

Disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and the plurality of Area Studies: A view from the social sciences

Mark R. Beissinger

After the end of the Cold War, Area Studies programmes faced severe challenges, as government and foundations cut funding, universities came under financial pressures and academic departments came to place increasing value on theory and method rather than knowledge of place. These latter issues were particularly acute in the social sciences, where traditional Area Studies scholarship grew devalued and departmental hiring practices, in many cases, came to ignore area altogether. With the number of social scientists working in Area Studies dwindling, many Area Studies programmes faced the predicament of how to continue to function as multidisciplinary intellectual enterprises – at least if multidisciplinary were understood to include the social sciences. Area Studies scholars frequently complained of the ‘death’ of Area Studies in the social sciences, expressing frustration over their inability to influence the ability of social science departments to hire Area Studies scholars.

I believe that such lamentations are premature. In this chapter I outline the ways in which Area Studies knowledge remains deeply implicated in social science research. But Area Studies as currently practised in the social sciences is significantly different from Area Studies as it was traditionally imagined during the Cold War (as an interdisciplinary enterprise aimed at a deepened understanding of place), or from Area Studies as it is currently practised in the humanities (focused on promoting a deepened knowledge of

particular cultures). In short, what we have witnessed is not so much the 'death' of Area Studies in the social sciences as the emergence of multiple models of Area Studies that function parallel to one another, with each model serving different purposes. Area Studies in that sense needs to be treated as the plural noun that it is, in that what is often touted as a singular enterprise hides within it multiple purposes.

As I outline in this chapter, there are at least three models of organizing Area Studies knowledge: 1) the traditional area-driven model (Area Studies as a space for conversation between humanities and the social sciences to promote a deepened understanding of particular cultures or places); 2) discipline-driven Area Studies (an Area Studies that fosters research at the cutting edge of disciplinary knowledge); and 3) problem-driven Area Studies (the use of area knowledge to promote cross-area conversations around a particular problem). The social sciences have been involved in all three models (as have the humanities). As Area Studies serves multiple purposes, we need to think more imaginatively about how to achieve these multiple purposes and how Area Studies intersects with the variety of outcomes that we care about. In this chapter, I provide some ideas, based on my own experience as a long-time scholar and administrator working in Area Studies, about ways of achieving these outcomes. The quality of our knowledge about the world, the production of experts who can apply that knowledge and our ability to foster a citizenry capable of making informed decisions about the world all rest significantly on the health of multiple models of Area Studies and on the determination of governments and universities to ensure their continued vitality.

Three models of Area Studies in the production of knowledge

What are the intellectual foundations of Area Studies, and what should be the relationship of Areas Studies to disciplines and to multidisciplinary inquiry? These are questions that have occupied me throughout my professional career. I am a political scientist who works on the Eurasian region. Or perhaps I am a Eurasianist who works within the grammar of Political Science. I am not exactly sure. I have spent my entire academic career within a Political Science department and have taught courses within Political

Science – some of which focus on the Eurasian region, some of which do not. I have won disciplinary awards, chaired a major Political Science department, mentored numerous Political Science scholars, hired and overseen the tenuring of many political scientists and handed out major awards within the Political Science discipline. But I have also been heavily involved in Area Studies throughout my career. I was trained as an Area Studies scholar at Harvard and founded an Area Studies centre at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have published in Area Studies journals and have taught Area Studies courses. And I served as President of the main North American Area Studies association in the Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies field. To complicate things further, my work has also strongly intersected with the work of sociologists and historians, I have often used sophisticated quantitative methods in my work alongside narrative and case study analyses and I have run an interdisciplinary institute whose purpose is to bring people together across disciplinary departments not only to study particular regions of the world, but also to address key issues that cut across both area and disciplinary boundaries. In general, when it comes to Area Studies, this kind of ‘confusion’ is a very good thing. It represents the ways in which Area Studies traverses the variety of boundaries by which we organize the production of knowledge and interpenetrates other forms of knowledge.

