who used their Orientalist knowledge for imperial expansion. As for Orientalists specializing in the study of the Orient for academic purposes, they could or could not be part of the process Said so passionately criticized. It goes without saying that many European and American scholars of Oriental studies had no intention of serving imperial projects and did what they did for academic purposes only. As I will discuss in the following pages, American experts on Central Asia in the 1950s- and ‘60s orientalized Central Asian cultures and Islam not because they were influenced by traditional Orientalists. In some ways, the opposite was true. Stereotypical and negative assumptions about Central Asian cultures and Soviet Islam demonstrated by American scholars of this era could have been avoided or at least mitigated had these scholars consulted existing Orientalist scholarship on Islam and Oriental history. Their negative assumptions were mostly rooted in popular views of the Orient and internalizing of Soviet ideological views on these subjects.

The functioning of Orientalism in the way Americans imagined, studied, and understood Central Asia is further complicated by the fact that American also partially orientalized Russia itself. It shall be recalled, Russian colonization of Central Asia in the nineteenth century was described as a “conquest of Orientals by Orientals, of a cognate character by a cognate character,” by British statesman Lord Curzon.⁵⁷¹ Not only was it a sentiment shared by many in Western societies, but it was a sentiment that persisted for another century. Russia’s one foot was

⁵⁷⁰ Nancy Elizabeth Gallagher (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Middle East: Interviews with Leading Middle East Historians* (New York: Ithaca Press, 1994), p. 40.

⁵⁷¹ George Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question* (London: Longmans, 1889), p. 392.

in Asia and the other foot was in Eastern Europe which was for a long time imagined to be outside the realm of European civilization as defined by leading Enlightenment thinkers. In his famous post-war speech on the descent of “iron curtain” over “these Eastern States of Europe,” Winston Churchill affirmed philosophical demarcation of what separated Christian civilization from its Eastern shadow. As Larry Wolff argues, this envisioning of Western and Eastern Europe may be described as “the invention of Eastern Europe as an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization.”⁵⁷² Russia was undoubtedly included into this demarcation and from late medieval era to the twentieth-century was viewed as a country trapped between civilization and barbarism.⁵⁷³

The resilience of this perception of Russia’s can be seen in the writings of American cold war strategist George Kennan whose influential article under the pseudonym of “Mr. X” in *Foreign Affairs* in 1946, “provid[ed],” in the words of Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis, “American officials with the intellectual framework they would employ in thinking about communism and Soviet foreign policy for the next two decades.”⁵⁷⁴ In a telegram he earlier sent to the State Department from Moscow, Kennan discussed “Kremlin’s neurotic view of the world,” which, he noted, was rooted in the “traditional instinctive Russian sense of insecurity.” In Kennan’s view, “disrespect of Russians for objective truth” and “their disbelief in its existence” originated “from the atmosphere of oriental secretiveness and conspiracy.”⁵⁷⁵ In the “Mr. X” article, Kennan contrasted the “Western” mind with the “mental world” of Orientals in

⁵⁷² Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 2,7.

⁵⁷³ Alfred Rieber, “Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy: An Interpretative Essay” in Hugh Ragsdale (ed.), *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵⁷⁴ Quoted in Frank Costigliola, “‘Unceasing Pressure for Penetration’: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan’s Formation of the Cold War,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, No. 4, (March, 1997), pp. 1309-1339.

⁵⁷⁵ Kennan’s telegram to the Secretary of State, dated 22 February 1946, is available at the National Security Archive online. < <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>>. (Accessed: 25 October 2017).

Russia. Unlike “any of the Anglo-Saxon traditions of compromise,” Kennan emphasized, Russians were prone to a “particular brand of fanaticism” and were “jealous to envisage any permanent sharing of power.” Kennan further noted: “Here caution, circumspection, flexibility and deception are the valuable qualities; and their value finds natural appreciation in the Russian or the oriental mind.”⁵⁷⁶ The Soviet Union in this sense was viewed as an extension of the traditional, oriental Russian empire.

Some scholars specializing in oriental studies held similar views of Russia and the Soviet Union. “Like the Nazis, the Communists are anti-Western in the double sense,” Bernard Lewis wrote in an essay trying to tie Nazism, Communism, and Islam as similar ideologies, “they are against the Western Powers and they are also against the Western way of life, Western institutions and ideas.”⁵⁷⁷ What is interesting is that Lewis describes both Communism and Nazism as anti-Western. One might ask, is not Nazism clearly a Western phenomenon, even if something widely condemned within the Western civilization? But there seems to have been an attempt, at least in some scholarly circles of which Lewis was part of, to tie Nazism to the Oriental influence. In his classic work on “Oriental Despotism,” Karl Wittfogel described Russia as a “semi- (or quasi-) Asiatic Russia” with a “genetic and structural affinity . . . to the semi-managerial autocracies of Oriental despotism.” He also briefly touched the subject of Nazism and offered the following explanation for its rise in the Western world: “I feel justified in asserting that the birth of Hitler Germany will never be satisfactorily explained unless the relations between Weimar Germany and the U.S.S.R. (including Russia’s Comintern policy prior

⁵⁷⁶ “Mr. X [George Kennan],” “Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, (July, 1947), pp. 566-582. For further analysis, see William Pietz, “‘Post-Colonialism’ of Cold War Discourse,” *Social Text*, No. 19/20, (Autumn, 1988), pp. 55-75.

⁵⁷⁷ Bernard Lewis, “Communism and Islam,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1954), p. 3.

to Hitler's victory) are approached through an adequate type of area and inter-area study."⁵⁷⁸

This once again demonstrates how malleable concepts such as "West" and "East" can be in political discourse, defined and re-defined to fit whatever ideological views exist at a given time. Everything despotic and oppressive was the characteristic of an Oriental society and the only way to explain the same taking place in the West was to either tie it to the Orient (Wittfogel) or outright deny it the Western identity and lump it together with other Oriental societies (Lewis).

The fact remains nevertheless that Russia in Western eyes still had characteristics of a Western society and there always was confusion on how to precisely locate it within the West-East dichotomy.⁵⁷⁹ No such confusion understandably existed in locating Central Asia as a quintessential Islamic Orient. American cultural views of Central Asia therefore partly derived from popular views of the larger Muslim world. Many Americans of the early Cold War era grew up reading and laughing at Mark Twain's depiction of the Middle East as the land of dirt, superstition, stupidity, and brutishness.⁵⁸⁰ During the interwar years, scholarly centers specializing in oriental studies in such places as Princeton University and the University of Chicago popularized a racist idea of the Ottoman Empire being divided into "the Ruling Institution," associated with the "Turkish-Aryan" race, and the "Moslem Institution," associated with the Semitic race—to offer a new insight into how Middle Eastern societies functioned.⁵⁸¹ More influential however were stereotypical depictions of the Middle East in popular magazines

⁵⁷⁸ Karl Wittfogel, "Russia and Asia: Problems of Contemporary Area Studies and International Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (July 1950), pp. 453-456.

⁵⁷⁹ Martin Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999).

⁵⁸⁰ To give an example from his exaggerated depictions of the Middle East for his American audience, Twain described the Ottoman Sultan as "the obedient son of his tyrannical mother" but also "representative of a people, by nature and training, filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, superstitious." And Constantinople was the "home of cripples and human monsters."—Marwan Obeidat, "The Innocent Eye: Mark Twain's Perceptions of the Muslim Orient as a Traveler," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Summer 1990), p. 196.

⁵⁸¹ Masha Kirasirova, "Orientalologies Compared: U.S. and Soviet Imaginaries of the Modern Middle East" in Michael Kemper and Artemy Kalinovsky (eds.), *Reassessing Orientalism: Interlocking Orientalologies during the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 20.

and the Cinema. As Douglas Little argues, “once the orientalist worldview epitomized by *National Geographic* found its way onto America’s coffee tables and movie screens during the early 1950s,” it started shaping the views of U.S. policymakers “in predictable ways.” “From Harry Truman through George Bush,” U.S. officials “tended to dismiss Arab aspirations for self-determination as politically primitive, economically suspect, and ideologically absurd.”⁵⁸²

Another factor was the growing influence of behavioral analysis among foreign policy analysts, which, in the case of the Middle East, “reduced the hearts and minds of the region’s population to opinions, attitudes, and trends . . . made it a soulless entity with neither literary imagination nor discursive subtlety,” as once scholar recently observed.⁵⁸³

The Middle East was however not Central Asia. Scholars and experts invested in cold war politics were more than willing to tone down their negative views of the Islamic cultures to score an argument against Moscow. The idea of Central Asia as a backward land with an inferior culture, for centuries stuck in ignorance and bigotry, nevertheless made its way to the minds of Cold War scholars. For example, even such a staunch anti-Communist as Richard Pipes believed that Russians belonged to a superior culture as compared to Central Asians. As for Muslims of the Russian Empire, he classified them according to their “cultural advancement” by which he meant incorporation of European ideas and values: Volga Tatars at the top, followed by Crimean Tatars and Azeris, and then Central Asians.⁵⁸⁴ Richard Pierce took it for granted that until the discovery by Russia, Central Asia was a dark, unknown land. He divided his three-volume bibliography of Soviet Central Asia into three periods. The first volume covered the years 1558-1866 and his reasoning for that is quite illuminating. The year 1558 was “when the British trade

⁵⁸² Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 11.

⁵⁸³ Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 59-60.

⁵⁸⁴ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 12-13.

emissary Jenkinson gathered and brought back to Muscovy the first reliable information about Central Asia.”⁵⁸⁵ Only a European could gather “reliable information” about that region and only a European discovery made the region relevant.

