

Infrastructure and Aquifers

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I appreciate the opportunity to join you and thank the organizers Steve Hanson of the College of William and Mary and Miriam Kazanjian of the Coalition for International Education for inviting me to speak about the role of foundations in international and area studies. The Henry Luce Foundation includes in its mission the goal to foster international understanding. Our Asia Program, as the name suggests, focuses on one “area” of international and area studies. More specifically, the program aims to foster cultural and intellectual exchange between the United States and the countries of East and Southeast Asia, and to create scholarly and public resources for improved understanding of Asia in the U.S.

I want first to acknowledge that world area programs within the American academy each have their own history and trajectory. Moreover, the information I have gathered about and from other foundations was done on relatively short notice and is not comprehensively researched. About 70,000 philanthropies are registered in the United States. I will be speaking about only a handful among the top 100. Thus, my remarks today represent a partial, limited viewpoint, and present only a broad-brush and impressionistic picture of the role of foundations in the establishment of what I will hereafter call “area studies” in American higher education. In putting this talk together, I am grateful for conversations with Zachary Lockman at New York University; my colleague Toby Volkman, who previously directed the *Crossing Borders* initiative at the Ford Foundation; Mary Zurbuchen, who served as a consultant to the Luce Foundation on Southeast Asian Studies; and Steve Wheatley at the American Council of Learned Societies, who pointed me to relevant articles by Robert McCaughey of Barnard College.

A Little History, and Some Private Foundations

One might “lay the blame” for the current configuration of area studies in American higher education at the feet of private philanthropy because the federal government doesn’t seriously come into the picture as a funder until 1959. Prior to World War II, only a small number of scholars were engaged in teaching and research about other world areas.¹ Under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), various area committees were organized as early as the 1920s and 1930s, beginning with the Committee on the

¹ Robert A. McCaughey, “In the Land of the Blind: American International Studies in the 1930s,” *New Directions in International Education: Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 449 (1980): 14; David Szanton, *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 8-9.

Promotion of Chinese Studies in 1928.² But intentional and larger scale investment in area studies really began after World War II, and the response came first from private philanthropy. The Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation between them provided roughly \$10 million to develop international studies programs at major American universities prior to 1950.³ The sense was, among many, that the United States had been unprepared not only militarily and diplomatically but also intellectually to confront the international crises of the 1930s that led to the war.⁴ Not only was need for expertise in foreign policy recognized, but also the importance of an informed citizenry in the conduct of that policy.⁵

While Carnegie and Rockefeller continued to lend support, during the 1950s and 1960s the Ford Foundation became the major philanthropic force behind the creation and institutionalization of area studies. Between 1951 and 1966, the Ford Foundation contributed about \$270 million to help create centers of excellence at universities, fund graduate student research, and support area studies efforts through organizations such as the ACLS and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC).⁶ Ford's investment decreased thereafter, but it remained committed to interdisciplinary scholarship about world areas until the early part of this century. In 1997, for example, it allocated more than \$25 million over a 5-year period for the *Crossing Borders* initiative aimed at revitalizing area studies.⁷ Ford's interest waned, however, at the conclusion of that program, and the foundation further shifted directions with the arrival of a new president in 2008.

With grantmaking priorities in the humanities, the arts and higher education, the Mellon Foundation has a broad purview that has included funding for area studies as a zone of inquiry in which the humanities have played a significant role. I do not have access to full numbers, but between 1989 and 2003 Mellon awarded 118 grants relevant to area studies, totaling \$40.5 million.⁸ These grants had a principal focus on the Middle East and Latin America. Since 2006, Mellon has worked with the SSRC to support transregional studies, such as the Inter-Asia program, aimed at exploring "ways to move beyond the territorial fixities of area studies research without discounting the importance of contextually grounded, place-based knowledge."⁹ Carnegie and Ford have also provided funding for this initiative. Following the recent cuts to the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs, Mellon provided \$3.6 million to the Institute of International Education for graduate fellowships, to assist those who lost funding when the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad program was cancelled. It also awarded three-year grants of \$750,000 each to eight research universities with the largest clusters of Title VI National Resource Centers (NRCs). The aim was to help them transition to reduced levels of public

² Robert A. McCaughey, "The Current State of International Studies in American Universities: Special Consideration Reconsidered," *Journal of Higher Education* 51 no. 4 (1980): 393.

³ *Ibid.*, 394.