Traditional Area Studies as it developed after the Second World War – what I call the area-driven model of Area Studies – represented one such model of ‘confusion’ or interpenetration between area knowledge and the boundaries of knowledge production. It advertised itself as an interdisciplinary space for conversation across the humanities and social sciences as a way of producing a deepened understanding of particular cultures and places. But the aim of the area-driven model was less to produce interdisciplinary conversation than to train specialists literate in a variety of dimensions of the cultures and places with which they engaged through knowledge of their literature, culture, history, politics, economics, geography and so on. In the words of Japanese scholar Alan Tansman, the purpose of Area Studies, as traditionally understood, was to provide students with the skills to be able ‘to know, analyze, and interpret foreign cultures through a multidisciplinary lens’.¹ Accordingly, Area Studies programmes were judged by the variety of disciplinary perspectives that they could offer to students concerning a specific region of the world. This was one of the key

criteria used, for instance, by the US Department of Education Title VI programme in awarding grants and National Resource Center status to particular universities. Indeed, in the United States, part of what drove the rise of the traditional area-driven model was the possibility of gaining significant outside funding from government and foundations by demonstrating multidisciplinary ‘coverage’ of particular world regions, and area programme chairs often went to great lengths to lobby university administrations and disciplinary departments to enhance representation of their regions or replace departing faculty, precisely in order to meet the requirements of external funders.

As a way of training specialists thinking only about a specific culture or place, the area-driven model of Area Studies was extremely useful, and during its heyday it was used to produce a generation of area specialists for government and academia. However, it should be recognized that, on its own, it was often inadequate for the kinds of tasks that these individuals were asked to perform and usually needed to be combined with further professional or disciplinary training. Moreover, as a source of intellectual interaction, the area-driven model had severe limitations, as the humanities and the social sciences often spoke quite different languages, utilized profoundly different epistemologies and aimed to answer starkly different types of questions. History functioned as a kind of hinge discipline in its ability to engage with both the social sciences and humanities. But aside from conversations between social scientists and historians and between humanists and historians, it is not clear exactly how well the area-driven model was ever able to foster real intellectual engagement, even in its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s. In the Area Studies professional associations with which I am involved, there has never been a great deal of conversation between humanists and social scientists, as the two groups tend to gravitate towards separate tables.

The end of the Cold War and the professionalization of disciplines within academia presented severe challenges to the area-driven model of Area Studies. The traditional area-driven model continues to function, often at the undergraduate level in Area Studies majors and certificates, as well as in MA programmes aimed at training area-wise professionals and government officials. But a different model of area knowledge and its interpenetration with the boundaries of knowledge production emerged alongside the area-driven model, particularly within the social sciences: a discipline-driven

model of Area Studies. Here, the production of knowledge was informed by area knowledge, but the purpose was not to produce a deepened knowledge of culture and place but rather to address better the broader theoretical issues salient within specific disciplines. This discipline-driven model of Area Studies has largely come to dominate scholarly interchange and doctoral training within the social sciences.² The result has been the emergence of a different model of Area Studies within the social sciences that aims to further social scientific knowledge rather than produce a deepened knowledge of particular cultures and places. In contrast to the area-driven model, which viewed itself in opposition to social science methods and generalization, the discipline-driven model sees area knowledge as critical to the development of social science theory.

With the rise of rational choice in the 1980s and 1990s (particularly within Political Science), the demise of Area Studies within Economics (which has come to imagine itself as a universal science with minimal regard to local circumstances) and the growing role of globalization (not only under the effects of neoliberalism, but also as an object of academic study), there were soundings about the imminent death of Area Studies within the social sciences in the 1990s.³ Geography, supposedly, no longer mattered, and Area Studies was accused of the sin of being incapable of generating larger propositions and of failing to identify general processes unfolding in local circumstances.⁴ Viewed in hindsight, those debates now seem overblown, caricatured and falsely dichotomized – as most of those who participated in them now recognize. Not only is it clear that, despite globalization, place and culture continue to matter (and, indeed, have sometimes manifested themselves with particular revenge); there is also significant value in knowledge of the local for understanding the general, particularly when one possesses the ability to place it in broader perspective.

Gradually, a new generation of area scholars representing a synthesis of social science training and area skills has emerged within a number of social science disciplines (economics being the only exception). Today, area knowledge remains a critical part of the production of social science knowledge (though some social scientists continue to downplay its contribution). Not only is area knowledge critical in helping social scientists identify the questionable (and often taken-for-granted) assumptions of general theories, but it also provides much of the empirical information that social scientists use to develop theories and test ideas, as a large proportion of

social science research takes place within an area context. This is no less true for those social scientists who study their own society than it is for those studying other societies. (In the United States, those studying American politics are often jokingly referred to by those studying other societies as the most narrow of all Area Studies scholars.) There is no contradiction between outstanding social scientific work (including work using highly sophisticated quantitative methods) and Area Studies knowledge. Rather, the two are mutually complementary and reinforcing, and many of the most highly regarded works within social science have been carried out within an area setting, relying extensively on area knowledge in their analyses.⁵

