

SOCIAL SCIENCIES

AREA STUDIES – DIFFERENT PARADIGMS

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Abstract

The present situation of anthropology in Russia can be described as a transitional period of looking for the discipline's distinctive identity. In this process, the important concept of "area" has to be taken into account. Though the term "area studies" has developed in the US, there is an analogue existed in the USSR as well. Both versions of area studies varied in ideological frames and created certain "area-paradigms" through which scholars have approached the world and cultures for a long time. In the United States and the Soviet Union obviously had some differences. However, despite these features and contradicting ideological fundaments, they still were focused on the same problematics embodied in the English concepts of an "area" and Russian concept of a "region" as politically rather than culturally defined entities. This article attempts not only to trace the distinctive features of both paradigms and to make a step towards rethinking of stereotypical colonial image of "areas," but also to show the common roots of the very concept within Russian and English language anthropology.

Keywords: area, region, area studies, regional studies, local lore, identity.

Origins of the "area" concept

Almost three decades have passed since the end of the Cold War. Interdisciplinary "classic area studies" became an object of criticism among anthropologists and other social scientists, and the very notion of *area* has been challenged and rethought. Stress on fluctuating borderlands, fluidity and change replaced the old understanding of rigid boundaries and areas as firm entities.

Despite the widespread view that area studies are a product of the Cold War period, it is important to mention that roots of area as a concept begin before the Cold War. The origins of the area approach can be found in the eighteenth century, when the zoologist Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) introduced a system of classification for the living things called *Linnaean taxonomy*. This biological classification was based on notions of kingdoms, classes, orders and species that were ranked and according to the author, represented a God's creation logic [25]. This taxonomy was improved and used by further generations of natural scientists in terms of underlying similarities between organisms, which made possible classifying them into groups.

This very idea was accepted by other disciplines including social sciences. For example, the Danish archaeologist Christian Thomsen (1788-1865) was the first scholar to use the principle of morphological classification by developing chronological schemes for archaeological data. Later Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) created a kinship typology of Native American tribes [21] that evolved into the notion of cultural evolutionism in his *Ancient Society* [22]. In the social sciences of the nineteenth century, there was a tendency for creating such typologies. It was grounded in colonial times when any knowledge about "savages" was used as a tool for control over subjects of colonial policies [22].

Evolutionism promoted by Henry Morgan, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spenser, and others became a leading trend by the end of the nineteenth century and was a respectable basis for creating typologies and classifications of "civilizations" and "races." Evolutionism, however, was not a monolithic entity, and went through

its own "evolution." There were ongoing debates about ways of cultural evolution that resulted in a further conclusion: it is a result of innovations or diffusions. At the time of these debates, diffusionists used a concept of "culture circle" to claim a limited number of peoples enabled by an innovation. Opponents of diffusionism argued that there are many independent centers of innovation all over the world. Such views challenged the very principle of colonialism and led to the invention of the new idea of "culture area" by the ethnologist Otis Mason (1838-1908) in 1887. He used a taxonomic approach towards the study of claimed laws of cultural evolution. Franz Boas criticized cultural evolutionism from the respective positions of cultural relativism [6, p. 485-486].

Clark Wissler (1870-1947), who was Boas's assistant at Columbia University also sought laws of culture and believed that it could be done by using comparative analysis. A passion for classification and creating categories embedded in Linnaean taxonomy led Wissler to organize his materials on American native peoples. He defined fifteen "culture areas" as a "classification of social groups according to their culture traits" on the territory of the North, Central and South America [38, p. 206], and included food, textiles, tools, transport, fine arts, language, social organization, customs, physiology, mythology and ritual *areas*. Wissler became one of the first scholars to promote this concept in social sciences by comparing functionally similar traits from different cultures.

The "culture areas" approach became a theoretical baseline for cross-cultural studies and was supported not only by Boas but also by his student Alfred Kroeber (1876-1960), who even moved it further in his article *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (first published in 1939) [20], and some other scholars [31]. Because of their influence, "culture areas" became a leading approach for classifying data in social sciences for the whole of the twentieth century and played an important role in the creation of the area studies project in the middle of the twentieth century. However, in coming into being, it started with European studies of biology and archeology but was extended and

codified where the New World was an important touchstone.

