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**Between Science, Politics and National Propaganda. Analyzing the Soviet-Polish Expert Debates on the Implementation of the Restitution and Repatriation of Archival, Library and Art Collections Following the Provisions of the Riga Peace Treaty**

This paper presents a new research agenda and discusses new archival sources for the study of the post-World War I restitution. It focuses on the Peace Treaty signed between Poland, Soviet Russia and Soviet Ukraine in Riga on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1921, thus ending the Polish-Soviet war of 1919–1920. By dividing the territories of Ukraine and Belarus between both Soviet Russia and Poland, it marked the end of the expansionist ambitions of the former and the failure of the idea of reconstructing the Commonwealth as a federation of nations comprising the historic borderlands. It led to the definition of Poland as a nation state. It is through this focus that the Treaty's article 11 - establishing the restitution of archives, libraries, and objects of cultural and historical value removed from Poland under the Tsarist rule, as well as the repatriation of artifacts and collections evacuated during World War I is considered in scholarship. This most far-reaching and successful post- World War I restitution is framed only in the context of building a Polish national heritage.

My research will first call for a more international focus on the issue of restitution and for a comparative perspective with other treaties signed by Soviet Russia with Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Finland.

Second, it will argue that the restitution and repatriation of cultural goods following the provisions of the Riga Peace Treaty should be analyzed as one of the most important expert discussions to have taken place over the definition of cultural heritage in Eastern Europe, its nationality and universality. Accordingly, following the provisions of the Treaty, a special Bilateral Mixed Commission was established involving the main Russian (ex. Igor Grabar, Alexandr Benois, Siergiej Oldenburg) and Polish scholars (ex. Marian Morelowski, Aleksander Czołowski, Stefan Rygiel) to discuss and reach an agreement over the claims of both states. The work of the commission and its meetings over the period between 1921 and 1937 has not hitherto been analyzed through a historiographical focus. My research will also call for a comparative analysis of the expert discussions of the restitution commissions, established in the aftermath of World War I to deal with restitution and repatriation claims.