Although there were Orientalist scholars who sometimes contributed to distorted views of the Middle East or Central Asia, as noted earlier, essentialist and stereotypical views of Central Asia by Cold War specialists were rooted elsewhere. This is an important reminder about how Said’s arguments were problematic in lumping ordinary scholars of Orientalism together with ideologues who were invested in exerting Western power over Eastern lands. As we will see in the following examples, Cold War specialists formed their stereotypical views based on popular assumptions as well as the views of imperial ideologues of the nineteenth century. Uncritically embracing assumptions of Soviet scholars only strengthened those views. Meanwhile, scholars specializing in classical Oriental studies offered far more diverse and nuanced views which contradicted the views of both Soviet scholars and American scholars of Sovietology. Cold War specialists were an odd case in orientalizing foreign people as they were neither producers of popular culture and views nor ideologues promoting an imperial policy in Soviet Central Asia, but they were not specialists in Oriental or Islamic studies either. As a result, they ended up expressing the views of the former and largely contradicting those of the latter.

In the early 1950s, Professor Pipes had a chance to interview refugees from Central Asia for his research on Muslims of the region. He published the results and his conclusions in a two-piece publication for the *Middle East Journal*. There is a lot about Islam and Muslim life in the pieces Pipes gets completely wrong, but I am not going to expand on those because he was neither a scholar of Islam nor had physical access to Central Asia yet, although the confidence with which he expresses incorrect information is quite puzzling. There is a very revealing

⁵⁸⁵ Pierce, *Soviet Central Asia*, p. 111.

discussion about the intellectual level of Central Asian Muslims that I am going to focus on here. After interviewing the refugees, he concluded that “the Muslim intelligentsia is woefully ignorant of the history of Turkestan.” It is not clear how refugees would be representative of the “Muslim intelligentsia” either. “Ignorant of the facts,” Pipes says of Central Asian Muslims, “the natives glorify their past and create a mental picture of greatness which is quite unwarranted by the historical record.” The Soviet regime, he says, is mainly to blame for suppressing the actual history, stimulating the native population’s imaginations of the past. Pipes also explains what a real history of Central Asian Turks should look like:

Objectively speaking, the history of Turkestan is largely the story of the gradual conquest and destruction of a great Iranian civilization by barbarian Turkic nomads, resulting in perpetual internecine wars, isolation from the rest of the world, and cultural petrification of that area. In other words, the history of the Central Asian Turks is by no means a glorious one, either politically or culturally.⁵⁸⁶

Before we fully unpack these illuminating quotes, it is worth mentioning that using Pipes’ logic, it would be hard for any people whose ancestors were conquering empires to be proud of their past, including Americans given the history of slavery, conquest, and genocide. Let us though address the validity of these claims and compare what Pipes says with the views of classical Orientalists.

Professor Pipes repeats the assumption about post-Timurid Central Asia going into perpetual decline and isolation until the Russian conquest.⁵⁸⁷ This assumption was never based

⁵⁸⁶ Richard Pipes, “Muslims of Soviet Central Asia: Trends and Prospects (Part II),” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), pp. 306-307.

⁵⁸⁷ He was, of course, hardly alone in expressing that view. Other Sovietologists made similar remarks. Seymour Becker wrote that until the Russian conquest “the khanates’ economic, social, and political systems, their technology, and the intellectual attitudes of their rulers showed no qualitative change from the tenth century.” Similarly, Serge Zenkovsky wrote that the Kazakhs “until some fifty years ago still lived in the medieval world of Genghis Khan.”—Seymour Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 11; Serge Zenkovsky, “American Research on Russia’s Moslems,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (July, 1959), p. 214.

on research into primary sources. The assumption neatly fit into later Soviet historiography which wanted to rehabilitate the Russian conquest and was partly continued unchecked because the area remains to be properly examined even today. Some of the preliminary research scholars have done lately however shows that the story was more complicated. Scott Levi writes in his study of the Ferghana Valley before the Russian conquest: “Contrary to long-held notions of Central Asian isolation and decline in this period, Khoqand maintained a policy of deliberate engagement with both China and Russia, promoting economic growth, urbanization, the expansion of irrigated agriculture, and the development of an impressive Islamic religious landscape in the valley.”⁵⁸⁸ A Harvard scholar from the 1950s obviously cannot be held responsible for not knowing recently discovered information that dispels old, unexamined assumptions, but the confidence with which Professor Pipes writes on these issues is again misplaced.

His claim about barbarian Turkish destruction of the Persian civilization refers to an older era which had been researched by Orientalists. One of them was another Harvard alumni and fellow Richard Frye who published a number of works on the interactions of Turks and Iranians in medieval Central Asia in the ‘50s and ‘60s. Frye was a scholar of medieval Persianate and proficient in the languages required to read and examine primary sources on the history of the region. In Professor Frye’s works, there is none of that vitriol and essentialist denigration directed at Turks. Based on his research, Frye rejected simplistic notions that divided Central Asia into “settled Iranians” versus “nomadic Turks.”⁵⁸⁹ Rather than conquest and destruction, Frye talked about gradual and partial Turkicization. And even then Turkish rulers, rather than enforcing the Turkish language on others, “patronized and encouraged Arabic and especially

⁵⁸⁸ Scott Levi, “The Ferghana Valley at the Crossroads of World History: the Rise of Khoqand, 1709-1822,” *Journal of Global History*, Volume 2, No. 2 (July 2007), p. 215.

⁵⁸⁹ Richard Frye, *Bukhara: The Medieval Achievement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 114-115.

Persian.”⁵⁹⁰ Turkic people had lived in settled and nomadic areas of southern Central Asia and the Middle East long before the invasions by Turkish conquerors such as Saljuqs. In Bukhara specifically, Frye talked about the “happy marriage of Islamic-Persian and Turkic traditions” under the Qarakhanid rulers and how the “Islamic culture was blended with Turkic traditions to form another Islamic culture using two languages, Persian and Turkish.”⁵⁹¹ In short, in discussing Turkish-Persian relations in Central Asia before the Russian conquest, Pipes and Frye offered diametrically opposite viewpoints. Needless to mention, Pipes offered no evidences for his views while Frye’s works are well-documented.

This raises another important question: if not from the works of Orientalists, where did the views of Professor Pipes come from? In order to answer this question, we need to look back at the nineteenth century Europe where some racist thinkers sought the roots of the Aryan race in Central Asia and how that idea was picked up by Russian imperial officials who saw themselves the modern-day Aryans in search of their historical roots. The idea was born among Europeans who wanted to legitimize colonization of Central Asia by finding in the region their ancient roots, restore the lost connection, and find their identity. The idea entered Russia where intellectual and imperial supporters of the Aryan myth saw Russians as the “Northern Aryans” who, they believed, needed to “erase” Turkic elements from their ancient homeland.⁵⁹² As part of this process, they promoted the notion that Turkic tribes in Central Asia were nothing but barbarian nomadic tribes who had destroyed the superior Iranian civilization. This would also further legitimize the Russian colonization of Central Asia, as it was assumed Russians were acting on behalf of the European civilization against the hated Turks.

⁵⁹⁰ Richard Frye, “Turks in the Middle East Before the Saljuqs,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (July, 1943), pp. 194-195.

⁵⁹¹ Frye, *Bukhara*, p. 194.

⁵⁹² Марлен Ларюэль, «Умозрительная центральная азия: поиски прародины арийцев в россии и на западе», *Вестник Евразии*, Номер 4 (2003), p. 156.

Russian intellectuals were divided on this question but those who supported the Aryan myth received direct support from the Russian state.⁵⁹³ One of the strongest critics of this notion at the time was Russia's greatest Orientalist Vasilii Bartol'd whom Pipes, in his discussion of Central Asian Muslim intelligentsia, mentions in passing. Here is what Bartol'd said about the Russian project of searching their lost ancestry in Central Asia and the subsequent vilification of Turks:

The exaggerated ideas of the cultural merits of the Aryans and the barbarism of the Turks necessarily found its expression in the understanding of the scientific tasks of Russia in Turkestan. As early as 1895, the year of its foundation, the local archaeological circle was instructed by the highest representative of Russian authority to explore the ancient Aryan culture of the region, which had been destroyed by the Turk-barbarians and which was to be re-established under the rule of other Aryans: the Russians.⁵⁹⁴

Bartol'd completely rejected these assumptions. In response, he listed cultural achievements under Turkic rulers. In short, what Professor Pipes listed as the “historical record” of Turks in Central Asia—“objectively speaking,” as he put it—was a racist myth propagated by imperial Russian officials and their intellectual supporters. He called Central Asian refugees whom he interviewed “woefully ignorant” for not accepting this Eurocentric interpretation of their history the purpose of which was to legitimize the Russian colonization of their lands.

The purpose of recounting these examples from the early Cold War era of American study of Central Asia is not simply to highlight the problematic nature of scholarship on an oriental society located within Soviet colonial realm (an important work in itself), but also to emphasize the persistence of Sovietological views, approaches, methods, and assumptions in later periods. Some of the scholars discussed above went on to influence policymaking decisions

⁵⁹³ Ibid, p. 161.

