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### Introduction: Interlocking Orientologies in the Cold War Era

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# 1 Introduction

## Interlocking Orientologies in the Cold War era

*Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Michael Kemper*

Sometime in the run-up to the twentieth Congress of the USSR Communist Party of 1956, officials from the Central Committee approached Tajikistan's first secretary Bobodzhon Gafurov and asked for his thoughts on how to improve Soviet Oriental studies. Soviet foreign policy was undergoing a transformation, from the isolation of the late Stalin period towards a new engagement with the East and former colonial lands in particular. Oriental studies as it was practiced at the time was found wanting—too mired in archaism and lacking the trained cadres to study contemporary issues. Gafurov agreed that the Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Studies needed to be reorganized, but he did not want to stop there. In a note to Dmitrii Shepilov, Central Committee secretary for ideology and soon to become minister of foreign affairs, Gafurov wrote:

I've been thinking about the question how to improve our work in the countries of the East for a long time. The state of this work is indeed intolerable. But improving the work of the Institute of Oriental Studies is not enough. I think that we need to take some fundamental organizational measures. We need to start reorienting people from the very beginning toward the study of the contemporary East.<sup>1</sup>

Gafurov probably knew by this point that he was himself being considered for the job of leading the institute. At the twentieth Party Congress in February, Anastas Mikoian severely criticized the Institute of Oriental Studies, claiming that “while in our days the Orient is waking up, this Institute is still dozing contentedly”<sup>2</sup>; and in May Gafurov was officially relieved of his Party job in Tajikistan and moved to Moscow, where he would reshape Oriental studies and also play a role in Soviet foreign policy, especially through cultural diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Although he had made his career in the Tajik party, Gafurov had earned his stripes as a scholar with a thesis on Tajik history, which would be developed over the years by a collective of authors in ever thicker editions.<sup>4</sup> For all of his promotion of the study of the contemporary Orient, Gafurov's own publications, as well as the scholarly work he organized within Tajikistan, focused very often on the distant past.<sup>5</sup> The work of Gafurov and many

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others in the new academic institutions of Oriental Studies in Tajikistan and other Soviet republics became part of a broader dynamic of nation building within a Soviet framework.

At the same time, Oriental studies became an important part of the USSR's international strategy. In the most direct sense, institutes that studied the "Orient" helped train specialists who went on to work for the Foreign Ministry or KGB, as advisers to trade missions, and in other capacities. Sometimes the institutes themselves provided "cover" for intelligence officers; other times they helped establish backchannels for diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> To take one instance, in 1977 Gafurov famously went on a *hajj* (pilgrimage) as part of a trip to Saudi Arabia, where he had gone to help improve Moscow's relations with the kingdom.<sup>7</sup> His successor at the institute, Evgenii Primakov (director 1977–1985), an Arabist by training, was frequently called upon to go on diplomatic missions, and eventually left scholarship completely to work in foreign policy, with a career that culminated in the late 1990s in his tenures as foreign and then prime minister of the Russian Federation.<sup>8</sup>

Even more important is the broader role that the growth of Oriental studies played in Soviet public diplomacy by presenting the Soviet Union as the defender of cultures that had been subject to European colonialism. Of course, its international engagement came with risks. As the eminent Soviet Japanologist Evgenii Zhukov explained at a meeting of Central Asian academics in 1965, the Americans were inviting the world community of scholars to the 1967 International Congress of Orientalists in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in order to wage an ideological battle: "They will use the delegations from Asia and Africa selected by them [...] to fight against Marxism-Leninism. [...] We need to come to this congress well-armed. We need to sharpen our ideological weapons."<sup>9</sup> Still, as the Afghanistan specialist Iurii Gankovskii noted with satisfaction in 1972:

one could cite many examples that prove that the flowering of Oriental science (*vostokovednaia nauka*) in Tajikistan is attracting the sympathy of the foreign progressive intelligentsia in Iran, in Afghanistan, in India, in Pakistan, as well as in Arab countries, in Bangladesh, [arousing sympathy] towards those social, cultural, economic and political conditions that make such research possible [in the Soviet republics of Central Asia].<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the development of Oriental studies, even in its most classical forms of historical and philological analysis, was already proving to be a victory in public diplomacy for the USSR, even without engaging within more "immediate" problems of economics and politics. Although the range of topics covered in various Oriental studies institutes around the country had greatly expanded since Mikoian's critique at the twentieth Party Congress, Gankovskii's statement suggests that views on "classical" Oriental studies had come full circle.