For the positivist social scientist, Area Studies is not about knowledge of culture and space for its own sake, but rather about knowledge of ‘context’ – the set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular situation. In positivist terms, context is often viewed as a holder for the variety of local causal factors that one has not clearly specified or that one does not fully understand. Area knowledge is especially good for unpacking context, and in this respect it necessarily plays an important role in the production of social scientific knowledge. Let me be clear: within social science, area knowledge is not a substitute for social scientific method or research design. Simply knowing area context is not enough, and there is a great deal of Area Studies research and writing that social scientists rightly view as questionable from a social scientific point of view, given the absence of thinking through issues of methodology, research design, logic of inference, and scope conditions and generalizability. But simply knowing theory and method is grossly insufficient as well. Knowledge of context is critical if one is to get one’s social science right, and many of the most egregious errors in social science research have to do with insufficient knowledge of context.

Context is closely intertwined with all social scientific method. An understanding of context is obviously critical for ethnographic and case-based research, which directly relies on knowledge of context in order to draw inferences. But it is equally critical for quantitative, formal and experimental work. In large-*n* statistical work, for instance, an absence of knowledge about context frequently leads to what social scientists refer to as measurement error (the mismeasurement of concepts) and specification error (omitting important variables that affect the outcome of interest) – errors that can invalidate findings. Indeed, for those fluent in both Area Studies and quantitative methods, these are the kinds of issues often examined in judging

the quality of scholarship. Area scholars conversant with the language and purposes of rational choice know that the purpose of formal modelling is not to substitute for empirical research but rather to sharpen empirical research. Formal modelling is a purposeful oversimplification – not a description of reality – in order to think through the logics that might guide action under specific conditions (that is, the assumptions and payoff structures that modellers identify). It is not meant to be realistic, but to be stylized and stripped of all context except that which the modeller cares about. Rational choice generally attempts to describe the way that people would behave under particular assumptions were they to act rationally, not the way that people actually behave in reality. The best formal modellers recognize the limits of rationality, the importance of contextual factors other than those that they identify and the ways in which culture can establish rule-based behaviours that might violate self-interest. But area-trained social scientists have a great deal to contribute in terms of explaining why actual behaviour has or has not conformed to the modeller's predictions, isolating the critical aspects of context that the modeller may have misconstrued and identifying the limits of rationality. In some respects, the experimental fad in social science may be an even bigger challenge than rational choice to area knowledge. It pretends that one can isolate causal processes from their larger context through games or framing exercises conducted under controlled conditions (limiting the effects of other causal factors). But the most widely cited problems with experimental research have all been about context: the artificiality of the controlled environment in which many experiments are conducted, the inability of experiments to control completely for critical contextual variables affecting behaviour, and the ways in which context continues to shape the validity and applicability of findings beyond the experimental setting in which it was conducted. In short, all social science methods assume knowledge of context or make assumptions about context, and it is here that a discipline-driven Area Studies plays an important role in the production of social scientific knowledge.

As the discipline-driven model suggests, Area Studies knowledge need not be counter-posed to disciplinary research, but can complement and improve such research. Still, as one can also see from these examples, the knowledge requirements necessary for working as an Area Studies scholar within the social sciences have skyrocketed. In addition to the language and area skills necessary to be able to understand the contextual dimensions of research,

extensive training in increasingly sophisticated methodologies and a deep knowledge of disciplinary theoretical literature have become indispensable. It is literally impossible to cover all of this in the typical social science doctoral training programme. What this means is that social science doctoral students interested in working on a world region often have a thinner Area Studies knowledge than was true of scholars trained in the past according to the area-driven model of Area Studies. But it also means that most social science graduate students working on a world region will necessarily come to graduate study already with their area skills largely in place, either from masters' programmes that work along the area-driven model or because they are recruited from the world region that they are studying. Both of these trends are evident in graduate student recruitment within doctoral programmes in social science departments.