⁵⁹⁴ Quoted in Sergei Abashin, “Ethnogenesis and Historiography: Historical Narratives for Central Asia in the 1940s and 1950s” in Roland Chetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister (eds.), *An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), p. 159.

in the government while others left an enduring legacy in scholarship. Professor Pipes never revised any of his earlier views on Soviet Central Asia and carried his opinions to the Reagan Administration where he advised the government on Soviet nationality affairs as the leader of the Nationalities Working Group, one of the groups set up by the National Security Council to deal with questions on U.S.-Soviet relations. Pipes consistently recommended efforts to weaken Soviet authority and exploit the assumed nationality crisis, especially in Central Asia where he thought Muslim “hatred” of Russians could “quickly explode into genocidal fury should the heavy hand of Russian authority weaken.”⁵⁹⁵ After a stint in the CIA, Paul Henze advised both the Carter- and Reagan Administrations’ NSC and pushed for similar efforts, especially via his cozy relationship with the National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. As Artemy Kalinovsky points out, in the 1980s “some of the CIA-sponsored attempts to penetrate Central Asia were inspired by ideas developed under Henze, and were consistent with the views held by Pipes.”⁵⁹⁶ Henze also brought like-minded scholars on Central Asia such as Alexander Benningsen and Ender Wimbush (Benningsen’s long-time collaborator and a former fellow at Rand Corporation) to his advising group at NSC.

While the influence of Pipes and Henze ended with the ending of the Cold War, Benningsen’s legacy was more enduring as his contributions were more geared at scholarship. To explain the persistence of views and assumptions that founded the Central Asian Studies in the early Cold War era it is worth briefly discussing Benningsen’s most famous—and probably most problematic—book which he co-authored with Enders Wimbush in 1985. Benningsen and Wimbush set out to explain Sufism in the Soviet Union by reading Soviet publications on the

⁵⁹⁵ Richard Pipes, *Survival Is Not Enough: Soviet Realities and America’s Future* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 184–185; Kalinovsky, “Encouraging Resistance.”

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 225.

subject.⁵⁹⁷ The book exemplifies all of the problems with Cold War scholarship I discussed earlier: reliance on Soviet publications and internalization of Soviet assumptions, repetition of orientalist assumptions reminiscent of the imperial era, and refusal to use Western specialized scholarship on Islam and Inner Asian history (including the works of classical Orientalists). The last one is especially puzzling since Benningsen and Wimbush dedicated their book to Joseph F. Fletcher, Jr., a Harvard scholar of Inner Asia who was not only proficient enough to study sources in Russian, Chinese, and Mongolian but also in Uyghur, Uzbek, Persian, and Arabic. Fletcher also had done archival research in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Kabul for his works.⁵⁹⁸

The book by Benningsen and Wimbush excellently illustrates both Western and Soviet approaches to studying Muslims and Islam at the time but as a monograph on the lives of Sufi Muslims in the Soviet Union, its value should be rendered in the negative. The main subject of the study—Sufism in the Soviet Union, that is—is distorted beyond recognition. As one critic put it, the book contains a long list of “erroneous, unsubstantiated, and sometimes just ridiculous statements made by the authors.”⁵⁹⁹ The popularity of this book despite containing shocking errors in the interpretation of basic Islamic and Sufi terminologies demonstrates how persistent the Cold War scholarship has been in American study of Central Asia and Islam in the Soviet Union.⁶⁰⁰ The focus here however is not on those errors but the revealing character of this scholarship. The book is a clear example of how, after several decades of recognizing the

⁵⁹⁷ Alexandre Benningsen and Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

⁵⁹⁸ For Fletcher’s brief biography, see John Fairbank, “Joseph F. Fletcher, Jr., 1934-1984,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1985).

⁵⁹⁹ Yuri Bregel, *Notes on the Study of Central Asia* [Papers on Inner Asia series] (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 53.

⁶⁰⁰ The book continues to be cited as some sort of an objective survey of Sufi groups in the Soviet Union in many scholarly publications as well as reference guides. See, for example, John Voll, “Foreword” in Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xi; Michael Bishku, *Caucasus: Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 18; Mosher Gammer, *Islam and Sufism in Daghestan* (Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2009), p. 133.

problematic nature of Soviet publications, American scholars continued to embrace and internalize propaganda and biased assumptions of Soviet authors. Although Benningsen and Wimbush caution their readers about biases and prejudices of Soviet authors, they end up praising two Soviet authors who had concocted an outlandish story about Uzbeks and Tajiks allegedly practicing human sacrifice for canal-cleaning ceremonies in the nineteenth century for their “authentically scientific works.” Lusitsian Klimovich, “the leading Soviet specialist in anti-Islamic propaganda,” is credited with publishing “[t]he most objective and the most important” work on “Sufi Islam.”⁶⁰¹

Benningsen and Wimbush continuously paint Sufi groups in the Caucasus and Central Asia as conspiratorially-minded, clandestine, fanatical, fundamentalist, and highly politicized societies whose purpose, they consistently stress by referring to anxieties expressed by Soviet authors, was to undermine Soviet authority, if not outright overthrow it. Sufis in Turkmenistan, they say, “represent the organized vanguard of unorganized fundamentalist dissent.” Initiation into a Sufi brotherhood means embarking “on a life of spiritual militancy.” People are attracted to it because it “has an aura of ‘forbidden fruit.’” Sufis can “be compared to conspiratorial underground political organizations.” They also represent “xenophobic conservative trend in Soviet Islam.”⁶⁰² Daily religious and spiritual practices of Sufis are disguised political activities. For instance, *dhikr*⁶⁰³ practiced by the “Hairy Ishans of the Ferghana Valley” are “in reality conspiratorial political meetings.”⁶⁰⁴ Apparently this was especially true of the two main Sufi brotherhoods: Qadiri and Naqshbandi groups. The former “could be compared to conspiratorial underground political organizations”; “more radical, more aggressive and more suited to

⁶⁰¹ Benningsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars*, pp. 133, 17, 177.

⁶⁰² Ibid, pp. 2, 59, 61, 73, 157.

⁶⁰³ *Dhikr* has multiple meanings in Islam but the most commonly used one refers to recollections of God’s name by reciting short prayers silently or aloud to attain spiritual blessings and cleanse one’s heart from vices.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 83.

clandestinity” as well as “conspiratorial work” than the latter.⁶⁰⁵ As for the Naqshbandi groups, their “activities are safeguarded by the order’s clandestine nature, of which silent zikr is a perfect expression.”⁶⁰⁶ Of course, the reasoning behind silent *dhikr* among Naqshbandi Sufis has for centuries and across many peoples been entirely theological; it has nothing to do with political expression—the fact known to Western specialists in Islamic studies.⁶⁰⁷ But that misinterpretation is in line with Benningsen and Wimbush’s general approach and has an interesting history behind it.

There are three reasons why I am highlighting the authors’ politicization of Sufi groups and their practices—to be sure, thanks in no small part due to the influence of Soviet authors—as underground activities intended to undermine Soviet power. Firstly, the preceding paragraph summarizing the views of Benningsen and Wimbush would cause nothing but bewilderment to any practitioner of Sufism because their interpretations were so off the mark as to be unrecognizable to Sufis.⁶⁰⁸ Secondly, while the authors’ research was hampered by the fact that they could not conduct ethnographic research in the Soviet Union, their decision to avoid dealing with Western specialized literature on Islam was entirely their own. This level of distortion could have been avoided by consulting the existing Western literature on Sufism (and Islam, in general).⁶⁰⁹ And thirdly, the roots of Benningsen and Wimbush’s interpretation once again go back to the nineteenth-century colonial era through two interconnected channels: (1)

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 73, 11.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁰⁷ See, for example, Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandi Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance,” *Studia Islamica*, Number 44 (1976).

⁶⁰⁸ I have several relatives and friends in Turkmenistan who are members of a Naqshbandi Sufi group. I have also interacted with Sufi Muslims a lot as well as read foundational texts on the nature of Sufism. So, I have a decent grasp of what it is and how it is practiced in Central Asia.

⁶⁰⁹ As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, there existed academically rigorous and impartial studies on Sufism. A good example is Reynold Nicholson, “A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism, with a List of Definitions of the Terms ‘Sufi’ and ‘Tasawwuf,’” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Apr., 1906).

Benningsen's education in France where he was exposed to French colonial literature on Sufi groups in North Africa and (2) the authors' reliance on Soviet literature which had borrowed from the Russian colonial era.

Through their colonial pacification campaigns in the Caucasus and North Africa, respectively, nineteenth-century Russian and French administrators produced a great deal of colonial literature on Muslim resistance against their rules. Colonial officials in both cases saw Sufi movements as particularly egregious because partly they saw them as closed and secret societies (they just did not understand them properly) and partly they saw resistance as inspired by Sufism. Literature they produced was not impartial, reflecting rather their anxieties and fears, on one hand, and their purpose of asserting control, on the other—the process one historian describes as “police report scholarship.”⁶¹⁰ As Alexander Knysh argues, Benningsen was exposed to this type of literature in France and “then simply transposed the Algerian model onto the Muslims of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and discovered ‘a great Sufi conspiracy’ that was bent on destroying the foundations of Soviet rule.”⁶¹¹ The fact that Benningsen found in the writings of Soviet authors what he had learned earlier in France probably confirmed to him that his interpretations were correct.

Soviet anxieties about Sufi danger however sprang from the same root. While some of the colonial anxieties about Sufi groups in imperial Russia were homegrown—particularly because of the fierce resistance demonstrated by Imam Shamil and his followers in the Caucasus—the Russians at the time had a great deal of respect for French philosophy and scholarship. Russian and French military officials exchanged ideas and experiences. Future participant of Russian conquest of Central Asia General Aleksey Kuropatkin completed military

⁶¹⁰ Knut Vikor, *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muḥammad B. ‘Alī Al-Sanūsī and His Brotherhood* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), p. 11.