Area studies in the United States

Since the end of the Second World War, due to decolonization processes and possible threats from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China during the Cold War period, area studies in the United States became an important academic project for security concerns of the United States government. That became the reason for the strong political ties of the discipline, oriented internationally with area studies grounded in local historical and cultural context that intertwined them with political or security considerations [9, p. 9-15]. However, area studies as a phenomenon in the United States came to existence in 1940s, when "the postwar Soviet area studies centers can be found in the general approach of key figures in the USSR Division who advocated 'integrated, multidisciplinary coverage of one country' while maintaining a grounding in a traditional discipline" [7, p. 3].

The 1950s became a golden era of modernization theory. This theory was rooted in Max Weber and Talcott Parsons's ideas of development in "traditional countries" as achieved by following the already "developed" countries. The shift away from exclusionist concept with acknowledgment to security issues opened a room for "area studies" as a project with an ideological agenda that developed with the support of certain organizations having strong ties with the state. As the historian Robert Byrnes notes in his *History of Russian and East European Studies in the United States*, such organizations included: the Rockefeller Foundation (managed the program called "The Intensive Study of Contemporary Russia Civilization" in 1944), the Carnegie Corporation of New York (that funded the Harvard Russian Research Center in 1948) and the Ford Foundation (that established the Foreign Area Fellowship Training Program in 1952) [7, p. 3].

One of the first establishments for Russian studies importantly included institutes at Columbia University founded in 1946 and at Harvard University in 1948 and then a long list of others. Later, during the 1950s, multiple centers for area studies opened across the United States. Among the most important centers were those opened at thirteen major universities including University of California at Berkeley, Columbia University, Fordham University, Harvard University, Indiana University, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Notre Dame, Syracuse University, University of Washington, Wayne State University, University of Wisconsin and Yale University. All of these and other centers focused on different aspects of Russian studies, including Russian language, Soviet Policy making, Slavic Studies and Soviet Union and Eastern Europe [7, p. 4-6]. All these variants involved "Russian studies" or *Sovietology*.

It would be wrong to see such centers and institutions as only a private scholarly initiative. The American federal government played a significant role in the development of the area studies project. Victoria Bonnell and George Breslauer mention one of the most interesting examples of the cooperation between area studies and the governmental institutions when the US Air Force with Harvard's Russian Research Center in 1948 organized and funded the Refugee Interview Project. It aimed at creating a model of Soviet society and

achieving a psychological image and patterns of behavior of Soviet people in case of nuclear attack [7, p. 7].

The area studies project in the United States covered the majority of countries all over the globe and was a state project aimed at getting a strategic knowledge on different world regions. Mostly it related to countries in the Third World. However, due to the Cold War ideological confrontation, the major subject of area studies in America was Soviet Russia. Despite such strategic and practical benefits, area studies also enormously enriched the social sciences, though some scholars to be mentioned later found that overconcentration on political centers of areas, and ideological issues and the lack of the field research led to some simplifications and overgeneralizations. For example, as it was mentioned in a report presented by the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council, "Soviet studies in the West has failed to capture the regional and ethnic wealth of the country" [7, p. 5].

Eventually, the concept of "area studies" became a subject of criticism for its historical ties to the military and its Cold War era agenda [10]. There were also voices against such criticism, arguing that in being placed in the academic environment, area studies lost its role as a mediator of the state [23]. However, the critical attitude towards area studies has become significant and led to rethinking of the concept in the academic world.

One of the important signals of change is the appearance of the rational choice approach that influenced political science and economics through 1960 and 1970s. According to rational choice theory, social mechanisms can be reduced to rational behavior and described in terms of quantitative research and methodological individualism rooted in psychological behaviorism [16; 18]. Methods of rational choice theory were borrowed from economics and political science and were used in some spheres of anthropology [13; 4]. One of the examples relevant for this paper is the book *Principles of group solidarity*, written by Michael Hechter [15], where he looks for the origins of such phenomenon as a group solidarity, and trying to explain inter-ethnic group relations. Of course, it was not left without criticism, and some behaviorist psychologists argued that there is an inconsistency between a methodological individualism and a rational choice theory [16].

