

# **The Future of Interdisciplinary Area Studies in the UK: A Source Document<sup>1</sup>**

**Report of a Workshop held in Oxford in December 2005  
sponsored by the ESRC and AHRC  
and organized by the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies  
(University of Oxford)**

**Edited with an introduction by Roger Goodman  
based on a summary of the Workshop by Amanda Berlan**

- P. 2 THE STATE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA STUDIES;  
INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA STUDIES AND THE STATE  
p. 2 Background to the Workshop  
p. 5 What lessons can be drawn from the Workshop?
- p. 8 LESSONS FROM ELSEWHERE: THE STATE OF AREA STUDIES IN  
THE UNITED STATES, CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE
- P. 15 THE STATE OF AREA STUDIES RESEARCH AND RESEARCH  
FUNDING IN THE UK  
p. 15 The Post-War History of Area Studies in the UK  
p. 18 The current state of Area Studies in the UK: A panel discussion  
p. 25 Funding policies and opportunities: A panel discussion
- p. 27 TRAINING RESEARCHERS IN AREA STUDIES  
p. 27 UK Demographics of - and Support for - Researchers in Area Studies  
p. 30 Methods Teaching and Area Studies
- p. 34 THE USERS OF AREA STUDIES KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
- p. 43 APPENDIX 1: WORKSHOP PROGRAMME
- P. 45 APPENDIX 2: BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORKSHOP

---

<sup>1</sup> Many individuals and organization need to be thanked for their support of this Workshop: Donald Hay and Frances Cairncross helped construct the original outline; generous financial support was provided by the ESRC and AHRC; Philip Robins, William Beinart and Andrew Hurrell contributed greatly to the design of the Workshop; Shannon Stephen and Alexia Lewis were responsible for the Workshop administration and organization; Amanda Berlan acted as rapporteur.

## **THE STATE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA STUDIES; INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA STUDIES AND THE STATE**

*Roger Goodman, Head, School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, University of Oxford*

In December 2005 a two-day workshop took place in Oxford – jointly funded by the UK's two leading research councils for the Social Sciences and the Arts and Humanities, the ESRC and the AHRC – to examine the future of interdisciplinary area studies. The workshop had over 70 participants, specialists who represented almost all the disciplinary approaches in the field and most of the regions.

The Workshop was divided into sections which looked consecutively at issues in area studies in other countries, the current state of area studies in the UK, the training of the next generation of researchers and, finally, the views of the end-users of the work of area studies specialists. A detailed account of each of these sessions – and the discussion that they engendered – is attached below and the conference timetable is attached as an appendix. This introduction, however, wishes to place the Workshop in a broader context (Workshops do not appear in vacuums) and also describe some of the activities which have taken place since. There has been a considerable increase in activity in some, though not all, of the area studies communities over the past two years since the Workshop. While it would be facile to suggest the Workshop was responsible for this increase, there is little doubt that it helped to focus the momentum that was already building and with the benefit of hindsight we can begin to place the Workshop in a much broader context.

### **Background to the Workshop**

Why was the Workshop organized? There were both local and national reasons for the development of the workshop. Since I am an anthropologist by training, it is perhaps only natural that I should see local concerns as reflecting the national, indeed international, debates around area studies and hence wish to start at that level of analysis.

The history of the development of area studies in Oxford University was, like so many other features of such a highly decentralized institution, best described as haphazard. By the end of the 1990s, however, there were three concentrations of area studies specialists. Those who worked mainly (though not exclusively) on the pre-modern aspects of all areas of Asia from Japan in the East to Israel in West were members of the somewhat anachronistically-named Oriental Institute. The study of the contemporary elements of overseas societies had been developed most conspicuously since it was founded in the late 1940s at St Antony's College, a social science focused postgraduate college which had Centres that specialized on Asia, Africa, Middle East, Russia and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Western Europe. Finally, as individual university departments accepted the need to be less Eurocentric (and several Oxford departments were criticized in early RAE rounds for being overly Eurocentric), they began to appoint their own area studies specialists in areas such as history, theology, philosophy, social policy, politics and economics. The area studies specialists in all three constituencies kept in touch through inter-departmental committees where they could discuss issues of teaching and finance.

In 1999, following an internal university review known as the North Report, Oxford radically re-organised in to five divisions with their own clearly defined departments which were established as fund-holders which could run their own budgets and paid the University for the central services that they used. The pre-modernists in the Oriental Institute were somewhat protected by being a discrete department in the Humanities Division, but the problems for the social scientist area studies specialists were particularly acute; the reorganization was hugely problematic for academic communities which spanned departments and even more so for those which spanned Divisions in a number of ways. Firstly, it was impossible for interdepartmental communities to be fund-holders. Secondly, the fact that all posts were now in the control of discipline departments, made area studies posts very vulnerable (if, say, an economist of China left, there was little that the Chinese studies community in Oxford could do to ensure that another Sinologist was appointed as a replacement if the economics department had other ideas for the post). Thirdly, the area studies communities were all small and increasingly isolated which made it difficult for them to generate new income streams, through setting up new courses or by setting up interdisciplinary research projects, or for them to find ways of being mutually supportive in a notoriously volatile environment which has seen in the past fifty years (as Colin Bundy describes in detail in his paper below) sudden injections of funds in certain area studies communities followed by years of benign neglect.

It was in order to deal with these problems that the area studies social scientists in Oxford prevailed upon the University authorities to establish a new department which gave them a voice for their activities. This new department went through several incarnations, before emerging in October 2004 as a new School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies within the Social Science Division. The School incorporated several small area studies units which already existed within the university – in Japanese, Chinese, Latin American, African, Brazilian, Russian and Eastern Europe studies – and made links with the American and European studies operations without taking their members on to its payroll.<sup>2</sup> There are three distinctive features of the School which have had a major impact on the development and protection of Area Studies within the University:

- (a) academic members of the school are, as far as possible, joint appointments with their disciplinary departments; the payment of salary is shared, as is any income that the postholder earns through teaching or research.
- (b) the income of the School is pooled and the School operates a principle of limited cross-subsidy while maintaining accounts which show up how these cross-subsidies work at any point in time. This has been seen as essential for the smooth operation of small units which can be disproportionately affected by short-term boosts and cuts in their income.

---

<sup>2</sup> On its website, the School describes its mission as follows: The School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies is devoted to research and graduate teaching in academic disciplines which attempt to understand the complexity and the interrelatedness of society - its anthropology, economics, politics, history, sociology and culture, and which takes into account both the insights provided by the separate disciplines and the contextualization provided by inter-disciplinary collaboration to study specific society and social processes. It ensures that students acquire the necessary appropriate technical methodological skills - skills that can be deployed in any part of the world. (see <http://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/>)

c) the School has had a seat at all Divisional meetings from its inception and thereby guaranteed a voice when it came to the replacement of posts and the development of strategies for the social sciences in Oxford more widely. As the Department has grown, so has its voice within the Social Sciences in the University. It has grown by over 50% during its first three years – as new units and research teams have formed or joined it – and by October 2007 had sixty staff on its payroll. Many others within the University who are not on its payroll participate in the School's committees and activities.

The foregoing case study may appear to be a local story, but in fact it reflects almost all of the themes which appear in the accounts of area studies within and without the UK that follow: the problem of the boom-bust model of the development of specific regional studies; the tension between discipline-based and area-focused study and the general ascendancy of the former; the problem of getting funding for interdisciplinary work in area studies. Many have felt that these problems have been increased in recent years as the concentration on discipline-based research methodologies has increased. This has operated against area studies in two ways:

- (a) skills in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies have become prioritized almost to the extent of excluding area studies knowledge and language skills. At times this has led to funding decisions which seem bizarre to those in the area studies communities: those with the language and local knowledge skills sets have been unable to get funding for important projects because they have been felt to lack the necessary research skills, while those who can *only* bring the methodological but not the other skills have found it easier to receive funding;
- (b) the interdisciplinary nature which frequently characterizes area studies projects (it is hard to do an area studies project without covering at least some basic areas of sociology, anthropology, economics, politics and history) have often been judged as methodologically weak by the discipline specialists in any one of those areas.

Given the fact that 'globalisation' and 'interdisciplinary' have become two of the key buzzwords of the research community, the sense (which was reiterated frequently throughout the Workshop) that many of those in the area studies communities feel that there is a bias against their research by research funders, is quite ironic. It is important to point out, therefore, that this was not a view that was supported by Ian Diamond, Chief Executive of the ESRC, who gave the opening address to the Workshop. He emphasised that the ESRC did recognise the vital importance of Area Studies, both in academic life and in policymaking, and also in the broader 21<sup>st</sup> century intellectual map. He stressed that the ESRC has a clear commitment to Area Studies, as demonstrated by the fact that it is a named area in research grants and studentship applications, and he highlighted some of the new grant schemes and the ESRC-funded international collaborations now operating in seven countries. He said that it was a myth that the ESRC did not fund interdisciplinary research – it does and has clear procedures for doing so. In addition to the ESRC's clear commitment to certain thematic areas, such as environmental change, ethnicity and society, and education for life, it is committed to ensuring the growth and consolidation of a strong area studies research community. What he did concede, however, was that maybe more needed to be done in order to get the message over to the research community

about how they should apply to the research councils in order to maximize their chances of receiving research funding. To this end, the ESRC and the AHRB, he said, and one of the reasons that the ESRC and the AHRC agreed to jointly fund the Workshop, was for the studies community and the research councils to exchange views and begin to understand each other better. Senior members of the ESRC, AHRC, HEFCE and the British Academy were present throughout the Workshop both as participants and as observers.

Indeed, as the Workshop was being organized, the two Councils were in intense conversation with HEFCE and its Scottish counterpart (SHEFCE) about the development of a major funding initiative in Language-Based Area Studies. This initiative was formally launched in the spring of 2006 and led to the establishment of five inter-university national Centres in the Arabic speaking world, China, Japan and Eastern Europe, including areas of the former Soviet Union with a total funding input (in the first five year phase) of £25 million pounds.<sup>3</sup> Two of those Centres, the British Inter-University China Centre (BICC) and the Centre for East European Language Based Area Studies (CEELBAS) are associated with Oxford School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies and have helped promote a major expansion in modern Chinese and East European Studies in the University as well as nationally.

The scope of Area Studies can include, of course, virtually all research activity in the social sciences and humanities, given that most of such research looks at real people in their human context. This made choosing participants of the academic community difficult, especially since it was decided early on that the Workshop should be kept relatively small in order to facilitate discussion. The final workshop programme is appended to this document and those include cover as broad a representation of regional specialists and disciplines as possible. The list of participants, however, had noticeable gaps: there were no speakers who worked specifically on European studies or on Australia and none who were specialists on literature, cultural studies or economics. The absence of economists was commented on several times during the Workshop, since it was felt that economics was the discipline that had most distanced itself from the Area Studies.

The report that follows is designed as a resource for those who want to plug into the debates about Area Studies in the UK in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century. It is not a polished analysis with hypotheses and conclusions. It is based on a summary of each of the talks and Q and A sessions which took place at the Workshop which was written by Dr Amanda Berlan, an anthropologist of Ghana now working at the Said Business School in Oxford, who was hired as a rapporteur. The report follows the original narrative of the Workshop which gives some sense of how ideas developed over the two days. Many of the accounts of presentations have been shortened, especially where they repeated ideas that had been covered earlier. (A session where two area studies projects were discussed as exemplars of how to construct research applications has been cut completely since all of the issues it raised were covered again in later sessions.) As with all Workshop presentations, some were more polished than others; some speakers distributed transcripts while others spoke

---

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/research/centres/lbas>. The initiative is jointly funded by the HEFCE the ESRC, the AHRC and the SFC over a 5 year period. HEFCE is contributing almost half of the initiative's £25million budget with the rest of the funders making up the balance.

from notes and this is also reflected in the rather uneven quality of some of the prose in the transcript. Q and A sessions, as with all Q and A sessions, also covered a wide range of topics; an attempt has been made to impose conformity though again sections of discussion have been cut that were repetitive. What is left is a primary source document which we hope will be of use to current and later generations of scholars and policy-makers who are interested in the concerns of the Area Studies community and the types of answers that they and others are beginning to formulate in response to those concerns.

### **What lessons can be drawn from the Workshop?**

The workshop brought together for the first time many of the leading academics in area studies (broadly defined) in the UK with senior scholars from the US, Europe and Asia, the major funders and representatives of significant user groups. The full flavour of the wide-ranging debate can be gauged by reading the account which follows. As the transcript shows, the workshop wrestled to a large degree with the problem of defining 'What is Area Studies?' Three different but not mutually incompatible definitions emerged: area-led area studies (eg the study of Japan per se); globalisation-led area studies (eg multidisciplinary and comparative research within regions); issue-led area studies (eg. terrorism, democracy, etc.). It is clear from the discussion that high quality area studies needs to be involved in all three of these areas and certainly not restrict itself to just the first.

The workshop made the strong case for the intellectual and strategic importance of investment in area studies. The need for a research-intensive area studies community is of crucial importance. In intellectual terms, investment has to be made in the study of all cases otherwise there is no good basis on which to make generalisations (ie non-strategically important examples are for social scientists as important as strategic ones). It is important also that area studies includes European and American studies and is not just about 'developing' countries or restricted to the 'difficult languages ghetto'. The workshop also made the point that while emphasis has been placed on language learning and discipline training, in fact the most important element of area studies knowledge is often the integrated historico-sociological understanding of large and complex societies. It is essential to maintain a stock of intellectual capacity for understanding every region so that the scholarly community maintains the ability to reproduce itself. It is the combination of local knowledge, language work and discipline training which makes area studies research training so intensive.

A second strong message to come from the Workshop is that area studies (however defined) needs to pay more attention to its user groups. It was quite clear that those in the front line of policy and journalism often see academia as a last source of information though of course they benefit from a food-chain in which those who inform them are themselves generally informed by academics and their work. Area studies scholars need to invest more effort in demonstrating the relevance of their work rather than taking this for granted. How can their deep knowledge be of immediate use to policy and user groups: can case studies of the real or potential relevance of their work (eg Iran, Iraq, Indonesia) be put together to show this? Moreover, Area Studies work, when it is funded, is generally to explain what has happened and not what might happen. To what extent is this the result of the way all research is funded in social sciences and humanities and what room is there for more

blue-skies thinking in this field? Equally seriously, are interdisciplinary research projects well treated when they submit for funds or do they fall foul of disciplinary boundaries and protected interests (or are they not even submitted because of such fears)?

Despite the reassurances of the representatives of the Research Councils that there was not intended bias against Area Studies research applications, participants in the Workshop were concerned that there might be institutional barriers to such application and felt that data (both hard and anecdotal) on this issue needs to be collected and analysed. Two issues particularly were felt to confront those applying for research funds or research training funds in Area Studies: inter-disciplinarity and comparative work. Who assesses research applications which want to develop these tracks? Are there representatives on Research Boards who protect the interests of such cases and, if so, how do they get there? What do examples of good practice in both inter-disciplinary and comparative work look like and what is the status in the academic community of those who undertake such work? What is the position of those who are anti-Area Studies as an intellectual concept? How do area studies scholars develop career strategies from doctoral work onwards? Who are the gatekeepers of 'good' research in area studies and where should individuals publish to be deemed to be doing 'good work' (cf recent AHRC journal ranking exercise which was criticised for being overly Anglo-American focussed).