Gafurov's story illustrates one of the central themes of this volume: the complicated relationship between knowledge of the Orient and domestic and

foreign politics. Debates about the relationship between knowledge production and power predate the histories presented in this volume, but it was Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* that fully ignited the still continuing debate about the role that the study of the "Orient" played in creating a discursive object for colonization.<sup>11</sup> A number of scholars have questioned the applicability of Said's findings to the Russian case, on the grounds that Russia was itself the subject of orientalising views in the thought of many Europeans,<sup>12</sup> that centuries of closer contact meant that the relationship between Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists was fundamentally different to what one saw in European overseas empires; also, Russian scholars often defined themselves *against* their European counterparts. Others have pointed out that only a narrow understanding of Said's thesis and how debate on it has evolved allows one to suggest the paradigm's complete inapplicability to Russia.<sup>13</sup> The link between power and knowledge, between research and policy, between a discursive "Orient" and real administrative and military power exercised there, are all present both in the Russian empire and in the Soviet case. Against this ambiguous tradition of imperial Russian Oriental scholarship, the subsequent development of Oriental studies in the Soviet period seems to represent a clear and undisputable attack on Western "Orientalism": the Soviet Union defined itself as an anti-colonial state, especially when operating within former Tsarist colonial areas (such as Central Asia and the Caucasus) and when engaging with former European or Ottoman colonies. After 1917 Russian Oriental studies were officially called upon to transform from a tool of oppression into an instrument of liberation.

### **The concept of interlocking Oriental studies**

In this volume we situate the development of Soviet Oriental studies (or "Orientalology," as the academic field of studying the "Orient" is termed) in a broader Cold War setting. In particular we compare the Soviet production of knowledge on the Orient with the ways Oriental studies developed in the US, where scholarship was suffering—but also benefitting, through state funding—from similar political entanglements. We argue that in the Cold War, Orientalology in both the USSR and the United States was as much about the "other superpower" as it was about the "Orient," and that on both sides Orientalist scholarship underwent a new wave of politicization that accompanied an unprecedented expansion of its institutional infrastructure.

The present studies continue the line of investigation begun in an earlier volume, *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, published with Routledge in 2011.<sup>14</sup> Our overall goal is to integrate the Russian and Soviet traditions of Oriental studies into current Western debates on the study of the Orient, and also of "Orientalism," where the Eastern European and Central Asian cases have so far hardly been visible. In the 2011 volume our main concern was to provide an outline of the major developments in the domestic history of Soviet Oriental studies, in various sub-fields (history, literature, Islamic

studies), and in various republics of the USSR (from Moscow and Leningrad to Central Asia and the Caucasus). The focus was to demonstrate how Soviet Orientology developed historically out of the strong Imperial tradition of Russian Oriental studies, on the one hand, and out of the Soviet Marxist framework, on the other.

These issues are also recurring in this volume. However, the contributions that follow transcend the framework of domestic dynamics to develop a focus on processes of interaction with other scholarly traditions. It is through the study of these interactions that the Soviet schools of Orientology can be placed in an international context, especially for the Cold War period. This entails a stronger attention to the role of Oriental studies for Soviet foreign policies, towards the “Oriental” world, but also towards the United States.<sup>15</sup> Besides providing archive-based studies on the development of Soviet projects of Orientology and Oriental archaeology, we also zoom in on the US perspective on how Oriental studies were conducted in the USSR; and in order to provide a case for direct comparison, we include an analysis of the development of Japanese studies in the United States, as well as a chapter on the political role of Oriental studies in Yugoslavia—another Cold War socialist state with a sizable own “Oriental” population, the Muslim Bosniaks.

The contributions in this volume are united by their exploration of how Orientalisms and Orientologies are, in various constellations, “interlocking”. With this term we refer to a relationship in which different actors in scholarship and politics, on national and international levels, are so closely linked to each other that any movement of one of them will also affect the functioning of the others. “Interlocking” thereby modifies the traditional idea of unidirectional transfers for explaining the diffusion of techniques and interpretations and demonstrates the various points of interaction between Soviet, Western and “Oriental” Orientologies, despite the different ideological frameworks. In this interplay, political and scholarly messages are constantly encoded and decoded for various target audiences, and interpretations of history and culture can be modified to a degree that meanings are completely altered.