Another set of criticism included the problematic of *collective action* (which was reduced by rational choice theory to actions of individual actors), *social structure* (all statements on "group" social facts can be reduced to and described through "individual" social facts) and *social norms* (or any forms of altruism or cooperation that are described as a rational strategy that leads to mutual advantage) [32, p. 132-136]. These critiques were serious enough to defend the concept of area studies. In some sense, these confrontations could be described in terms of a contradiction between primordialist and constructivist theoretical approaches on both practical and theoretical levels.

Nevertheless, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, support from different foundations for area studies became attenuated or even ended because the strategic threat was viewed as ending. However, strategic considerations did not entirely end, but shifted to a more globalized approach. A few years after the establishment of the National Security Educational Program

(NSEP) in 1991, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), have been an administrative nexus and a mediator between various academic disciplines and area studies. Both as government units played an important role in the processes of acquiring information on the Soviet Union during the Cold War era [7, p. 8].

Both organizations included the so-called joint committees first for eleven different areas and in 1995-1996 were restructured by reducing them to three branches: (1) area studies and regional analysis; (2) area studies and comparative analysis; (3) area studies and global analysis [10].

These changes in the structure of these organizations as well as area studies in general were foreseen before the dissolution of the Soviet Union and were approached as a necessary step for changing the paradigm of studying of yesterday's "enemy" that had to be "known" [17, p. 69-70].

The restructuring of the SSRC and the ACLS was based on a new agenda according to which areas should be approached as more dynamic and less fixed entities due to globalization processes, where this approach introduced rethinking of the concept of area in relation to rational choice theory when the United States should instead be recognized and studied as an "area" unto itself. The Ford Foundation and other leading funding organizations cancelled their support for area studies' projects, and this influenced growth of international and interdisciplinary topics of research like democratization or development. Such a shift was an incredibly significant sign of the changing situation in the sphere of area studies. An important fact here is that the whole area studies project during the time of its existence was significantly influenced by the state [10].

The significant results of the area studies crisis on the academic level were the new approach towards international and inter-cultural borders that resulted in the emergence of border studies as a new discipline (also called anthropology of borderlands, "frontier anthropology," and so forth) that questioned classic "upside-down" or "center-periphery" model of borders construction.

One of the books that has been most important in this sphere is James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* [33]. In this book, he explores the idea of Zomia as interregional entity inhabited by stateless peoples, and as an area with the high level of cultural diversity that, however, became an entity due to strong trade connections with surrounding states.

Another example is the volume *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space* [19] that challenges the concept of Southeast Asia as an area. Authors tend to replace this concept with a dynamism of networks and various categories through which different subjects of Southeast Asia have their own attitudes to each other and to this "area," that clearly shows prevailing cultural diversity over commonality.

Robert Alvarez [1; 2] discusses a conceptual side to the approach of borderland studies. He illustrates it through his own studies of the migration processes at the US-Mexican border and creates that new alternative approach for area studies. For example, he proposes to view borderlands as "regions" framed in a set of practices (material components, social practices, religion,

and others). Discussing *pro et contra*s of the new approach instead area studies, he also criticizes it by noticing that despite the emergence of borderland studies, scholars still do not have an appropriate and unified terminology, even the border metaphor itself is often "illusive and undefinable" [1, p. 448].

Area studies in Russia

Appearance of the Linnean taxonomy could not pass the attention of Russian scholars of the time. In fact, Carolus Linnaeus had a wide circle of fellow-thinkers and students in European countries and in Russia. One of them was a botanist and ethnographer Johan Peter Falck (1732-1774) who spent six years in the Siberia studying Kyrgyz peoples and the vegetation of the Ural steppes. Linnaeus and Falck views on classification influenced such Russian scholars as Johan George Gmelin (1709-1755), Stepan Krashenninnikov (1711-1755) and Matvey Afonin (1739-1810), who also were not only biologists, but also geographers, historians, and ethnographers.