There is yet a third model for Area Studies to traverse the boundaries by which we organize the production of knowledge: the problem-driven or thematic model. This model, which focuses analysis around a specific problem that transcends disciplinary and geographical inquiry, draws on the widespread practice of knowledge production within the sciences and engineering, where individuals with various expertise come together to 'solve' a problem. In the social sciences and humanities we generally do not 'solve' problems in the same way that engineers and scientists do. Rather, we seek explanation or understanding. But the problem-driven approach is one that has at times been applied within International Studies as well. Many of the subjects and problems that we study and care about are not confined by geography but appear in multiple settings around the world. Most of these same subjects and problems transcend discipline, contain multiple dimensions and have been studied from multiple angles, opening up the possibility for broad interdisciplinary and cross-area engagement in ways that generate new perspectives. This type of learning can be among the most exciting, as it brings together scholars working on similar issues in different spatial localities to share their understanding and experience, thereby helping each other to place their experience into context and generating insights that otherwise might not be obtained. The purpose of such a model is less to produce generalizable propositions than to produce among its participants a better understanding of how specific cases or aspects of a problem relate to broader human experience through comparison with similar phenomena. However, problem-driven engagement, like interdisciplinary engagement in

general, has often been difficult to organize, most universities lack ways of incentivizing it, and it requires a high level of personal commitment among its participants. Within International Studies it tends to be promoted by interdisciplinary institutions that stand above any particular discipline or region. But it is not as prevalent as it should be, given the intellectual gains that it promises to deliver.

Area knowledge obviously plays a critical role in the problem-driven model, since it is area specialists who are able to bring to bear knowledge of specific problems in their particular manifestations, and it is area specialists who perhaps stand to gain most through conversation with those studying similar phenomena in other contexts. But the problem-driven model is not confined to area specialists, and indeed the cross-fertilization of ideas can come by bringing area specialists together with generalists studying particular problems from a broader perspective and can also be quite useful for both. The problem-driven model has been applied in both the social sciences and the humanities, and sometimes can bring scholars together across the social science–humanities divide. But it has had particular appeal for social scientists as a way of thinking about a broader swathe of cases for the phenomena they study and for gaining a larger perspective. It can also be an excellent forum for brainstorming purposes, for fostering collaborative research and for enhancing the training of graduate students.

However, the problem-driven model assumes the already existing presence of disciplinary and area knowledge on the part of its participants and is not a substitute for disciplinary or area training. Indeed, all three models of Area Studies should be understood as interdependent. Traditional Area Studies programmes cannot function effectively in providing needed social science Area Studies curriculum to undergraduates and masters' students without also engaging the discipline-driven model prevalent within the social sciences. And the discipline-driven model within the social sciences depends on the presence of individuals who have already gained area skills largely obtained through traditionally organized Area Studies undergraduate and masters' programmes.

Promoting the vitality of Area Studies within the social sciences

The problems confronting Area Studies in the social sciences differ in fundamental ways from the problems confronting Area Studies in the humanities. Reflecting their different purposes and epistemologies, the humanities and social sciences have been organized in radically different ways. In general, the humanities have been organized on area principles – largely around languages, families of world-cultures or regions of the world. They self-consciously recruit faculty on the basis of their knowledge of culture and place. But in the social sciences this is not the case. The area-driven model's traditional emphasis on deep knowledge of place and multidisciplinary has long been in tension with the emphasis within the social sciences on theory, method and generalization. Indeed, all four of the major social science disciplines – Anthropology, Economics, Political Science and Sociology⁶ – by and large do not recruit faculty on the basis of region, but rather on the basis of contribution to disciplinary knowledge. (Political Science is sometimes an exception, but increasingly Political Science departments have come to recruit without regard for country or region.) Even Anthropology, which generally does not subscribe to positivist epistemologies and which accords a central place in the discipline to the study of culture, tends not to recruit on the basis of region – due largely to the same prioritization of theory and method that has come to dominate in the other social sciences.

As disciplinary needs have come to assume priority, the representation of Area Studies scholars has sharply declined within social science departments. For example, one study based on a comparison of large-scale surveys of Area Studies scholars in professional Area Studies associations in the United States found that the representation of political scientists among those identifying as Area Studies specialists had halved between 1991 and 2014.⁷ The effects on curriculum offered to students at the undergraduate and graduate levels have been profound. I recently chaired a university-wide strategic task force on revitalizing Area Studies at Princeton.⁸ As part of our review, we examined trends in non-language Area Studies instruction across the university, classifying all courses credited by Princeton that contained at least 50 per cent of their content on the study of societies other than the United States and that primarily aimed to promote knowledge of a specific world area. We then examined these courses by the division of the university in which they are formally offered: social sciences, humanities, sciences or engineering. The data showed that, while the number of Area Studies courses