⁶¹¹ Knysh, “Sufism as An Explanatory Paradigm,” p. 161.

studies in France in the 1870s and accompanied the French expedition to the Sahara.⁶¹² Russian assumptions about Sufis formed through their experience in the Caucasus and exchange of colonial knowledge with France and other European empires transferred to Central Asia. Events like the Andijan uprising of 1898 seemed to confirm those assumptions.⁶¹³ Anti-Islamic literature of the colonial era made its way to the Soviet period. Soviet anti-Islamic propagandists were mostly ignorant of Islam and did not command the languages to read original sources, including the Qur'an, so they borrowed from Western as well as pre-revolutionary literature, reformulating their politicized language and vocabulary in Marxist terminology.⁶¹⁴ Add to this the fact that there existed among Soviet propagandists in general a conspiratorial mentality of their own, assuming any non-confirming activity to be sinister attempt at undermining the Soviet order. The result were the Soviet views and assumptions about Sufis summarized and internalized by Benningsen and Wimbush.

To understand the origins of Central Asian Studies in the United States, we need to closely examine the early Cold War years when scholars and specialists began to seriously study Central Asia. Although the field developed within the confines of Cold War politics, all opinions and research conclusions were not uniform and scholars of Sovietology did a great service to the field of Central Asian Studies by challenging dominant Soviet narratives and exposing the ideological sides of Soviet scholarship. Sovietology scholars also laid the groundwork for further development of the field. But they also sometimes took their criticism of Soviet narratives to the

⁶¹² Владимир Бобровников, «Русский Кавказ и французский Алжир: случайное сходство или обмен опытом колониального строительства?» в Мартин Ауст, и др. (ред.), *Imperium inter pares: роль трансферов в истории Российской империи, 1700-1917* (Москва: новое литературное обозрение, 2010), ст. 205.

⁶¹³ Alexander Morrison, "Sufism, Pan-Islamism and Information Panic: Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin and the Aftermath of the Andijan Uprising," *Past and Present*, Number 214 (Feb. 2012).

⁶¹⁴ Vladimir Bobrovnikov, "The Contribution of Oriental Scholarship to the Soviet Anti-Islamic Discourse: From the Militant Godless to the Knowledge Society," in Michael Kemper and Stephan Cornemann (eds.), *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

extreme, surrendering to the pressure of Cold War politics, and the foundations of the field they built were rife with pitfalls in studying Central Asia, as they relied mainly on Soviet publications and approached their subject of study through the orientalist lens reminiscent of the classical imperial eras. There were however, as we will examine further, exceptions to this development. Not all American scholars contributing to the development of Central Asian Studies were heavily invested in Cold War struggle.

CHAPTER 4: ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE COLD WAR AND SOVIETOLOGY: THE RISE OF CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY – BLOOMINGTON

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the development of Central Asian Studies within the framework of Cold War politics. That chapter evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of scholarship produced in that environment, while assessing the effects politics exerted on this scholarly field as well as its legacy. In this chapter, I explore a scholarly development that grew out of war exigencies but nevertheless took a relatively independent path in producing knowledge and developing research methodologies. That case is the development of Central Asian Studies at Indiana University – Bloomington (IUB), which currently boasts one of the best research institutes on Central Asian studies in the world and contains one of the largest collections of materials related to the field outside Uzbekistan. The roots of the program go back to World War II and took its current shape during the Cold War. How and why it developed differently from other programs across the country during the Cold War era is the subject of this chapter.

Scholarship produced at IUB was obviously not immune to the effects of the Cold War but there were a few factors that distinguished the research conducted by scholars at IUB from the works of mainstream Sovietologists. IUB was a relatively small school as compared to places like Columbia and Harvard which received far greater support from government- and corporate institutions and collaborated with them on matters related to Cold War politics. As such, scholars

at IUB could conduct research in a much less politicized environment. They struggled more with getting funds and resources, but they compensated for it with hard work and dedication, which brings us to the second factors that made IUB a special place. From its initial development as a program in Uralic and Altaic Studies, IUB attracted European scholars who had escaped persecution under Nazi and Communist regimes. These scholars had gained their specializations under hard conditions and as a result they were as demanding of themselves as they were of students while working at IUB. The most important difference however was the fact that, while Central Asian Studies was part of Sovietology or Russian Studies elsewhere, at IUB it grew out of Uralic and Altaic Studies. In other words, from the very beginning the focus at IUB was to study Central Asia as a geographic and cultural entity. The purpose of studying Central Asia at IUB was not Kremlin-centric. It was rather the understanding of its languages, cultures, and history as part of a larger area stretching from the Baltic and Hungary in the West to Mongolia and Korea in the East. By focusing on areas as geographic and cultural entities, these scholars largely left politics out of scholarly inquiry.⁶¹⁵

This chapter consists of three parts. I begin by locating the origins of the program as part of the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTM) during World War II and show how it developed with support from government- and corporate institutions. Although the duration of the ASTM was short-lived, it laid the foundation for area studies comprising, but not limited to, Central Asian studies at IUB. School administrators and scholars learned from their experience and continued to work with government institutions during the Cold War to get material support, on the one hand, and maintain their status as an independent research institute, on the other.

⁶¹⁵ Denis Sinor classified seven cultural areas of Uralic and Altaic Studies: Scandinavian, Central European, East European, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Far Eastern, and Central Eurasian. Central Asian languages fell within the categories of Middle Eastern and Central Eurasian.—Denis Sinor, “Uralic and Altaic: the Neglected Area,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 356, No. 1 (1964).

Administrators and faculty members achieved this by emphasizing the importance of Uralic and Altaic Studies for current political concerns in applications for financial support and at times trained members of the Army as well as civilian government personnel in their language training programs. But my examination of internal correspondence of faculty members and especially research conducted by scholars at IUB demonstrates that the Sovietological impetus that animated studies of Central Asia elsewhere was almost non-existent in the works of faculty at IUB. None of the faculty members within the Uralic and Altaic Studies focused on understanding Soviet policies. Instead, IUB faculty focused on linguistics, culture studies, comparative language studies, and history based on primary sources.

The second part will discuss the nature of IUB Uralic and Altaic Studies, its contents, and the faculty members. The program became very ambitious soon after its formal inception as a specialized program. Uralic and Altaic Studies required specializations in dozens of languages and areas of study. Early faculty members acted as polymaths, researching different areas and preparing dictionaries and study materials on several languages. Both the administrative staff and faculty members consciously sought specialists from abroad, mainly Europe, and tried to diversify their curriculum by adopting interdisciplinary approaches and covering studies on language, geography, culture, religion, arts, folklore, and history. For example, a basic course on Uzbek was offered as early as during World War II and study materials on other Central Asian languages were developed by specialists in other languages and areas of study. The existing faculty did not have specialization or native proficiency in these languages. What they did was use their expertise in linguistics to self-teach on basics of Uzbek, Azeri, and other Turkic languages and both prepare study guides and offer courses in these languages.

And finally, this chapter will conclude by looking at how these foundational methodologies continued in the later Cold War era and beyond. Just as with the Sovietological study of Central Asia discussed in previous chapters, the foundations help us explain the current state of Central Asian Studies at IUB. The Uralic and Altaic Studies program eventually developed into the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies and later into the Department of Central Eurasian Studies. Program administrators and faculty members continued to attract specialists from abroad, sought collaboration with foreign scholars (including those in the Soviet Union), and maintained their focus on studying languages, cultures, arts, religion, and history, rather than politics. Graduates of IUB and scholars trained in the Sovietological approach continue to be at odds on how to study Central Asia, demonstrating not only the ongoing clash of methodologies but also the persistence of what was founded during the early Cold War years.

The Army Specialized Training Program and IUB

On December 7, 1942, the U.S. Army announced the largest Army training program established during World War II. The program was called The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), a collaboration between the Army and over 200 U.S. colleges and universities designed to prepare soldiers for the task of helping to win the war. In addition to training young men for psychology and medical sciences, the program aimed at foreign language and area studies. The Secretary of War Henry Stimson explained the sole purpose of the program as follows: “To win this war and win it as quickly as possible we must have large numbers of young men in the Army. We must now use every opportunity to train our soldiers for the immediate task ahead.”⁶¹⁶ Many educators expressed concern for the narrow focus of the Army despite the urgency of war needs, but even Secretary Stimson assured them that the Army understood the

⁶¹⁶ Sidney Shalett, “New Plan Suspends Liberal Education,” *New York Times*, 18 December 1942, p. 2.

importance of liberal education for the post-war period. He expressed “hope and believe that many of the soldiers of today will return to become tomorrow the students and leaders in the field of liberal education.”⁶¹⁷ But in the meantime....College administrators clearly understood the importance of that long-term vision.

The fact that a narrow language training program at American colleges and universities grew into full-fledged programs and departments is an extraordinary development. According to the *Journal of Educational Sociology*, the ASTP was designed “to provide a continuous and accelerated flow of technicians and specialists needed by the Army—men who can be developed more speedily and more efficiently in the colleges than in the camps or other military establishments.”⁶¹⁸ Specialists in foreign language and area studies were “trained for duty as liaison officers in the lower echelons between our troops in foreign territories and the native population.”⁶¹⁹ The language training also focused on “a command of the colloquial *spoken* form of the language,” as one scholar surveying European language courses explained.⁶²⁰ This aim assumed that the emphasis on the need to learn the spoken language obviated the need for “most published textbooks, especially grammars,” forcing the trainers to collect their own teaching materials.⁶²¹ That necessity might have also helped them become more efficient teachers for the post-war civilian program extensions.

As the said observer of ASTP courses on European languages noted, “there are some who see in this Army language program the beginning of a foreign language boom” which could “help to overcome the cultural and linguistic isolationism that was becoming more and more

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ “The Army Specialized Training Program: A Brief Survey of the Essential Facts,” *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 16, No. 9 (May, 1943), p. 543.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid, p. 544.