Later the intellectual heritage embodied in *culture area* approach promoted by Boas, Wissler and others, also reached Soviet ethnography and was introduced by Vladimir Bogoraz (1865-1936) and Lev Shternberg (1861-1927). Due to ideological and historical circumstances, Soviet ethnography (especially in the first half of the twentieth century) was focused on ethnic and geographic issues rather than economic ones. As a result, culture area approach influenced Russian ethnography relatively late, when in 1950s, Maxim Levin (1904-1963) and Nikolay Cheboksarov (1907-1980) elaborated their version of it named *historic-ethnographical areas* theory that has much in common with the theory proposed earlier by Wissler. This theoretical approach was not widely used until the beginning of 1980s, when Julian Bromley (1921-1990) mentioned that "studies of various historic and ethnographic problems, in the end aim to create generalizations ... of the historic-ethnographical areas" [37].

Nevertheless, the conglomerate of scholarly disciplines that can be called "area studies" in Russia existed. It was interdisciplinary complex of sciences rooted in the colonial past when its predecessor's major function was to collect information about the artificially created colonial administrative "regions." During the Soviet era, area studies developed and maintained this approach [36]. However, it is important to understand the specifics of the Russian version of area studies. There is a difference between *studies of the local lore* or *local history* (Rus., *kraevedenie*) and *regional studies* or *regions and country-studies* (Rus., *regionovedenie*, *stranovedenie*).

Studies of the local lore

Studies of the local lore are focused on research of different regions of Russia and its localities. It is the reason why it is occasionally called *motherland studies* (Rus., *rodinovedenie*). Partially because of that, it is also viewed as a popular rather than fully academic discipline, focusing on collecting empirical data and representing it to the wide public [24, p. 21-43].

Studies of the local lore are traced to the fifteenth century, when one of the Tver city merchants, Afanasiy Nikitin (1433-1475), became famous because of description of his journey to India in his "Journey beyond Three Seas." Geographical research of the Russian territories is dated back to the first half of the eighteenth century when it became a scholarly discipline. At that

time, it meant collecting information on local history and making selective descriptive of geographical localities. Largely, both are associated with the reforms of Peter the Great (1672-1725) in the spheres of culture and education: he insisted on the development of geographic education and creation of "Russian history." Such strong attention to locality and geography in general due to the foundation of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1724. Nevertheless, there were a few expeditions organized in the period between 1742 and 1743 aimed to study and describe remote geographical boundaries. These expeditions resulted in a compilation of numerous maps of Russia and contributed to the study of multiple remote regions, including especially Siberia and the Russian Far East.

The first famous Russian scholars to conduct or participate in first localities research included Stepan Krashenninnikov (1711-1755), Vasilii Tatischev (1686-1750), and Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765). There were also some individuals unconnected with scientific institutions who also made a significant contribution to local lore studies by collecting artifacts or doing archival research on Siberian townships, (historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705-1783), Semen Remezov (1642-1721) and others).

However, studies of the local lore only gained a place in the scholarly world by 1845, when the Russian Geographical Society was founded. Its expeditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played a prominent role in the study of the Central Asia, Siberia, including the Russian Far East and other regions and were conducted by such famous travelers and scholars as Pyotr Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky (1827-1914), Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), Nikolay Przheval'skiy (1839-1888), and Vladimir Obruchev (1863-1956). Long-term studies of local lore became a part of history-geographical descriptions. At the same time, it was also tightly intertwined with ethnography (in the nineteenth century it was still understood as a sub-discipline of geography). Besides these "official" studies, there was also a trend toward "unofficial" or bottom-up studies of the local lore, organized not only by representatives of local governments, as well by followers of the Siberian regionalist movement, some of whom had been deported to Siberia by the Tsarist government. One such person was Grigoriy Potanin (1835-1920), who was one of the founders of the so-called "concentric local history studies." Potanin claims that a regional "center" influence periphery and graphically represented by concentric circles and radial vectors of the cultural influence out of a "center." He applied it by arguing that any education has to be represented in terms of concentric circles, where the first circle is a school neighborhood, physical geography and people's life there; the second circle is a province described physically and socially, and the third circle is Russia itself [26].