in the humanities increased slightly from 2008 to 2014, the number of Area Studies courses in the social sciences declined dramatically during the same period. Thus, the overall number of Area Studies courses offered at Princeton in the humanities increased by 8 per cent, while the number of Area Studies courses taught in the social sciences declined by 38 per cent. Our data only went back to the 2008–2009 academic year, and we strongly suspected that this downward trend among Area Studies social science courses would appear even more pronounced were the data to be extended back further. Moreover, of the Area Studies courses classified as social science courses over this six-year period, 38 per cent were offered in the History department (and therefore likely to be more humanities-oriented than oriented towards the social sciences),⁹ while another 22 per cent were offered in departments outside the social science departments (often, humanities departments or Area Studies programmes frustrated with the absence of social science area curriculum within the social science departments). In other words, not only had the number of Area Studies courses in the social sciences declined dramatically, but a majority of the ‘social science’ area curriculum was not even taught within the social science departments. This decline of Area Studies instruction within the social sciences at Princeton is a reflection of general trends associated with the professionalization of the social sciences. In particular, the problem inheres in the hiring process within social science departments, where the needs of Area Studies programmes and concerns for providing Area Studies curriculum for students are not held as high priorities. Demand for such instruction remains high among students; yet social science departments are increasingly unable to meet student interests in these areas, as other foci within these departments have taken priority over Area Studies.

But when one examines the Princeton data more carefully, one sees evidence of a looming humanities Area Studies problem as well. Thus, while the number of Area Studies humanities courses taught by full-time faculty at Princeton remained relatively steady over this period, what had increased in the humanities was the use of lecturers and visitors to teach Area Studies courses. The growing proportion of non-staff appointments and part-time employees in the humanities who are teaching Area Studies courses is also not a positive development for Area Studies and in some university settings threatens to undermine the quality of Area Studies education (in addition to raising issues of fairness of labour relations). So far at Princeton there has

been no parallel in the humanities to the sharp decline of Area Studies curriculum that has taken place in the social sciences. But there are worries that such a decline could take place, though for very different reasons. The humanities today at most universities feel under threat due to declining numbers of majors, as students seek out more ‘practical’ undergraduate majors. Moreover, public and private universities are under economic pressures due to the rising costs of education and declining government support. Many universities have responded to the need to cut costs by merging humanities departments based on languages, families of world-cultures or regions of the world into larger, non-area units and hiring part-time instructors and non-tenure-track staff in place of tenure-track professors. This of course threatens the traditional area-driven model of Area Studies from a different direction. In some universities the combination of declining numbers of majors and economic pressures has already led to significant cutbacks in the humanities. In short, there is a crisis of Area Studies in the humanities; but it is being experienced unevenly across universities, and its full force has yet to be fully felt. Moreover, it is fundamentally different from the crisis of Area Studies in the social sciences. In the social sciences the challenge has largely been the declining representation of Area Studies scholars among full-time faculty, caused by departments failing to hire Area Studies specialists. In the humanities, the challenge has largely been a watering down of the quality of instruction and the erosion of the traditional organization of the humanities around area, caused by declining numbers of majors and the economic pressures pummeling universities.

Why should we be troubled by the decline of Area Studies curriculum offered in social science departments? There are multiple reasons for concern. First, knowledge of contemporary cultures, economics, politics and societies around the world is vital for governments trying to address the myriad challenges that pervade our world. A recent survey of 234 current and former senior US policy-makers found that policy-makers considered Area Studies knowledge — not theoretical social science works, mathematical models, large-*n* cross-national studies or policy analyses — to be the most important contribution that academic social scientists can bring to policy-making.¹⁰ Indeed, as training of area specialists within the social sciences has declined, the governments of both the United States and the United Kingdom have noted shortages of expertise on critical regions of the world.¹¹ If courses are not being taught on societies other than one’s own

within the social science departments, then it will be extremely difficult to train the expertise that governments need to function effectively.

Second, Area Studies is central to the very purposes of a liberal arts education, and the absence of area curriculum in the social sciences means impoverishing the type of liberal arts education that social science students receive. Knowledge about foreign societies and cultures is necessary for the development of a student's critical faculties by challenging culturally based assumptions often taken for granted, illuminating alternative ways of thinking and instilling a healthy understanding of one's place in the world. True knowledge of self can only be obtained through knowledge of others, and participation in a globalized world requires a basic understanding of diverse cultures and an awareness of different perspectives. The decline of Area Studies curriculum in social science departments has meant that many social science students are not receiving exposure to ideas that might challenge taken-for-granted culturally based assumptions. The result is the production of narrow-minded, culturally biased citizens.