⁶²⁰ Herbert Schueler, “Foreign Teaching Under the Army Specialized Training Program,” *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Nov., 1944), p. 183; emphasis original.

⁶²¹ Ibid, p. 187.

characteristic of the American secondary school and college”⁶²² Indeed, another survey conducted on behalf of The Modern Language Association noted that school administrators, course developers, and instructors who participated in the ASTP program “reaffirmed their belief that the understanding and appreciation of foreign cultures is a primary aim of a language study in a liberal education.” Among them, there was also a “wide agreement” that “certain objectives of ASTP language training, admittedly designed to fill practical military needs,” could be dropped, while “certain principles and elements of this curriculum could fruitfully be introduced into post-war language teaching for civilians at the college level.”⁶²³ Language studies was not the only area which the participating educators saw with a future prospect of extending for civilian purposes. For example, the Washington University in St Louis was able to develop science programs of the ASTP training into a reputable engineering department.⁶²⁴ Our focus however is Indiana University’s development of its Uralic and Altaic areas studies program.

The emergence of language courses on Uralic and Altaic studies at IUB was directly tied to the needs of the war. There was a need to rapidly prepare specialists in Uralic languages such as Hungarian, Finnish, and the languages spoken in Baltic states; and the Altaic languages, including Turkish, Turkic dialects spoken in the Soviet Union, Mongolian, and Korean. All these languages were spoken by peoples directly involved in the war. The ASTP began to unravel before the war was over in what many educators described as a “shortsighted” decision.⁶²⁵ But administrators and the faculty at IUB decided to continue to develop the program on Uralic and Altaic Studies while the demand for the program still existed among government- as well as non-

⁶²² Ibid, p. 188.

⁶²³ Frederick B. Agard et al., "A Survey of Language Classes in the Army Specialized Training Program" *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Feb., 1945), p. 155.

⁶²⁴ Jennifer Silverman, "*The Exigencies of War*": *The Army Specialized Training Program and Washington University, 1942-1945*, PhD Thesis (The University of California – Riverside, 2015).

⁶²⁵ Benjamin Fine, "Army Training Cut Cramps Colleges," *New York Times*, 20 February 1944, p. 22.

-profit institutions. Thus, IUB within a decade received grants from places like The American-Scandinavian Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, The American Philosophical Society, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Department of the Army, and the Air Force. Some of the programs were developed with the latter in mind, allowing “members of the Armed Forces and of the United States Foreign Service” participate in “studying particularly Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian, Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Uzbek.”⁶²⁶ Indiana’s president, Herman G. Wells, described by the founder of the Uralic and Altaic Studies program Thomas Sebeok “visionary and international-minded President,” consciously sought collaboration with the military because he had seen the value of such cooperation. The university benefited financially from it and the programs developed under such cooperation could be preserved and developed further.⁶²⁷ The collaboration with these government institutions helped IUB formally establish a program on Uralic and Altaic Studies in 1956. International events such as the Communist revolution in China, the Korean War, the Cold War confrontation in Europe, and other relevant events intensified the need for the U.S. government to increase specialists in many area studies programs. The establishment of the program in Uralic and Altaic Studies at Indiana was part of building other similar programs such as Slavic Studies, Asian, Studies, Latin American Studies, and Near Eastern Languages and Literature.⁶²⁸

In requesting support and grants from government- and corporate foundations, the faculty at IUB were very cognizant of the pressing needs of the Cold War struggle. A report prepared for the Ford Foundation on the Uralic and Altaic studies program by the chair of the Uralic and

⁶²⁶ Report on Conference on Uralic and Altaic Studies Conference at Columbia University, 18-19 May 1956, in *Denis Sinor Papers*, at Indiana University - Bloomington. When I conducted research at the archives in Bloomington in 2014-2015, the materials in this collection unfortunately were not sorted or ordered in any form. There were only piles of paper jammed into boxes which had no reference numbers.

⁶²⁷ Thomas Sebeok, “My ‘Short Happy Life’ in Finno-Ugric Studies,” *Hungarian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2 (1997), p. 29.

⁶²⁸ Blake Puckett, “Central Eurasian Studies at IU (the pre-Department Years),” *Indiana University Linguistics Club Working Paper*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2010), p. 4.

Altaic Studies program at Columbia University, in collaboration with the faculty at Indiana since both Columbia and Indiana had a program in this new field, highlighted, “besides their general interest for the study of language, culture, and history,” four reasons that made studying these languages significant. The second, third, and fourth reasons, respectively were the language group’s proximity to “ancient world” of Byzantium, Iran, the Arab Caliphate, and the Chinese Far East; its size and cultural variation; and the presence of immigrant groups who spoke Uralic and Altaic languages as their native tongues. The first and most important reason listed was directly tied to the Cold War struggle. “These groups live in and around the Soviet orbit, representing 130 million people,” the report said. “The conflicts of Soviet policy with Finland, Hungary, and Korea, and the tensions in Soviet Central Asia, and in Sinkiang and with Turkey indicate the relevancy of the language factor in the shaping of policies for this area.” In a fashion known to scholars of Sovietology, the report also mentioned “the high birthrate of the Turks in Central Asia” that could cause problems for the Soviet government.⁶²⁹ Despite the focus on the study of languages and cultures irrespective of politics and ideology, administrators and the faculty at IUB were aware what specifically the government- and corporate foundations were interested in funding.

The passing of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 by the Eisenhower Administration helped the development of the Uralic and Altaic Program at IUB even further. Partly in response to the Soviet launch of Sputnik and partly to address the huge number of children of the baby boomers entering schools, and what received bipartisan support in Congress, the NDEA supported foreign language and area studies under Title VI.⁶³⁰ That said, support IUB received for its language programs was limited. While government support for language and area

⁶²⁹ John Lotz, *Report on Uralic and Altaic Studies*, 30 September 1958, p. 4.

⁶³⁰ Wayne Urban, *More than Science and Sputnik: The National Defense Education Act of 1958* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), p. 75-76.

studies covered all universities and colleges, Indiana University was not among the big leagues. One specific grant request from 1959 was politely rejected by the Department of Education. The reasoning given was telling, as it mentioned that the Department had allocated materials “in excess of \$600,000” for the development of Uralic and Altaic through the American Council of Learned Societies, but those were granted to “a three-year program organized by Dr. John Lotz of Columbia University.” The rejection letter could not tell “whether or not any additional centers in Uralic languages will be supported in the future.”⁶³¹ Since those funds were used to prepare textbooks and study materials, IUB also benefited from it, but at the same time it was given lesser significance, at least initially. Federal aid helped the establishment of Uralic and Altaic Study centers in Columbia and Indiana in 1959 and 1963, respectively. Remarkably, however, in the academic year 1963-64, Columbia had only 15 degree candidates in Uralic studies whereas Indiana had 55 in Uralo-Altaic studies.⁶³² The same year the Uralic and Altaic Studies program at Columbia ceased to exist, while the center at Indiana became recognized as a National Defense Education Center.

Despite the close collaboration with many government institutions and foundations, the faculty at IUB did not focus on either politics or understanding Soviet policies specifically despite running programs and courses directly related to the Soviet Union. Language studies remained the focus and there was general understanding that language studies required proper understanding of respective cultures and histories associated with whichever language was under study. In an inter-departmental communication from 1956, the chair of the Uralic and Altaic studies proposed the inclusion of a course on Arabic as part of the Asian Studies Program. The chairman suggested that the Arabic class better be taught by a native speaker and suggested a

⁶³¹ Kenneth Mildemberger to Dean Ashton, 8 September 1959, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶³² Orlan Lee, “The Creation of Area Studies Centres: A Case Study (U.S. Federal Aid to Centres for Uralic-Altaic Studies),” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1968), p. 89.

few names from Lebanon and Egypt. The chairman also emphasized: “Students studying Arabic may be able to supplement their work with courses in medieval and modern Islamic history.”⁶³³

What mattered to them was scholarship for its own sake rather than how that scholarship was important for foreign policy. As another former chair of the program explained, “our interest is focused on a specific area about which we wish to find out as much as possible,” and theirs was a wish to “serve the community, the country, the world by supporting teaching and research focused on specific foreign areas.”⁶³⁴ While the administration of the Indiana University as well as governmental and non-for-profit organizations that funded the Uralic and Altaic Studies program helped it become the leading center of study in this area, the rigorous scholarly tradition adopted for the program owed its existence to the faculty which was overwhelmingly represented by Eastern European immigrants who had gained their knowledge and specialization under hard conditions and came to the United States to flee authoritarian regimes and unexpected life changes at home.

Immigrants and Scholarship in Indiana

It is not an exaggeration to state that Europeans educated in classical linguistics and Oriental studies built the Central Eurasian Studies Program at IUB. And they managed to build a leading research institution in area studies programs covering this geographic area in not so ideal conditions. When he first arrived in Bloomington in 1961, Denis Sinor found that “the library was abominable” and students in his charitable evaluation “did not compare well with those of Cambridge.”⁶³⁵ His assessment was partly in comparison to one of the leading universities in the

⁶³³ Thomas Sebeok to Members of the Committee on Program in Uralic and Asian Studies, 21 August 1956, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶³⁴ Denis Sinor, interview with the *Daily Heard Telephone*, 1965, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶³⁵ “A Word From the Director,” *Inner Asian & Uralic National Research Center Newsletter*, Winter 2003, p. 8.

world, but financial struggles and the lack of adequate resources were real. The same year Indiana was trying to recruit John Krueger who was a rare specialist in Turkic languages but struggled to offer a comparable salary and even adequate financial assistance to cover Krueger's moving to Bloomington.⁶³⁶ Two years after his arrival and by then as a chair, Sinor wrote in annual report the following: "My office is so miserable, dirty and dark that I cannot possibly use it for receiving visitors from other Universities or from abroad. For over a year I had to work with a naked bulb banging from the ceiling. Sure, a ceiling light in my office would not overtax the financial possibilities of the University."⁶³⁷ That was the condition under which these scholars worked and built the Uralic and Altaic studies center which went on to become the leading center in this field.