⁴ McCaughey, "In the Land of the Blind," 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶ Susan V. Berresford, *Crossing Borders: Revitalizing Area Studies*, (New York: Ford Foundation, 1999), v.

⁷ Conversation with Toby A. Volkman.

⁸ Information provided by Phillip E. Lewis, vice president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

⁹ <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/interasia-Program/>

support, which is particularly harmful with respect to lesser commonly taught languages (LCTLs). Mellon also provided a grant to Columbia, Cornell and Yale to encourage the development of new collaborative strategies for the teaching of LCTLs.¹⁰ My understanding is that these initiatives were considered temporary measures. I don't know whether area studies will be included in Mellon's future grantmaking, but have heard that the foundation is currently reorganizing its programs under a new president, with new priority areas to be announced later this year.

The Luce Foundation has included teaching and research on East and Southeast Asia among its priorities since its founding in 1936, but formal grantmaking programs were established only in 1975 with the hiring of professional staff. Between 1975 and the end of 2013, Luce awarded over 1,100 Asia-related grants totaling approximately \$170 million, primarily in support of scholarly infrastructure.

The programmatic interests of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, one of the sponsors of this conference, include higher education and international peace and security. Until recently, it supported an Islam Initiative to strengthen American academic programs and outreach, and foster international collaborations.¹¹ It has also worked to strengthen scholarly communities in Russia, Eurasia, and Africa. Its grantmaking in peace and security includes research relevant to other parts of the globe and implications for American foreign policy. Perhaps there is a Carnegie representative here at the conference who could provide additional detail on its work in international and area studies.

Although the Rockefeller Foundation became less involved in area studies after the 1950s, its creativity and culture program resonated with area studies work. That program concluded following the arrival of a new president in 2005 (you'll notice something of a pattern here!). Currently, Rockefeller's overall goals, as articulated on its website, are to build resilience and more equitable growth, especially for poor and vulnerable people worldwide, with priorities focused on advancing health, revaluing ecosystems, securing livelihoods, and transforming cities.¹²

The MacArthur Foundation is another philanthropy whose name is often raised with respect to international work. Like Carnegie, MacArthur's interests include peace and security. Although its grantmaking includes policy-relevant research, it does not typically support area studies work within the academy. However, it is worth noting that, in a November 2012 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, MacArthur's president Robert Gallucci, while criticizing academia as too inward looking and concerned with theoretical constructs as opposed to real world problems, recommended "a robust embrace of regional studies. Nothing can replace the value of insights that emerge from the integration of knowledge and research on the history, economics, politics, culture, religion, and geography of a region."¹³

¹⁰ Information from Philip E. Lewis, vice president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

¹¹ <http://carnegie.org/programs/past-programs-and-initiatives/islam-initiative/>

¹² <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/our-focus>

¹³ Robert L. Gallucci, "How Scholars Can Improve International Relations," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Commentary, November 26, 2012. <http://chronicle.com/article/How-Scholars-Can-Improve/135898/>

As a bit of an aside, I want to flag an article in a recent issue of *Foreign Policy* about bridging the gap between higher education and foreign policy. The journal noted a survey conducted by scholars Paul C. Avey and Michael C. Desch in which 234 current and former senior government officials were asked about the role of academics in foreign policy. In response to a question about which disciplines are useful for a State Department staffer, area studies and history were ranked the highest, above political science and international affairs. Similarly, when asked which methodologies are useful, area studies again topped their list.¹⁴

The foundations mentioned above are, or have been, some of the largest philanthropies involved with area studies. Other foundations, as well, are concerned about informed foreign policy and educating Americans about the world beyond our borders. Because of my work, I am most familiar with those interested in Asia. In 2001, for example, the Freeman Foundation provided \$100 million in support of undergraduate Asian studies. It also invested significant funds in K-12 education about Asia. Those specific initiatives, as I understand it, have concluded. The United States-Japan Foundation supports K-12 education about Japan. And government-supported foundations in Asia, such as the Japan Foundation, the Korea Foundation, the Hanban under China's Ministry of Education, and the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation of Taiwan, contribute to efforts designed to strengthen American teaching and research on their respective languages, cultures and societies.

