Securing a seed bank of knowledge
The Oxford School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies
Introduction

"No one can know where the next crisis will erupt... Yesterday's apparent irrelevances – the demographics of eastern Ukraine, for example, or popular attitudes towards public health in West Africa – can suddenly become matters of consequence."

Foreign Affairs (July/Aug 2015)¹

A World of change

The second decade of the 21st century poses a daunting range of complex challenges. Exponential urban population growth alongside rapid fertility decline and population aging. Climate change and dwindling natural resources alongside burgeoning demand for energy and consumer goods. Radical extremism and democracy movements alongside voter apathy. Shifting and uncertain power relations across the world, amplyfying concerns about issues such as cyber-terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Simultaneously, wealth disparities within and between countries have reached such extremes that Oxford scholar Paul Collier has identified a ‘bottom billion’ who are disproportionately exposed to stagnating incomes, urban sprawl, ecological hazards, water shortages and ever-mounting pressures to migrate.

Many of these flashpoints are linked to global processes. All, however, are incubated, shaped and driven by specific regional realities. From Japan’s post-tsunami nuclear disaster to China’s anti-corruption drives; from Nigeria’s Boko Haram to Mexico’s drug cartels and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria: contextualised, area-specific knowledge is a prerequisite for understanding the day-to-day ways that people live, love, work, play, argue... and affect the rest of the globe.

Policy makers, businesses and global citizens need the ability to respond intelligently to this world of increasingly dense connections. They need a reserve of experts with deep and nuanced regional knowledge, up-to-date intelligence, personal contacts and local language fluency. They need what Area Studies delivers.

Vital and valued expertise

A 2013 study found that current and former national security policy-makers in the United States picked Area Studies as the form of academic research they most value: 69% of respondents said Area Studies was very useful and 97% said Area Studies was somewhat useful, compared with 32% and 80% for political science more generally.²

Indeed, recent world crises have revealed the crucial importance of regional expertise. Many observers have reported that strategic responses to September 11th, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the toxic fall-out from the Arab Spring were all hampered by a lack of scholars with in-depth understanding of the Middle East and North Africa – or even speakers of Arabic, Pashto or other now needed languages.³

More directly, the Chair of the UK Parliamentary Defence Committee noted in 2014 that an absence of Area Studies knowledge had left the UK and Europe unprepared for the crisis in the Ukraine, in particular.⁴
Introduction

The cost of lost knowledge

Today we face critical shortages of Area Studies expertise, following three decades of disinvestment in the field. After the collapse of Communism in 1989 and end of the Cold War, governments and universities around the world de-prioritised the field. Successive waves of fiscal austerity in the higher education sector of Europe and the United States further depleted regional knowledge. In 2014 alone, for instance, the US Department of Education reduced its funding for Language and Area Studies by 40%. In the UK, funding bodies have stepped up measures to provide doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships to remedy a recognised national deficit in area studies expertise, but still, the overall funding situation in UK universities is bleak and considerable investment is needed to undo years of neglect.

Repair won’t come quickly. It takes decades to build up expertise in Area Studies. Students need to master the languages of the regions they study; the analytical tools of particular disciplines; and both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Students also need to learn where to gain access to different forms of data and how to conduct field research. Moreover, they need to develop extensive personal networks to sustain access to field sites and to communicate and co-operate with other scholars based in the region. Crucially, the regional experts of tomorrow need a critical mass of current experts to learn from: scholars, linguists and teachers with decades of experience to transmit.

The School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies at the University of Oxford

Oxford’s School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies (SIAS) boasts the largest community of Area Studies scholars anywhere. We have research and teaching programmes dedicated to the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, South Asia, China, Israel, Japan, Russia and Eastern Europe. The School offers nine Master’s degrees and welcomes students from all around the globe.

Upon completion of their degrees, our superbly trained UK, EU and overseas graduates go on to transform the world. Many pursue doctorate studies and teaching careers, thus preserving crucial intellectual capital further into the future. Other graduates take up high profile posts in international agencies, global NGOs, international governments, the diplomatic service of various countries, the military, media and journalism, business consultancy, banking, and law.

In the UK’s 2014 nationwide survey of student satisfaction across the higher education sector, three of Oxford’s five Area Studies taught master’s programmes achieved satisfaction levels between 96 and 100%, well above both national and university averages. Oxford’s Area Studies department is consistently ranked amongst the top echelon and a recent ranking by QS University Rankings placed us first in the world.

Oxford has the intellectual and human capital to chart a new course for international Area Studies. What is lacking, however, is the stable funding base needed to attract, train and retain a cohort of top-flight international candidates in the face of competing educational and career opportunities that often offer more secure futures.
The impact of Oxford’s Area Studies experts

The value and impact of scholarship cannot be reduced to simple calculations of national security. Regions that seem remote or inconsequential judged by daily headlines, may yield powerful insights with time. Indeed, the expertise of SIAS scholars runs deep and wide. Our focus scales from the local to the national and regional levels. We reach into the historical past to help us understand the present while remaining thoroughly informed by a deep understanding of our country or region. We have spent years “on the ground” and we speak the languages of the people we want to understand. When we engage with big theories such as globalisation, liberalisation, and feminism, our emphasis is to understand how they help us reveal processes within states and the reality of people's daily lives.

Our work doesn’t prescribe policy. Instead it provides the essential context for distinguishing between evidence-based action plans and misguided or misinformed policy options. As a result, our expertise is consistently sought by government, business, the media, and NGOs in the UK and worldwide. Some contributions to recent debates include:

- **Russia and Eastern Europe**: Professor Roy Allison assisted the House of Lords in producing a Committee Report on the Ukrainian crisis and was cited several times in the final Report. He also gave presentations on the topic of Russian involvement in Ukraine to senior officers in the Royal College of Defence Studies and to US Foreign Service Officers.

- **Latin America**: Professor Leigh Payne made presentations on mechanisms to improve democracy, human rights and peace to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, the UN Mediation Group, and the RFK Human Rights Centre.

- **Africa**: Professor Nic Cheeseman advised the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on approaches to electoral observation, decentralisation, and political settlements in Kenya. In a separate project, he advised the Lagos State Government in Nigeria on public goods provision and how to generate public support for taxation. At the same time, Professor Cheeseman wrote a regular column on contemporary African politics for Kenya’s *Sunday Nation* newspaper, which has a circulation of approximately 170,000.

- **The Middle East**: Professor Matthew McCartney gave 40 hours of lectures and classes to a team from the Ministry of Petroleum, Cairo, Egypt as a member of a World Bank project seeking to reform energy prices, subsidies and taxation in Egypt. These reforms are currently being implemented and are having a substantial impact on the Egyptian economy.

- **India**: Professor Barbara Harris-White formed links with NGOs in India to devise strategies for more carbon-efficient forms of agricultural production in the dispossessed hinterlands.

- **China**: Dr Paul Irwin Crookes contributed to a policy-led Roundtable hosted by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) at their headquarters in Whitehall, London covering changes in foreign policy under China’s Xi Jinping and cross-Strait economic ties between mainland China and Taiwan.

Oxford: a trusted and neutral forum for debate

The University of Oxford’s School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies is ideally positioned to be a neutral and trusted forum for debate. Based in the UK and within the European community, it is relatively distanced from the legacies of the Cold War that shaped area studies programmes in US universities.

Oxford scholars, visiting academics and students from across the globe can research and debate topics that remain taboo elsewhere. In our seminars, Israeli and Palestinian scholars have debated the two-state solution; students from mainland China have explored the causes of the Tibetan people’s socio-economic deprivation; visiting scholars from Pakistan have attended lectures on contemporary India and discussed the impact of India’s nuclear status and aspirations to become a Great Power.
Be part of our future: philanthropic opportunities

Having built a world-class foundation in the study of countries and regions, the University of Oxford’s School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies (SIAS) now intends to go further. We wish to build and secure the international community’s best seed bank of regional knowledge, research and teaching. Now more than ever, in the current challenging economic climate, the University is reliant on visionary benefactors who share our ambitions. In the following pages, we present a number of opportunities for philanthropic partnerships.

Scholarships and fellowships

Graduate scholarships

We offer postgraduate degrees at Master’s and Doctoral levels, and these highly competitive courses attract outstanding international applicants. It is important that the most promising students be accommodated, regardless of their ability to pay. This is a tenet of Oxford’s educational mandate, and also important for the success of our research programme. To ensure that we continue to attract the very best candidates in each of our six main area specialties, we aim to endow a portfolio of at least 12 studentships.

The University has created the Oxford Graduate Scholarship Matched Fund to encourage new philanthropic support of fully-funded postgraduate scholarships, covering all fees and living costs. A donor’s contribution of 60% of that sum could be matched by the University’s contribution of 40%, ensuring that a donor’s gift will go much further towards supporting postgraduate researchers.

The tables below show the cost of scholarships, with a breakdown of the matching costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctoral scholarships</th>
<th>Fee status</th>
<th>Annual fees + living costs total</th>
<th>Minimum endowment required per scholarship</th>
<th>Oxford’s contribution (40%)</th>
<th>Donor’s contribution (60%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas students</td>
<td>£36,182</td>
<td>£904,543</td>
<td>£361,817</td>
<td>£542,726</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/EU students</td>
<td>£30,562</td>
<td>£764,050</td>
<td>£305,620</td>
<td>£458,430</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assuming 4% drawdown on endowment and starting course in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters scholarships</th>
<th>Fee status</th>
<th>Annual fees + living costs total</th>
<th>Minimum endowment required per scholarship</th>
<th>Oxford’s contribution (40%)</th>
<th>Donor’s contribution (60%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas students</td>
<td>£36,182</td>
<td>£904,543</td>
<td>£361,817</td>
<td>£542,726</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/EU students</td>
<td>£32,707</td>
<td>£817,668</td>
<td>£327,067</td>
<td>£490,601</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assuming 4% drawdown on endowment and starting course in 2016.

Travel and fieldwork funding for graduate students

Engagement with the world is key for our work and, as such, our students and postdoctoral fellows spend time working in the field. Funds to enable this are vitally important:

- £40,000 will support 50 master’s students each year with a travel grant of £800 for dissertation fieldwork
- £60,000 will support the fieldwork of six doctoral students (£10,000 per student per year).
Postdoctoral fellowships

Outstanding graduates from doctoral programmes from all over the world can share their expertise with their peers, receive valuable mentoring, and lay the groundwork for their careers by spending a postdoctoral year at Oxford. Postdoctoral fellowships normally include travel expenses and equipment expenses for research needs as well as the salary itself and internal costs incurred by the relevant department. We are seeking post-doc fellowship endowments for each of our six main area specialties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of postdoctoral fellowship</th>
<th>Annual cost for 1 postdoc researcher</th>
<th>Minimum endowment required per scholarship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary costs</td>
<td>£51,618</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Research support costs</td>
<td>£16,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total fellowship costs</td>
<td>£67,618</td>
<td>£1.7m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assuming a postdoctoral fellowship appointment starting in October 2016/7 at a suitable level of seniority (Grade 7 stage 1), and travel/research costs appropriate to a post that is likely to require significant overseas travel. Also assumes drawdown of endowment at 4%.

Academic posts

World-class educational institutions are sustained by the presence of world-class minds. This means that, first and foremost, outstanding academics: people who are doing rigorous and original research and who set high standards for their colleagues and their students, inspiring them to do great work. They are constantly pushing forward the boundaries of knowledge in their fields. And they are great teachers, able to impart their in-depth knowledge and their enthusiasm for learning to others.

World-class academics are the lifeblood of the School. We already have some of the finest scholars and specialists in the world. However, there is an urgent need to deepen and broaden our expertise by recruiting new posts. We must ensure a diverse spectrum of teaching in important and emerging parts of the world as well as cross-regional fields and research methods. We seek to appoint new faculty specialising in important regions and issues, such as:

- South Asia (including Sri Lanka and Pakistan)
- East Asia
- China in Africa
- Turkey
- Border regions
- Stateless nations
- Cities and urbanisation across the world
- New human security challenges across the world

Permanent endowment of these posts will be a guarantee of excellence for many years to come.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic posts</th>
<th>Minimum endowment required per post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>£2,750,000</td>
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</table>

Assuming 4% drawdown on endowment.
Acknowledging our benefactors

Since its founding more than eight centuries ago, Oxford has been shaped and sustained by the patronage of visionary individuals, groups and organisations, who share our commitment to advancing human knowledge. In turn, the University has been deeply committed to providing lasting and fitting recognition to its philanthropic partners. Major forms of acknowledgement include:

The Clarendon Arch
A benefactor who has donated £5 million or above may have their generosity honoured by the engraving of their name in the Clarendon Arch (right), near the entrance of the world-famous Bodleian Library. Names inscribed on the Clarendon Arch include some of the most prominent benefactors in Oxford's history: King Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Thomas Bodley, and Cecil Rhodes. Benefactors added within the last generation include Mr George Soros, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the Wolfson Foundation.

The Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors
Philanthropic contributions which cumulatively total more than £1.5 million by an individual benefactor or £3 million by an organisation, once received in full, may enable the Chancellor to invite the benefactor to join the Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors (CCB). The Court meets annually in Oxford for the formal ceremony of admission, business meeting and formal dinner. The Chancellor, The Rt Hon Lord Patten of Barnes CH, presides at CCB meetings.

The Vice-Chancellor’s Circle
The Vice-Chancellor’s Circle recognises benefactors who have provided generous support of between £250,000 and £1.5 million to the collegiate University. The Circle engages members in the life and work of the collegiate University, and meets each year in Oxford.

Encaenia
Encaenia is the annual ceremony in which honorary degrees are awarded to distinguished men and women, and benefactors are celebrated. Major partners of the University’s work are invited to attend this important occasion, held at the Sheldonian Theatre since 1670. Every year, the University’s Public Orator delivers the Creweian Oration on the events of the past year and in celebration of the University’s benefactors. In addition, the University records principal gifts to Oxford received during the past 12 months in the list of benefactions in the Encaenia Programme.
Contact details

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