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Mark Solovey. *Shaky Foundations: The Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus in Cold War America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013. 266 pp. ISBN 978-0-8135-5465-5.

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Contemporaries noted that the Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union led to an intense “ideological offensive” when thousands of historians and social scientists in both countries became involved in area studies, including Soviet studies in the USA and American studies in the USSR. The common feature of this offensive from both sides of the Iron Curtain was an attempt to combine the techniques and insights of new historical research and “social sciences (intelligence on demographic and cultural trends, public opinion data, media manipulation) with advanced engineering (in command and control, weapons, transport) to manage, defuse or in some cases obliterate local challenges to superpower influence” (Simpson 1998:xvi; Engerman 2009). Simultaneously the Cold War’s area studies programs began training useful experts with broad knowledge of a particular region or nation’s language, culture, history, and political, judicial, and economic systems “in terms of mediation between the national self and the other, as liaisons or inter-cultural translators (often, of course, with specific geopolitical agendas to promote)” (Shamir 2003:377). But in contrast to the American side of the Cold War story, where the US government and various corporations funded college-based social science centers for area studies as early as the 1940s, Soviet social science centers for area studies were organized much later and only in the Moscow-based institutions of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

From the very beginning, in the United States various Russian and Soviet research centers were spread all over the country in a decentralized fashion, affiliated with different colleges and universities. All these American centers were professionally organized, well-funded, and immediately integrated into an academic-national security complex, especially during the late 1940s and 1950s (Simpson 1998:xx; Engerman 2009).

During the early Cold War, from 1945 to the 1960s, the United States witnessed a sudden and head-spinning growth of the social sciences. The membership of the American Psychological Association, the main professional society for psychologists in the US, grew from 4,661 in 1947 to 15,545 within a decade, reaching 25,800 in 1967. The most phenomenal increase (fivefold) was experienced by another professional society of US social scientists, the American Sociological Association, with membership growing from 2,218 to 11,000 between 1947 and 1967. According to Mark Solovey’s book, this unprecedented increase in the numbers and prestige of

the social sciences was a direct result of the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union and the rapid growth of various extra-academic funding sources. These sources included so-called federal patrons, especially those associated with military, propaganda, and intelligence agencies, civilian science agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Mental Health, which took a strong interest in the social sciences.

According to Solovey, discipline-oriented historians of knowledge production during the Cold War have traditionally concentrated on “the major schools of thought, leading departments, and prominent scholars within a single discipline” (2). In contrast to this approach, Solovey devotes his study to the evolution of the national funding landscape. He is mostly interested in the development of funding sources and their engagements with the social sciences. Solovey clarifies the role of “patrons and their wider importance for the history of American social science by examining a small group of new funding sources,” especially the National Science Foundation, the military, the Ford Foundation and its Behavioral Science Program (3). He also examines the emergence and influence of such patrons, particularly the development of their policies and programs for funding and promoting the social sciences, which could help in both domestic and foreign politics, diplomacy, and military strategy during the Cold War. According to Solovey, American scholars, who worked closely with those patrons, had special opportunities “to influence, promote, and assess their efforts to promote progress” in the social sciences, especially sociology and psychology (4). As Solovey demonstrates, Pentagon, the Ford Foundation, and the National Science Foundation became instrumental in providing American social scientists, influential politicians, and natural scientists with new opportunities to work out the nature and uses of the social sciences for the needs of American government.

Solovey’s study develops three major arguments. The first argument is about the crucial role of the patrons who defined the development of American social sciences during the Cold War as the major ideological and instrumental tools of response to the confrontation with communism and the Soviet Union. As a result, the patrons of American social sciences through informal coordination developed a single, albeit loosely integrated system, which led to “striking commonalities in their efforts to advance the scientific and practical view of the social sciences” (4). The second argument is that both the patrons and the social scientists themselves became committed to scientism and social engineering. By “scientism” Solovey refers to the ideological position asserting that the social sciences lag behind the more “mature” natural sciences, with the implication that the former should follow in the footsteps of the latter. Commitment to social engineering stressed the practical value of the social sciences, which eventually could contribute to national welfare and human betterment. The third argument is that constant criticism by both conservative and liberal opponents of “promotion by the federal patrons of the social sciences along the rules of scientific strategy” would eventually lead to a strengthening of social scientists’ “presence in the natural science-oriented defense science establishment” (7).

Using detailed case studies of patronage in the social sciences in the United States during the early Cold War decades, Solovey presents the intriguing intertwined stories of scientific identity, social utility, and national needs in the evolution of the social and psychological sciences. But at the same time, Solovey shows how patrons and social scientists responded to important developments in American science, politics, and higher education during the same period. According to him, “those developments include the dramatic expansion of the federal science system and the defense science establishment; the powerful presence of the natural sciences and especially the physical sciences in federal and defense science agencies; bitter partisan debate about the legacy of the New Deal; the growth of anticommunist politics; the early postwar marginalization of left-liberal positions in the political, scientific, and academic communities; the rise and decline of McCarthyism; and the resurgence of liberal Democrats along with a more vigorous liberal reform agenda by the early 1960” (13).

What is missing in Solovey’s analysis is the international dimension, especially the significance of academic dialogue and exchange between social scientists in the USA and the USSR, funded by the same federal patrons, such as the American Council of Learned Societies—a dialogue which began in 1958 and contributed to the spectacular growth and importance of the politics-patronage-social science nexus and its evolution in Cold War America (Richmond 1987; English 2000; Zhuk 2013). Paradoxically, including the international aspects of the “patronage-social science nexus” and stories of the involvement of various American federal patrons in academic international exchange would have strengthened Solovey’s major arguments and made them more attractive to the wider audience of readers.

Despite this criticism, Solovey’s book is a serious and important contribution to the history of knowledge production and the role of the patronage system in the growth of the social sciences during the Cold War.

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