Public Funding

How does this investment compare with federal funding? The national Defense Education Act (NDEA) was signed into law in 1958. The initial appropriation in 1959 for Title VI of the NDEA was \$3.5 million.¹⁵ From Fiscal Year 1959 to Fiscal Year 2014 total investment in Title VI has been over \$2.2 billion.¹⁶ This averages about \$40 million per year over 55 years. From FY 1964 to FY 2014, funding for Fulbright-Hays approached \$308 million, or about \$6 million per year over the program's 50-year life.¹⁷

My basic point is that, although private philanthropy was instrumental in getting the international and area studies enterprise started, its investment has been overtaken by public funding and foundations are no longer in a position to fill the breach left by the 2011 federal cuts to Title VI and Fulbright-Hays. While there have been reductions in federal spending for area studies in the past, they were not of the magnitude of the recent cuts,

¹⁴ "Does the Academy Matter?" *Foreign Policy*, March 14, 2014, 62-69. Carnegie has been supporting some of this work, which is aimed at strengthening the link between universities and policymakers. (Correspondence with Stephen Del Rosso, Carnegie's program director for the International Peace and Security program.)

¹⁵ The \$3.5 million was appropriated for three programs under Title VI, Part A: \$500,000 each for Centers and Fellowships, and the remainder for Research and Studies. Richard D. Scarfo, "The History of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays" (paper presented at *International Education in the New Global Era: Proceedings of a National Policy Conference on the Higher Education Act*, University of California, Los Angeles, December 27, 2001): 23.

¹⁶ Figures provided by Miriam Kazanjian of the Coalition for International Education.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

which also came as a surprise in the midst of a four-year funding cycle.¹⁸ Accompanying budget cuts at the state and university levels have doubled, or tripled, the pain and anxiety. Within the Asia Program at Luce, we have been receiving a high volume of requests. But our roughly \$6 million annual budget can only respond to a small portion of the need.

Trends

I see several trends contributing to current challenges. Fewer private foundations are supporting higher education. Myriad problems exist in the world, including here at home, that are worthy of attention and it is gratifying that the United States has such a rich tradition of charitable and philanthropic giving to address them. But the number of large foundations supporting long-term scholarship and student learning seems to be shrinking, and the number of foundations with an express international portfolio is even smaller. Some, like Alison Bernstein in her 2011 article for the National Education Association, also point to a growing corporatization of American philanthropy, in which short-term, measurable, outcome indicators have taken precedence over investment for the longer term.¹⁹ Measuring impact is important, as is the setting of goals that can be achieved in the short term. But when talking about investment in human capital, if you will, things become harder to quantify. One can certainly count the number of enrollments in a language course, or the number of dissertations on a particular subject in a particular world area. But it is more difficult to track longer term change – the impact of a study abroad opportunity on a person’s career trajectory, for example, or how his or her perceptions of the world have been altered by a course, even a lecture, on Chinese history or philosophy. Maintaining core capacity for international and area work in the U.S. requires, as the Luce Foundation’s president Michael Gilligan has written, “staying power.”²⁰ That does not mean necessarily doing the same old thing. One must balance steadfastness to core interests with openness to new ideas and opportunities.

A Conundrum

A certain tension also exists between what “internationalization” means, and between traditional area studies and global studies. This creates a conundrum. Most agree that we are in need of new configurations, new collaborations, and multi-institutional and global partnerships, that there are compelling reasons to de-center area studies from the U.S. academy. But, for me, effectively working on transregional and transnational themes and problems, and working with scholars in other parts of the world, presupposes knowledge of local particularities and context. The “global” is always locally experienced. With all of the global challenges facing us—climate change, the threat of pandemics, the trafficking of humans, drugs and arms—it seems more important than ever to cultivate

¹⁸ Seteney Shami and Holly Danzeisen, “Midnight Surprise: Preliminary Reactions to the Federal International Education Budget Cuts,” *Items and Issues* (Social Science Research Council), July 20, 2011. <http://itemsandissues.ssrc.org/midnight-surprise-preliminary-reactions-to-the-federal-international-education-budget-cuts>

¹⁹ Alison R. Bernstein, “Media Metrics: The Growing Corporatization of U.S. Philanthropy” *The NEA Higher Education Journal*, Fall 2011. <http://www.nea.org/home/50022.htm>

²⁰ Theadora Lurie and Michael Gilligan, *The Henry Luce Foundation at 75 Years*, (New York: Henry Luce Foundation, 2012), 7.

experts with deep knowledge of particular places (their histories, languages, cultures, politics) as well as the skills to work collaboratively across disciplinary boundaries (which area studies has been doing for a long time) and geographic boundaries. This will be best served by maintaining core area studies infrastructure while encouraging innovation. I suppose this means having your cake and eating it too. There is the rub.