The Workshop worked through many of the intellectual, methodological and theoretical issues to do with area studies but a follow-up survey of those who attended suggest that there was need for more discussion and thinking about strategic and practical planning issues. This might involve looking at examples of how joint networks with collaborators overseas and in the societies being studied can actually be mobilized, expanded and sustained or how area studies can find a niche within the burgeoning world of global and transnational studies and not simply be passed by them; (ie back to the issues of high quality area studies work which is interdisciplinary, comparative but still has a deep knowledge of individual countries). In the context of teaching, the Workshop did not touch upon the thorny and perennial question of area studies versus disciplinary doctoral programmes and where they lead students in career terms. Nor did it look at all at the sustainability of high quality undergraduate teaching in area studies and the chances of such programmes being able to produce the quality cohort that is prepared to go on to graduate work. Is the state prepared to invest more in these expensive u/g programmes? Although there was little discussion of the Swedish model of collaborative funding for Chinese Studies in the presentation by Elisabeth Croll, there was otherwise very little discussion of institutional structures of Area Studies. It will be interesting to see how the inter-university collaborations demanded by HEFCE and the research councils as a condition for funding the Language Based Area Studies programmes that were established in 2006 operate in practice just as, to return to a local example, Oxford waits to see if the way in which its School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies has been established will give it the stability that Area Studies have sought in UK universities over the past fifty years.

## LESSONS FROM ELSEWHERE: THE STATE OF AREA STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES, CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE

Since area studies is, by its nature, a comparative enterprise, it seemed logical to start the Workshop by looking at how the subject was organised elsewhere. The US provides the most significant comparative paradigm for all higher education activity in the UK these days and hence it was decided to invite two speakers from there, **Professor David Ludden** a specialist on South Asia from the University of Pennsylvania and **Professor John Coatsworth** a Latin Americanist from the University of Harvard. Both speakers provided a well-argued and stimulating overview of the current state of Area Studies in the U.S. and both were upbeat about the current state and future potential of Area Studies in the US context. One of the themes which emerged clearly in the course of their discussion was the strong link made in the U.S. between Area Studies and policy-making.

**Professor Ludden** argued that one of the main events which has had a direct impact on the development of Area Studies was the 1979 Revolution in Iran. This event highlighted the need for reliable and context-based knowledge, as well as the need for such knowledge to be treated as a national asset and invested in on a long-term basis in order to secure its preservation and utility.

In the 1990s, Area Studies felt constant threats, mostly in foundations and in Universities, from advocates of globalism in the academy, but 9/11 again put expert knowledge of language and culture in the limelight for "hotspots" -- and again, in the Muslim world especially -- so that funding for government for area studies increased and became more secure under the George W Bush Administration.

While the need for expert language and regional knowledge in sensitive areas has remained a focus, Professor Ludden argued that in the last fifteen years the Social Sciences have benefited from the debates generated by globalisation. For example, he contended that in spite of the value of area knowledge being recognised in the U.S., it had still been relatively underutilised as a resource but that this trend has to some extent being counteracted by globalisation and its impulse to know about the 'other'.

In the Association for Asian Studies, the relative isolation of social sciences from humanities disciplines has become a sore issue. 'Hard' social scientists, notably economists, but also political scientists and sociologists, do not encourage Area Studies-based research, giving it low ranking in the profession. As a result, social scientists are much less prominent in area studies programs than language-based humanities specialists. History and Anthropology are seen as "cross-over disciplines". The AAS has received petitions from political scientists charging AAS humanities bias against them; so that now special sessions at the AAS meetings are flagged and set aside as "social science" panels. Though many political science and economics departments, and some sociology departments, in the US, have for example prominent South Asia specialists in them, these scholars are commonly isolated programmatically from Asia Studies programs covering their own areas in their own universities. A prime example is Penn's Center for the Advanced Study of India -- a bilateral policy-oriented combination of business and politics experts -- which has virtually nothing to do with Penn's South Asian Studies program. This is an example of how the *policy relevance of area studies* specialization can actually be

extracted from area studies as an interdisciplinary field of academic research and training. Pushing policy relevance too hard as a wedge to loosen state funding for area studies can backfire.

Professor Ludden identified some of the practical factors driving Area Studies forward as being the political volatility of poor regions which have not been incorporated well in the globalisation movement and the knowledge gaps exposed by medical emergency situations such as the AIDS pandemic or avian flu. In the U.S., institutions such as the World Bank recognise that in order for their policies to secure socio-economic development on a long-term basis, they need regional, rather than simply economic, knowledge. But like economists and business and politics folks, epidemiologists, geologists, public health specialists, and even social psychologists can become area experts without learning languages or participating in Area Studies programs.

Professor Ludden contended that the long-term solution to the needs of Area Studies involved the creation of institutional initiatives and support (especially as regards language initiatives) linked to the study of particular policy issues. If language-dense Area Studies programs only produce translators or cultural interpreters, they can serve educational purposes attached to liberal arts teaching, or national security interests. But unless language and culture specialists can address policy issues directly, they will lose their advantages in competition for funding to area specialist policy experts in various fields. He argued that the exclusive categorisation of disciplines was extremely problematic and that fixed categorisations within Area Studies were also a problem as they resulted in interregional characteristics being neglected. For example, 'Asia' should not be bracketed off by Asian Studies at the expense of the Middle East and of the study of the Muslim world.

**Professor John Coatsworth** began his presentation with a *definition* of what Area Studies means in the context of the U.S.: the study of a culture other than of the U.S. or of Western Europe. One of the key themes in his talk was the belief that Area Studies in the U.S. was in 'extremely good health'. Professor Coatsworth provided a well-illustrated and lively discussion on this basis. Having drawn attendees attention to the idea that individual areas within Area Studies, such as Chinese Studies or Latin American Studies, all had a histories of their own, Professor Coatsworth went onto provide a more general history of Area Studies in the U.S. - and the ups and downs of the last sixty years.

He argued that World War II had resulted in a significant surge in interest in area studies (although the general history of Area Studies of course predates this), a surge further enhanced by the Cold War and events such as the launch of the Sputnik into space or the attempted assassination of VP Nixon in Venezuela in 1958, because of the perceived need for in-depth regional knowledge in order to preserve national interests and to guarantee peace. Private foundations (the role of which were further expanded on by Colin Bundy in a later part of the workshop) also played a significant role in the promotion of Area Studies by providing funding. However, in spite of these apparent successes, substantial cuts in government funding hindered further developments and the sustained growth of the subject. Perhaps unexpectedly, this proved to be a long-term blessing as many universities in the US began to absorb the costs of Area Studies and institutionalise them in tenured faculty appointments,

courses, library acquisitions etc. This removed political and utilitarian demands normally associated with non-academic funders and also made it possible to maintain high levels of training and teaching. By becoming embedded in the culture and budgets of universities, Area Studies has enjoyed strong support, which has further been enhanced by the events of 9/11. Professor Coatsworth cited impressive sums to support his views; for example in the fiscal year 2004-5, Harvard University spent over \$18m on Latin American Studies alone (including faculty, staff, fellowships, study abroad, libraries etc.) Private foundations also still provide support, mostly to fund projects rather than to build or sustain capacity.

As regards the intellectual history of the subject, it cannot be dissociated from the strict disciplinary boundaries of the Social Sciences. The different disciplines are split into departments and institutes and it is within the frameworks and limitations of these structures that Area Studies have to operate. Indeed, the Area Studies centres in the U.S. do not have their own faculty but instead draw on faculty who have been recruited and hired by disciplinary departments. As such, Area Studies are part of permanent structures, which is a significant benefit. Embedding language and Area Studies in universities has had other highly significant benefits, such as the development of comparative, trans-national and global work. Professor Coatsworth argued that the growth of Area Studies had encouraged new theories and models by providing new empirical information, analytical models and intra-regional comparisons.

Furthermore, Professor Coatsworth argued that the US model of Area Studies has two important characteristics, which he examined in turn: it privileges basic over applied research and it values political independence over policy relevance. As regards the latter, it was of mutual benefit as specialisations that were closely linked to government tended to be less robust than independent advice and that independent advice was much more useful if it was of high quality. Furthermore, the independence from the US government proved to be an asset in securing the endorsement of informants in host countries. Professor Coatsworth concluded by reiterating that Area Studies in the U.S. is thriving and receives strong support, mainly from institutions, but also from government, although he also felt that more could be done to bridge the gap between basic and applied research.

The two papers prompted a lively question and answer time:

- A member of the audience commented that it appeared the dynamic between researcher and researched had altered over time; research was no longer the preserve of a small number of developed countries. For example it is no longer the case that only Americans or Europeans research South East Asia. South East Asians are part of the academic community and help to shape its discourse.
- This idea raised objections; some felt that there is still a hierarchy between Western and non-Western researchers. Are non-Western researchers regarded as researchers in their own right or are they simply seen as feeding into the work of Westerners?

- In response to this, another member of the audience argued that there is an exclusion of views which are not deemed to be ‘important’; we need to investigate how decisions about the ‘value’ of knowledge are made.
- Definitions used in Area Studies were also a subject of discussion; a workshop participant asked what should be included or excluded under particular labels. He referred to ‘large country syndrome’ whereby large countries such as Brazil do not necessarily fit Area Studies models.
- One participant felt that disciplinary pressures were greater than the picture presented by Professor Coatsworth. The speaker’s response was that it was not disciplinary pressures themselves but rather faculty-specific tensions which heightened the perceived strains. Many faculty members do not want to be area experts but rather specialised in a type of work.
- Another member of the audience voiced his reservations about the speakers’ optimism that Area Studies, being embedded within Universities, had been shielded from external constraints and influences. He cited the revival in interest in South East Asia following 9/11 as evidence of the ‘Sputnik syndrome’ whereby the value of Area Studies, rather than being recognised intrinsically, was determined by external events.
- Opening out the discussion, one participant argued that in the absence of government funding, academics should be discussing different ways to defend the Area Studies agenda. The question of how to institutionalise networks of research is critical. He highlighted again the issue of wealthier countries leading Area Studies research in networks where local researchers could be sidelined.
- Professor Ludden’s response to some of the comments was that it is right to institutionalise dialogues. There is currently, he argued, a low-level equilibrium. Many individuals are simply not aware of the knowledge gaps that could be filled by specialist area knowledge, or where to find this knowledge. Much data is being lost; we need to make people interact with each other. He retained however his optimism that this was possible.

The second panel focused on the state of Area Studies in European countries and beyond; the panel included **Professor Rikki Kersten** from the University of Leiden, **Professor Marianne Braig** from the Free University in Berlin, and **Professor Amitav Acharya** from the Nanyang Technical College in Singapore. All three speakers concentrated on what they saw as the intellectual challenges facing area studies specialists in their regions rather than outlining the institutional features of the area studies communities with which they worked.

In her talk, **Professor Kersten** richly exemplified some of the comments made in the previous question and answer time concerning the dangers of labels and of the paradoxes inherent in maintaining highly rigid disciplinary boundaries. She began her presentation by situating herself – she is Professor of Modern Japanese Studies at Leiden University, which is over 400 years old and prides itself on the breadth and depth of language and Cultural Studies. The importance attached to language at Leiden means that to study Japan is to study the language of Japan. However, rather than regarding herself as a Japanologist, and although her colleagues mostly see her as a Japanologist, she sees herself as a Historian with an interest in Japan. In addition to this, and somewhat confusingly, she belongs to the Centre for Non-Western Studies.

Although Area Studies research in North East Asia to some extent involves deconstructing archaic and misleading constructions, in the Netherlands it is often necessary in order to receive funding to classify the Orient as mystical and 'other'. Many researchers have to embrace something they regard as anathema in order to be able to pursue their work. When applying for large funding, it is often vital to stress a disciplinary contribution, whereas when applying to the Royal Academy, the emphasis is on presenting research as 'scientific'. One of the more positive aspects of the funding process in the Netherlands is that academic institutions have an obligation to institutionalise a particular line of research if a major grant has been received for it.

Professor Kersten also drew attention to institutional problems, such as the cuts in the amount of time allocated for learning the language and changes in the curriculum, both of which had been detrimental to the growth of Area Studies. She broadened the scope of her paper by discussing the state of Area Studies in Australia, where she was formerly Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Sydney. In Australia, there is a perception among academics that Area Studies, and the Humanities more generally, are in crisis. This issue is linked with the allocation of research grants and the fact that funding councils are measuring the potential success of research according to criteria which only make sense in the hard sciences. Indeed, their focus on quantification and 'results' makes little sense in relation to Area Studies which has established itself as a subject strong on language study. The general perception of the Humanities being in crisis, and the fact that Area Studies is seen to have no theory, has resulted in Area Studies being doubly sidelined. As regards publications, Professor Kersten contended that publishing in Area Studies journals is incredibly hard if one has a theoretical research background. Her experience was that sending papers for publication to non-Area Studies journals received a much friendlier reception.

**Professor Marianne Braig** provided a detailed analysis of the state of Area Studies in Germany, where she is Professor of Latin American Studies in Berlin. She traced the development of Area Studies alongside the Humanities since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and remarked on the legacy of seeing groups as highly distinct (and generally categorised as either primitive or advanced) and of the strict division of disciplines in the Social Sciences.

In her talk, Professor Braig provided a case study of the development of Area Studies at the Free University of Berlin through the JF Kennedy Centre which was set up by Frenkel, a Jewish German lawyer who returned to Germany from the U.S. in 1951 and taught political science and democracy. He developed the idea of the Centre focusing on U.S. society and politics. It housed 8 departments (now only 6) and had a professor and junior professors. This case study gave further evidence of the role of private foundations in the development of Area Studies as without the support of the Ford Foundation it would not have been possible in 1964 to have an institute or any other form of localisation for Area Studies. With the beginning of the 1970s other Institutes of Area Studies were founded (with public funding) in Berlin and other places in and outside of the universities. The particular possibilities in Berlin (and Hamburg) for Area Studies are grounded in the broad and multifaceted arrangement of specialized infrastructure (museums, archives, libraries, etc.) and their integration and collaboration with institutes in Universities.

Professor Braig's paper reiterated the central concern also expressed by Professor Kersten that the perceived crisis in Area Studies is linked to the perceived absence of theory and the difficult relationship between disciplines and regional specialization. To overcome this, she suggested reflecting more the opportunities coming out of the revitalization of Area Studies due, on the one hand, to theoretical paradigmatic shifts such as the "cultural turn", "translation turn" and postcolonial studies and, on the other hand, externally from processes of globalization. Following Arjun Appadurai for her understanding, globalization processes are fuelling the fragmentation of states, societies, cultures, and territories while, at the same time, borders and spaces are being "re-territorialized" in the mutual relation between the global and the local. Area Studies in a globalized and globalizing world has to focus on the processes between and beyond spaces, on trans-national, regional and trans-cultural movements, as well as on overlapping spaces.