From its inception within the Army Specialized Training Program, immigrants played a crucial role in developing the program. The ASTP was initially managed by Charles F. Voegelin, an anthropologist and linguist who specialized in indigenous languages of North America and also conducted an experimental course on Turkish during the war, but it was quickly taken over by Thomas Sebeok, a native of Budapest who left Hungary to study in Cambridge in 1936 but a year later immigrated to the United States to study at the University of Chicago. Initially intended to become "a biologist, viz., a geneticist," Sebeok was "inexorably impelled" by "the outbreak of World War II in 1939" to become a linguist.⁶³⁸ From there he went to do his PhD at Princeton and became a faculty member at IUB in 1943. Sebeok was instrumental in securing grants from and collaboration with the Air Force, the Ford Foundation, and the Department of Education. The establishment of the Uralic and Altaic Studies program, the Uralic and Altaic Studies Area Center, and the *Uralic and Altaic Series* publication owe their existence to Sebeok.

⁶³⁶ Dean Ashton to John Krueger, 21 June 1961, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶³⁷ Denis Sinor, Faculty Annual Report for 1963-1964, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶³⁸ Sebeok, "My 'Short Happy Life' in Finno-Ugric Studies," p. 28.

More importantly, as Blake Puckett emphasizes, “Sebeok’s success in building a program Uralic and Altaic studies included an active recruitment campaign for like-minded colleagues.”⁶³⁹ He particularly attracted linguists and scholars of Oriental studies from Eastern Europe.

Sebeok’s early efforts in this regard resulted in bringing two scholars born in Estonia: Felix Oinas and Alo Raun. Raun received both his MA and PhD from the Tartu University in Estonia. Oinas received his MA from the same university. Both were disrupted by the war and left Estonia in 1944 for Germany and from there found their ways to the United States in 1950. Oinas completed his PhD at Indiana in linguistics and joined the faculty upon completion. They both specialized in the Uralic language family but helped the Altaic language and cultures research and study by essentially self-teaching themselves. Raun developed experimental courses in Kyrgyz and Uzbek using his expertise in linguistics. Another recruitment of Sebeok’s was Fred Householder who also self-taught himself in Turkish and Azerbaijani. Householder went on to publish *Spoken Azerbaijani* in 1960 and *A Basic Course in Azerbaijani* in 1965, supervising Gerd Fraenkel’s dissertation on Azerbaijani grammar in-between.⁶⁴⁰

As the areas covered within the Uralic and Altaic studies at IUB continued to grow, the school continued attracting specialists in Turkic languages. The faculty and administration were able to secure John Krueger for a long-term position although Krueger correspondingly received an attractive offer from the University of California – Berkeley.⁶⁴¹ Another scholar specializing in Turkic studies they soon added was Ilse Laude-Cirtautas who had received her PhD from the University of Hamburg and studied under the supervision of famous German Turkologist Annemarie von Gabain as well as distinguished scholar of Slavic and Oriental studies Bertold Spuler. It should be noted that Indiana was not the only place trying to recruit these European

⁶³⁹ Puckett, “Central Eurasian Studies at IU,” p. 10.

⁶⁴⁰ Puckett, “Central Eurasian Studies at IU,” p. 12.

⁶⁴¹ Edward Schafar to John Krueger, 25 April 1962, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

scholars. John Lotz, the chairman of Uralic and Altaic studies in Columbia, was also a graduate from the Budapest University.⁶⁴² Nicholas Poppe, Professor in the Department of Far Eastern and Russian Institute in Washington University and an author of a number of works on Altaic studies, including the Uzbek language, was a Russian immigrant and a student of famous Russian Orientalist Alexander Samoylovich.⁶⁴³ Bloomington however had the biggest concentration of these immigrant scholars whose lives and careers in Europe had been disrupted by war and conflict and who had nevertheless managed to build impressive research and career portfolios due to their dedication to scholarship.

Professor Sebeok shifted his focus from linguistics to semiotics, publishing important works on ape-human speech theories and helping the Nuclear Regulatory Commission develop “keep away” signs to warn people in distant future about the dangers of nuclear waste.⁶⁴⁴ But before moving there, he managed to recruit perhaps the most important figure in the history of Uralic and Altaic studies in Bloomington, if not in the field in general: Denis Sinor. Sinor was another Hungarian-born scholar who received his early education from private tutors as well as the Oriental Department of the University of Budapest—the “ruthless Hungarian education,” as he recalled it in his old years.⁶⁴⁵ In Budapest he took courses in modern Turkish, Turkic languages of Central Asia, and the Mongol language before moving to Paris to study old Turkic manuscripts under the supervision of notable French scholar of Central Asian Studies Paul Pelliot. His studies were disrupted by the German occupation of France and he briefly served in the French resistance. Even under those conditions, Sinor continued his scholarly works and it

⁶⁴² “Dr. John Lotz, 60, Linguist, is Dead,” *New York Times*, 28 August 1973, p. 38.

⁶⁴³ His manual on Uzbek was published as part of the *Uralic and Altaic Series* in Bloomington.—Nicholas Poppe, *Uzbek Newspaper Reader (With Glossary). Uralic and Altaic Series, Volume 10* (Indiana University – Bloomington, 1962).

⁶⁴⁴ Anahad O’Conor, “Thomas Sebeok, 81, Debunker of Ape-Human Speech Theory,” *New York Times*, 2 January 2002, p. B10.

⁶⁴⁵ “Denis Sinor: Scholar with a Dash of Derring-Do!” *Bloom* (June-July 2009), p. 94.

was there when he coined the term “Central Eurasia.” After the war, Cambridge University offered him a teaching position in its Oriental Studies department which Sinor accepted. Cambridge quickly awarded him a Master’s degree and made him a tenured Professor.

The fact that Professor Sinor ended up moving to Bloomington and staying there is a testament to the quality of research and scholarship of Indiana’s Uralic and Altaic studies program. At the recommendation of Thomas Sebeok, Indiana offered Sinor a one-year teaching position as a Visiting Professor in 1960.⁶⁴⁶ But bringing him over to the United States was not easy because of small quota granted to Romanian citizens like Sinor. IUB’s administration reached out to members of Congress imploring them to assist in bringing Sinor to Bloomington. A letter from Graduate Dean to Senator Homer Capehart from 1961 described Sinor “almost unique in his knowledge of Mongolian and Turkish languages and cultures” and bringing him to Indiana was crucial.⁶⁴⁷ The initial courses assigned to Sinor had to be postponed because even with assistance from members of Congress, it took nearly two years to bring Sinor to Indiana. Recruiting Sinor again was purely for the quality of his scholarship and dedication to research. Sinor was no communist but he was also wary of moving to the United States because of the cold war politics, and the recent wave of McCarthyism in particular. He initially “intended to stay one semester” but it did not take too long before he “fell in love with the place.”⁶⁴⁸

Six months after staying in Bloomington, Sinor decided to stay and quit his job in Cambridge. Using his international reputation and connections, Sinor expanded the Uralic and Altaic studies program even further by incorporating research and teaching in neglected areas. A graduate school bulletin from 1962-63 indicates Sinor offering courses in Comparative Turkic, Comparative Altaic Phonology, Altaic Linguistics, The Mongols in Medieval Europe, Turkic

⁶⁴⁶ Felix Oinas to Denis Sinor, 17 June 1960, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶⁴⁷ Dean Ashton to Senator Capehart, 25 October 1961, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶⁴⁸ “Denis Sinor: Scholar with a Dash of Derring-Do,” p. 93.

History and Civilization Before the Mongol Conquest, and Medieval Hungarian History and Civilization.⁶⁴⁹ According to Sinor, the National Defense Education Act was interested in supporting the teaching of language only, but immediately upon arriving at Indiana, he “began teaching the history and civilization of the peoples involved, and there was marvelous support at IU for that.”⁶⁵⁰ What Sinor and others in the Uralic and Altaic studies managed with federal support had a virtuous circle effect. The more support they received, the further the center’s reputation improved, making further requests for assistance more likely to be granted. Within five years from his appointment, Professor Sinor was able to convince the Department of Education to fund the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center as well as the Asian Studies Research Institute (in honor of his 90th birthday in 2006, it was renamed Denis Sinor Institute for Inner Asian Studies).⁶⁵¹

Sebeok, Raun, Oinas, Sinor, and others, in addition to teaching full-time through their stay at IUB, have voluminous lists of scholarly publications. They expected that dedication to scholarship and excellence from their students as well. When the Uralic and Altaic studies program turned into a Department, the first brochure outlining the MA and PhD degree programs explained what was expected of prospective students:

There can be no doubt that Uralic and Altaic Studies present a greater than average challenge to students. Thus, those desiring to enter the Department should show greater than average ability, stamina and purposefulness. The Department does not wish to attract numbers but welcomes talented students who desire to engage in a slightly unconventional program. To cater to the needs of students of exceptional caliber, the faculty must be exceptional. Indeed it is...⁶⁵²

In simple terms, the faculty was not joking around. They believed in excellence of scholarship and teaching, they practiced it, and they expected the same from students. In his reflection on

⁶⁴⁹ Indiana University Bulletin, Graduate School Calendar for 1962-63, in *Denis Sinor Papers*.