Third, the thinning of Area Studies within social science departments is concerning because such practices tend to be reproduced over time through the production and hiring of new doctoral students and scholars at universities. Today in the social sciences, graduate students who do not receive a deep disciplinary training stand little chance of breaking into a disciplinary hierarchy. But who will train tomorrow's professors with area expertise if Area Studies scholars are not represented in the ranks of social science departments? They simply will not be there, magnifying the problem inter-generationally. As a report on the state of Russian Studies in the United States recently concluded, 'The movement within political science away from devoting faculty lines to area specialists in general and Russia specialists in particular threatens to vitiate the ranks of political scientists studying Russia in the medium- to long-term as current generations of political science faculty who work on Russia retire and are not replaced by other Russia specialists.'¹²

Finally, most universities recognize the need for internationalization, but rarely do they recognize the need to nurture leadership for internationalization. Internationalization depends critically on the initiative of faculty, and a significant part of that initiative necessarily comes from Area Studies faculty in the humanities and social sciences. It is primarily Area Studies faculty in the humanities and the social sciences who develop global

networks and partnerships, organize study abroad experiences and mentor students interested in contemporary issues in various regions of the world. By eliminating Area Studies social science faculty, a significant portion of university leadership for internationalization is also removed. Moreover, interdisciplinary Area Studies programmes often rely heavily on social science faculty for their leadership, since Literature departments are already organized on an area principle. Such programmes need social science faculty in order to function.

Of course, an alternative to hiring Area Studies scholars in disciplinary departments is to create a separate Area Studies department along the lines of the area-driven model and simply to separate completely the study of world regions from social science theory and methods. Due to continued frustration with the inattention of social science departments to the curricular needs of area programmes in the social sciences and the decline in the numbers of humanities majors, there has been a trend at some universities towards the conversion of language and literature departments into Area Studies departments. But this insular approach tends to produce a faux interdisciplinarity within the context of a single department and leads to the isolation of the study of world regions from social science theory and methodology. Such Area Studies departments tend to be highly factious, with social science faculty hired in these departments cut off from the production of doctoral students competitive on the academic market and from academic discourse within their own disciplines. Such an approach may address the issue of the absence of area curriculum at the university for some students. But it does it in a way that ghettoizes Area Studies still further, reinforcing the very problems it is meant to address.

Any effective effort to strengthen Area Studies social science curriculum must start with the process of hiring faculty within the social science departments, as, left on their own, social science departments will not prioritize the hiring of Area Studies scholars or the provision of Area Studies curriculum; they will follow their own narrow departmental interests and ignore the broader interests of Area Studies altogether. However, knowledge about the contemporary world is too important for producing knowledgeable citizens, for creating expertise in government, for internationalizing universities and for challenging often taken-for-granted assumptions to be left simply to the whims of disciplinary bureaucracies. If

there is to be an Area Studies representation within social science departments, university-level intervention is required.

Recently, Princeton has been experimenting with one such intervention: stimulating social science departments to pursue a discipline-driven model of Area Studies as a strategy for revitalizing Area Studies within the social science departments. Essentially, departments that participate in the search process must commit half of a position towards the appointment, while the university, through its interdisciplinary International and Area Studies institute, supplies the other half. After the university administration determines the Area Studies priorities for the search, the social science departments have the opportunity to nominate their own preferred candidates to the International Studies institute on a competitive basis. Any appointment carries the requirement that, at a minimum, the newly hired faculty member annually teach an area-focused undergraduate course in order to provide students with needed Area Studies curriculum. Social science departments normally are averse to any suggestions by Area Studies programmes to hire specific scholars, seeing this as an attempt to impose less-qualified candidates (from the disciplinary point of view) onto them. But when the veto-point is reversed, and departments nominate individuals instead to International and Area Studies programmes on a competitive basis, the social science departments tend to view this as an opportunity rather than a trade-off – indeed, an opportunity at a steeply reduced price. Within its first two years of operation, this discipline-driven model for Area Studies appointments in the social sciences had successfully stimulated four different proposals from three different social science departments to hire outstanding Area Studies scholars, two of whom were selected by the International Studies institute and were hired. Even the Economics department, not known to make Area Studies appointments, expressed interest in the process. The experiment has successfully provided needed Area Studies curriculum where it had previously disappeared. At the same time, it has brought several top-ranked social science scholars to the university. These new hires have been active in developing new area-focused research centres, seminars for students abroad and exchanges with particular regions of the world. In short, what this experiment shows is that fundamentally there is no contradiction between outstanding social science and promoting Area Studies, and that university administrations interested in addressing the issue of the decline of

Area Studies curriculum in the social sciences can easily do so if they design the incentives properly and are sufficiently committed.