By the second half of the nineteenth century, along with the continuing differentiation of scholarly disciplines, there was also a countertrend towards disciplinary integration, to the development of their synergy with geography, and a systemic exploration of different regions of Russia. Such local historians like Nikolay Charushin (1852-1937), Nikolay Skalozubov (1861-1915), Vasilii Shishonko (1831-1889) also played an important role in that process.

However, the term "local lore studies" (Rus., *kraevedenie*) was introduced in 1914 by the Russian

pedagogue Vladimir Ulianov in his *The Experience of Methodology of History in the Elementary School*, where he stressed the importance of such studies for educational purposes. Since then, the discipline has been called by different terms: for example, studies of motherland, studies of fatherland, studies of local lore, local studies, studies of Russia, and so forth. The discipline became an important tool in the construction of the idea of Russianness and the development of patriotic schools. After the Revolution of 1917, terms with an explicit patriotic agenda like "studies of motherland" were rejected by the Bolsheviks and replaced with terms like "studies of local lore" or "local history."

The changes during 1920s played an important role in disciplinary development after the post-revolution government acknowledged the importance of such studies, and Anatoliy Lunacharskiy's (1875-1933) agitation for the disciplinary goal of getting "as deep, precise and firm a knowledge of all resources as possible" [29, p. 91]. Industrialization, collectivization, and the formation of a multinational Soviet state were claimed to be the main scientific, practical, and political importance. On the other hand, physical and economic geography also became independent disciplines, which led to a divide between economic-geographical and physical-geographical branches of local lore studies. One of the reasons for this tendency were debates over the second half of the 1920s, when scholars such as Sergey Oldenburg (1863-1934), Ivan Grevs (1860-1941), Nikolay Anciferov (1889-1958), and others argued against using geography only for politics.

In 1926, a panel session of the Head Office for the Local Lore Studies defined the discipline as a "method of synthetic scholarly study of a relatively small location defined in terms of administrative-political or agricultural units" [8, p. 50].

However, definition did not silence debates about the subject and methodology of geography. The ambivalent status of the discipline that played such an important role in the patriotic education during the Soviet period and was well accepted by the Soviet state and did not change across the whole of the twentieth century. On the one side, it remained a scholarly discipline. On the other side, however, it remained an applied methodology that was an important ideological tool for achieving concrete educational goals. Even after secession of the Soviet Union, debates within Russia about the structure of knowledge, methodology and subject of geography continued [30]. The art historian Irina Reshikova, who argues that local lore studies should not be approached from the historical point of view, proposed one of the more interesting concepts. According to her, geography is not a sub-discipline of history; rather, it is a manifestation of the post-Soviet periphery self-perception, which appears in different forms but becomes a center of consolidation of people into local communities [28, p. 188-189].

Summing up, we can say that local lore studies in pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet periods of Russian history maintained a certain degree of continuity, though they are still the center of methodological and epistemological debates. However, it cannot be denied that it is a rather popular discipline available for non-professionals in the senior school years (which makes it a socio-cultural phenomenon), and is a political tool for patriotic education, ideological and political frames (which helps in identity construction).

Regional Studies

Another discipline in Russia is *regional studies* or *regions and country-studies* (to some extent equivalent to *area studies* in the United States), which can sometimes be misrecognized as local lore studies, focuses on comprehensive studying of countries (including Russia), closely intersects with geography, and provides a synthesis of data on the population, social organization, economy, and culture.

Nowadays the whole context and the meaning of regional studies in Russia has completely changed. As the honorary chair of the Russian Association of Local Lore Researchers Sigurd Shmidt (1922-2013) puts it, the major difference between the above-mentioned local lore studies and regional studies is that the latter one is an interdisciplinary science, producing knowledge that is more theoretical. Unlike local lore studies, regional studies today analyze regions not only based on the local history and geography, but also on elements of economic and political sciences [34]. In this context, today the basic Russian term *region* is used to designate a relatively big territory that has its unique natural geographic, socioeconomic, and historical (and cultural) specifics [34].

