Context and Contours of American Cold-War Social Science: Policy Pundits and Military-Landscape Architects
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What is This?
Perhaps because of its anomalous and imprecise quality (as befitting its name) the Cold War has been the object of considerable speculation, commentary, and analysis. Early reflections on the meaning and significance of the Cold War (primarily a psychological rather than a material struggle) helped to shape and fuel it, becoming part and parcel of what strategists and theorists originally sought to define (e.g., Lippmann 1947, Zacharias 1950, Lukacs 1961). As the Cold War began to fade into the past, increasing attention was given to making sense of what happened and why, and how specific decisions and policies intersected with broader strategies (Friedman 2000, Gaddis 2000). More often than not, the historiographies that underpinned analyses of the Cold War were bound up with particular sets of political loyalties and affinities, making for contentious and sometimes rancorous debates (Paterson 1971, Schrecker 1998, Haynes 2000). Once the Cold War had been consolidated as an historical category of over-riding and over-arching significance, it became a point of reference for shifts in thought and ideas particularly in the realm of culture and the arts (Saunders 1999, Bergahn 2001).

Apart from a few recent texts (e.g., Robin 2009, Solovey and Cravens 2012), the role played by the social sciences in this global confrontation has received only cursory examination. To be sure, over the years a number of works have appeared that address particular aspects of social-scientific activity during the Cold War (e.g., Simpson 1994, Glander 2000, Parry-Giles 2002, Gilman 2003, Wax 2008). But the various partial analyses have never added up to form a whole. And more general overviews of how the social sciences developed in the post-World War II period largely fail to take into account how they were shaped by escalating tensions between the U.S.S.R and the United States (e.g., Lyons 1969). This oversight has been unfortunate. While the post-war period spawned a number of fields in the human sciences including strategic studies, Sovietology, game theory, and modernization theory, the practical assumptions that gave rise to these approaches have largely escaped close scrutiny. While current assumptions about how and why social sciences should be funded were largely forged in the Cold War crucible, broader accounts of how the current pattern of patronage developed have been notably lacking.

The publication of these two insightful and thoroughly researched volumes goes a long way to help fill this void. Mark Solovey’s focus, in Shaky Foundations, is on funding patterns for the social sciences during the two decades after World War II. Following the money, he delves into how social-scientific research was supported by both private and government agencies, including philanthropy and the military. To this end,
he discusses decisions, rationale, strategy, alliances, and rhetoric, focusing on official reports, correspondence, hearings, as well as key policy statements. He emphasizes the extent to which proposals for increased social-science funding were framed by the broader ongoing initiatives to form closer links between natural-science research and foreign policy, in the aftermath of the Manhattan Project. Solovey gives particular attention to how advocates of the social sciences sought inclusion in these ventures, particularly the National Science Foundation (NSF) with varying degrees of success. Most notably, they sought to demonstrate that they had scientific credibility (what Solovey terms "scientism"), which would make them capable of social engineering. He argues that the foundations that these provided for the social sciences ultimately proved to be shaky ones, as evident in the period after the Project Camelot episode in the mid-1960s, when the social sciences' close involvement with the military came under fire.

While Matthew Farish also gives attention to patterns of funding, his over-riding concern in *The Contours of America's Cold War* is with how the production of knowledge was implicated not only in Cold War policy, but also more broadly in the militarization of American politics, society, and culture. Consistent with this focus, his book covers the period spanning the United States' entry into World War II in 1941 and President Eisenhower's farewell address in 1961, when he bemoaned the onset of the "military-industrial complex." It is instructive that rather than using the term "social sciences," Farish prefers the term "human sciences," which he derives from Foucault's notion of "a field of knowledge that takes as its object man as an empirical entity" (p. xix). Farish examines many of the same social-scientific initiatives as Solovey. But viewing them through the lens of human sciences, he detaches them from taken-for-granted assumptions about their nature and meaning, exploring how they were implicated in larger contentious issues of knowledge, power, and authority. To this end, from his standpoint as a geographer, he is particularly interested in how geographical knowledge was implicated in defining the Cold War's contours, embodied in a set of interconnected spaces, including the North American continent, regions, world areas, and urban configurations. The Cold War, according to Farish, was primarily a spatial one premised on defining, containing, defending, and expanding territory. In his view, the American government relied not only on the knowledge produced by what were considered to be the "core" human sciences (economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology) but also on geography. It was through encouraging collaborative work among a number of these fields (with the aim of producing cumulative knowledge) that officers of the Social Scientific Research Council sought to contribute to the Cold War effort.