Conclusion: The virtue of multiple models

There is a need to reflect upon the multiple purposes of Area Studies and of Area Studies institutions and the variety of ways in which area knowledge might transcend the boundaries of knowledge production. Indeed, there is great value in fostering multiple models of Area Studies and multiple types of Area Studies institutions that address specialized purposes.

A discipline-driven model of Area Studies can help facilitate the production of area-knowledgeable doctoral candidates and can aid in addressing the declining representation of Area Studies scholars and area curriculum within social science departments. Area Studies knowledge has something distinctive to contribute to social science in its ability to unpack ‘context’ and to hold theory and method accountable to reality. The divorce of Area Studies from social science would only impoverish social science, just as the divorce of Area Studies from the social sciences would serve to impoverish Area Studies as well. But the presence of Area Studies scholars in social science departments will not come about automatically; it takes creative ways of stimulating departments to hire area scholars, and it takes committed intervention from university administrations.

The traditional area-driven model of Area Studies as a space for a deepened knowledge of culture and place through multidisciplinary learning is no longer a sufficient basis for the development of Area Studies. But there is still plenty of need for the traditional area-driven model, particularly in training undergraduates and master degree students, and in providing area training for government, business and journalism. The area-driven model is most applicable for pre-professional training. Such programmes prepare students for work on a world region, but realistically only after receiving further professional training or graduate education. It potentially could also find a niche in post-professional education – that is, in imparting area knowledge to mid-career professionals about to embark upon work in a particular region, or in providing disciplinary doctoral students who have already completed their disciplinary training with the necessary language skills and area knowledge to be able to carry out fieldwork in a particular

context. We have not yet structured international and Area Studies programmes in ways that might cater to the needs of either of these groups.

Finally, the problem-driven model of Area Studies represents an exciting alternative to the area-driven model as a way of organizing cross-disciplinary exchange that draws in significant part on area expertise. It can provide a venue for broadening perspectives among area scholars, fostering collaborative research and enhancing doctoral student training. But it requires a high level of personal commitment among its participants, and it assumes the robustness of both area-driven and discipline-driven models for it to function effectively. Indeed, all three models of ways that area knowledge might transcend the boundaries of knowledge production are symbiotic and synergetic.

In short, the promotion of confusion between Area Studies and the variety of boundaries by which we organize the production of knowledge is a worthy goal. The more confused we are about the boundaries between Area Studies and other modes of knowledge production, the more thoughtful and knowledgeable we will be about the forces that shape the world in which we live.

Notes

- 1 Alan Tansman, 'Japanese Studies: The Intangible Act of Translation', in David L. Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley, CA, 2004), pp. 184–216.
- 2 While the discipline-driven model of Area Studies has been predominantly a phenomenon of the social sciences, it has had weaker echoes within the humanities as well, particularly as literary theory came to play a larger role within the humanistic sciences. The rise of postmodernist perspectives within the humanities complicated conversation between humanists and social scientists, and the critique of 'Orientalism' (the creation of knowledge for the exercise of geopolitical power) and post-colonial theory represented strong attacks on the traditional Area Studies model, though for reasons of political bias rather than epistemology. See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993). In short, the attack on traditional Area Studies was not only a phenomenon of the social sciences.
- 3 Robert H. Bates, 'Area Studies and Political Science: Rupture and Possible Synthesis', *Africa Today*, 44.2 (1997): 123–131; Robert H. Bates, 'Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy?', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 30.2 (1997): 166–169; Chalmers Johnson, 'Preconception vs. Observation, or the Contributions of Rational Choice Theory and Area Studies to Contemporary Political Science', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 30.2 (1997): 170–174.
- 4 Arjun Guneratne, *Area Studies, Regional Worlds: A White Paper for the Ford Foundation* (Chicago, IL, 1997), available at http://works.bepress.com/arjun_guneratne/2/ (accessed 26