Others define region as a politically, ecologically, or economically homogeneous territory [5, 32-33]. The term is often defined through territory due to the geographical background of the discipline. The term “region” was not widely used until after the World War II, when it came from geography, and took its place in the Big Soviet Encyclopedia in 1955 in the article “Regional agreements.” The term “region” is described there as a territorial and political unit [5, p. 35]. During most of the second half of the twentieth century it was interpreted only through the paradigm of the international relations, however most of the sources lack any precise definition of the region concept or even avoid it.

In 1981, Alexander Suharev (1931-2010) proposed a concept of *regionology* not as an independent discipline, but as an integral approach rooted in geography, sociology, management practices and economy [35]. It was followed by the opening of the “regionology laboratory” in 1982 and led the opening of the Institute of Regional Studies later in 1993-1994 in the Russian city of Arkhangelsk. Regional studies (divided into the two branches of Russian and international regional studies) were an important part of the international relations in the Soviet period and after the end of it. Except for its theoretical role in the body of international relations scholarship, regional studies played an important role in the formation of strategies for the technological and economic development of certain regions of Russia, and foreign relations. In order to establish such applied regional studies, a few centers were created during the Soviet era that have had connections with the Russian Academy of Science.

To understand better the context of regional studies in Soviet Russia, we need a brief introduction. Enhancing the practical relevance of regional studies in the twentieth century was due to the creation of socialism in the Soviet Union, and its role in an ideological education. Regional studies have been a discipline where nature and society are approached from the point of view of the public interest. Regional studies in the Soviet Union inherited its institutional framework from

pre-revolutionary Oriental studies (that included different scholarly disciplines like geography, history, linguistics of a certain region or country), therefore can be seen as a sign of continuity. However, the formation of the discipline was in part a reaction to the establishment of scientific institutions studying Russia in the United States. As a popular revolutionary and Soviet public official, Anastas Mikojan (1895-1978) mentioned in his speech at the 1956 Party Congress: “in the United States, there are more than fifteen scientific institutes that study the Soviet economy alone ... and we close down old research centers!” [5, p. 244].

That led to the reestablishment of some research centers and the opening of new ones (Institute of World Economy and International Relations divided into branches covering countries all over the world, Institute of Africa, Institute of the Peoples of Asia, Institute of Latin America). Besides Moscow, some research centers that studied Latin America and other Third World countries were opened at local universities all over the Soviet Union. Those institutions did research in the respective fields (on global political and economic issues) and provided the results to the state.

What caused such blossom of area studies at the time? This discussion should be framed by the important topic of the internationalization of the Soviet Union and leaving the period of isolationism after Stalin's death. Though his death did not mean an immediate end of the Iron Curtain policy, however, since the Khrushchev Thaw period (1950-1960), there was a certain increased internationalization in different spheres, including an increased level of contacts between Soviet and foreign scholars. This process was accompanied by the development of the diplomatic ties with foreign countries. On the other hand, the Soviet Union government continued to influence the so-called Third World countries loyal to the communist ideology. This behavior was rooted in the contradictions between the pro-revolutionary ideas on interaction with those countries, promoted by the International Department of the Central Committee, and ideas of careful political dialogue promoted by the Foreign Ministry. Most members of the International Department were high ranking scholars doing their research in the field of regional (or area) studies that officially constituted institutes of international relations. They often influenced the course Soviet foreign policy and were responsible for strengthening the Soviet Union's positions in international relations with the Third World [36, p. 234-235] that was viewed as a battlefield between socialism and capitalism. Most of them graduated or taught classes at Moscow Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) remembered Stalin's repressions and supported relative liberalization trends of the Thaw period. On the other hand, there was a lack of scholarly works on Third World countries and a deficit of literature on the topic in libraries. All that led to a “schematic perception of the world abroad” that created difficulties in the interaction between Soviet Union and those countries [36, p. 243]. This was the most important reason why the network of research institutions for area studies was established after Stalin's death. By the beginning of the 1960s, the gaps had been filled; international dialogue between scholars improved and the first groups of researchers were sent to international conferences in some Third World countries, such as Cuba and Chile [27, p. 196-197]. The beginning of the 1960s also

marked the first guest professors from abroad. For example, in 1965 Professor Roland Ely from Argentina was invited by the Institute of Latin America in Moscow; in 1967-1968 Russell Bartley became the first scholar from the United States to conduct research in Moscow [36, p. 248].