By reading these two works in concert, one gains a good picture of the interplay between the social sciences and the Cold War during the quarter century from 1940 to 1965. Moreover, since their epistemological assumptions are radically different, by comparing their respective inclusions and omissions, along with their accounts of particular events and activities, one also becomes much more aware of issues of Cold-War historiography that are in need of further clarification.

What is of particular concern for Solovey is the emergent complex of social science, philanthropy, and government that began to coalesce in the Cold War era. With his emphasis upon the extent to which the social sciences were supported by funding patrons, Solovey is of the view that following the money allows us to "understand what gets studied by whom, how, under what conditions, and for what purposes" (p. 203). By using the granting agency and the funds provided as his point of reference, he is able to provide a reasonable account of some of the major funding initiatives. However, what is lacking in his discussion is an examination of how the researchers, administrators and donors interacted during a particular initiative, and how the final results were presented and disseminated. For instance, in his examination of the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, funded by the Air Force's Human Resources Research Institute (HRRI), he largely confines his attention to the fact that support
for it was withdrawn in the midst of controversy (pp. 88 89). Yet in terms of who was involved in the study, under what "conditions," and with what "purposes," the Harvard Project, as Farish underscores, was very revealing. Undertaken by members of the Russian Research Center, it drew on expertise from the Department of Social Relations and was also assisted by "quantitative sociologists at Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research" (BASR). What is noteworthy about this project, as Farish points out (pp. 124 125), is that two versions of its final report were produced: one was used for military planning (reviewed and edited by the Air Force) and another (later on) took the form of an academic monograph (Bauer, Inkeles, and Kluckhohn 1956). With his emphasis on the particular "trees" of research and their funding circumstances, Solovey largely ignores the "forests" of networks (examined by Farish) that were rooted in the extensive initiatives that took place in World War II and continued to sprout and cross-fertilize during the Cold War period. Solovey argues, moreover, that in the aftermath of World War II, advocates of the social sciences were continually faced with the tasks of legitimating their fields in terms of the norms of science. The extent to which they were included or excluded, or given ample rather than minimal support, depended on how well they made their case, and whether those making decisions (relying largely on the views of scientists) felt that they were worthy of riding on Science's coat-tails. This narrative has a certain plausibility if one confines one's attention to the broad picture such as the NSF debates and the major initiatives. But if one looks more closely, questions can be raised about its ability to capture adequately what transpired. With his emphasis upon how the social scientists sought protective scientific coloration, Solovey continually makes reference to their "scientism" their claim that social science approximated the natural sciences in terms of method. Given the status that big science held in the wake of the Manhattan Project, this was a strategy that was potentially fruitful. The corollary, according to Solovey, was that scientism was linked to social engineering. In the same way that scientific knowledge provided the basis for control over the natural world, it was supposedly held that a scientistically-based social science would allow one to engineer the social world along particular lines, grounded in scientific neutrality and the elimination of values. But the figures he discusses do not rest very comfortably in this Procrustean bed. In fact, Solovey's account generates some strange bedfellows. For instance, among the groups he includes in the scientific camp was the "behavioralist movement," led by persons such as V.O. Key and Gabriel Almond. As "behaviorist leaders" they supposedly "advocated an approach to political studies that would place their discipline firmly within the scientific rather than the humanistic camp" (p. 132). Yet as Farish points out, because of Almond's experience in the strategic bombing survey, he was dismayed with the "mechanization" of social science as well as its "fanaticism and reductionism." Along the same lines he was opposed to both the "abstractions of statistics" and "the experimental method" not to mention the cultural relativism "that posited regions as incomparable." Differing from Solovey's view that Almond espoused scientism, Farish makes the case that he invoked a "strategic practicality" to make his case for support. Along similar lines, Solovey claims that Alexander Leighton (1949), in his examination of the role played by social sciences in the World War II, only included "hard-nosed, scientifically minded scholars working on specific problems defined by their wartime superiors" (p. 66). Yet as Farish notes, in his capacity as co-director of the OWI's Foreign Morale Analysis Division, Leighton hired the decidedly soft-nosed Ruth Benedict to write a cultural profile of Japan, which was later revised and published as "the best-selling The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture(1946)" (p. 80). That Leighton chose Benedict to undertake this study casts doubts on Solovey's contention that Leighton could be included among those who were deeply rooted in the anti-humanist camp of social scientists. Indeed, elsewhere Farish describes how Leighton's Human Relations in a Changing World (1949), could be seen "as an extreme but manageable challenge to the scientific method" (p. 200).
The starkly different views of particular initiatives provided by Solovey and Farish arguably stem from their focus on the Cold War as context and as contour, respectively. Using the Cold War as a general point of reference and backdrop, Solovey is able to chart how the patronage-politics-social science nexus emerged and developed, with particular reference to the National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, RAND, and the Office of Naval Research. These funding agencies, according to Solovey, subscribed to a "general scientific outlook," which was to provide the basis for "powerful technical applications during the Cold War years" (p. 87). While Solovey often alludes to what these technical applications entailed, he tends to give more attention to how concerted efforts were made to "place military strategy on a more rigorous, analytic foundation," through initiatives in the "decision sciences" such as operations research, systems theory, game theory, and the "science of strategy" (p. 87). Farish covers similar ground, but he is less interested in the efforts to generate analytical foundations than he is in how these approaches were materialized in particular practices addressing specific challenges posed by the Cold War. Noting that the RAND strategists, for all of their obsession with quantification, deployed a language of "intuition, insight, discretion, and artistry" (p. 167). He goes on to examine how their application of theory "required finely tuned abilities and assumptions senses, skills, and speculations" in the simulated war games that they fashioned in the 1950s (p. 169).