- February 2018); Wolf Schäfer, 'Reconfiguring Area Studies for the Global Age', in Saïd Amir Arjomand (ed.), *Social Theory and Regional Studies in the Global Age* (Albany, NY, 2014).
- 5 Economics is exceptional in this regard, though fields such as institutional economics, behavioural economics and development economics have often relied on area knowledge to underpin empirical or theoretical work. The discipline, however, has tended to downplay these relationships.
 - 6 I classify History among the humanities, though, as noted earlier, History has traditionally straddled the humanities and social sciences, with some historians (for example, those interested in global history) being in closer conversation with social scientists and others in closer conversation with humanists. Increasingly, however, History as a discipline has moved closer to the humanities, with fields such as quantitative historical analysis, social science history, diplomatic history and economic history growing marginalized within the discipline.
 - 7 Laura Adams, 'The State of Area Studies: A Survey of Foreign Language and Area Studies Specialists in Higher Education', Paper presented at the conference on 'The Future of International and Foreign Language Studies: A Research Conference on National Needs and Policy Implications', 11–13 April 2014, Williamsburg, VA, available at http://www.wm.edu/offices/revescenter/globalengagement/internationalization/papers__and__presentations/lauraadamsfull.pdf (accessed 26 February 2018).
 - 8 For a copy of the report, see Regional Studies Task Force, 'Revitalizing Regional Studies at Princeton', Princeton University (2016), available at <http://www.princeton.edu/strategicplan/files/Task-Force-Report-on-Regional-Studies.pdf> (accessed 26 February 2018).
 - 9 History courses formally count as social science courses at Princeton.
 - 10 Paul C. Avey and Michael C. Desch, 'What Do Policymakers Want from Us? Results of a Survey of Current and Former Senior National Security Decision Makers', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58.2 (2014): 227–246.
 - 11 See Jason Horowitz, 'Russia Experts See Thinning Ranks' Effect on U.S. Policy', *The New York Times*, 6 March 2014; James Coomarasamy, 'UK Struggles with Language of Russian Diplomacy', *BBC News*, 16 March 2015; Charles King, 'The Decline of International Studies: Why Flying Blind Is Dangerous', *Foreign Affairs*, 94.4 (2015): 88–98.
 - 12 Theodore P. Gerber, 'Russia-related Research and Graduate Training in the United States', *NewsNet*, 55.4 (2015): 2.

Bibliography

- Adams, Laura, 'The State of Area Studies: A Survey of Foreign Language and Area Studies Specialists in Higher Education', Paper presented at the conference on 'The Future of International and Foreign Language Studies: A Research Conference on National Needs and Policy Implications', 11–13 April 2014, Williamsburg, VA. Available at http://www.wm.edu/offices/revescenter/globalengagement/internationalization/papers__and__presentations/lauraadamsfull.pdf (accessed 26 February 2018).
- Avey, Paul C., and Michael C. Desch, 'What Do Policymakers Want from Us? Results of a Survey of Current and Former Senior National Security Decision Makers', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58.2 (2014): 227–246.
- Bates, Robert H., 'Area Studies and Political Science: Rupture and Possible Synthesis', *Africa Today*, 44.2 (1997): 123–131.

- Bates, Robert H., 'Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy?', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 30.2 (1997): 166–169.
- Coomarasamy, James, 'UK Struggles with Language of Russian Diplomacy', *BBC News*, 16 March 2015.
- Gerber, Theodore P., 'Russia-related Research and Graduate Training in the United States', *NewsNet*, 55.4 (2015): 1–3.
- Guneratne, Arjun, *Area Studies, Regional Worlds: A White Paper for the Ford Foundation* (Chicago, IL, 1997), available at http://works.bepress.com/arjun_guneratne/2/ (accessed 26 February 2018).
- Horowitz, Jason, 'Russia Experts See Thinning Ranks' Effect on U.S. Policy', *The New York Times*, 6 March 2014.
- Johnson, Chalmers, 'Preconception vs. Observation, or the Contributions of Rational Choice Theory and Area Studies to Contemporary Political Science', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 30.2 (1997): 170–174.
- King, Charles, 'The Decline of International Studies: Why Flying Blind Is Dangerous', *Foreign Affairs*, 94.4 (2015): 88–98.
- Regional Studies Task Force, 'Revitalizing Regional Studies at Princeton', Princeton University (2016), available at <http://www.princeton.edu/strategicplan/files/Task-Force-Report-on-Regional-Studies.pdf> (accessed 26 February 2018).
- Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993).
- Schäfer, Wolf, 'Reconfiguring Area Studies for the Global Age', in Saïd Amir Arjomand (ed.), *Social Theory and Regional Studies in the Global Age* (Albany, NY, 2014).
- Tansman, Alan, 'Japanese Studies: The Intangible Act of Translation', in David L. Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley, CA, 2004), pp. 184–216.