During this Thaw period, Soviet Union scholars who were engaged in regional studies early on became a privileged part of those intelligentsia allowed to go abroad, to participate in international conferences, and enjoyed many additional privileges [11, p. 117-118]. Most were not only privileged, but they were also the elites of the Soviet state. On the other hand, this fact, which allowed them to be the most liberal part of Soviet scholarly community, at the same time made them vulnerable due to the strict surveillance by the International Department of the Central Committee. It closely reviewed their writings and was an active participant in making final decisions on whether they be trusted to go abroad [14]. Some scholars were even affiliated with the foreign ministry and secret services, like Nikolay Leonov (born 1928), and major media sources, like Genrich Borovik (born 1929), or held major positions in leading institutions, like Anatoliy Shulgovskiy (1926-1991) or state apparatus, like Karen Chacaturov (1927-2005), and Sergo Mikoyan (1929-2010). All were members of the Communist Party. However, there were also those who dared to rebel by using anti-Stalinist rhetoric in their publications such as Kiva Maidanik (1929-2006), or by engaging in a polemic against Marxism, like Tobias (2015, 259-260).

“Areas” or “regions”

While the history of area studies in Russia and the United States obviously differs, we cannot say that which of them is “better.” Both are rooted in the classification tradition of Linnaean taxonomy that was created in the context of natural sciences and influenced social sciences and resulted in a creation of culture are approach. Later, due to historical and ideological reasons, the Soviet and American area studies took different paths. The phenomenon of regional studies in the Soviet Union as well as the area studies in the United States were not led solely by scholarly needs. Foremost, they were products of the Cold War era, when other countries, especially countries of the Third World, became a battleground between socialist and capitalist competition.

The development of regional studies in Soviet Russia was a reaction to the same interests as it was for the United States [12]. The only difference between the two countries was scholarly involvement with scholars participating in policy decisions. However, in the Soviet Union such participation was ideologically driven and existed only as a form of international relations aimed at supporting pro-communist movements in Third World countries and promoting socialist ideology. It led to concrete political and ideological work that included scholarly research as well as indirect influence on certain decision-making processes in foreign policies.

In contrast, in the United States the state recruited scholars from different fields like anthropology, history and economics and finance them to provide objective knowledge on “areas” as geo-political blocks. No matter the ideological narrative, both versions of area stud-

ies were results of the Cold War’s ideologically motivated lack of expertise on the outside world, including each other’s “Others.”

However, the purely political and ideological uses in area studies and regional studies had improved the scholarship and general knowledge about other countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Area studies changed the Russian ethno-centrist paradigm and its overly ideologized Stalinist approach towards the world. It likewise stimulated American scholars to abandon overly simplistic views on “totalitarianism” and Stalin’s terror. In debates that took place in 1950s and 1960s, this in turn, led to a broader view about the complexities in the Soviet state [7, p. 17].

The changes on the Russian side led to a partial opening of Soviet scholarship and created a trend toward internationalization that was still grounded in the official political discourse and peppered with Soviet style military, ideological, and economic superiority. It was then consumed by the people of the Soviet Union as well as in Third World countries. When this superiority driven internationalism ended after the demise of the Soviet Union, regional studies in Russia increasingly emphasized international relations and the geographical sciences.

By the end of 1990s, regional studies in Russia had been accepted as a separate discipline. New regional institutes and centers opened, and students majored in interdisciplinary new regional studies that included history, geography and politics of specific former Soviet republics and of international relation between them. The interdisciplinary nature of today’s Russian-language regional studies is well described by the Russian geographer Nikolay Baranskiy (1881-1963), who contributed to the Soviet era development of the methodological framework of regional studies. He proposed to view this discipline in the modern context as one that should not pretend to have a specific role as a discipline, but rather to be an organizational framework for the study of certain countries [3, p. 37].