The metaphor of “interlocking” Orientologies is borrowed from the work of our Amsterdam colleague Joep Leerssen, whose *Study Platform of Interlocking Nationalisms* (SPIN) analyzes the interconnectedness of European romantic nationalisms in the nineteenth century. Just as current research on “Orientalism” has a tendency to focus on particular national schools, in isolation from each other, so also the history of nationalism has largely been studied internalistically from exclusivist national perspectives, in teleological and finalistic fashions that legitimate the existing nations today. Against this trend, Leerssen has demonstrated that in the Romantic period, intellectuals such as historians, philologists and folklorists in Europe—from Iceland and Ireland over Germany and France to Poland, Russia and the Balkans—were in constant exchange and developed their concepts in close interaction; and also the ensuing practices and institutions—associations of students and local historians, national monuments and celebrations, opera and museums—were

pan-European phenomena, irrespective of the conflicting aspirations that ensued from the ethnic nationalisms they fostered.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, *Orientalism* also evolved as a research tradition of pan-European nature (including Russia, and with the US joining full steam in the Cold War period), with common practices and institutions. And all ideological differences notwithstanding, *Orientalists* on both sides of the Iron Curtain found themselves under similar political pressures and constraints, to which they responded and at the same time also contributed. And finally, just as European romantic nationalisms also fed from the knowledge provided by local informants—for instance in the Baltics, where ethnic German folklorists relied on the data provided by Estonian collaborators—so also Soviet and Western *Orientalisms* incorporated “Orientals,” first as providers of raw information but increasingly as colleagues; and just as the German folklorists paved the way for Baltic nationalisms,<sup>17</sup> so also Muslim *Orientalists* from Central Asia used the system of Soviet *Oriental* studies to develop their own national agendas.

To be sure, Soviet *Oriental* scholarship was subject to direct state control to a much higher degree than its Western counterparts, with the Communist Party regularly intervening in academic debates, reshaping the academic institutions, and appropriating scholarship for propagandistic and political purposes. The state’s anti-religious policies put additional constraints and limitations on the study of Muslim societies, past and present. Moreover, *Orientalists* were constantly urged to focus on contemporary developments and provide knowledge which would help the USSR to expand its outreach in the developing world and counteract British and US influence. This political pressure shaped Soviet *Orientalism* not only in the central *Oriental* institutes in Moscow and Leningrad but also in the institutes of *Orientalism* that the Soviets established, since the 1940s, in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In the US, too, scholarship, on the “Orient” (whether the Middle East, Japan or Soviet Central Asia) fed into broader public and political discourses, and there were clear links with the military and the intelligence communities. To take just two examples that will be elaborated later in this book, in the 1940s US *Orientalists*/*Japanologists* were called upon to train the military officers in charge of the US occupation of Japan (1945–1952);<sup>18</sup> and under Carter and Reagan a group of *Orientalists*/*Sovietologists* directly contributed to the formulation of political strategies for undermining Moscow’s rule in Muslim-populated Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.

There are thus multiple opportunities to compare the politicizations of *Orientalism* in East and West in the Cold War era. Next to comparative perspectives, in this volume we also want to explore the direct or indirect points of interaction between Soviet and Western *Orientalisms*—where *Orientalists* responded to each other. What emerges is a triangle, in which the West, the USSR and the Orient are in constant interaction. This interaction is all the more fascinating because after World War II the Orient was not only the classical object of *Orientalist* research and a major target area of Western and Soviet foreign policies, but also an emerging global player that navigated

between the capitalist and the socialist systems; furthermore, the (Muslim) Orient was also an ambiguous overlapping area, since a significant part of it—the Caucasus and Central Asia—was part of the USSR.

By comparing and putting into context, our major goal is to challenge the widespread assumption that Soviet Oriental studies developed largely in political and scholarly isolation.<sup>19</sup> We hope that this will make a meaningful contribution to the historiography of Orientology on both sides of the Iron Curtain and also provide an impetus for rethinking the political and scholarly frameworks of how to conceptualize the “Orient,” Russia, and the “West” in our days—in the context of the failed Arab Spring and the widespread perception of a newly emerging Cold War with Russia.

“Orientology,” as a super-discipline that has historically grown to encompass the study of the history, languages, literatures, societies, economies and political systems of the “Orient” (in its broadest definition: from the Maghreb to Japan), has been a powerful category for organizing scholarship in the twentieth century. We will demonstrate that in the USSR it has weathered not only political pressures but also conceptual critiques, long before Said’s famous book gave “Orientalism” a negative connotation in the West; and we argue that the interlocking nature of Orientology contributed a great deal to its longevity. Western and Soviet Orientologies presented themselves as distinct from each other, but they also responded to and thereby reinforced each other; and on both sides responses had to be found to the actual challenges that came from the changing “Orient”. From this relational perspective we suggest understanding Orientology not by defining its possible essence but by focusing on the various “docking spots” of the discipline—that is, its capacities to interlock with the state and the broader public, with other national Orientologies and other academic disciplines, and with actors from the Orient, who then appear as both subject and object of Orientalist research.

## **Chapters**

The seven contributions to this volume are united in their analysis of this “interlocking” relationship, which includes processes of transfer and re-transfer, but also competitions and conflicts as well as instances of cooperation and integration. Recurring topics in all chapters are the interaction between various national traditions of studying the East, the interplay between political and scholarly institutions (including situations where activist scholars tried to transform state policies), and the role of “Orientals” within academic research schools, in the USSR, the United States, and Yugoslavia.

### ***Origins and comparisons***

As part one of this volume we offer one comprehensive comparative chapter, Masha Kirasirova’s “Orients Compared: US and Soviet Imaginaries of the Modern Middle East”. Kirasirova first elaborates the different historical

trajectories of US and Russian Orientalology before the Second World War, including the place of missionary writings on Islam and the Orient in both Russia and the US. The author then demonstrates how these traditions transformed in the Cold War era, in response to the new geopolitical realities but also in the context of domestic changes. One of the striking continuities is the strong “missionary” character of Marxist (atheist) Orientalology in the USSR – that is, the attempt to create a maximum outreach for propaganda and political “conversion” in both the “Orient within” and the “foreign East”. Russian Orientalists became involved in official associations that promoted Soviet soft power abroad, above all the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS); and scholars were also called upon to give lectures to the broader Soviet public in order to rally public support for Khrushchev’s massive investments in the decolonizing East. Kirasirova argues that such activities, and the ambitious popular publication programs that accompanied them, had no clear counterpart in the US, where the image of the Orient remained that of a distant and exotic region, in spite of the massive US investments in the Middle East and the growing interconnection through oil production/trade and military alliances.

### *Transfers*

Part two of this book focuses on transfer processes, including the interlocking with other academic disciplines and religious learning. Alfrid K. Bustanov, in Chapter 3 (“From Tents to Citadels: The Transfer of Oriental Archaeology to Soviet Kazakhstan”), conceptualizes archaeology on the Orient as a discipline to which classical Orientalology establishes an “interlocking” relation, to the degree that “Oriental archaeology” becomes a subdiscipline of Orientalology. Bustanov outlines how archaeology in Central Asia interacted with Oriental textual studies, including in the field of cultural heritage preservation. In Soviet Central Asia, archaeologists set up “complex expeditions” that were conducted together with historians, philologists and anthropologists—a multidisciplinary approach that was also meant to bridge the study of the ancient, medieval and modern periods. In the post-war period, Kazakh archaeologists who had obtained their professional education at academic centers in Leningrad gradually developed their own research projects in Kazakhstan. This led not only to the institution of a Kazakh school of Orientalists/archaeologists in Alma-Ata but also to a re-interpretation of the dominant paradigm according to which Kazakhs had always been nomads; this nomadic paradigm was rejected in favour of a new image of Kazakhs as a nation that descended from ancient city-dwellers. Curiously, while the message was inverted, the normative Orientalist framework (the higher value attached to urban civilization compared to pastoralism) largely remained the same—another indication of the success of Western (in this case, Soviet) Orientalology in the East.

A similar important docking spot of Soviet Orientalology was its relation to Muslim scholarship, and thus to Islamic education—a link that has largely

been obfuscated by the various degrees of atheist propaganda that permeated Soviet Orientology also after World War II. As Bakhtiyar Babajanov argues in Chapter 4 (“Islamic Scholars in the Soviet Institute of Oriental Studies”), former Islamic students played a significant role within the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences. When the institute was opened in 1943, former graduates from local Islamic *madrasas* began to be employed for cataloguing and copying work, and later also for editing and translating Oriental manuscripts, which remained the core task of the Soviet Oriental Institute in Tashkent. The linguistic and palaeographic skills of these new “*ulama*-Orientalists” were indispensable for the growing number of tasks that co-workers with merely a Soviet education were not able to carry out; it was thus “Islamic Soviet Orientalists” who laid the material groundwork even for the grand state projects of Soviet Uzbek national cultural heritage. For the former Islamic students and scholars themselves, the institute offered a new opportunity to work with Islamic texts; and after the repression of Islam and Muslim scholars in the Stalinist period they now gained a relative security from political persecution, in spite of the political intrigues that continued to be spun against them.

In both cases we see a transfer of knowledge from the central institutions in Moscow and Leningrad to the Soviet south; and in both cases the development of local Orientology was accompanied by a flow of political directives and interference from the Party leaderships in Moscow and the republican capitals. Western scholarship has largely looked upon the achievements of Soviet Oriental studies in the Central Asian republics with disdain—for the local institutes’ dumb following of mindless political demands, for the incapacity of some of their directors, and for the neglect of the important Islamic and manuscript heritage.<sup>20</sup> Bustanov and Babajanov’s contributions put these shortcomings of Central Asian Orientology into perspective: yes, local scholarship was stifled by the political absurdities created by the Party (including the constant Cold War-related urge to focus on the “foreign” and contemporary East); and yes, there were evil machinations by individual players who made meaningful research next to impossible. But Oriental manuscript research and archaeology were indeed brought forward, in an admirable collaboration of Russian and Central Asian (Muslim) scholars; and next to several misfits there were able administrators, in both Alma-Ata and Tashkent, who cared for their collectives and who designed ambitious research projects. Most importantly, the scholars on the spot and their local bosses also learned how to play the game at Union level and how to attract budgets for their projects.

Chapter 5 offers a history of Japanese studies in the United States, written by Ruud Janssens. Janssens asks whether Said’s archetypical knowledge-power paradigm has value for US Japan studies: not denying that many North American Japan experts also produced typical “Orientalism” in their writings, Janssens’ major argument is that on the whole, twentieth-century Japan studies in the US had the stated goals of fighting negative stereotyping

and racism and enhancing peace and trade. In particular, Japanology in the United States defies Said's claim that Oriental scholarship necessarily supports imperialist policies (unless one regards US trade and democracy promotion as a form of imperialism). One would assume that World War II, and in particular the US occupation of Japan, would constitute an ideal example of "Orientalism," in which Orientalist scholarship shaped and supported political domination; but as Janssens argues, American scholars of Japan played hardly any role in the enforced transformation of Japan that the US promoted during the occupation (although they were crucial for setting up schools and training programs for the military government officers). This brings us to the core of the Saidian dilemma—namely, how to study a different society or region if not from one's own cultural and temporal embeddedness, and further to the general question of whether any "Western" interference in the East must per se be qualified as "negative" or destructive. In the case of defeated Japan, the destruction had of course already been achieved, not least in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the political and economic reforms that the US then enforced were arguably initiating a success story, with emancipating value for much of the population, bringing welfare and democracy. This all occurred under continued US military hegemony, one might add—but the same holds true for Western Europe, and in particular for West Germany.

As Japan transformed from an exotic and fierce enemy of the US into a major trade partner and ally in the Cold War, Janssens finds it is difficult to detect any clear pattern of dominance in expert writings on Japan. With support from American foundations, Japanology became an established discipline, largely following the general trends that social sciences went through in the second half of the twentieth century and even producing scholarly associations that were highly critical of US policies in the Far East and of the Vietnam War. A particular characteristic of US Japanology was its collaboration with scholars from Japan, not as mere informants but as respected professors (next to Japanese Americans). This process paralleled developments in the USSR, as indicated above with the example of Gafurov; but in the case of US Japanology, much of its financial support also came from Japanese business, in particular from car manufacturers. As a result, Janssens sees the case of US Japanology as an invitation to nuance the assumption that Orientology by definition supports imperialism and that it "gives no voice" to the Orientals. And although Soviet and Marxist Japanese studies are left out of the equation, the Japanese case seems to support and modify the "interlocking" argument that we develop on the basis of Soviet and Sovietologist cases.

### ***Competition and conflict***

The final section of this volume presents cases where national Orientologies were competing and conflicting with each other. Chapter 6, "Competing National Orientalisms: The Cases of Belgrade and Sarajevo," takes us to

Yugoslavia, another Cold War player with its own, often forgotten, tradition of Oriental studies. Here Armina Omerika examines the competition between Bosnian and Serbian Orientology over the definition of the Bosnian Muslim cultural heritage. As in Soviet Uzbekistan (Chapter 4), scholars with an Islamic *madrassa* educational background from before the Second World War were important for setting up secular Oriental studies, especially in Sarajevo's Institute of Oriental Studies. Tito's role in the Non-Alignment movement and his establishment of relations with the Middle East was an important stimulus for expanding the infrastructure of Oriental studies; but just as in Soviet Central Asia, despite the foreign policy-related demands from above, Yugoslavia's Oriental research centers also continued to focus on "the Orient within," that is, on the history of the Yugoslav lands in the Ottoman period. As Omerika shows, Oriental scholarship in Belgrade and in Sarajevo was closely interlocking, but it was also deeply influenced by national sentiments. Bosnian and Serbian scholars found themselves in conflict over their interpretations of the Bosnian "Oriental" (Muslim) national identity and over the character of Islam; these academic debates directly helped prepare the ground for the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Interestingly, in Tito's Yugoslavia, issues of Orientalism and Eurocentrism in scholarship were already being discussed in the early 1950s; and while the publication of Edward Said's book in 1978 did not create the same "splash" as in the West, the proximity of Yugoslav scholars to Western/Central Europe did make a subsequent integration of Saidian ideas into their discourses easier than in Russia, where Orientalists largely ignored Said until quite recently.<sup>21</sup>

Chapter 7, "Propaganda for the East, Scholarship for the West: Soviet Strategies at the 1960 International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow," examines cases of direct contact and exchange between Soviet, Western and "Oriental" colleagues. Already in 1954, one year after Stalin's death and two years before Gafurov started to reform Soviet Oriental studies, the Soviets established links to Western Orientalists by sending significant delegations to Orientology Conferences in Cambridge (UK) and Munich; and in 1960 they eventually invited the world community of Orientalists to Russia. This twenty-fifth International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow became, under Gafurov's chairmanship, a curious amalgam of aggressive Soviet anti-Western rhetoric in the opening forum and quite conventional scholarship in the individual sections; as Michael Kemper demonstrates, Soviet propaganda evolved side by side with a display of respectable scholarly communication, in which the ordinary Soviet scholars perfectly integrated themselves into the traditional trajectory of "bourgeois" Oriental studies represented by their many Western guests. Even in the run-up to the congress, Soviet scholars identified the dilemmas that ensued from the growing interaction of USSR Orientalists with their Western counterparts, and discussed the future of Oriental studies in the light of decolonization: would Soviet Orientology not continue, willingly or unwillingly, the old colonial approaches to the Orient, by setting the latter apart as the eternal "other"? How could a Western (including Russian)

academic discipline, designed in the past for Western political purposes, transform to include “Oriental” perspectives and integrate with the research that “Orientals” themselves did, in India, China and the Muslim Middle East, from very different starting points? These questions foreshadowed many of the points raised several years later in the West, by well-known scholars such as Anouar Abdel-Malek and Edward Said. Still, Gafurov did not take these initiatives further, perhaps sensing that an encompassing post-colonialist critique of Orientalism and Orientology would also undermine the Soviet approaches to the “Orient,” both domestic and foreign.

In the US, where Orientology was mainly studied at universities, the relationship to the state was traditionally much looser than in the USSR. Yet after World War II the field began to be shaped by strategic funding programs that supported research on the Middle East and the USSR as well as on Japan. These targeted programs, whether supported by the state or by the Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford foundations, provided a major stimulus to expand but also reshape the existing area studies; in our volume this is discussed in most detail in the contributions by Kirasirova and Janssens (Chapters 2 and 5). As Artemy M. Kalinovsky shows in his “Encouraging Resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen School, and the Crisis of *Détente*” (Chapter 8), in the 1970s and 1980s American and European academic Orientalists who worked on the “Soviet East” succeeded in bringing themselves into the circles of political advisers to the US State Department. There they began to develop strategies for fostering unrest in Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus; these Muslim areas of the USSR had the potential, they believed, to unite against Moscow and contribute to bringing down the “Soviet Empire”. Yet even this aggressive form of “Sovietology” was closely interwoven with the work of Soviet Orientologists in the USSR, for Western observers were highly dependent on Russian publications about a perceived revival of Islamic activities in Soviet Central Asia; reading “between the lines” of these Soviet publications, Sovietologists like Paul Henze and Alexandre Bennigsen concluded that there was indeed a prospect of a new anti-Soviet Islamic militancy. And while the well-known Bennigsen school of Sovietology practically monopolized academically informed political writing on the Muslims of the USSR in the West for more than two decades, it also met with serious criticism and inspired new visions of the role and position of Muslim Central Asia in the USSR.<sup>22</sup> And finally, in the 1980s Soviet scholars responded to the publications of Bennigsen in their own works and “situational reports,”<sup>23</sup> which brings the interlocking paradigm full circle.

Although this volume does not delve into the post-Cold War period, the issue of knowledge-power relations and the role of politics in scholarship has not, of course, declined in importance. The political functions of Oriental studies have transformed but not abated, even if the field has undergone significant changes. The splitting up of Oriental studies into specific area (or country-specific) studies and the transfer of “Orientalist” knowledge into sociology, political studies and history, accompanied by the emergence of

“Islamic studies” as a new expanding discipline, are of course processes that started in the first half of the twentieth century; Orientalology can be zoomed in and out of, and the many changes often preclude a clear view of the substantial continuities.

In the West these processes have been reinforced by the growing awareness of “Orientalism,” leading eventually to the demise of “Oriental studies” as the old umbrella name. In the post-Soviet countries, by contrast, institutes of Oriental studies are still prominent and continue to play a role in the foreign policies of these now-independent states, while their role in nation-building has only grown. Historiographies produced during the Soviet period are still called upon to provide national narratives. Gafurov’s *Tajiks* is still sold at every bookstall in Tajikistan, in Tajik, Russian and even English editions, and the historian is celebrated with frequent conferences and *festschriften* and memorialized on the 50-somoni national banknote. Gafurov’s monograph, which was important for developing a Tajik national identity within the Soviet Union and linking it with a broader Persianate cultural world, has proved even more necessary for Tajikistan’s post-Soviet rulers. This situation is not unique to Tajikistan, and national histories are written at times to advance or support competing territorial and cultural claims. In the meantime, works on national history produced in the Soviet period have been supplemented by new histories produced by younger historians, following similar agendas but in a different context.<sup>24</sup>

Western Orientalology, if we may still use this term, has seen a number of divisive splits in recent decades, connected to US policies in the Middle East and the War on Terror. For some intellectuals, the “Muslim World” came to be seen not as a bulwark against communism but as a source of violent resistance against Western values. Scholars like Bernard Lewis in the United States have been called upon once again to “explain” the Middle East and the “Muslim world” to policymakers and the public. The support for regime change in the Middle East, a general projection of Muslim “backwardness,” and the “clash of civilizations” that scholars like Lewis, Samuel Huntington, and Daniel Pipes espoused in their roles as public intellectuals has in turn invited a vigorous debate among other scholars.<sup>25</sup> As in previous eras, their views and convictions have both driven foreign policy and been shaped by political prerogatives.

The historical investigation into such forms of knowledge-power relations in the context of geopolitical confrontation is important for understanding our own disciplinary trajectories, and also our situation as scholars today. While in the twenty-first century, few historians, Islamologists or area studies experts in the West would see themselves as “Orientalists” in the classical sense (this term is now again mostly used for classical text studies, as it had been in the beginning), we are all still confronted with the fundamental problem of how to study a different civilization without simplified stereotyping and without translating scholarly authority into legitimacy for political dominance. The temptation to do so is great. The public demand that our

scholarship be “relevant” for our societies and for our foreign policy is clearly expressed in the academic funding programs, whether at national or EU level. It also has direct repercussions for teaching: universities continue to open, merge, or close down area studies departments (and the “vital language” programs) according to changing geopolitical configurations, and a course on “Putin’s Russia” attracts more students than one on “Russia and the Mongols,” although the latter might have more educational value. All this limits our capacity of critically investigating our own standpoints. As several of our contributions demonstrate, in this entanglement the major consolation is that political and military leaders hardly ever listen.

## Notes

- 1 B.G. Gafurov’s letter regarding the improvement of the study of the contemporary East, February 5, 1956, *Akademia Nauk v resheniakh TsK KPSS, 1952–1958*, ed. by V. Afiani and V. Ersakov (Moscow, 2010), pp. 553–554.
- 2 ‘Rech’ tov. Mikoiana’, *XX S’ezd kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza, 14–25 fevralia 1956 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1956), p. 324.
- 3 On the connection between Gafurov’s promotion and Khrushchev’s Third World policy, see Kemper’s chapter in this volume, as well as Artemy M. Kalinovsky, “Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1964,” *Ab Imperio* 2 (2013), pp. 191–222.
- 4 By 1989, 62 per cent of college/university students identifying as Tajik had a copy of the book in their possession. See Kirill Nurjanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Social and Political History* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2013), p. 173.
- 5 On Gafurov’s career and influence, see Lisa Yountchi, “The Politics of Scholarship and the Scholarship of Politics: Imperial, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Scholars Studying Tajikistan,” *The Legacy of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. by Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 217–240; Marlene Laruelle, “The Return of the Aryan Myth: Tajikistan in Search of a Secularized National Ideology,” *Nationalities Papers* 35, 1 (2007), pp. 51–70; and Hanna E. Jansen’s ongoing PhD project at the University of Amsterdam.
- 6 Sergey Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 7 V.M. Alpatov, *Iazykovedy, vostokovedy, istoriki* (Moscow: IAzyki slavianskikh kul’tur, 2012).
- 8 Primakov has written several memoirs about his time in politics, but the one that discusses his role in Middle East policy in most detail is Evgeny M. Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs: Behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).
- 9 Record of the meeting of the Social Sciences Section of the USSR Academy of Sciences devoted to current problems of development of social sciences in Kazakhstan and the republics of Central Asia, December 1, 1965, Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, fond 1731, opis’ 1, delo 56, p. 27.
- 10 “Regarding the Activity of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Tajik SSR,” discussion in the Sector of Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, April 29, 1972. Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, fond 1731, opis’ 1, delo 157, p. 74.
- 11 Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd rev. edn, 2010), pp. 183–215.

- 12 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).
- 13 Proponents of the idea that Russian relations with the Orient and discourses about the East were substantially different from western European ones include David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), and Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Others have pointed out that Said's ideas, particularly as refined by other scholars, provide a useful framework for understanding Russian attitudes and discourses. See the debate between Adeeb Khalid, Nathaniel Knight, and Maria Todorova, *Ex Tempore: Orientalism and Russia*, in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 691–727. Several PhD projects are now extending this debate into the Soviet period, including Matthias Battis' research on Vladimir Semenov, which he is completing at Oxford University, as well as Hanna E. Jansen and Sara Crombach at the University of Amsterdam. See also Alfrid K. Bustanov, *Settling the Past: Soviet Oriental Projects in Leningrad and Alma-Ata*, PhD thesis (University of Amsterdam, 2013).
- 14 *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, edited by Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (London: Routledge, 2011).
- 15 Western scholars picked up on Moscow's use of the "Soviet East" in its competition with the US, but paid less attention to the role of Soviet Oriental studies in this regard. See, for example, Yaacov Ro'i, "The Role of Islam and the Soviet Muslims in Soviet Arab Policy," *Asian and African Studies* 10, 2 and 3 (1974/5); K. Dawisha and H. Carrere d'Encausse, "Islam in the Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union," *Islam in Foreign Policy*, ed. by A. Dawisha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 16 Joep Leerssen, "Literary Historicism: Romanticism, Philologists, and the Presence of the Past," *Modern Language Quarterly* 65, 2 (2004), pp. 221–243; idem, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (2nd edn; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); idem, "Oral Epic: The Nation Finds a Voice," *Folklore and Nationalism during the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by T. Baycroft and D. Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 11–26.
- 17 Anne Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales: Europe, XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1999).
- 18 Although we do not address it in the volume, a related theme is the proliferation of "Oriental" themes in literature, film, and popular culture in general which both reflected changing foreign policy concerns and obviously shaped the public attitude towards international politics. See, for example, Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).
- 19 This holds true for other areas of inquiry, such as economics. See, for example, Joanna Bockman and Michael Bernstein, "Scientific Community in a Divided World: Economists, Planning, and Research Priority during the Cold War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 (July 2008), pp. 581–613 (on the cooperation between Soviet and US-based economists).
- 20 Yuri Bregel, *Notes on the Study of Central Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1996).
- 21 Vladimir Bobrovnikov, "Pochemu my marginaly? Zametki na poliakh russkogo perevoda 'Orientalizma' Edvarda Saïda," *Ab imperio* 2 (2008), pp. 325–344.
- 22 For example, Muriel Atkin, *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan* (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1989).
- 23 'A. Bennigsen. Panturkizm i panislamizm v istorii i segodnia', *Islam i politika. Sbornik informatsionnykh materialov (Publikatsii zarubezhnoi pechati po problemu*

*'Islamskii faktor, Sovetskii Soiuz i Mezhdunarodnoe kommunisticheskoe dvizhenie'*), no. 4, ed. by Iu.N. Pankov (Moscow: Institut obshchestvennykh nauk pri TsK KPSS, 1986), pp. 288–296.

- 24 See Mohira Suyarkulova, “Statehood as Dialogue: Conflicting Historical Narratives of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan,” *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood*, ed. by John Heathershaw and Edmund Herzig (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 161–176.
- 25 Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, pp. 235–278.