Farish's probing analysis of the RAND war games underscores his conviction that the domestic and foreign fronts of the Cold War quickly blended into one another to become inseparable. In waging a battle with the Soviet Union for human minds, the weapons deployed by the United States were ideas and threats rather than guns and bombs. Gesturing to both Foucault and former Office of War Information official, Edward W. Barrett (p. xix), Farish examines how the Cold War was in large part constituted by knowledge produced by the human sciences, particularly that pertaining to geography and space. The spatially-oriented intelligence could not be viewed as mere backdrop to the Cold War; it was folded into its very contours. Solovey, however, provides a much different account of the interplay between the social sciences and the Cold War. With his focus on how members of the political, military, philanthropic, and scientific elites deliberated about the role social sciences were to play in the emergent struggle with the Soviet Union, "the terrifying Cold War" largely lurks somewhere in the background rather than becoming the object of direct and immediate attention.

Noting that deliberations about support for the social sciences were framed "in the charged Cold War context," Solovey effectively charts how anti-communist hysteria affected discussions of how and to what extent the social sciences were to be funded and how social-scientific knowledge was to help forge the "weapons" of propaganda and (mis) information. In focusing on how science, and social-science, policies were connected to the foreign-policy aspects of the Cold War, Solovey gives particular attention to how the various actors involved (buffeted by recurrent waves of anti-communism) sought to steer between the Scylla of scientism and the Charybdis of value-laden practicality. Still, compared to Farish’s all-encompassing militaristic Cold War, Solovey’s rendition of it is rather vague and distant, largely devoid of relentless visceral confrontation and urgency. Indeed, much of what he describes could very easily apply to any modern nation-state seeking to advance its changing foreign-policy goals through deployment of the sciences within an ideologically-charged international environment. The actors performing on Solovey’s policy stage seem more concerned with convincing the powers-to-be that the social sciences were deserving of their name rather than with throwing themselves directly into the Cold War fray. The striking differences between Solovey’s and Farish’s accounts could be rooted in their preoccupations with Cold War context and contours, respectively. Solovey’s policy pundits spun their rhetorical webs within the relative calm of the Cold War storm’s eye; Farish’s military-landscape architects toiled in the trenches of its turbulent eyewall.
References


Inside Bets: Two Approaches to Compulsive Gambling

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"Ch-ching," says Danny, his right hand pulling the imaginary lever of a slot machine, "I won $300 at the Flamingo's last night." A Las Vegas native and construction worker, Danny plays video poker from time to time, typically on week-ends. Feeling good about his winning, he insists on paying for our drinks at a Thai restaurant located right off the Strip. Danny is not addicted to gambling. Actually, we are more concerned about his drinking.

Addiction by Design is an interesting book that presents much information about the