Speaking about the level of scholarly disciplines involved in the area studies project in the United States during the Cold War, it should be noted that there was a majority of historians, political scientists and economists who got most of the funding (since they could do their research more or less without conducting any fieldwork). In the case of the Soviet Union, anthropology and sociology did not play a significant a role until its dissolution. However, there was more than a single approach to studies during that time; in the Soviet studies there were debates on the nature and future of the Soviet authoritarianism, traditionalism, political culture, Soviet Union international behavior and possible modernization. On the academic level, these debates partially became a precondition for the rethinking of the subject of area studies. It has been slightly shifted towards globalization and internationalism since the end of the 1980s and shows in the renaming of disciplines and changing the perception from areas as political entities to areas as cultural, ethnic, and geographical ones (e.g., Eurasian, or Slavic studies instead “Soviet studies”). The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War led to changes in the whole “area” paradigm: in a short period, it has been redefined by the state as well as academics, which led to existence of new programs (Middle Eastern studies, Caucasus studies, Baltic studies and so forth).

From this review, we can see that area studies in the United States and the Soviet Union obviously had some differences. However, despite these features and contradicting ideological fundamentals, they still were focused on the same problematics embodied in the English concepts of an “area” and Russian concept of a “region” as politically rather than culturally defined entities.

The conceptual differences in the relative histories of both approaches were the distinctive markers that organized different versions of area studies. Though the term “area studies” usually connotes the interdisciplinary entity developed in the United States, we can see that its analogue existed in the Soviet Union as well. Both versions of area studies varied in ideological frames and created certain “area-paradigm” through which scholars (including social scientists) have approached the world and cultures for a long time.

The Soviet Union and the United States took similar paths in developing area studies. In both cases, the notion of “area” as it was used after the Second World War was taken from the Kroeberian and Boasian studies that also were based on the classification borrowed from natural sciences of the eighteenth century. One of the biggest differences was a split between local lore and regional studies in Russia, where both were driven by developing a patriotic attitude among the Soviet population in the former and promoting the communist ideology in the context of international relationship in the latter.

What are the distinctive features of area studies in the context of English-language anthropology? At present, it still is an open question. However, there is something that is distinctive for the history of area studies in the United States. In the United States, the major interest of area studies were foreign countries, and long before American studies were included in this context. In both Russian and American cases, it was not a pure scholarship need, but a long-term political project aiming “to know each other’s enemy” and combined a set of disciplines and methodologies. Launched in the United States in the 1940s and developed during the Cold War era, it resulted in the appearance of its twin on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Both played an important role in the policy-making processes, though also enriched different scholarly disciplines with new data on different places and cultures. Ideological contexts led to certain differences in methodologies but not goals. In the beginning of the 1990s due to the end of the Cold War period, dissolution of the Soviet Union, formation of the European Union and decolonization processes, area studies on both sides were transformed and reformed and they lost strong connections with a state, lost or voluntarily rejected funding from secret services and major foundations. It happened partially because of objective political changes, and partially in the context of scholars “revolting” against being puppets of the state, who were pulling the strings of intellectual thought during the Cold War era.

What are distinctive features of the area studies in the context of Russian language anthropology? It appears that there are two trends in contemporary Russian anthropology: there are those who enjoy the “global party” and those “nationalists” or “primordialists” who still strive to preserve their Soviet era intellectual cocoon. The present situation of anthropology in Russia can be described as a transitional period of looking for

the discipline’s distinctive identity, and the situation within area studies leads me to the same conclusion. The division between local lore studies and regional studies still exists and though compared to previous times, both are not a tool for spreading any official ideology anymore, an old dichotomy that has existed since the imperial times still reveals itself: regional studies maintain its strong connection with geography and international relationships, and local lore studies still keep their old monarchic sentimentalism.

Recently, the notion of area studies in English language anthropological literature has been changed; however, the Russian version of James Scott has not appeared yet – Russian anthropology is still in transition and in order to “see the forest through the trees,” needs to rethink colonial concept of “area” towards an application of a new notion of it described in terms of flexibility and fluidity. I believe such an approach would be very pertinent at the contemporary stage of Russian-language anthropology and would help new “area studies” to find their ways.

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