⁶⁵⁰ “Denis Sinor: Scholar with a Dash of Derring-Do,” p. 96.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Quoted in “A Word From the Director,” p. 8.

those years, Sinor states that, while support from both the Government and the University administration were enormous, “the basis of it all was uncompromising high standard in teaching and active publishing. Nor was ‘outreach’ neglected, there was no year without us organizing several conferences and symposia either on campus or elsewhere in Indiana.”⁶⁵³ Both the archival evidence and the growth of the program as a highly reputable research center confirm the validity of his assessment.

The Growth of Central Asian Studies and Its Future

Just like the Sovietological scholarship on Central Asia, the legacy of scholarship on Central Asia produced by scholars at IUB owes its current formation to the foundations during the early Cold War years. In both cases, the visions, the methods, and the approaches persisted for the rest of the Cold War era and beyond. During the ‘60s and ‘70s, the faculty at IUB continued the tradition of producing excellent scholarship without delving into politics. Sinor built strictly scholarly communication with specialists in the Soviet Union.⁶⁵⁴ In what was perhaps the only example of its kind, Professor Sinor in 1979 managed to secure funding from Hungary, then still within the Communist orbit, for Hungarian studies at IUB.⁶⁵⁵ Towards the later Cold War era, the Uralic and Altaic studies program began to give greater emphasis to the study of Central Asia as part of greater Inner Asia, on the one hand, and of Islamic civilization on the other. In implementing this new direction, the major role was played by IUB’s third main faculty acquisition, after Thomas Sebeok and Denis Sinor, to the Uralic and Altaic studies

⁶⁵³ Ibid, p. 9.

⁶⁵⁴ *The Denis Sinor Papers* contains an exchange with Professor Alexandr Scherbak and Professor A.P. Okladnikov, both in then Leningrad, and the exchange of letters was only about scholarship on Turkic and Altaic studies.

⁶⁵⁵ “Denis Sinor: Scholar with a Dash of Derring-Do,” p. 96.

program. It was Professor Yuri Bregel, a Soviet Jewish immigrant who came to Bloomington by way of Israel.

Bregel's academic life was quite similar to that of other faculty members engaged in Central Eurasian studies in Indiana, except the hardships he endured were much more severe. As his student, colleague, and friend Devin DeWeese explains, "his life has been marked by an extraordinary succession of interruptions, shifts, and new directions, occasioned by his direct confrontation of the grimmest forces the 20th century had to offer. . . ."⁶⁵⁶ Bregel was the son of a professor of political economy who had not joined the Communist Party. When his life in Moscow was interrupted by World War II, Bregel's family moved to Ferghana in Central Asia where he developed his fascination for Islamic history of Central Asia. From there he was mobilized for the war, serving the Red Army against Nazi forces until 1944 when he got wounded. After the war, he enrolled in the history department of the Moscow University and specialized in the history of Central Asia, learning from the best of the Soviet academics in the field and continuing the scholarly tradition of Vasilii Bartold's. Bregel mastered Persian and Chagatai Turkic, the two languages crucial for exploring original manuscripts in Central Asian History.

That early academic career development was interrupted as well, this time by an informer who had reported to the secret police on what was simply a friendly joke between Bregel and his friend about the repressive state of Stalin's regime. He was, without trial, sentenced to 10 years of hard labor in the Northern Urals. He was released from there in five years thanks to Stalin's death and the partial de-Stalinization that followed under Khrushchev. Bregel returned to his studies and earned a PhD from the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1961. But the bureaucratic

⁶⁵⁶ Devin DeWeese, "Introduction" in Devin DeWeese (ed.), *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel* (Bloomington, IN: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2001), p. 1.

nature of Soviet politicized scholarship, anti-Semitism, and political events such as the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 compelled him to leave the Soviet Union. His decision to emigrate came about at the right time, as the Soviet delegation in the Internal Congress of Orientalists in 1973 was confronted by Western Orientalists for the Soviet government's refusal to grant exist visas to Soviet scholars, and for fear of not being able to host future meetings of the Congress, the Soviets relented. For a few years, Bregel taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1981 he was brought to Indiana by Denis Sinor.⁶⁵⁷ Upon arriving in Indiana, he helped establish a proper program on Central Asian Studies which had previously been studied only as part of other programs.

During his academic career in Bloomington, Bregel enlarged the center's focus on the history of Central Asia as part of Inner Asia and the Muslim world. He emphasized to his students the importance of mastering the Persian and Chagatai languages, and even more importantly the necessity of preserving disinterested scholarship free from bureaucratic and political influences. In fact, he was as determined in this approach to studying history during his years in the Soviet Union as he was later. His first major publication on Khwarazmian Turkmens in the 19th century, published in 1961 in Moscow, is a clear example of this. There is no reference to Lenin or the Communist Party in the preface, as it was the standard practice in Soviet publications, and his discussion of traditional culture as well as Islam in Central Asia in the 19th century is entirely based on critical analysis of primary sources, without any pre-judgmental characterization of Islam and traditional practices.⁶⁵⁸ He was also consistent in criticizing other scholars for failing to uphold the same scholarly tradition. In his review of a bibliographic monograph by a typical Soviet historiographer Boris Vladimirovich Lunin, Bregel

⁶⁵⁷ This brief summary of his life is taken from Ibid, pp. 1-20.

⁶⁵⁸ Ю.Э. Брегель, *Хорезмские Туркмены в XIX веке* (Москва: издательство восточной литературы, 1961).

displayed an extraordinary level of courage and integrity in challenging prevailing Soviet assumptions. He dismissed Lunin's suggestion that pre-Revolutionary Russian Orientalists due to their "progressive tendencies" were superior to their Western colleagues as a thesis "proven nowhere and by no one" and as an example of "scientific-patriotic exercises." He also criticized Lunin for quoting Friedrich Engels, as was customary of Soviet scholars to refer to the founders of the Communism, in the discussion of the nineteenth-century Central Asian history. Referring to Engels was totally misplaced as he was neither an authority on the subject nor relevant in the discussion, Bregel noted.⁶⁵⁹

Professor Bregel continued this tradition in the United States, in Bloomington in particular. Upon coming to the United States, he realized that in some regards things were not that much different in the land of the USSR's cold war nemesis. In the United States, he confronted the vast body of scholarship on Central Asian history written under the strong influence of the Cold War. He was among the first to subject this approach to powerful criticism alongside his criticism of post-Soviet Central Asian scholarship where Soviet methodologies are still predominant, serving at this moment their respective state ideologies with the same gusto they had previously served the Soviet ideology.⁶⁶⁰ His students, namely Devin DeWeese, have continued his scholarly tradition of working with primary sources, translating and annotating manuscripts, and collecting original sources in microfilms, on the one hand; and challenging politicized legacy of Sovietological scholarship, on the other.⁶⁶¹ The Soviet Union might have

⁶⁵⁹ Юрий Брегель, «Рецензия на книгу Б.В. Лунина *Средняя Азия в дореволюционном и советском востоковедении* (Ташкент: издательство «Наука» Узбекской ССР, 1965)», *Письменные памятники востока* 1968, ст. 261-263, 279.

⁶⁶⁰ Yuri Bregel, *Notes on the Study of Central Asia (Papers on Inner Asia)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

⁶⁶¹ Devin DeWeese, "Islam and Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaacov Ro'i's *Islam in the Soviet Union*," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), pp. 298-300.

ceased to exist, but the ideological language and terminology of the cold war era have deeper roots and continue to affect both scholarship and popular depictions of Central Asia.

Even in recent years, DeWeese has been challenging the lingering legacy of Sovietological methods and approaches.⁶⁶² With a good reason, it should be added. The kind of rigorous scholarship developed in Indiana and grew out of the Uralic and Altaic studies program to what it is today—and thanks to the enormous work done by immigrant scholars—has had a great impact upon the scholarly community. Everyone in the academia with some expertise in Central Asian Studies takes the Bloomington school seriously. That said, even within the scholarly community, especially among those who serve as sort of a “bridge” from academia to policy circles, Central Asia, its history, and Islam are viewed with the same simplistic narratives with the purpose of defining security interests of the United States rather than understanding the region. Media and popular depictions also largely build upon the same cliché-ridden approaches reminiscent of the cold war era.⁶⁶³ The visions of Central Asia continue to be contested between those who want to understand it in a scholarly tradition and others who publish, without proper specialization in Islamic studies or Central Asian history, for popular consumption, media outlets, and think tanks interested in foreign policy concerns.

⁶⁶² Jeff Eden, Paolo Sartori, and Devin DeWeese, “Moving Beyond Modernism: Rethinking Cultural Change in Muslim Eurasia (19th-20th Centuries),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 59 (2016); Devin DeWeese, “It Was a Dark And Stagnant Night (‘til the Jadids Brought the Light): Cliches, Biases, and False Dichotomies in the Intellectual History of Central Asia,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 59 (2016).

⁶⁶³ For some of the examples, see Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005); Martha Brill Olcott, *In the Whirlwind of Jihad* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012); and Frederick Starr, *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia’s Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). The latter can boast the endorsements of such luminaries as Francis Fukuyama and Henry Kissinger.