For better or worse, at the moment traditional area studies remains the basic model around which teaching and research on world areas is organized and funded. There is a high entry cost, in terms of time and money, to area studies fields, to the study of another language and culture in addition to a discipline, to building connections with institutions and colleagues in the region. Costs will be even higher if we add the need for familiarity with multiple disciplines and transregional work. Many universities now place limits on time to degree, and money for graduate training and field research is tight. So how do we train the next generation of experts? I'm not suggesting that things must stay the same. We must adapt and accommodate change. But how can overworked NRCs and others on increasingly tightened budgets be encouraged not only to carry on their primary work but also to find new ways of relating to one another, to counterparts around the world, to the disciplines and to other constituencies on campuses such as sciences and the professional schools? How can one encourage innovation without undermining the bedrock on which area studies sits (language, library, field research, outreach)? Creating space for change takes time, and resources.

For good reason, the Obama administration has emphasized the need for access and equity in education. But it also highly touts the need for global competence. Where are the college faculty and K-12 teachers going to come from to teach this competence? Where is deep expertise and research that underpins it? Shrinking the centers of excellence for international and area studies at public universities may have the unintended consequence that only the rich institutions, the Ivy League and elite universities, will be able to afford to carry on this work.

Infrastructure and Aquifers

There has been much angst in recent years about the dismal state of America's infrastructure—the crumbling bridges, roads and pipelines that have been poorly maintained. The public/private partnership in area studies over the past 55 years or so has arguably established the best infrastructure for area studies in the world. It took years to build these resources. Maintaining this core infrastructure seems much wiser and more cost effective than trying to revive or repair it after it is broken. Of course, there are questions about what an “area” is and who defines it. There are lots of interesting ways to study the world. But all of these are premised on having an infrastructure in place. In my mind, it is entirely appropriate for the government (federal, state and local) to play a key role in keeping this infrastructure intact, healthy and resilient. I believe the amount of funding devoted to area studies, even at its historic high, represents a relative drop in the bucket of the Department of Education's overall budget, and certainly of the defense budget. In 1948, Thomas Bailey,

a Stanford diplomatic historian, wrote that “a well-informed citizenry is as important as battleships.”²¹

If a public/private partnership is to continue, what is the role of foundations? I see foundations best at playing a catalytic role—planting seeds, fostering experimentation and innovation; supporting convening and the building of networks; encouraging the imagining and piloting of those new configurations we think are needed in the 21st century. My earlier remarks about the changing priorities of large foundations and the shrinking of philanthropy for higher education is concerning to those of us who remain in the field, which is why the staying power of the government is so vital.

A strong partnership will require others as well. Universities must be willing to commit, as should corporations and individual philanthropists. And we will need to locate new sources of support. All of us must be willing to make our voices heard, to tell the stories, make the case for why area studies (both traditional and new configurations) continues to be important and relevant to the United States in the 21st century.

Pauline Yu, the president of ACLS, recently cited Nancy Ruther’s statement that likened higher education to an aquifer, not a spigot.²² To me, coming from Texas where we face the danger of depleted aquifers, this metaphor seems particularly apt. As we have learned, after 9/11 we could not just turn on the spigot and expect a Middle East specialist or speaker of Arabic magically to appear. More recently, the crisis in Ukraine has reminded us that our Russian studies programs are not as robust as they once were.²³ These resources can only come from deep reserves, built up over time.

And this is not just an issue of national security. Rather, I would say it is in our broader national interest. Whether one characterizes the benefits as “know the enemy, know the competition, know the world,” that is, in terms of national security, economic competitiveness or just plain empathy and tolerance, an educated populace with an understanding of the array of human cultures, societies, and conditions in other parts of the world, and in our own, like biodiversity, makes the world a richer, more humane place. It helps us survive, and thrive.

These are all things you already know, but I recite this mantra nonetheless: that area studies matters, that robust, sustained government support is important, and that private philanthropy should continue to be involved. I look forward during this conference to your creative ideas for the internationalization of U.S. education in the 21st century.

²¹ McCaughey, “In the Land of the Blind,” 3.

²² Nancy L. Ruther, “The International and Foreign Language Human Capital Challenge of the U.S. Federal Government” (paper presented at Duke University Conference, January 23-25, 2003): 33. <http://ducis.jhfc.duke.edu/archives/globalchallenges/pdf/ruther.pdf>

²³ Jason Horowitz, “Russia Experts See Thinning Ranks’ Effect on U.S. Policy,” *New York Times*, March 6, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/world/europe/american-experts-on-russia.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar>