

Case 25

Facilitating Global Knowledge Creation: University Area Studies Programs

Ford Foundation, 1952

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Background. America's diplomatic experiences in World War II demonstrated significant gaps in its own policymakers' knowledge and understanding of international regions and cultures. While such gaps may have been inconsequential in a pre-World War II world, the nation's assumption of superpower status and international leadership in the aftermath of the war made filling these gaps imperative.³⁸⁷ University international studies programs eventually would play a central role in foreign policy development in the 1960s, but they were anomalies in higher education immediately after the war, only twenty years earlier.³⁸⁸ Large foundations, particularly Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford, recognized the discrepancy between American power in international affairs and American understanding of regions over which it exerted great influence. A Ford Foundation officer noted that "the abysmal lack of knowledge" in areas that would take on great diplomatic importance in the Cold War needed to be addressed by the Foundation.³⁸⁹

Strategy. In the years immediately following World War II, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation were the first to fund programs in area studies. Both funded the creation of large scale Russian centers; Columbia's center was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and Harvard's by the Carnegie Corporation.³⁹⁰

Later, the Ford Foundation entered the arena. Its initial strategy was to create experts and knowledge through direct grants and fellowships to individual scholars and students. This strategy was an essential first step in building world-class centers of area studies—more widespread foreign area studies programs would need some basic knowledge from which to start and trained scholars to run them. Ford's fellowship program began in 1952 and continued after the conclusion of the area studies building programs.³⁹¹ From its beginning until 1977, the Foreign Area Fellowship program was responsible for \$35.1 million of Ford disbursements.³⁹²

In 1960, Ford began the institution-building phase of its foreign area studies strategy with \$15.1 million in long-term grants. Columbia received \$5.5 million for expanded programs on the Soviet Union, East Europe, East Asia, and the Near and Middle East. Harvard received \$5.6 million for building its programs on the Soviet Union, Middle East, and East Asia. Berkeley and UCLA together received \$4 million. Smaller grants for experimental and specific research purposes went to Johns Hopkins, Michigan State, Syracuse, Texas A&M, Oregon, and Pittsburgh.³⁹³ The next year, Ford disbursed \$20.77 million for long-term institution building to Indiana, Northwestern, Princeton, Yale Universities, and the Universities of Chicago, Michigan, Notre Dame, Pennsylvania, and Washington.³⁹⁴ The 1961 Annual Report of the Ford Foundation describes the objectives for these long-term grants: "The grants are designed to put studies dealing with Asia, Africa, the Near East, the Soviet Union, and East Europe on a competitive footing with other subject-matter fields.... The long-term grants, in contrast [to smaller Foundation grants intended for specific experimental or developmental purposes], provide support for up to ten years and may be used at the universities' own discretion for comprehensive development of their international interests."³⁹⁵

A Ford Foundation officer, in describing the Foundation's understanding of its purpose in the international studies field, indicated that the Foundation had recognized "the need to improve the capabilities of the United States in meeting its responsibilities in world affairs—more especially for maintaining the strength of the non-Communist nations and for assisting the social and economic

development of the new emerging nations.”³⁹⁶

Impact. In assessing the broader role that foundations played in the development of foreign policy, Edward Berman, in *Ideology of Philanthropy*, assesses the importance of the foreign area studies building efforts of Ford, and to a lesser extent, Carnegie and Rockefeller, essentially indicating that Ford achieved its articulated objectives: “These programs facilitated the scholarship that would shape American foreign policy.”³⁹⁷ As for the Ford Foundation in particular, he notes: “The Ford Foundation almost single-handedly established the major areas-studies programs in American universities.”³⁹⁸ The university recipients of Ford’s long-term grants are, Berman indicates, the leading producers of scholars and the primary training facilities for corporate, political, and academic leaders in international arenas.³⁹⁹ Early high profile individuals linked closely with foreign area studies programs such as W.W. Rostow, foreign policy advisor to Kennedy and Johnson, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and countless foreign policy diplomats and leaders since, demonstrate that these grants have had a direct impact on American foreign policy.⁴⁰⁰

Notes

387. Richard Magat, *The Ford Foundation at Work: Philanthropic Choices, Methods, and Styles* (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), 103.

388. Edward H. Berman, *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 99.

389. *Ibid.*, 100.

390. *Ibid.*, 101.

391. Magat, *Ford Foundation at Work*, 178–79.

392. *Ibid.*

393. Ford Foundation, *Annual Report: To Advance Human Welfare*, 1960, 67.

394. Ford Foundation, *Annual Report: To Advance Human Welfare*, 1961, 20.

395. *Ibid.*, 21.

396. Berman, *Ideology of Philanthropy*, 100–01.

397. *Ibid.*, 99.

398. *Ibid.*, 102.

399. *Ibid.*, 102.

400. *Ibid.*, 103.