EPILOGUE

This dissertation is about the history of Central Asian Studies in the United States. To explain the development of this field, I explored the first American interest in Central Asia, the first encounters between Americans and Central Asians, the reasons for American interest in writing about Central Asia, the political and intellectual motivations behind them, and how the field eventually turned into an academic discipline. My research has shown that American

understandings of—and writings about Central Asia—have until recently been almost always tied to American relations with Russia. From the very beginning, Russia's ties to Central Asia gave the latter a meaning, most often as a colony and as a part of the Soviet empire. Russia as a window to Central Asia or as an interpreter of Central Asian culture and identity therefore fundamentally shaped American understandings of Central Asia. This does not mean there were no other factors that influenced the formation of Central Asian studies. Changing intellectual currents, European affairs, the Cold War struggle, and classical Orientalism in defining the Orient and Islam contributed to the development of the field as well. In addition, as I have argued in Chapter 4, a tradition of research and study of Central Asia largely independent of politics and ideological interests also emerged, especially in the work of scholars based at Indiana University-Bloomington.

The four chapters in this dissertation demonstrate how both the background to the formation of Central Asian studies and the academic development of the discipline were complex and multi-faceted. These chapters highlight the interplay between politics, ideology, and scholarship. And while just learning about the history itself is a worthy endeavor, it is pertinent to ask what now? How does this historical background explain present affairs and the state of Central Asian Studies? Has anything changed in terms of how Americans study and view Central Asia? The short answer is that some things changed, and some remained the same. The biggest difference today is the existence of a robust and rigorous scholarship on Central Asian studies, especially since many scholars within this field have moved away from the politicized nature of scholarship that characterized the Cold War era and studying Central Asia without focusing on its relations to Russia and by utilizing sources written in Central Asian languages.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁴ Some examples of these works are: Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941* (Westport, CO: Praeger, 2001); Marianne Kamp, *New Woman of Uzbekistan* –

In the non-scholarly world of popular perceptions, media analyses, and political commentary, however, understanding things have not changed much. Ideology and politics continue to play a huge factor in defining Central Asian Muslims, and Muslims in general, while analytical commentaries continue to use Sovietological paradigms.

It is worth giving a specific example here. A report on political and economic conditions in Turkmenistan, with a catchy title, was recently authored by a fellow at Russia and Eurasia Programme at the International Affairs in London (Chatham House).⁶⁶⁵ The author had previously contributed an entry on Turkmenistan for *World Almanac of Islamism 2011*, published by a conservative American think tank American Foreign Policy Council. The section on religion in Turkmenistan is written in such a tone that the main concern is whether outsiders should worry about potential rise of political Islamic movements in Turkmenistan. The author's references are mainly press releases and journalistic accounts, including the author's aforementioned entry on Turkmenistan, and her discussion of Islam in Turkmenistan is barely distinguishable from the superficial, misleading, and cliché-ridden publications of the Cold War era. Although Soviet and Sovietological publications are not credited, their imprint is clear. Practice of Islam in Turkmenistan is divided into so-called "'folk' Islam" and "orthodox Islam," which is her modified version of "official" and "parallel" Islam popularized by Soviet *agitprop*. To add credence to this claim, the author even tried to Islamize these terms by calling them "*Islam-i halq*" and "*Islam-i kitab*," fictitious terms that do not exist in specialized literature on

Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism (Washington, DC: University of Washington Press, 2006); Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁶⁶⁵ Annette Bohr, *Turkmenistan: Power, Politics, and Petro-Authoritarianism* (Chatham House: the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2016).

Islam; and would definitely be something new to hear for anyone in Turkmenistan because neither the terms nor the concepts exist among citizens of Turkmenistan.⁶⁶⁶

In the first chapter I discussed the cases of Eugene Schuyler and Januarius MacGahan who traveled to Central Asia in the nineteenth century. I argued that both came to Central Asia with perceptions typical for their time—a mixture of prejudices and genuine misunderstanding of the Muslim Orient—but their personal experiences of observing and interacting with Central Asians moderated their early views. They learned to appreciate aspects of Central Asian culture and ways of life and challenge some of their preconceptions. Something similar happened to scholars of Central Asian studies after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Central Asia and its archives became partially accessible to Western scholars. Some American scholars trained in Sovietological methods and approaches traveled to Central Asia to examine archives, primary sources, interact with and interview Central Asians, and conduct ethnographic studies. They, too, realized the limitations of earlier views and scholarship. What these two situations demonstrate is that American negative perceptions of the Muslim Orient in the nineteenth century and the flawed American scholarship on Central Asia during the Cold War were not necessarily some nefarious attempts at misrepresenting Central Asia but the cases of misperception and misunderstanding that could be corrected or at least moderated by actual encounters between Americans and Central Asians.

In the second and third chapters I discussed how politics influenced American understandings of Central Asia. The fact that largely positive descriptions of Soviet rule in Central Asia during the interwar period quickly turned into negative ones on the eve of the Cold War indicates that politics, not scholarship, was behind this turnabout. The beginning of the Cold War impacted scholarship as strongly as did its ending. Recall how American Sovietologists

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 49.

viewed Sufism in the Soviet Union as a reactionary, xenophobic, fundamentalist, and a highly politicized clandestine organization. The most famous book on Sufism in the Soviet Union was co-authored by a RAND fellow.⁶⁶⁷ RAND, however, started promoting an entirely different view of Sufism in recent years. In the post-9/11 era, the United States began to court Sufism as a bulwark against fundamentalism and extremism. A report published by RAND in 2003 recommends to “encourage the popularity and acceptance of Sufism” in Muslim countries. It turns out, “Sufism represents an open, intellectual interpretation of Islam.”⁶⁶⁸ In a report titled *Understanding Sufism and Its Potential Role in US Policy* by the Nixon Center, Sufism is praised by Bernard Lewis as a “remarkable” strand of Islam that treats all religions the same.⁶⁶⁹ According to a piece in *New York Times*, “Sufism is the most pluralistic incarnation of Islam – accessible to the learned and the ignorant, the faithful and nonbelievers—and is thus a uniquely valuable bridge between East and West.”⁶⁷⁰ Another report by RAND declares followers of Sufism “natural allies of the West to the extent that common ground can be found with them.”⁶⁷¹ The acknowledgement page of this report makes for an interesting read: some Muslim names who threw in their lot with U.S. militarism, think tanks such as The Hudson Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and names such as Daniel Pipes, the son of Richard Pipes and a notorious Islam-basher who sees Japanese-American internment during World War II as a model to be emulated in treating Muslim Americans.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁷ Alexandre Benningsen and Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁶⁶⁸ Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, resources, and Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), pp. xii, 46.

⁶⁶⁹ Zeyno Baran (ed.), *Understanding Sufism and Its Potential Role in US Policy* (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center Conference Report, 2004), p. 18.

⁶⁷⁰ William Dalrymple, “The Muslims in the Middle,” *New York Times*, 17 August 2010, p. A27.

⁶⁷¹ Angela Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell Schwartz, and Peter Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), p. 73.

⁶⁷² Daniel Pipes is an academic and a trained historian. Yet his defense of the Japanese-American internment is based on a populist book published by a conservative blogger Michelle Malkin—Daniel Pipes, “Japanese

The courting of Sufism in the post-9/11 era is part of a larger practice of viewing Muslims as either “good Muslims” or “bad Muslims” where the former refers to Muslims whose views and practices are approved by Western powers.⁶⁷³ This also had parallels during the Cold War. Let us recall how Soviet officials as well as American Sovietologists distinguished between “official” and “parallel” Islam in the Soviet Union. It was the Soviet officials’ own version of distinguishing between “good” and “bad” Muslims. What constituted “good” for them was their loyalty to the Soviet Union and the Communist ideology. In the post-Cold War era, the United States took this approach to the global Muslim community. A “good” Muslim in this definition is the one who embraces Western values and norms and even supports U.S. militarism. An oft-repeated term used to describe such Muslims is “moderate Muslims” (usually contrasted with “extremist Muslims”). According to one RAND report, this label is a “shorthand for those groups who eschew violent and intolerant ideologies and that, therefore, are potential partners for the United States and its friends and allies in the ideological struggle against radical Islamism.”⁶⁷⁴ This fallacy is as misleading as Soviet distinction between “official” and “parallel” Islam. Muslims are far more diverse in their views, religious practices, piety, and political participation or non-participation to be divided into two opposing groups. It is also dangerous as any ordinary Muslim who does not embrace Western values or is critical of U.S. foreign policy is a *prima facie* candidate for being designated an extremist (just like followers of so-called “parallel” Islam in the Soviet Union were *prima facie* suspects for being anti-Soviet).

American scholars of Central Asian studies today do not subscribe to these essentialist and Islamophobic narratives. Nonetheless, even within the scholarly community there are mild

Internment: Why It Was a Good Idea—and the Lessons It Offers Today,” *History New Network*, 10 January 2005, available at <<https://historynewnetwork.org/article/9289>> (accessed: 2 November 2018).

⁶⁷³ Mahmood Mamdani “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (2002).

⁶⁷⁴ Angela Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell Schwartz, and Peter Sickel, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, p. 3.

variations of categorizing Muslims of Central Asia based on how much they appeal to Western sensibilities. One form of this, as criticized by Indiana University professor Devin DeWeese, is the tendency of scholars to prioritize the views of Western-oriented reformers, particularly the Jadid movement in Central Asia at the turn of the twentieth century. Jadids are appealing to Western scholars because they are viewed as “modernists,” reformers who tried to take Central Asia out of medieval backwardness. They are, after all, “more like us,” as opposed to traditional Muslims whose views are inimical to Western values.⁶⁷⁵ Traditional Central Asian Muslims—which constituted the majority population at the time of Jadids—are often ignored. Islamic piety, aloofness to modernity and technological progress, preservation of traditional education and social practices—usually associated with traditional Muslims—are viewed with tacit disapproval, if not outright contempt. Scholars need to move away from such ideologically-driven approaches and simplified narratives that paint Muslims of Central Asia—or any human group, for that matter—as either or and from judging their culture based on how much they do or do not embrace Western values.

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