It was in this context that specialists from different regions established a trans-regional working group called "Ways of Knowledge. Trans-regional Studies" in the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute of Advanced Studies). This network of interdisciplinary scholarship and Area Studies allowed the overcoming of static and eurocentric concepts of space. The specific value-added of interdisciplinary Area Studies is to bring into the so-called 'core disciplines' the debate about multi-level interconnections in and between societies and states, between micro-worlds and hemispherical configurations, between the global and the local. The working group should contribute to generate specific knowledge, theoretical concepts and methodological approaches, while Area Studies, which are inherently concerned with local and trans-local, regional and trans-area phenomena, are challenged to use their own approaches to explain and understand these multi-faceted, interlocking processes of globalisation.

**Professor Amitav Acharya** from Nanyang Technical College in Singapore discussed the changing relationship between Area Studies and disciplinary approaches to international relations with a focus on Asia. Despite this particular geographic and disciplinary focus, the paper was also highly relevant to other regions and disciplines as it discussed two challenges that the traditional Area Studies approach has faced in recent years.

The first challenge he identified comes from disciplinary (or what is known in US as the social science approach) perspectives on international relations, especially those informed by theory. "Disciplinary Area Studies" combines two orientations. The first includes scholars who may be termed "regionally-oriented disciplinarians (or social scientists, to use an American term)", and "discipline-oriented regionalists". The former group's main specialization is theory (usually drawn from Europe and the US global role), but they have been attracted to Asia for a variety of reasons, including its economic rise, and the growing importance of Asian powers, China, Japan and India and Asian regional institutions. This is in contrast to the earlier attention to Asia from international relations scholars, which was mainly due to its role as a Cold War flashpoint. The latter category, "discipline-oriented regionalists", includes scholars whose initial primary focus might have been on regional affairs, but who have now increasingly embraced theory, not the least because of the entry of the "regionally-oriented disciplinarians" whose contribution has been to inspire younger scholars from the region to undertake theory-guided research.

The second challenge stems from the impact of globalization, which has called into question the relevance of areas (regions) as units of analysis. The practitioners of “transnational area studies”, who may be called “transnational regionalists”, are primarily trained in regional affairs, but they are also increasingly interested and involved in comparative research on trans-regional phenomena, especially those linked to the effects of globalization.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Unlike disciplinary Area Studies scholars, transnational regionalists are not necessarily theory guided, but are interested in looking beyond their respective areas and hence in comparative studies of issues which are transnational in scope, such as Aids, terrorism, etc. Professor Acharya argued that Area Studies will continue to be important despite the challenge posed by disciplinary perspectives and the effects of globalization. This is for example reflected in the demand for Middle East and Islamic Studies specialists in the wake of the 11 September terror attacks. What is of real concern is not the end of Area Studies, but the need for it to engage new approaches that straddle and synthesize Area Studies and disciplinary social sciences in an era of globalization.

Professor Acharya’s analysis pointed to several key features of these new approaches:

1. Increasing attention to theory by area specialists and vice-versa. This involves scholars adopting both “outside in” (looking at the region from a theoretical perspective) and “inside out” (looking at theory from a regional perspective) approaches.
2. Related to the above, the emergence of a new breed of scholars who are at the forefront of theory, but who also have deep grounding in the language, history, culture and politics of a country or region.
3. The increasing contribution of scholars based in regional centers of learning, relative to regional scholars based on Western centres of learning or western scholars. Much of this goes unrecognized, however, even by those who rely on these regionally-based scholars and institutions.
4. Growing interest in comparative studies of regional dynamics, including comparative regionalization (focusing on political economy), regional institutions, and regional security orders.

Taken together, these new approaches offer enormous potential for a creative synthesis between Area Studies and disciplinary perspectives which will advance the frontiers of knowledge in international relations. The challenge for both Area Studies and disciplinary approaches to international relations is to engage and accommodate these approaches.

Discussion following these three papers illustrated that all three speakers had touched on issues that were central concerns to the participants at the workshop:

- The first comment focused on the apparent lack of recognition as Area specialists. The discussant described the frustration of being categorised as a specialist in International Relations and Security issues, rather than as an Asia specialist. He identified two reasons for this: the lack of theory in Area Studies and the tendency, as he saw it, of the globalisation discourse to bring trans-

national rather than regional issues to the fore. He deplored the practice of marginalising ‘hybrids’: researchers who were either area specialists who had come to terms with trans-national studies linked with globalisation, or theorists who were incorporating an increasing amount of region-specific data. He argued that these should rather be encouraged. At any rate, many felt that there is a need to develop theory within Area Studies in order to get away from the straitjacket of disciplines and to engage with comparative work and trans-national issues. Some criticism was also expressed of the perceived tendency towards parochialism in Area Studies, whereby specialists retreat ‘into a shell’ rather than engage with disciplinary issues such as International Relations. It was felt that Area Studies was at risk of becoming obsolete if these challenges were not recognised and addressed and that the crisis in Area Studies in Australia was proof that area specialists could not afford to be complacent.

- On a more positive note, there was also a feeling that Area Studies provided young scholars with appropriate intellectual contexts for taking theories and testing them against local realities. Professor Kersten agreed with this idea and said that Area Studies had been a crucible for testing Western theories, and in keeping with Professor Coatsworth’s earlier argument, that it had stimulated new theories, models and comparative work.
- The discussion also touched on other earlier issues, such as whether the English language crystallises issues around particular discourses and whether regions are meaningful units of analysis.
- One participant felt that the old container of Area Studies was simply inadequate for dealing with the complex and highly fluid socio-economic models of many groups. He cited the example of African-Americans.
- The issue was picked up on by another participant who felt that academics in the U.K. had retained an implicit desire to maintain boundaries; old models were still impeding flexibility.
- Another participant drew attention to how different disciplines related to Area Studies and remarked that there were no economists present at the workshop. He asked why certain disciplines do not interact and the effect this has.
- The last question prompted many responses. One person gave the example of the American Studies Association, where Economists felt their views were not fully taken on board and who therefore had decided to set up their own association, the ASEA. This association is now well-established and is gradually widening its scope.

## **THE STATE OF AREA STUDIES RESEARCH AND RESEARCH FUNDING IN THE UK**

### **The Post-War History of Area Studies in the UK**

**Professor Colin Bundy**, Principal and Director of the School of Oriental and African Studies, opened the second session. In his talk, **Professor Bundy** provided a thorough overview of the development of Area Studies in the last sixty years. His talk was particularly informative as regards the policies of the UK government and universities, which were contrasted to the situation in the U.S.

Professor Bundy described Area Studies in the UK in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as being ‘shallowly rooted’. Faced with the increasing realisation that Area Studies could enhance political stability, the government appointed a commission known as the Scarborough Commission in 1944 to examine, and make recommendations for strengthening, the facilities offered by British universities for the study of overseas cultures. The commission resulted in new posts being created and in a scheme of grants being introduced in order to build up university departments. Unfortunately, the posts were largely focused on language proficiency rather than towards a deeper engagement with other societies.

In the U.S. there was a similar recognition of the importance of Area Studies and of the knowledge gaps towards other cultures. As a result, the Committee on World Area Research of the Social Science Research Council published a report, mainly authored by Robert Hall, which made a passionate case in favour of Area Studies, a sound understanding of which was deemed to be a pre-requisite to ‘total peace’. In contrast to the UK, the overall approach in the U.S. in following years was highly pragmatic, policy-oriented, and more rooted in the Social Sciences.

As the interest in Area Studies in the U.S. was largely based on concerns for foreign policy and conflict management, the Cold War was highly significant to its development. Professor Bundy also drew attention to the role of charitable foundations such as the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations in boosting Area Studies. In the U.S., interdisciplinarity was very much in evidence, explicitly stated for example in the 1948 National Conference on the Study of World Areas, which challenged the narrowness of traditional disciplinary boundaries. The launch of Sputnik in 1957, together with the concomitant fears about national security, further boosted Area Studies which grew steadily into the 1960s.

Back in the UK, the situation was less positive and a sudden financial crisis in 1952 prompted financial cutbacks by the University Grants Committee (UGC). In 1960, however, Hayter was appointed by the UGC as the chair of a committee to review the progress of Area Studies since the Scarborough commission and his report prompted the second key phase of expansion in Area Studies. Hayter had been influenced to a large extent by the flourishing state of Area Studies in the U.S. and he made a strong pragmatic case in favour of Social Sciences. There was a period of expansionist optimism and, according to Professor Bundy, Area Studies enjoyed a brief golden age in the 1960s and 70s.

Professor Bundy then went on to detail some of the difficulties of the subject area in the last twenty-five years. In the U.S., funding for Area Studies stayed buoyant for a relatively long time, although the fall of the Berlin wall and the general demise of the Cold War gradually shifted national and academic priorities at the expense of Area Studies. Modernity also brought challenges of its own, such as considerations about the politics of knowledge production and the need to understand global rather than just regional factors.

In the U.K. issues of costs and affordability rose to the fore under the Thatcher government. Area Studies programmes came under threat and the situation became increasingly bleak. The Chairman of the Association for South East Asian Studies reported in 1984 that “the condition of South East Asian Studies within British

universities has declined to the point of near crisis.” In order to address the crisis, the UGC appointed Sir Peter Parker to assess the situation. Perhaps not surprisingly, he reported an urgent need for action as an “irreplaceable stock of excellence” was in obvious danger of disappearing. Some additional funding was provided in order to make up for this but it was by no means enough and a new report was commissioned in the 1990s. The report highlighted a number of problems, such as the presence of an ageing academic community still rooted in particular disciplines rather than geared to a regional focus, a significant drop in people going on to do PhDs and a strong tendency for research to be disciplinary rather than regional.

More than a decade later, there is still deep concern for Area Studies because of two main sets of pressures. Firstly, Area Studies, which is resource, time and labour intensive in terms of training and facilities (particularly when it comes to language learning), are much more likely to struggle to survive than other subjects in the current higher education environment, which is driven by market principles of cost-cutting, efficiency and ‘productivity’. Secondly, Professor Bundy felt that the quinquennial Research Assessment Exercises was inadvertently putting pressure on academics to focus their efforts into disciplinary channels in order to be successful.

In conclusion, Professor Bundy questioned what changes have taken place and whether the old paradigms concerning Area Studies still applied. He went on to question whether there are Area Studies specific theories and methodologies and whether British area specialists were adequately self-critical and reflective towards their field. He also reflected on the way in which Area Studies was ‘uncomfortably dependent’ on changing considerations of national interest, and especially national security. There is a distinct pattern whereby the U.K. government asks ‘Are Area Studies important?’, it then receives a positive response and funds are injected into Area Studies on a short-term basis, before being abandoned, which results in the government asking the same question and repeating the same pattern fifteen years later. He concluded by reiterating the importance of the history of Area Studies in understanding the challenges faced by area specialists today.

In the discussion that followed, comments focused on the institutionalisation of Area Studies in the UK:

- There was continued concern that Area Studies remained in the hands of the developed rather than developing world, and one participant asked when funding would be made truly accessible to institutions based in the Third World.
- Concerns were also expressed about the short-term ad-hoc solutions to the problems identified, which had not promoted the institutional health area specialists wished to see.
- One person provocatively asked if part of the problem arose from academics themselves and pointed out they were not always good ambassadors for Area Studies, giving the example of an ‘area’ project from the 1980s on a language not spoken for 3500 years. In this respect, he felt that the ESRC and the AHRB being directive about research being purposive was not necessarily a bad thing, although he also conceded that decisions that make economic sense do not necessarily produce ideal research results.

- Another speaker pointed to the dispersed nature of Area Studies centres. He suggested that the subject is in better health than it seems, and that this perception is merely heightened by the fact that Area Studies individuals are not clustered. In this respect, he felt it would be more effective to start the institutionalisation process by pushing for universities to have clusters doing research on particular issues.
- Several speakers argued that the fifteen year cycle of commissions-reports-funding-cuts-commissions simply had to come to an end and that the most pressing concern was to investigate ways to guarantee the long-term sustainability of initiatives.

### **The current state of Area Studies in the UK: A panel discussion**

**Dr. Rosemary Hollis** addressed the workshop in her capacity of Director of Research at Chatham House, a Think Tank specialising in issues relevant to the work of government, business, NGOs, the media and academia, and working in partnership with institutions in the U.K. and overseas. Dr. Hollis argued that it is not only academics who face the challenge of balancing a geographical focus with a thematic approach. For example, oil companies and banks also go through phases of self-examination and re-organisation sometimes giving greater emphasis to nurturing relations in specific areas or cultural settings and other times preferring to promote their goods or services in a more uniform way across the globe. Even the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has just gone through a process of restructuring whereby geographic departments are subordinated to umbrella directorates dealing with politics, economics and security, among others.

Dr. Hollis demonstrated how attitudes towards the relevance of Area Studies expertise have changed over the years by detailing some of the developments in the British policymaking and attitudes towards the Middle East in the last hundred years. Her contention was that the British had had a regionally specific and internally coherent policy towards the Middle East throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (as illustrated in the early days by the De Bunsen Report of 1917) but that this phase had come to an end. For decades policy had been predicated on what Britain wanted to make happen in the Middle East, and it treated the region as a distinct entity. However, since the end of the Cold War and particularly since the coming of New Labour, Britain's position vis-à-vis the Middle East has shifted towards separate policies on issues arising in parts of the region or affecting the region (such as proliferation, terrorism, development, conflict resolution and regime change in Iraq). Dr. Hollis argued that it does not presently have a coherent policy for the region as a whole, except very recently by ex post facto rationalisation. New Labour does not appear to consider history as a decisive parameter shaping discourses and events, which seems deeply regrettable as this is central to the thinking and understanding of events of those in the region. Furthermore, one of the problems of contemporary Middle Eastern politics is the uneasy balance between international and domestic agendas. For example, the Iraq policy was worked out first and foremost in the context of the 'special' transatlantic relationship, with the aim of 'doing good' in the world and in relation to UN Security Council politics, rather than in relation to Iraqi and regional dynamics. Dr. Hollis concluded her insightful talk by exemplifying earlier discussions on the differences between Area Studies in the U.S. and in the U.K. in relation to policymaking; while in

the U.S. Middle East area specialists have rushed to assist the administration, in the U.K. they have tended to point out the difficulties of intervention and not seek to be involved in policy formulation and implementation.

**Professor James Dunkerley** from the Institute for the Study of the Americas of the University of London drew attention to the tendency to think of the Americas, and particularly of North America, as a single entity, before going onto detail the history of the American Studies in the U.K. which can be traced as far back as 1882. Today, American Studies is taught in fifty U.K. institutes of higher education, and these offer over six-hundred courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level. However, there has been a reduction in the number of students taking courses in American Studies and of research students researching U.S. topics in the U.K.. Latin American Studies (including the Caribbean) programmes in the U.K. have not been in place for as long as American Studies and although the first chair was established in 1948, the study of the region was scarcely institutionalised until after the Cuban revolution. The Parry report of 1965 provided a significant boost for Latin American Studies and today Latin American Studies in the U.K. is far more concentrated in provision than U.S. studies and runs at about half the level. The overall picture for the development of Latin American Studies in the U.K. is mixed, and Professor Dunkerley expressed frank concerns about the provision of programmes and facilities in the area of Caribbean Studies, which he felt was particularly disproportionate given the size and important history of the diaspora.

In the question time:

- One participant argued that Area Studies needs to be organised in a way that does not favour a selection bias towards funding for research only being given for policy-relevant or politically important subjects, and whereby Area Studies can resist being entirely subject to external influences. There was also concern about the balance between academic and policy language - whether the emphasis on being relevant and having transferable knowledge could seriously undermine area expertise. In response, Dr. Hollis made a strong case demonstrating the practical relevance of Area Studies. Broadly, she argued that the fashion for taking a common theme and examining common characteristic features is peaking. There is a need for region-specific knowledge rather than generality. For example, the military require specific information if planning an operation in Iraq, Afghanistan or Albania and the regional expertise needs to be packaged in a way that is deliverable. Dr. Hollis argued that during a recent trip to Jordan, her work required an understanding of complex lineage systems, which had to be presented in accessible rather than elaborate academic language in order to be of any use. She also argued that Area Studies was vital to providing useful contemporary models. For example, many definitions of Europe lag behind reality. European societies exhibit an enormous and complex range of factors but the tools of analysis at popular level are very blunt and fail to understand contemporary realities. As the people best equipped with the conceptual apparatus to make sense of contemporary social affairs, Area Studies specialists need to disseminate their knowledge more broadly.

**Professor George Kolankiewicz** from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London discussed some of the new directions in Area Studies reflected in the work of post-graduate students in Russian and East European Studies. His introductory remarks concerned the way in which research topics are affected by their context and researchers' inability to control or forecast the circumstances shaping research. For example, students of the Soviet Union saw paradigms collapse dramatically in the late 1980s and 1990s and their agendas had to be modified accordingly. The accession to the EU of certain Eastern European countries has redefined migration patterns across Europe, which also poses new challenges and creates new research questions for area specialists. These changes are not only reflected in the discourses taking place in academic circles and Professor Kolankiewicz cited the word diaspora as an example of this. Whereas a search on Google two years ago obtained 750,000 search results, it now shows well over 11 million. The term has shed its exclusive association with the notion of victimisation and, in keeping with the new discourses and emerging identities, has evolved to have much wider connotations.

Although Professor Kolankiewicz drew attention to the highly fluid and sometimes ephemeral nature of research, he also made a strong case that there is thematic continuity. This is typified by the issue of 'identity', which recurs again and again in Area Studies. He illustrated this point through examples of 'identities in the making', such as the identities of displaced communities or of Russians in the Baltic who do not necessarily see themselves as Latvian. In order to illustrate that identity has to be understood in a multifaceted way, he also gave examples of research being carried out on issues as broad as architecture, the informal practices of poor neighbourhoods, post-communist sexualities or turbo folk music. This practically illustrated the productive and almost iconoclastic way in which students are redefining discourses relating to Eastern Europe. When taking such an open and inquisitive approach towards the study of a particular region, no material is insignificant; even the heavily censored material of the Communist era is relevant as it can form part of a study on censorship or propaganda. Professor Kolankiewicz' contribution illustrated the way in which postgraduate students pick up on new agendas and develop new understandings. It provided an ideal basis for the arguments Professor Elisabeth Croll went onto make concerning the need to invest in the next generation of scholars.

**Professor Elisabeth Croll** from SOAS spoke about the current state of language-based research on China in the UK. She began her presentation by examining the routes into China-related research and the good news that at under-graduate level, larger numbers of students than ever before are enrolling for first degrees in Chinese language or for degrees that combined Chinese language with a discipline in the arts, humanities or social sciences. However, with the exception of language-literature degrees, few of these degrees equipped students with sufficient of the language or discipline to proceed directly to PhD-level research. At the taught post-graduate level the news is mixed. Although a few students use a Masters' degree to make good either language or discipline deficits or study for a general Asia or China area studies degrees to obtain a broad overview of the region, the number of students who study specialist Masters' degrees is disappointing and most are overseas rather than UK-based students. Very few UK students proceed to or are equipped to undertake language-based research degrees on China particularly in the social sciences, arts and humanities and, of those that do proceed, a high proportion required further training in either discipline or language. The

result is that a high proportion of the PhD students in this country are from abroad and, although some stay on, there is evidence that the present situation is not feeding the UK China's studies field to the degree that it might.

There are disappointing numbers of UK-trained younger scholars recruited into academic and other related positions especially in the social sciences where the number of economists, political scientists and sociologists working on contemporary China are few. Many of the young lecturers in language, literature and the humanities are recruited from Europe, Asia and North America while some of the new senior posts have remained vacant for a time because of the scarcity of suitably-qualified candidates who wish to take up such positions in the UK. For all these reasons, it is difficult not to conclude that for some time now neither the supply nor demand for trained specialists has kept pace with the expanding interest in and importance of China. That this is so is not so much due to the lack of relevance of China language-based research or because graduates in China Studies earn less than their peers - indeed there is evidence that they earn more than graduates in other fields. Rather it is because there is a lack of institutional incentives to enhance the China Studies field of the type already referred to at this workshop in the United States and because the qualifications for language-based area research demand combinations of knowledge deriving from language, area/region, discipline and multi-disciplinary approaches to identify and analyse processes, structure, trends and tensions in China or other contemporary societies. Moreover students completing such post-graduate studies want to be sure that such a major investment in time and funding will equip them for a satisfying and long-term career trajectory and the present conditions in British higher education do not necessarily attract potential scholars.

In looking at how to foster or encourage language-based area research, Professor Croll identified two models or institutional solutions which have made a strategic and operational difference in the past or elsewhere to expanding and sustaining the field of China studies. The first, based in the UK and setting a precedent, is the China-studies programme founded in a new contemporary China institute at SOAS which, financed by Volkswagen and the Ford Foundation, supported PhD studies for three years and was responsible for training an entire generation of China scholars all of whom now occupy senior positions in the UK and Australia. However once this funding was lost, the host university was not in a position to continue the PhD funding and there was no government or university incentive for doing so.

The other model - and perhaps one that is more appropriate in contemporary times when there is a growing consensus that no one institution can or should take the lead in establishing such a national programme - is that of the Swedish School of Advanced Asia-Pacific Studies (SSAAPS). This is a county-wide academic programme in network form with a director and secretary which was set up by two research foundations in 2001 with a three-fold set of aims: to build up research and research training in the field of Asian studies, to better understanding of the region and to strengthen contacts in Asia in all fields relevant to academia, politics and diplomacy. SSAAPS is linked to all universities and research institutes in Sweden and administers a programme of funding-support for PhD fellowships including intensive courses, training workshops and travel funds which has had the effect of tripling the number of PhD students from 26 to 80 in three years. It also supports promising post-doctoral researchers by offering them placements abroad in leading research institutes to help them expand their research

agendas and senior scholars who want to increase their disciplinary or cross-disciplinary research on Pacific-Asia. Finally it encourages co-operation between research institutes in Sweden and the international research community and more specifically in Asia by funding conferences, workshops, visiting fellowships and strategic partnerships.

Professor Croll wanted to draw attention to this model for not only had it provided core funding, brought a sense of cohesion rather than competition and fragmentation to the field and was inclusive but outward-looking, but it also had a longer term objective 'to make research on Pacific-Asia a well-integrated component of the Swedish research community in the humanities and social sciences'. The importance of this long-term objective lies in its intent to address one of the tensions so often evident in the field and that is between area and discipline. Ideally, the basis for language-based area studies should be that either the discipline will strengthen any regional study or that the study of a specific region will produce the kind of knowledge that will challenge the discipline and currently add to or modify the very concepts deployed in these disciplines. However instead of such integration, it is so often the case that, over past decades, there has been a periodic swing against regional studies in favour of the disciplines and a history of imbalance with regional studies left under-funded and less appreciated.

It can be argued that this imbalance continues in the UK at present and at a time when such knowledge has never been so necessary. Professor Croll thought that despite this imbalance, now was the time to celebrate the research of those in the China field in the UK who in their own work, and despite the constraints, conducted relevant and high-quality research which combined both language and discipline with a passion for region. She wondered if the label 'AREA Studies' best-served the quality of this research and was not now a somewhat outmoded term with so much baggage attached to it that it should be replaced by a new collective, generic or more contemporary and 'sexed up' alternative.

Finally Professor Croll concluded her talk with two very recent pieces of good news. The first is that perhaps the tide is turning in favour of language-based regional studies in the United States and the UK. In the latter, HEFCE and ESRC have taken new initiatives in support of such studies, including this workshop. In the USA, a recent report entitled 'States Prepares for a Global Age' published by the Institute for International Education in Washington has drawn media attention to the dangers arising from America's lack of foreign knowledge. Secondly, Professor Croll detailed some of the new initiatives in introducing Chinese language studies in UK schools and the significant interest expressed by secondary school pupils for learning more about Chinese Studies at a recent day-conference held in London which suggested that the problems of building up a strong UK-based research community might yet be remedied given the right infrastructure and investment.

**Professor Graham Chapman** spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the British Association for South Asian Studies and as Professor of Geography at Lancaster University. Before detailing the state of South Asian Studies in the U.K., he drew attention to some of the different definitions of South Asia and to the enormous range of languages and ethnicities (among other factors) that this encompasses. He then highlighted the recent economic growth in the region, particularly in India, and expressed his disappointment that South Asia does not feature amongst the regions recently announced by HEFCE for strategic targeting.

Professor Chapman then went onto discuss the current status of South Asian Studies in the U.K., first by detailing the different centres for South Asian Studies, some of which were more established and 'robust' than others: the 'core' was centred around Oxbridge and London. As regards degree courses, the only first degree with South Asia in the title is at SOAS. There are Masters courses at SOAS and Edinburgh with South Asia in the degree title. Disciplines such as History or Geography incorporate South Asia to a varying extent as part of a broader degree syllabus. There are two learned societies specifically on the area: the British Association for South Asian Studies (BASAS) and the Society for South Asian Studies (SSAS), which is funded by the British Academy. His comments on BASAS included details of their recent annual conferences as well as some of the key areas of interest of its members. The five most common of these were Politics, History, Anthropology, Modern History and Economics. Professor Chapman had gathered comments from BASAS members on the state of Area Studies in the U.K. for the workshop. These directly echoed some of the dominant themes and areas of concern expressed by others during the workshop. There was concern that there was insufficient recognition of the practical uses of Area Studies in policymaking and of the need for a regional, as opposed to a disciplinary or theoretical, focus. Some comments focused on the training of the next generation of scholars and on the problems connected with funding and resources for such training. The issue of students coming from overseas and therefore not forming a long-term research community in the U.K. also came up, although Professor Chapman argued that in the era of globalisation, this should not necessarily be seen as problematic.

Professor Chapman also recounted his own training as a geographer, his lifelong commitment to South Asian Studies and his academic path until his present post. Amusingly, he recalled how he was asked to lecture and debate security in South Asia at the NATO Defence College in Rome with an audience of military officers and diplomats. Over the course of two days of lectures and seminars, he was 'grilled' comprehensively. At the end of the course which had clearly been extremely useful to the audience, he was asked 'Could you do the same for Latin America?' This illustrates the assumptions made about Area Studies and the lack of understanding and appreciation for the long-term investment it requires.

**Professor Janet Hunter** from the London School of Economics discussed the strengths and problems of Japanese Studies in the U.K. She sees herself predominantly as an economic historian working on Japan rather than a Japanologist and describes the LSE as being predominantly a disciplinary institution rather than one with a strong focus on Area Studies. She is also the President of the British Association for Japanese Studies.

Professor Hunter described how Japanese Studies has consistently operated in an unstable environment of recurrent initiatives and short-term policymaking since the war. Japanese Studies attracted the attention of students and policymakers when it was perceived as rich and there were many opportunities for investment. However, popular opinion is now that Japan is 'dead' and that China is the future, as a result there has been a fall in public/policymaking interest in Japanese Studies. Professor Hunter also argued that universities are reluctant to pursue expensive options and therefore when the generosity of Japanese fund givers dried up in the 1980s, many departments and language courses had to close. The closure of the East Asia

department at Durham University for example was very problematic as it was training as many as 20% of East Asia undergraduate students in this country. Her examples clearly illustrated the dangers of short-term provisions of funding which had been discussed earlier in the workshop.

As in the case of Chinese Studies described by Elisabeth Croll, the time and funding requirements for language acquisition and developing disciplinary expertise in Japanese Studies are considerable and require a minimum of two years of intensive study, preferably in Japan. Few graduate students are from the UK, which is not conducive to building a strong research community in the U.K. Other constraints on Japanese Studies include research resources and library stocks in particular, which remain relatively poor.

The entrenched and institutionalised disciplinary divide which is present to some degree across all institutions and disciplines is both persistent and extremely problematic. Professor Hunter argued that the conventional institutional divisions are very damaging to both sides as disciplines need area studies as much as area studies need discipline. She believed this was reflected in the disciplinary weakness of a lot of past research on Japan (something recently much improved), and that it was academically damaging in as much as it promoted Japanese 'exceptionalism'. In the context of the LSE, there have been considerable attempts to embed work on China and Japan for example within disciplinary departments, both for their own sake, and in the interests of comparative considerations.

Professor Hunter continued her presentation by detailing four positive factors within Japanese Studies. The first was that Japanese is increasingly being taught in schools, and there are currently approximately 10,000 children learning it in school. In addition to this, undergraduate numbers are buoyant. Thirdly, the subject has benefited considerably from schemes such as the Daiwa and JET (Japan English Teacher) schemes which support Japanese language acquisition and enable students to spend time in Japan. Finally, there are more and more non-Japanese speaking academics teaching and researching on Japan

Professor Hunter concluded her talk by discussing the different disciplines and the relative disciplinary strengths and weaknesses within Japanese Studies. She felt that although numbers are small there is relative strength in political science, international relations, anthropology, religion, art history, literature/drama and management. By contrast, she felt that economics, history and economic history were weak. This was linked with source access problems and language demands, and, in the case of economics, with the increasing emphasis on theory and quantitative methods that characterized the discipline.

Question time covered many of the issues raised in the second half of this session:

- The issue of exceptionalism came up again and one member of the audience pointed out that it was paradoxical that certain area specialists simultaneously argued in favour of it and against it, using it to justify their work but also arguing there is no such thing.

- One member of the audience questioned the meaning of interdisciplinarity. It was felt that area specialists needed to gain confidence and not bow to disciplinary demands as they capture data which does not appear on the disciplinary 'radar'.
- As regards the issue of overseas students not building up the long-term UK research community, opinions remained divided to some extent. One speaker felt that getting scholars from abroad was actually a positive thing as it is cheaper to 'buy' scholars than to train them. He argued that people are flowing through Britain anyway and therefore that there was no problem with them returning to their countries. Most universities even encourage foreign postgraduate applications as they pay higher tuition fees. The speaker added that depending on South East Asians for South East Asian Studies would be the best thing. Professor Croll's response was that it undermined the sustainability of the field in this country. Posts are currently vacant in Chinese Studies due to lack of suitably trained candidates and research and dialogue opportunities are being missed. Professor Hunter added that arguments concerning the training or 'purchasing' of scholars were misguided as the costs of training or buying were not borne by the same group.
- Professor Kolankiewicz was asked if the fading dichotomy between Western and Eastern Europe was a problem. His response was that changes were occurring in many different directions and that it was wrong to assume that everything is led by market integration. There is still no parity in the purchasing power of countries such as Poland or Slovenia and it will take 20-30 years before such parity is achieved. He argued that economists had to be reigned in and their predictions toned down by the realisation that EU integration will by no means follow a linear progression.

### **Funding policies and opportunities: A panel discussion**

The panel included **Ms. Jane Lyddon** and **Ms. Rachel Paniagua** from the British Academy, **Mr. Tony McEnery** from the AHRC and **Mr. Rama Thirunamachandran** from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and **Mr Adrian Alsop** from the ESRC. Before the start of the discussion, some of the panellists gave information on the funding body they represented.

**Ms. Jane Lyddon** from the British Academy explained that, relative to certain other funding bodies, the British Academy is a 'small player'. They have a budget of 12.5 million pounds for research programmes and international programmes, postdoctoral fellowships, long-term research projects, conference grants etc.

One of the British Academy schemes most relevant to Area Studies is the research grants flagship scheme which offers a large number of awards but not large sums of money (there is a maximum per award of £7,500). The scheme is highly flexible and enables award recipients to go abroad, organise small workshops etc. 80% of these funds are used to travel abroad and about 60% of those involved do collaborative work. The success rate for application of awards is around 65%.

In addition to this, 3.5% of the British Academy budget funds schools and institutes abroad in Rome, Athens, Ankara, Oman, and Nairobi. It also funds the British Institute in Tehran and the Institute of Archaeology in Baghdad.

Their International Relations department works through agreements with partner bodies abroad e.g. in the Soviet Union and China. They are looking to develop and expand into Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, although due to funding restrictions, these initiatives will remain small-scale in the short-term. Their policy is to adopt different strategies for different areas. In Africa for example they want to establish schemes promoting institutional links and partnerships. Another opportunity relevant for area specialists is the new visiting fellowship scheme whereby young scholars can come to the UK for 2-4 months.

**Rama Thirunamachandran** from HEFCE (The Higher Education Funding Council for England) explained how the University Grants Commission had existed from 1919-1989 but then been abolished due to financial difficulties. Its replacement, HEFCE, now provides £4 billion per year for teaching and £1 ¼ billion for research. A considerable proportion goes towards academic staff salaries and infrastructure costs and this budget also funds 8 research councils which provide funding for programmes and projects. Unlike the British Academy (which channels a lot of funding to individuals) most of the funding provided by HEFCE goes to institutions.

As regards the issue of sustainability, Mr. Thirunamachandran agreed with earlier comments that this was an extremely important issue. However, he also emphasised that it was necessary to be realistic and accept that funding cycles for Area Studies had to be limited to five years to fit in with government spending cycles. The HEFCE policy is to focus on strategic or vulnerable subjects. It will seek to obtain more funds in spending reviews and Mr Thirunamachandran stated that it was up to the research community to assist them in making a strong case for this. HEFCE support a wide variety of subjects, and as a result have to set funding priorities. His final remarks mainly concerned the RAE. While he was sympathetic to the fact that the RAE was not always suited to the way institutions work, he also argued that one needed to reflect whether it serves the purpose it is intended to. As over 10 billion pounds of funding will be distributed in higher education between 2008 and 2014, he contended that it would not be right to give such enormous amounts of funding without a proper evaluation process. Furthermore, he argued that some of the negative trends plaguing Area Studies in the UK could also be observed in other countries (although to a much lesser extent in the US), which indicated that the problems were not necessarily linked with the RAE.

Question time elicited an animated response:

- Mr Thirunamachandran was then asked what thinking had influenced HEFCE's set of priorities. The response was that HEFCE had written to cabinet ministers and asked what areas were most important and needed most support.
- Regarding the issue of Area Studies having to 'fight' over money, Mr Thirunamachandran asked why Area Studies academics could not get together and plan more collaborative work, rather than see it as a competitive enterprise. He argued that it was universities who were not interested in a

consortium arrangement. Professor Croll responded that she had attempted to set up a China consortium but that two key universities had not supported as it could hinder their chances of getting funding for their own work. On the same issue of working together, another participant noted that funding opportunities were posted on websites a couple of months ahead of the deadline which was simply not enough time to get people from different universities together and draw up plans. It was also felt that funding bodies had political agendas which could not be second guessed so it was hard to know how to formulate applications.

- Audience members specifically asked for reassurance of flexibility rather than 'hard criteria' when assessing applications. Mr Alsop described the ESRC as a vehicle for applications and a channel for partnerships. He also said that the ESRC does not fund by discipline or area but that assessment panels consider the questions driving the research. The main thing referees are interested in is the excellence of the question and the methods used to answer it.
- Another issue which came up was the need to strengthen commitments of schoolchildren to move into Area Studies. Professor Croll said that the work done in schools encouraged Area Studies. Their focus was on promoting Area Studies rather than SOAS but their outreach work had to be carried out at SOAS for practical reasons. She argued there is a direct correlation between students taking gap years and having an interest in Area Studies.
- More broadly, it was also felt that studentships abroad, travel programmes, and internships should be encouraged. It was argued that students who had taken part in a graduate training scheme had greatly benefited. The expense of the scheme (£800) was deemed to be worthwhile as these students were more likely to get AHRB/ESRC funding afterwards as they had experience of fieldwork. Because they had more experience, these students also completed their PhDs faster.
- The valuable work carried out by overseas institutes was discussed. The overall feeling is that they are expensive to run, but extremely worthwhile in the long run as they provided invaluable resources to researchers going overseas.
- One significant factor in the discussion is that enormous changes were made to the British Council when Clare Short headed the Department for International Development and it became a development rather than an academic resource. One discussant said that the British Council should go back to working with universities and not the Department for International Development. The changes made to the British Council were recognised as very significant – and in most cases they were regarded as a negative thing – but it was also argued that the changes were unlikely ever to be reversed.
- It was argued academics should do more to leverage funds from other sources, such as business.

## **TRAINING RESEARCHERS IN AREA STUDIES**

### **UK Demographics of - and Support for - Researchers in Area Studies**

**Dr. David Mills** from the Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP) spoke on the UK demographics of Area Studies, which was based on an ESRC-sponsored demographic review of the social sciences in the UK, which he had co-

authored and researched, and which was launched in January 2006. The review surveyed more than 320 departments; 100 senior staff were interviewed in order to obtain a detailed picture of the research staffing and capacity-building agendas. The directors of the ESRC's research centres and 60 ESRC postdoctoral fellows were also interviewed. Dr. Mills began his talk by talking about the demographics of Area Studies researchers, and then went on to discuss recruitment and internationalisation, before concluding his talk with a discussion of the findings as regards training needs and the future for interdisciplinary work.

According to the statistics of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, Area Studies is very small. The total staff numbers in the three Area Studies disciplines (Middle Eastern, African and Asian Studies) make up less than 2% of all the social sciences. 370 staff in 36 departments were returned to Area Studies in the 2001 RAE, spread fairly evenly across the three fields of Middle East and African Studies, Asian Studies and American Studies. However, such figures cannot be used to precisely measure the actual research activity within Area Studies as area specialists are likely to be on disciplinary panels in the RAE exercise. For this reason, the researchers carrying out the demographic review of the social sciences supplemented HESA data with their own survey of departments. The research showed that Area Studies has one of the older age profiles of the research-focused disciplines, with 43% over 50. However, one cannot directly compare it with the other more policy-linked fields, partly because they have different recruitment patterns and take in professionals and second career researchers. If one focuses in on the research-focused disciplines, of the three Area Studies subjects, Middle East and African Studies has the oldest age profile, and stands out from the other social sciences with almost 30% of its staff aged 56+. There are fewer than 20 staff under 35. This is likely to reflect the major growth and recruitment of this field in the 1960s, and a relatively small research staff population and low student numbers. In the survey of 250 staff in Area Studies, only 5 held fixed-term research contracts, although Dr. Mills speculated that this is changing. At any rate, the age profile revealed in the figures points to a major turnover of staff in coming years.

According to Dr. Mills, each of the different branches of Area Studies is unique in its particular recruitment concerns. Because the problems have different causes, they may need to be tackled in different ways. As regards recruitment problems, Dr. Mills quoted one of the respondents as saying that "in the current financial climate there is a perception that jobs are 'safer' in disciplinary departments with large undergraduate and taught post-graduate intakes". Another person complained that that the key challenge is finding someone who has a really top reputation both in the area and in the discipline... we often find the appointing bodies are split."

However, the issue that Dr. Mills paid particular attention to was internationalisation. The Area Studies disciplines (except American Studies) have much higher percentage of non-UK national staff than most of the social sciences. In 2003/2004, around 40% of Middle East and African Studies staff, and 45% of Asian Studies faculty, did not hold UK nationality. This is a complex and divisive issues, and one that polarised opinions. Some saw the recruitment of UK nationals into Area Studies as 'very important' or 'crucial', but an equal number were either not concerned or saw "international recruitment is equally important to the recruitment of UK-domiciled staff." Several of those expressing concerns made useful elaborations. One respondent

agreed that it was difficult to find suitable people especially in the Social Sciences and stated that “This reflects the fact that we are not training a sufficient number. The market in our field is international – and we lose some of our best people to the USA and Australia. The UK has drawn a significant number in this area from the Netherlands.” Another person commented that this was an important issue in Chinese Studies and that “We increasingly rely on American PhDs to fill vacancies, both because of the quality of UK/EU trained staff is less, and because there are so much less of them.” Only one respondent mentioned turnover, or the lack of it. They noted that within a small department, ‘there is insufficient turnover’ and there is little opportunity for growth, expansion or changes in direction.

As regards retention concerns, the researchers did not think that the evidence they found supported the conclusion by an influential 2005 NISER report that ‘Non UK nationals enter academic employment in the UK after completing a higher degree in the UK, but ultimately intend to return to their home country’. On the contrary, the researchers agreed with a HEPI report from 2005 which identified ‘brain circulation’ and international collaborations as being strengths in UK academia. The starting point for this belief is that non-UK nationals with UK PhDs represent an important source of high quality recruitment to the UK social sciences. The evidence suggests that non-UK nationals are more likely to hold fixed-term contracts than permanent contracts. Such staff are more likely to move to another UK HEI than to take up an academic post outside the UK. Those who take up academic posts outside the UK are more likely to have been on fixed-term contracts. Following on from this, Dr. Mills raised the possibility that it is not institutions or disciplines that are rendered vulnerable by the growth in short-term funding and research contracts, but the individuals themselves. One of the problems with making firm conclusions about future retention issues is that this internationalisation is a new phenomenon, and it is very difficult to predict the future.

The conclusions reached by the researchers was that national data and returns to their survey revealed less concern about employing international staff per se than about ensuring that UK universities remain competitive and can recruit the best possible staff. Their recommendation was that the focus has to be on recruiting the very best students - whether or not they are UK nationals - to do PhDs and develop academic careers. Finally, the review offered some insights on the tensions of interdisciplinary work, which are particularly pertinent to Area Studies. Dr. Mills’ view was that the tensions are usefully productive of intellectual insight, but slightly less comfortable for an academic career. It is not a question of discipline or area but both discipline and area.

**Mr. John Canning** from the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies based at the University of Southampton started his presentation by explaining that the Centre is one of twenty-four Subject Centres based at institutions throughout the UK. They are funded by HEFCE via the Higher Education Academy and their remit is to support teaching and learning in Area Studies for all teaching staff in the UK. All the resources they offer are listed on the website ([www.llas.ac.uk](http://www.llas.ac.uk)), such as for example guides to good practice for teaching and learning in languages, linguistics and Area Studies. They have a materials bank for languages such as Arabic or Bulgarian and a virtual department of Dutch. They also offer £4,000-5,000 of funding money which people have used in the past to buy themselves out of teaching for a

term. LLAS run events such as pedagogic research projects involving fieldtrips as well as workshops, conferences and seminars such as 'Enhancing the student experience in Area Studies' (November 2005), 'Teaching Globalisation' (April 2005) or 'The Disciplinary Identity of Area Studies' (November 2004). As regards recruitment and cross sector work, they do outreach work in schools, and they are specifically trying to encourage children not to quit their GCSE in language. LLAS works in partnership with CILT, the National Centre for Languages. Collaborative projects include a project investigating longer-term employability in the humanities (with English and the Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology) and an interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Group of ten Subject Centres. Their publications include the *LLAS Digest*, '700 reasons for studying languages' and *Atlas: The bulletin of the Area Studies Project*.

Mr. Canning summarised his talk by saying that the work of LLAS is driven by the needs and demands of practitioners in the field. Their focus is to share good practice, and not be prescriptive about what should be taught. The activities are planned by the Area Studies community for the community and most of the workshops or one-day conferences are free (as are all the materials on the website).

### **Methods Teaching and Area Studies**

**Professor Graham Furniss** from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) discussed some of the key issues in Area Studies research, with a specific focus on the issue of language. He began by asking what kind of research required the use of a local language. Econometric analysis for example is less language dependant than interviews. There is a common view that there are also contexts where one can 'make do' with English, or an interpreter. Professor Furniss drew attention to 'narrow competence requirements' whereby the instrumentality of particular language competencies for the immediate research purpose is the sole and pressing issue (e.g. 'I only need a reading knowledge of business Japanese').

He went onto argue that such considerations had had consequences for language teaching in the U.K. Broadly speaking, universities have perceived language learning as a long-term investment aiming to provide the student with a comprehensive range of linguistic skills and cultural appreciation. There is an obvious difference between such a perspective and the more utilitarian focus on language as a tool used for a specific purpose, which is generally associated with the commercial world, and Professor Furniss described the gap between the two as being wide and sometimes acrimonious. He went on to argue that this gap was regrettable and unnecessary, and that language students, irrespective of their purpose or affiliation, should have access to a wider range of options. The suggestion to devise a curriculum that is flexible enough to be taken by lots of different clients i.e. commercial and academic, is often met with the response that resources are insufficient, that mixed-ability classes make such an arrangement unworkable, and that such a system would create greater dissatisfaction. However, *ab initio* learning is often the same for all groups of students, with divergence of aim and materials being a factor in higher level courses.

There is evidence to suggest that the dilemmas identified above may fade away as a greater variety of teaching texts are made available and these cater for a greater

variety of needs. In addition to this, new technologies and techniques are allowing the development of distance learning support and creating an environment which is not based around the progress of a single homogeneous group of students.

If the need for language acquisition is linked to a sustained and continuing research interest, Professor Furniss argued that it has a different meaning and set of implications to that which he had just described. More specifically, it is no longer a tool for gathering information but rather becomes “the vehicle in which [researchers] present themselves and interact.” As a result, ‘language’ becomes the site of negotiation and understanding. Among these implications, Professor Furniss identified the question of ethics and argued that language competence was one way of demonstrating respect for the people the researcher is working with and of helping to ensure the data and conclusions are fed back to the informants. It is possible to view language as a tool which can be purchased and acquired in an intensive course, or as an end in itself to master a language as part of a long-term, often life-long, commitment to engage with a particular group. Language provision ought to be able to provide both types of course equally to academic and to non-academic constituencies.

**Dr. Karen O’Reilly** from the University of Aberdeen began her presentation by explaining that she is a sociologist and comes from a Social Science perspective. She said the discussions on the previous day of the workshop had reinforced her perception of the challenges facing training researchers in Area Studies. It is a vast and disparate field which challenges traditional disciplines and is even redefining methodological boundaries. Dr. O’Reilly argued that the first question we need to ask is who research is for and noted that researchers often have to address the needs of end-users as well as their own career needs. She argued that contemporary researchers need to develop intellectual and practical skills to apply to the given geographical area, to other areas, to comparative analysis, as well as to the global context. They need to understand and interpret the world of the ‘other’ and to translate this otherness for academic and end-user audiences. Furthermore researchers come from a variety of perspectives and backgrounds. In view of such differences it is essential that methods training begins with an initial needs assessment.

It is also essential that methods programmes are flexible and Dr O’Reilly argued that standardised methods programmes do not work. It is, however, essential that a flexible and creative approach does not mean compromising the quality of the training received as researchers need to be equipped with adequate skills and knowledge to proceed and to respond to the challenges Area Studies offer. Dr. O’Reilly spoke in favour of a modular approach to research training, where departments or units can pool and exchange expertise to suit the needs of researchers. This places a considerable demand on resources, however, as it requires core modules and also highly advanced and specialised resources that suit the requirements of the individual. The approach also needs to transcend disciplinary boundaries, push methodological boundaries and embrace comparative analysis. In addition to this, it is necessary to consider learning a language and one or more disciplines.

In terms of research skills, these need to be both context-specific and general. The generic and transferable skills needed for research are bibliographic and computing skills, teaching and presentation skills, communication, and research design and

management skills. In terms of context specific training and knowledge, it is crucial that the researcher learns about the culture, language, political organisation, history, geography and social organisation of the area through direct and indirect exposure. They will require sensitivity to the context in order to proceed with the research. Researchers will also need to know how to define researchable questions and to understand the relationship of theory to empirical research. They will need to understand what criteria to use to evaluate the quality of research.

Researchers will need to gather data from insiders and outsiders, scholars and lay people. They are going to have to evaluate these descriptions/ statistics/ documents/ theories both methodologically and theoretically. This involves an awareness of where they have come from and how they were constructed. Furthermore, they may well have to generate raw data themselves, through qualitative or quantitative research procedures. Data may then be primary, or secondary, written, oral, visual, statistical, or web based; it may be in the language of the area, in their own language, or even a third language.

It is unrealistic to expect all Area Studies researchers to acquire applied skills in the design, conduct and analysis of large and small scale surveys. Those requiring this kind of expertise should have training available on a needs basis. However, all researchers need to understand the logic of quantitative research, the nature of statistical evidence, and where to go to find out more. This means teaching a critical and informed analysis of statistical and survey data evidence. More specifically, researchers (even if they will never employ a survey themselves) should understand the logic of large and small scale survey research, the basics of questionnaire design and coding, and some techniques for analysis. They will need to be able to read, interpret and assess presentation of statistical data (e.g. bar and pie charts, cross-tabulations), and even if they do not understand inferential statistics it would be helpful if they knew where to find out. They should understand how a database is constructed and some of the means through which statistics are collected and collated.

Because it is much more likely that an Area Studies researcher will need to communicate with researchers, experts, groups and individuals in the research context than conduct a survey of their own, Dr O'Reilly argued that it is essential to teach the range of qualitative methods (including: in-depth, semi-structured, individual, focus group, elite and life history interviews; case studies; ethnography and participant observation); the scope of applications and relevance for particular research problems; hands-on experience and critical reflection on practical problems in using qualitative methods; awareness of the range of analytical techniques; and experience analysing qualitative research. More specialist and innovative techniques, such as content and discourse analysis, biographical analysis, and the use of computer software and new technology for the collection, recording and analysis of data can, again, be provided on a needs basis.

In conclusion, Dr. O'Reilly discussed ethnographic research, and what she perceives as the strengths of ethnographic research for Area Studies. She contended that (sociological) ethnography provides a fruitful way forward for all disciplines as it employs diverse perspectives and approaches. It is iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study) that draws on a family of methods involving direct and sustained contact with human agents within the context of their daily lives

and cultures. It involves watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and producing a richly written account. This written account should respect the irreducibility of human experience and acknowledge the role of theory as well as the researcher's own role.

Ethnography is not confined to the study of small-scale interactions, the study of daily life, or even to culture. It is equally well suited to the study of institutions and organisations, and to theorising and empirically researching the relationship between everyday understandings and macro-processes and formations. Indeed, Dr O'Reilly stated that there is some very exciting work (and perspectives) being established in the fields of organisational ethnography and macro ethnography. Ethnography is directing its analytical gaze beyond the local and contextual to the boundaries between spaces, practices that transcend spaces, and to the global field.

Dr O'Reilly concluded that it is important that the generic research training needs (for a researcher's prospective career) be balanced against the needs to understand the specific case and to translate research skills and knowledge for use in a given context.

**Professor Julian Cooper** from the University of Birmingham said that Area Studies have evolved over time and made reference to the 'old' and 'new' Area Studies. Whereas in the past Area Studies was often general and not rooted in a Social Science discipline, there is now an increased awareness of the need for greater disciplinary and methodological rigour. In Professor Cooper's field of academic expertise, this awareness has been heightened by the 'crisis' in Russian and East European Studies following the collapse of communism. What is regarded as Russian Studies is changing all the time and one can now use theories and methods in studying Russia that were inapplicable in Soviet times, which inevitably also affects training issues. Furthermore, the appreciation for research training has been reinforced by the ESRC's commitment to training in generic social science skills and there is greater awareness of disciplinary rigour and methodological expertise. Professor Cooper argued that such factors are the basis for strong multi- and interdisciplinary Area Studies. He also argued that Area Studies have three dimensions: language, cultural context and discipline, and that it was important to develop an awareness of the basic disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities to provide at least minimum level of understanding to facilitate multi-disciplinary dialogue and research collaboration.

The demands in training are heavy and challenging. Students have to develop a high level of linguistic skill and an understanding of the culture of the countries being studied. In order to help students develop a stronger appreciation of the cultural context, Professor Cooper recommended history, which he feels is very important. The language training process also helps, as do visits to the country. In addition to this, Professor Cooper contended that students need a strong disciplinary basis, and that it is also important to impart an understanding of other disciplines in order to strengthen the multi-disciplinary approach. Another key part of the research training is helping students to develop an understanding of the problems of applying methods, concepts and theories developed in a 'Western' context to a different historical, social and cultural situation. As a basic example of this, Professor Cooper cited the word 'democracy' which has a very different meaning in Moscow, let alone Voronezh or Omsk, than in Oxford. Colleagues with experience of undertaking research in the area, and with working with colleagues of the area, can be a key asset to developing

an understanding of this. At Birmingham for example, research students and young researchers have benefited considerably from exchanging their own experience of field research.

- One of the members of the audience asked how well funding agencies understood training and methods-related needs. He argued that the ESRC and the AHRC are not fully aware of the complexity and importance of these and that as a result, they do not appreciate why it is such a long-drawn out and expensive process. An added difficulty is that training material is very expensive to produce and the commercial world is not interested in it.
- Another participant agreed that funding institutions do not understand the problems and that there are disincentives against producing materials. The RAE says that producing language materials does not count. Another problem is that language teaching staff are often on non-permanent contracts which is another impediment to long-term capacity-building. There is scope for long-term, collaborative and sustainable investment and a request was made for a follow-up workshop that would specifically address this issue.
- Another person asked what was meant by research methods in the Arts and Humanities as there is no single curriculum in research methods skills. The AHRC has produced a 6 page document on this issue, while the ESRC's policy document on this is over 100 pages long.
- Some participants expressed concern that a social science training programme could be imposed on them (i.e. generic research modules) and that this would result in their language programmes being pushed to the edge. Professor Cooper's response was that the ESRC was moving in new directions in terms of their policy on research methods and that some initiatives need to be taken by the arts and humanities community to guide the research methods agenda. Dr. O'Reilly agreed with Professor Cooper that the agenda should be set by the arts and humanities community.

## **THE USERS OF AREA STUDIES KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

**Mr. Graham Hutchings** from the consultancy firm Oxford Analytica described the way in which Area Studies fits in with Oxford Analytica's vision to provide the best possible information to business and government in order to inform the policy and decision-making process. Oxford Analytica is an international consulting firm drawing on over 1,000 senior faculty members at Oxford and other major universities and research institutions around the world. Founded in 1975, the firm has built an international reputation for strategic intelligence and analysis of geopolitical, macroeconomic and social developments worldwide.

Mr Hutchings argued that the world we live in is characterised by threats which are linked with subjects relevant to Area Studies specialists, such as the radicalisation of the Islamic world, changing demographics or environmental degradation. Mr Hutchings sees the working relationship with Area Studies as one of engagement and interaction. The firm is premised on the widest possible use of seasoned and impartial analysis and he believes this is the best basis for decision making in the modern world.

Oxford Analytica runs daily editorial conferences in Christ Church where area specialists join in-house analysts and they review the news from the last 24 hours and decide on the most important issues to be written about in the *Daily Brief*. The *Daily Brief* consists of eight analytical articles each business day, available online and by email. They provide executive-level decision makers in government and international organisations, as well as business and financial leaders, with analysis of the meaning and implications of the most significant current developments. The firm also offer *Oxweb* which is access to an integrated archive containing more than 33,000 articles and 75,000 summaries published since the first issue was published on September 27 1984. In addition to this, the firm provides clients with individually tailored research and consultancy services.

The distinction between regionalism and disciplinarity is not an issue for Oxford Analytica – their policy is to match expertise with the topic at hand and this often, but not necessarily, involves Area Studies.

**Ms. Rosemary Thorp** from the University of Oxford spoke in her capacity of Chair of Trustees for Oxfam. She has occupied this position for the last four years, prior to which she was a Trustee for twelve years. At the beginning of her talk, she explained that she was not speaking as a representative for NGOs in general, but rather as a representative for Oxfam, which is involved in three different kinds of development work: long-term development, advocacy and humanitarian response.

Ms. Thorp's talk addressed three main issues: the importance of the user relationship, the problems with this relationship, and optimism for the future.

Firstly, Dr. Thorp stressed the importance of capacity building and of the depth of experience, which are of vital importance to Oxfam's work, and which are reflected in the fact that the Area Studies courses in Oxford have supplied numerous members of staff to Oxfam. For example, almost the entire staff of Oxfam's Latin American programme in the 1980s had been through the MPhil programme at Oxford and this was very important in building depth of understanding and commitment.

The informal capacity building/user relationship is also very important and she exemplified this by saying that many Oxfam members of staff help out informally and share their contacts when students travel to regions where they have expertise, while at Queen Elizabeth House (Oxford's Department of International Development), informal help and training is given to Oxfam staff. She does not feel the tension between the regionalist and the disciplinary focus; Oxfam is always working and balancing the two and she described this as 'very natural'. Interestingly, however, she pointed out that the value of knowledge for Oxfam was very different to that identified by other participants of the workshop. Oxfam's interest is not in security threats etc. but in poverty, and specifically poverty reduction. Therefore, the expertise they require is defined by need and must be available for a wide sweep of countries affected.

As regards problems and discontent, Ms. Thorp argued that knowledge is recognised as necessary and useful but also admitted that Oxfam's use of research expertise is not as good or as deep as it ought to be. This is part of a broader problem connected with

NGOs and is not specific to Area Studies – there is a tendency within the world of development to use the word ‘academic’ in an uncomplimentary manner, and to want ‘committed’ rather than ‘academic’ research. In Oxford, Oxfam has decentralised by moving out to individual regions so in Oxford they have a thematic rather than a geographic preoccupation. Academics are in many cases not good at dissemination and often write too much, so there is also room for improvement and more collaboration in this respect too.

The optimism expressed by Ms. Thorp in the last part of her presentation related to the fact that the door is open for a greater user relationship. There has been a loss of country expertise in Oxfam and this is recognised by Oxfam. In her concluding remarks, she encouraged academics and participants of the workshop to take advantage of this opportunity.

**Mr. Quentin Peel** from The Financial Times argued that there is a certain disconnection between journalism and Area Studies, and that this is manifest in a variety of ways. Many positions at The Financial Times require area knowledge, experience and a strong multidisciplinary focus. Mr. Peel was formerly the Foreign Editor of The Financial Times and when he was recruiting new staff, candidates who had area expertise but were not opposed to doing other things had an advantage over others. Broadly speaking, an ability to work across a range of disciplines fits well with media work but interdisciplinarity has to go hand-in-hand with flexibility, even if this means an area specialist has to move from one geographical area to another.

Mr. Peel argued that the balance between media work and regional specialisation has also been affected by decentralisation – the Financial Times has sent an increasing number of people to the field as more people were needed ‘on the ground’. For example, at the onset of the Asian financial crisis happened the Financial Times had people watching events unfold and reporting from the region. Editing teams are also sent out to regions with area specialists. However, the most significant need for interaction between the media and area specialists relates to consultation for background analysis behind the news. This is increasingly important in view of the tough competition in the media. There is existing competition between the printed press and radio, and it has been exacerbated by the internet. The pressure to be faster, first and best is ever greater and the only way to survive is to provide something different in the form of competitive analysis.

Mr. Peel said that at times when analysis is needed, academics are not always seen as the first option. Journalists increasingly turn to politicians, economic analysts in banks or think tanks. For example, the Middle East editor is more likely to contact a think tank in the US for information than an academic. In Western Europe and North America such sources are plentiful and therefore it is only when analysis is needed for less known and developed places that the media turn to academics. NGOs are also an important source of information and Mr. Peel argued that they are much more media savvy than one would expect. Contacts are also important and often determine who is consulted on a particular issue.

Another issue which results in disconnection between the media and area specialists is that academic studies are often simply not forward-thinking enough for the media. If they are too backward and insufficiently ‘headline-grabbing’, there is simply no use

for them. For example, the ESRC European internal market study examined projects which have already been looked at. Mr. Peel humorously described journalists as being lazy and needing daily deadlines otherwise they would never get anything done. Given such time pressure, unless material is literally placed in front of them and appears to be immediately relevant, it will not even be considered. As regards the issue of whether academics should be talking to the press more for information, Mr. Peel argued that they probably should and that seminars and conferences were a good opportunity for this – e-communication is not necessarily a good point of contact as we are in danger of communication overload; email has facilitated some communication but also become unmanageable at times.

**Mr. Noel Brehony** spoke in his capacity as an adviser to Rolls Royce. He began his paper by explaining that Rolls-Royce plc sells and supports engines for aeroplanes. The engines are also used to drive ships, pump oil and for power stations. The company operates everywhere and also has the same competition from two of the largest companies in the world wherever it goes in the aerospace field. Irrespective of the location of their operations, they focus on obtaining the right package for each customer so area knowledge can be very important. Agents and consultants provide local knowledge and support, although the most crucial issues are commercial and technical rather than cultural. Because of this, many executives feel that having local agents and consultants is enough. Rolls-Royce employed area specialists from the UK when Mr. Brehony first joined the firm but there are now fewer of them, not only in Rolls-Royce but other large British companies. As one large oil company executive recently told a conference: ‘If we need knowledge of Egypt, we hire an Egyptian’.

Mr. Brehony went on to argue that given the size of contracts in the industries like aerospace and oil and gas decisions can often be made at a political level. In order to be commercially successful, it is therefore necessary to understand the priorities and concerns of governments and people. Governments want to create employment and industrialisation. This is not always possible or commercially viable so the firm has to find other ways of serving them, such as investing in local universities, technical institutes and science parks. Mr. Brehony also spoke of the need for positioning, and gave the example of China as having an enormous long-term market requiring such a strategy.

In terms of the area knowledge required by large companies that he has advised, the key needs identified by Mr. Brehony largely fell into six different categories:

- Strategic knowledge for the main board
- Knowledge of long-term changes in the world, especially given the rise of India and China
- Knowledge enabling the establishment of priorities for regions and markets
- Knowledge useful for making decisions on where to deploy people, manufacturing and repair bases, such as where to build factories
- Knowledge of factors linked to investment, such as political stability, changes in society, political and economic reforms over 5-20 years, business climate, transparency issues and impact assessments. Impact assessments now include a greater consideration of the impact on communities.
- Knowledge of security issues and terrorism. Security threats need to be assessed in order to determine if they are a passing threat or if they are likely to carry on.

In order to acquire this knowledge, he identified many useful sources. In addition to the local agents, partners and consultants identified earlier, he cited employing nationals, the Foreign Office and other governments, firms such as Oxford Analytica, think tanks and Chatham House, or employing graduate from Area Studies, although these are rare. He also argued that area knowledge alone was not sufficient to meet commercial needs and that the understanding needed to be linked to the business process.

**Dr Nigel Gould-Davies** from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) titled his talk 'The Users of Area Studies Knowledge and Skills: Some thoughts on academics and the Civil Service'. He emphasised that the views expressed were his own, and not an official statement of British policy. He started with the point that the FCO and other government departments differ from some other users in being *action-oriented*. In this respect, they are, for example, like NGOs and unlike journalists. They also generate for their own use information and analysis, as well as consuming those of others.

The Foreign Office draws on a range of contacts and inputs from the academic world, primarily through its Research Analysts Department (the nearest US counterpart is the State Department's INR). The FCO also supports bodies which foster such links, e.g. Chatham House and Wilton Park. Outside expert input has played a notable role in, e.g., the White Paper on FCO Strategy, and the UK energy strategy. There has been a welcome cultural shift on both sides in recent years: greater Whitehall openness to academics, NGOs and business; and greater readiness among academics to engage. The FCO and other departments –for example, DFID– are also increasingly using outside groups to deliver outputs as well as provide inputs –e.g. project work.

Nonetheless, he argued that the academic and policy worlds naturally tend to look at the same things in different ways, and describe them with different languages and mental grammars. There are inherent, structural reasons that can explain some of these differences, rooted in the different contexts, purposes and incentives of the two communities:

1. The policy world is action-oriented. A Foreign Ministry wants to change the world, or at least respond effectively to it. The overriding need is thus for useable knowledge, often for quite immediate purposes, rather than knowledge for knowledge's sake. In particular, its demand is for an understanding of specifically actionable variables –those susceptible to influence by policy levers.
2. Closely related to this, the policy demand, especially in urgent situations, is for tactically relevant detailed knowledge: the contingent, fuzzy and *sui generis* in a situation. Sometimes this is a very fine grain indeed –e.g. the personality of a particular leader or official. This contrasts with the academic impulse to generalise and systematise, to transpose particular facts into larger categories and causal relationships, to make broad comparisons rather than stress the unique –in short, the deep rationalist assumption that an immaculate order underlies, and can explain, the surface details of things.

3. Policy practitioners want interested knowledge. While they may espouse, and sincerely pursue, universal values, morality or ideology, their starting-point is and must be the protection and advancement of the national interest. The perceptions, beliefs and understanding of the policy mind will therefore be instinctively organised around the particular perspective of the state. This perspective will necessarily be, in both senses, partial. The extent to which a piece of information, or an argument, is “helpful” is relevant in a way that has no analogue in the academic world.
4. Policy institutions do not value novelty for its own sake. They require a degree of stability, continuity and consistency – known and shared intellectual parameters which frame and underpin the making and implementing of particular policies (though, of course, ideally leavened with the capacity to respond flexibly, and to think afresh, in rapidly-changing circumstances). It would hinder policy –even supposing the time and resources were available– to be constantly scrutinising the microfoundations, or debating the meta-assumptions, of the institution’s world-view. Not all conventional wisdom is wrong, and boldly challenging it is in any case rarely a secure route to career advancement. By contrast, the academic world places a high value on novelty. Originality of explanation –sometimes, it can seem, at least as much as the intrinsic merit of an explanation– is the coin of that realm. It is certainly the price of admission to the guild, as the Ph.D. rubric –“a substantial contribution to knowledge” – stipulates.

For all these reasons, Mr Gould-Davies concluded that there are natural limits to engagement between the policy and academic worlds of International Relations. Nonetheless, it is useful to ask whether, within these limits, there might be closer and more productive engagement between them. As a former academic now in the policy world, he was struck by how little exchange, or even awareness, sometimes exists between the two communities. He offered three thoughts on the challenges and prospects for a closer relationship between them:

1. Policy institutions should not assume they have it all right. All such institutions should think how to manage the production and consumption of knowledge in a world exploding with information. The traditional dominant career model of the “flexible generalist”, who can “get up” a subject within a few weeks, is already being complemented by growing recognition of the importance of career anchors: specialist areas of knowledge to which the officer will return over the course of a career.

Furthermore, while a wide range of process- and skills-related training is available on, for example, finance and project management, less attention is currently paid to concepts and analyses of international relations. The policy mind absorbs and deploys a wide range of concepts, very often generated in the academic world: deterrence, domino theory, clash of civilisations, failed state, globalisation, asymmetric warfare, and so on. It is not always clear, though, that these are fully understood when they migrate to the policy world. Sometimes they degenerate into soundbites, and lose their analytic clarity and value. The context in which they were formulated can be lost, and the concepts therefore incompletely or inappropriately applied.

Furthermore, a theory, however implicit or unacknowledged, about the way the world works necessarily underlies every purposive action or policy. Any decision to do something logically entails assumptions about relations of cause and effect, about relative risks and rewards, about which factors in a situation matter and which do not. It is always better that such assumptions be explicit and subject to scrutiny and refinement, than that they remain implicit and unrecognised. Good concepts are the foundation of clear thinking and thus of good policy. The current emphasis is on deliverable outputs: any institution will, rightly, be judged ultimately by the quality of its outputs. But effective outputs depend in part on high-quality inputs. The two are complementary, and a policy institution should think explicitly about every part of the corporate management of knowledge and understanding (not only of information and data) as a precondition for generating effective outputs. This will include addressing its engagement with the academic world and other knowledge producers, and thinking about how such sources are best gathered, integrated, and disseminated within the organisation.

2. As well as enriching the policy world with expert inputs, academics can themselves benefit from greater engagement with the policy world. Such engagement will, in particular, expose them to a different form of knowing –what might be called practical knowledge. What this means is not easy to convey. It is best experienced rather than described – indeed, this is precisely the point of it – but the essence is that there is a form of knowing that arises from action and experience, which is not axiomatic and cannot be formalised. It is the distinctive form of judgement that is formed from doing rather than theorising –from engagement in processes, and from acting on and in the context of events. The academic study of International Relations and of area studies would gain, perhaps significantly so, from a better feel for the textures of policy as it is practised. The US State Department’s Scholar-Diplomat Programme may offer a useful model for facilitating this.

3. In regard to the last point, Mr Gould-Davies wanted to sound a warning about some directions in the study of Political Science, which have developed primarily in the US and are migrating to Europe. The key feature is a self-conscious commitment to developing a science –in the strongest sense– of politics: the construction of abstract models, generation of hypotheses; and their statistical testing with large-N data sets. This increasingly assertive project, which sometimes does not hide its intellectual imperialism, is well known and much discussed in the academic world, but its implications specifically for the academic-policy nexus need to be highlighted. In particular, it is making the study of politics –and especially of International Relations– less accessible and useful to practitioners. Too often the cart gets put before the horse: defending a model or methodology becomes an end in itself. A mediocre explanation of a large number of “data points” becomes more important than a deep and detailed understanding of a small number of cases. As a consequence, there is a real danger that swathes of the academic study of politics will spin off into self-referential irrelevance and have ever less to say to the policy world.

There is, of course, a value to knowledge for knowledge’s sake. The justification for academic work should not, or not only, lie in its usefulness. But there is an irony worth pondering. Real science – that is to say, the natural sciences, from which political science increasingly takes its cue – is a deeply practical undertaking. The discoveries of physics, chemistry, biology and so on are very often applicable, and

produce tangible benefits. This is rarely so of contemporary political science, especially in its “harder” forms. Sometimes, indeed, the discipline seems to wear its abstruseness as a badge of professional honour. The question therefore arises: how far is this science of politics— unusable and even incomprehensible to policy practitioners— really science, or really knowledge?

Mr Gould-Davies saw three broad conclusions from his previous comments.

- There will inevitably be limits to collaboration and exchange between the academic and policy worlds, rooted in their differing purposes and interests. But the potential for a closer, mutually productive relationship exists. Both sides should think hard about how to encourage this.
- The policy world could look at the systems it uses for drawing upon, and supporting, relevant academic expertise, both in the realm of detail and substance, and in that of the conceptual and comparative.
- There are choices facing the academic world. Some will always wish to retain a critical distance and “speak truth to power”. Others, though, may wish to engage –and benefit from engagement– with the policy world. But the incentive structures in academia do not at present conduce to this. For example, work with policy practitioners is currently little rewarded or recognised. Publications in policy journals count for far less than those in more narrowly academic ones. The urgent task, therefore, is to create incentive structures that more fully recognise such contributions, thus helping to integrate them into academic career paths.

Question time offered an opportunity for the audience to highlight issues raised in the final session of the Workshop:

- One member of the audience commented that there is a gap between what is produced and what is used. He asked if academics were happy to have think tanks acting as filters between academics and policymakers. In support of his view he quoted Isaiah Berlin as saying that that we are intellectual taxis waiting to be hailed and asked if we would not rather be trendsetters, in which case our findings need to be made more relevant and accessible.
- Frances Cairncross stated that research looks backwards whereas policy looks forwards. We have to facilitate ways in which academics can move in and out of different worlds, for example by setting up a PhD in the Treasury or a prize for studentship for someone to spend three months doing journalism. It was also suggested that the issue of academic salaries be considered.
- One of the speakers commented that he spent more time teaching methods than substance and said that many academics felt that in order to rise up the ‘academic tree’ they felt they had to be highly theoretical and complex, rather than practical and accessible.
- Another person commented that there is considerable pressure on young academics to publish and because of this they cannot take time

out to gain relevant experience. One of his students went to work for the FCO for five years but was then unable to find an academic job as they had no teaching experience.

- One of the members of the audience commented that the user session had not reassured him of the need for area specialists as there was still a distinct focus on practical skills (be it journalistic flair, business acumen or a development focus). The response was that it was time to stop looking for employment for Area Studies specialists and time to brainstorm and to create effective channels based on what had been shared during the workshop in order to maximise the utility of what area specialists know.
- Another person commented that area specialists *were* in demand from industry, journalism etc. and that the focus on practical skills and area knowledge were not exclusive. Style and language can be adapted in order to suit journalism for example in a way that does not necessarily detract from an academic focus. He had submitted an article to a newspaper which had been turned down but then submitted it to a different one and it had been accepted. Mr. Peel reiterated the view that writings have to be as accessible as possible and put together in a way that was innovative and interesting.
- Dr. Gould-Davies picked up on an earlier point that there is a need for academics to promote themselves in a more concerted way. The most fruitful allocation of effort is to play on natural strengths and offer intellectual capital, make patterns, give perspective in a way that is relevant and useful.
- One of the participants felt that one of the ways in which Area Studies had been influential was in shaping the school curriculum and deplored the fact that this was not recognised enough.
- Mr. Hutchings said that Oxford Analytica employs at least forty graduates from Area Studies. They are at the front end for academic knowledge and keen for the clients they serve to be shown in clear and concise form why people should be interested in particular areas and issues. They need to be made instantly aware of how to make their job better by tapping into area expertise.

11 August 2007  
23,000 words



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

**School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, University of Oxford**  
**THE FUTURE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA STUDIES IN THE UK:**  
**DEVELOPING RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING**  
**International Workshop, 6-7 December 2005**  
**Venue: Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies and**  
**St Antony's College, University of Oxford**

**TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER**

**Introductory comments**

**Chair:** Roger Goodman (Oxford)

**9.00-9.30** Ian Diamond (ESRC)

**Session One: LESSONS FROM THE CURRENT STATE OF AREA STUDIES  
RESEARCH IN THE UNITED STATES, CONTINENTAL  
EUROPE AND BEYOND**

**9.30-10.30** USA: David Ludden (Pennsylvania)  
USA: John Coatsworth (Harvard)

**11.00-12.15** Netherlands/Australia: Rikki Kersten (Leiden)  
Germany: Marianne Braig (Free University Berlin)  
Singapore: Amitav Acharya (Nanyang Technical College, Singapore)

**Session Two: THE STATE OF AREA STUDIES RESEARCH IN THE UK**

**12.15-13.00** Colin Bundy (SOAS): 'A Post-war Historical Overview'

**14.00-16.45** **The current state of area studies in UK: panel discussion**

**Chair:** Laurence Whitehead (Oxford)

Rosemary Hollis (Chatham House)  
James Dunkerley (Institute of the Study of the Americas)  
George Kolankiewicz (University College London)  
Elisabeth Croll (SOAS)  
Graham Chapman (Lancaster)  
Janet Hunter (LSE)

**17.00-18.30 Funding policies and opportunities: panel discussion**

Adrian Alsop (ESRC)  
Tony McEnery (AHRC)  
Jane Lyddon/Rachel Paniagua (British Academy)  
Rama Thirunamachandran (HEFCE)

**WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER**

**Session Three: PUTTING TOGETHER HIGH-QUALITY  
INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA STUDIES RESEARCH PROJECTS**

Two sessions looking at incipient area studies research projects as case studies to discuss how they could be developed intellectually in terms of their disciplinary, area studies, comparative and intellectual coherence.

**9.00-9.45 Towards an interdisciplinary study of African environments**

William Beinart (Oxford); Dan Brockington (Manchester)

**9.45-10.30 Comparative regionalism**

Anand Menon (Birmingham); Andrew Hurrell (Oxford)

**Session Four: TRAINING RESEARCHERS IN AREA STUDIES**

**11.00-13.00**

**Chair:** Alex Pravda (Oxford)

David Mills (Birmingham): 'Demographic profiles of area studies researchers'  
John Canning (Southampton): 'Supporting teaching in area studies'  
Graham Furniss (SOAS): 'Language training for Area Studies researchers'  
Karen O'Reilly (Aberdeen): 'Area Studies specific methods training'  
Julian Cooper (Birmingham): 'The relationship between teaching area specific methods and discipline skills'

**Session Five: THE USERS OF AREA STUDIES KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS  
14.00-16.30**

**Chair:** Frances Cairncross (ESRC/Oxford)

Charity/NGO sector professionals – Rosemary Thorp (Oxfam)  
Commercial users – Noel Brehony (Rolls Royce)  
Journalists – Quentin Peel (Financial Times)  
Civil servants – Nigel Gould-Davies (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)  
Consultancy – Graham Hutchings (Oxford Analytica)

## **Appendix 2: Brief biographies of participants at the SIAS Workshop 'The Future of Interdisciplinary Area Studies in the UK'**

**Amitav Acharya** is Professor, Deputy Director and Head of Research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His areas of interest include Asian security, regionalism and multilateralism and international relations theory.

**Adrian Alsop** is Director for Research Training and Development at the Economic and Social Research Council. He is an economics graduate of the University of Cambridge.

**David M Anderson** is University Lecturer in African Politics and a Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford, and is programme convenor for Oxford's new MSc in African Studies. His research focuses upon the history and politics of eastern Africa.

**William Beinart** is Professor of Race Relations at the University of Oxford, Director of the African Studies Centre and member of St Antony's College. He researches and teaches especially on southern Africa and on environmental history.

**Marianne Braig** is Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the Free University of Berlin. She is a political scientist, who specialises in the study of Mexican political culture and transition in Latin America.

**Noel Brehony** is a former diplomat, director of Middle East Affairs at Rolls-Royce and chairman of the Middle East Association. He is chairman of Menas Associates, an adviser to the Rolls-Royce board and President of the British Society for Middle East Affairs.

**Shane Brighton** is a Researcher on the International Security Programme at Chatham House. His research focuses on terrorism and counter-terrorism in the UK and Europe and the security dimensions of humanitarian intervention in the developing world.

**Daniel Brookington** is a Lecturer at the School of Environment and Development and member of the Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. His research interests are the social impacts of protected areas; the nature, causes and consequences of environmental change, particularly in rural, semi-arid Africa; and the dynamics of local resource management.

**David Browning** is the Founder Registrar of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and a fellow of St Cross College Oxford. The Centre studies of contemporary Muslim societies in their global and regional contexts.

**Colin Bundy** is Director & Principal of SOAS. Before falling amongst administrators, he was an historian writing mainly on South African agrarian history.

**Frances Cairncross** chairs the Economic and Social Research Council and is Rector of Exeter College, Oxford. In her 20 years on *The Economist*, she wrote on a wide

range of economic and social policy issues, from retirement and pensions policy to the economic impacts of the internet.

**John Canning** is Academic Coordinator for Area Studies in the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, based in the School of Humanities at the University of Southampton. He is a geographer by training and specialises in Canada

**Tony Chafer** is Director of the Centre for European & International Studies Research and Professor of Contemporary French Area Studies at the University of Portsmouth. He is a specialist on Franco-African relations and is currently working on a research project on Franco-British cooperation in Africa.

**Graham Chapman** is Professor of Geography at the University of Lancaster and Chairman of the British Association for South Asian Studies. His interests include geopolitics, environment and development (particularly of late with reference to disasters in Bengal), and media analysis. He also has an active interest in systems theory.

**John H. Coatsworth** is Monroe Gutman Professor of Latin American Affairs and director of the David Rockefeller Centre for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. He is an historian who has worked on the economic and international history of Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America.

**Patricia Coatsworth** is the Administrator of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University.

**Julian Cooper** is Professor of Russian Economic Studies of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, and was Director of the Centre, 1990-2001. He chaired the Area and Development Studies subject panel for the ESRC's 2001 recognition exercise.

**Elisabeth Croll** is Professor of Chinese Anthropology at the University of London and Vice-Principal of SOAS. She writes on issues social development to do with China and Asia.

**Máire Cross** is Professor of French Studies at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and President of the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France. She works mainly on the history of political ideas of nineteenth-century France and on contemporary gender political issues.

**Philip Davies** is Director of the Eccles Centre for American Studies, at the British Library. His interests cover a wide range of political and cultural approaches to the study of the USA. His recently published work has included articles on US political conventions, the history of US campaign materials, media and politics in the USA, US election campaigning at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the Shaker religious community.

**Christopher Davis** is the Reader in Command and Transition Economies in the Department of Economics of the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Wolfson College. His research has focused on the economics of health, economics of defence

and industrial development in the USSR and Russia. He teaches courses on economic transition in the FSU and Eastern Europe.

**Malcolm Deas** is a Fellow of St Antony's College, University Lecturer in the Politics and Government of Latin America, special interest Colombian history and politics, one of founders of Oxford University Latin American Centre in early 1960's.

**Ian Diamond** joined the ESRC in 2003 as Chief Executive. His research has involved collaboration with many government departments including the Office for National Statistics, the Department for International Development, the Department of Transport and the Department for Work and Pensions.

**James Dunkerley** is Director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London. He works on the political history of the western hemisphere since the late 18th century.

**Andreas Eckert** is professor of African history at the University of Hamburg. He is currently vice-dean of the faculty of humanities and director of the African studies program. He mainly works on 19th and 20th century Africa with a focus on urbanisation, the colonial state and African intellectuals.

**Richard J. Ellis** is Head of the Department of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham. His specialisms are in American Studies, where he pursues interdisciplinary work in the fields of literature, culture and history.

**Rosemary Foot** is Professor of International Relations and Senior Research Fellow in the International Relations of East Asia. She works predominantly on security relations in the Asia-Pacific and also has broader thematic interests in human rights issues.

**Lesley Forbes** is Head of Area Studies in Oxford University Library Services. She is interested in working nationally to improve access to/collections of library materials relating to Area Studies.

**Alice Frost** is presently Projects Consultant at HEFCE, with responsibilities including management of work on areas studies and related languages in HEFCE's programme on strategic and vulnerable subjects. She is due to take up post as Head of Business and Community Policy at HEFCE in April 2006

**Graham Furniss** is President of the African Studies Association of the UK, a professor at SOAS, and a specialist in literature and popular culture in West Africa, the Hausa culture of Nigeria and Niger in particular.

**Paul Giles** is Director of the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University and President of the International American Studies Association. He works mainly on U.S. literature and culture within a transnational context.

**Rob Gleave** is Professor of Arabic Studies at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. He specialises in Islamic Law and the History of Shii Muslim Thought

**Roger Goodman** is Nissan Professor of Modern Japanese Studies at the University of Oxford. He is a social anthropologist who specialises in the study of Japanese education and social policy.

**Nigel Gould-Davies** is First Secretary and Head of Economic Section in the British embassy, Moscow.

**James H. Grayson** is Professor of Modern Korean Studies in the School of East Asian Studies at The University of Sheffield. Professor Grayson is a cultural anthropologist with a specialist interest in the religions of Korea, especially Christianity, and has comparative interests in the religions of China and Japan.

**Lyndy Griffin** is the Science and Development Manager at the Economic and Social Research Council.

**Martin Halliwell** is Professor of American Studies and the Director for the Centre for American Studies at the University of Leicester. He specialises in twentieth-century American cultural and intellectual history.

**Barbara Harriss-White** directs Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford's Department of International Development and is Professor of Development Studies. She works on South Asian political economy : the social regulation of the informal economy; aspects of poverty and deprivation and long -term agrarian change.

**Donald Hay** is chairman of the Management Committee of the Oxford Internet Institute, Head of the Division of Social Sciences, University of Oxford, and Professorial Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. His major research area is empirical industrial organization and his most recent research focuses on the profitability of UK firms, competition in retailing, and competition and efficiency in the financial services industry.

**Jim Hoare** joined Research Analysts FCO in 1969 and had postings to Seoul, Beijing and Pyongyang. He retired in 2003, and now writes and broadcasts on East Asia

**Clive Holes** is Khalid bin Abdallah Al-Sa'ud Professor for the Study of the Contemporary Arab World at the University of Oxford. His main interests are the modern Arabic language and its dialects, the social and political functions of modern non-canonical Arabic literatures, and the cultural history of Arabia.

**Rosemary Hollis** is Director of Research at Chatham House, with overall responsibility for research activity, project formulation and grant applications as well as the institute's publications. She assumed this post in April 2005, having completed ten years as Head of the Middle East Programme at Chatham House

**Janet Hunter** is Saji Professor of Economic History at the LSE, and President of the British Association for Japanese Studies. She has specialised in modern Japanese economic development, in particular institutional and labour market change

**Andrew Hurrell** is a University Lecturer on International Relation and Faculty Fellow, Nuffield College, Oxford. His major interests are international relations theory, including the history of thought about international relations; and the international relations of Latin America, with particular reference to the foreign policy of Brazil and US-Latin American relations.

**Graham Hutchings** is editor of The Oxford Analytica Daily Brief. He specialises in China, and was formerly China Correspondent of The Daily Telegraph based first in Beijing and then Hong Kong.

**David Johnson** is a Fellow of St Antony's College and University Lecturer in Comparative Education (Developing Countries). His main interests include interdisciplinary policy research in education, particularly in Africa and South Asia.

**Rikki Kersten** is Professor of Modern Japan Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. She is a historian of modern Japanese political thought, and specialises in studies of revisionism and political apostasy.

**Alan Knight** is Professor of the History of Latin America and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. His research interests are modern history and politics of Latin America, especially Mexico; revolutions, state-building and peasant movements; British and US relations with Latin America

**George Kolankiewicz** is Professor of Sociology with special reference to Eastern and Central Europe UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. In 2001 he was appointed Director of SSEES and continues to specialise in Social Citizenship and Social Inequality in Eastern Europe.

**George W Leeson** is Deputy Director of the Oxford Institute of Ageing and a Senior Research Fellow in the Sociology Department, Oxford. His main research interests are in the socio-demographic aspect of ageing populations, covering both demographic modelling of population development and the analysis of international data sets. His other research includes the demographic inequalities of global ageing, the changing populations of Europe, migration and migrants in Europe, health and social eldercare migrant workers, older people and homelessness in Denmark, family care in Denmark, life-long learning, age discrimination, and late life work retirement.

**Carol Leonard** is a University Lecturer in Regional Studies of the Post-Communist States, and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. Her recent projects and publications focused on agrarian reform in transition Russia, the Internet, and general technological advancement in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe

**Kun-Chin Lin** is a Leverhulme Fellow in Contemporary China Studies and a Fellow of St. Cross College, Oxford. He specializes in the political economy of contemporary China.

**David Ludden** is Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. His research concerns economic development viewed through overlapping frames of analysis that embrace history, economics, politics, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, hydrology, geology, agronomy, and geography. His research focuses on southern

Asia. He has directed the South Asian Studies program at Penn and served as the President of the Association for Asian Studies.

**Jane Lyddon** is the head of the International Relations Department at the British Academy. The Academy has recently established Area Panels to advise on the development of academic links with Africa and with Latin America and the Caribbean

**Neil MacFarlane** is Lester B. Pearson Professor of International Relations and Head of the Department of Politics and International Relations. He works on conflict and transition in the Caucasus and Central Asia

**Maurizio Marinelli** is Senior Lecturer in East Asian Studies at the University of Bristol. He specialises in the study of modern China's intellectual and political history.

**Tony McEnery** is currently Director of Research at the AHRC. As Professor of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University, Tony engaged in a wide range of funded research projects covering a number of languages and subjects as diverse as language teaching, legal language and the use of language in the media.

**Anand Menon** is Professor of European Politics and Director of the European Research Institute at the University of Birmingham. His research focuses on the French and British foreign policies, the politics and institutions of the EU, and the politics of European security.

**David Mills** is a lecturer at the University of Birmingham and academic co-ordinator within Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP). He led a recent demographic review of the social sciences for the ESRC, and has also written about higher education in East Africa

**Ian Neary** is a University Lecturer in Politics & International Relations and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He works mainly on Japan and East Asia, and on the thematic issues of human rights and industrial policy.

**Farhan Nizami** is the Prince of Wales Fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford and Director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. He works on Muslim social and intellectual history in South Asia.

**Karen O'Reilly** is Reader in Sociology at the University of Aberdeen. She has conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork with British migrants in Spain and is interested in themes of migration, tourism, community, cohesion and stratification.

**Rachel Paniagua** is the Secretary of the Area Panel for Latin America and the Caribbean, in the International Relations Department at the British Academy

**Quentin Peel** is International Affairs Editor of the Financial Times, and formerly a foreign correspondent in Johannesburg, Brussels, Moscow and Bonn. He writes editorials and a weekly column for the FT.

**Karen Perkins** is the Administrative Manager of the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London. She is a languages and area studies graduate and has spent much of her career in area studies departments in the UK and Australia.

**Alex Pravda** is a University Lecturer and Fellow of the Russian and East European Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford. His research focuses on Soviet and post-Soviet Russian foreign policy and on the international dimensions of East European politics.

**Mark Rebeck** is a University Lecturer on the Japanese Economy and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. His main interest is in the Japanese employment system.

**Emma Reisz** is a Junior Research Fellow in History, Jesus College, Oxford. Her main research interest is global economic history and imperial science and culture.

**Philip Robins** is a University Lecturer in Politics & International Relations and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He works mainly on the Middle East and Turkey, and on the thematic issues of foreign policy analysis and illicit drugs

**Vivienne Shue** is Leverhulme Professor of Contemporary Chinese Studies and a fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford. Her work has focused on the changing nature of the relationships between state and society, politics and economy in modern and contemporary China.

**Michael Spence** is Head of the Social Sciences Division of the University of Oxford. He is an academic lawyer working on intellectual property law and obligations theory.

**Rama Thirunamachandran** has been Director at HEFCE since 2002 with responsibility for research, knowledge transfer, and the London and East of England regions. He is a geographer by training and has held senior posts at Royal Holloway, University of Bristol and King's College London.

**Graham Thompson** is Senior Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Nottingham and Treasurer of the British Association for American Studies. He works mainly on mid-nineteenth and contemporary American literature.

**Rosemary Thorp** is Reader in the Economics of Latin America and a member of the DFID-funded research group on Inequality, Ethnicity and Human Security ("CRISE") at Queen Elizabeth House. She is currently the Director of the Latin American Centre.

**Eric Thun** is the Peter Moores University Lecturer of Chinese Business Studies at the Said Business School and a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford. A political scientist by training, his research focuses on industrial development in China.

**Ann Waswo** is Director of the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies, Oxford and University Lecturer in Modern Japanese History. She is primarily interested in the social history of Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Laurence Whitehead** is an Official Fellow in Politics at Nuffield College, Oxford. His field is comparative politics with a particular focus on Latin America and comparative analysis of democratizations.