

Academic Area Studies and Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of the GCC and US



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Abstract

This paper seeks to answer four questions. First: how does the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC compare to that in the US? Second: what accounts for the GCC-US difference in the incidence of area studies? Third: what role do area studies play in foreign policy in the GCC and US? Fourth: should the GCC countries consider allocating a larger volume of resources to area studies departments/programs in the pursuit of more effective foreign policy decisions? We answer these questions using a combination of literature reviews, primary data from universities, and qualitative data from interviews with academic and foreign policy stakeholders in the GCC and US. Our main conclusion is that the GCC has a dearth of area studies programs, and would benefit considerably from investing in them.

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Executive Summary

Area studies departments/programs are interdisciplinary academic units that holistically study a geographic area, such as a region (Latin American studies, Eastern European studies) or a country (Chinese studies, Russian studies). This paper examines the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC and US, and their role in the foreign policy of each country, using a combination of literature reviews, primary data from universities, and interviews with key American and GCC stakeholders. The paper arrives at the following conclusions.

First, when conducting foreign policy, a government that exclusively relies on in-house research performed within government entities such as the foreign ministry - shunning outsourced research from universities, think tanks, and consultancies - places itself at a disadvantage.

Second, should a government's foreign policy institutions decide that they wish to consider outsourcing some of their research, they have access to a variety of outsourcing options, such as universities, think tanks, and consultancies, each with their own pros and cons.

Third, area studies have the advantage of permanent dedication to a certain country/region, allowing for a large volume of accumulated knowledge. They also have holistic/integrated knowledge about that area, rather than knowledge that is specific to one discipline such as political science or sociology. Finally, within a university bureaucracy, they have administrative flexibility, allowing them to undertake research-relevant activities that traditional university departments cannot perform. Accordingly, in a rich policy-support ecosystem, there is a role for area studies.

Fourth, area studies departments partially reflect overt government interest in the research output of such academic entities. However, they also reflect a broader societal curiosity about other cultures. Consequently, if a government is seeking to increase the incidence of homegrown area studies, it needs to go beyond top-down management, as grassroots interest in such entities plays an important role.

Fifth, in the US, which is the global leader in area studies, the role of area studies departments/programs has evolved considerably over the last 75 years: they went from being espionage support units during

the Cold War, to being highly academic entities that actively shun policymakers. This was due to distaste among academics toward the US government's foreign policy.

Sixth, in terms of absolute numbers, area studies units continue to thrive in the US, as they exist in large numbers in universities of all ranks. A typical American university contains approximately five area studies departments/programs. These large numbers persist despite the weakening of their direct relationship with the US government's foreign policy institutions.

Seventh, to a large extent, in terms of their direct relationship with foreign policy institutions such as the State Department, area studies departments/programs in the US have been supplanted by think tanks. This is because think tanks have missions that prioritize influencing policy, and that they better know how to serve policymakers' needs.

Eighth, despite having a minimal direct influence on policy, area studies departments/programs continue to have a very important indirect role via the training of people who work in foreign policy, and in the think tanks that have a large direct effect on foreign policy. Moreover, area studies departments/programs have an indirect effect via the production of academic research that gradually feeds into foreign policy institutions and think tanks. Finally, though it is hard to quantify, there is also an indirect effect via diplomats, government researchers, and think tank scholars informally interacting with area studies specialists.

Ninth, in the GCC, area studies departments/programs entities barely exist, and the handful of exceptions represent inward looking area studies programs because the host country is included in the program's remit, e.g., a Middle Eastern studies program situated in a GCC country. This is due to a combination of factors including: a highly instrumentalized view of education; parochial attitudes in all social strata; and a lack of belief among policymakers that such entities could make an important contribution to policy making. This latter factor is reflected in the weakness of institutional ties between governments and universities in many areas of expertise.

Tenth, investing in a few area studies programs in the GCC would yield societal returns, both in the foreign policy arena and in terms of culturally enriching the general population. For it to improve foreign

policy, however, the establishment of area studies programs would have to be coupled with an explicit and openly articulated commitment by policymakers regarding the desire to leverage academic area studies expertise. Otherwise, the channels that normally link area studies to foreign policy - both direct and indirect - will not materialize.

Eleventh, should the GCC countries decide to invest a greater volume of resources in area studies, particular areas that GCC area studies departments should focus on include East Asia (especially China), the US, and Europe. These choices are due to three factors in conjunction: the countries are highly important to the strategic goals of the GCC countries, they each have complex political and social structures, and there is a lack of institutionalized familiarity with those complexities in the GCC.

Twelfth and finally, with the passage of time, governments' needs change, and thus any newly established area studies departments in the GCC will need be able to adapt in order to survive, in a manner that is similar to that seen in the US. This requires entrepreneurial thinking on the part of the academics working in these GCC-based area studies departments/programs. However, at the societal level, there will always be a value in understanding other cultures, even if the government's geo-strategic priorities lie in a different corner of the globe.

1. Introduction

Diplomats must make important decisions on a daily basis. Research constitutes a significant input into these decisions. It can take many forms, including broad background knowledge about a country, or game theoretic analysis of the strategic options when responding to a crisis. Diplomats in the foreign policy organs of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are no exception to this rule, and this is reflected in the considerable volume of resources that GCC foreign ministries allocate to research.

When managing the production of research as an input into foreign policy decisions, policymakers can choose to either insource the research, meaning that it is assigned to employees within the organization; or to outsource it to researchers working outside the organization. Moreover, upon deciding to outsource, there are multiple options available, with the most salient being universities, think tanks, and private consultancies. All three exist in the GCC and are used to varying degrees by policymakers in the foreign ministries.

In the postwar era, a particular class of knowledge institution known as the “area studies department/program” has emerged as an option for Western policymakers seeking policy-relevant research. These are interdisciplinary academic entities that bring together a group of academic disciplines within the social sciences and the humanities to serve the primary goal of producing and disseminating knowledge on a certain geographical locale (Ashutosh, 2017; Walker and Sakai, 2019). They could be associated with a region, such as Middle Eastern studies or Eastern European studies; or a country, such as Russian studies or Chinese studies.

The US in particular has a rich history of developing area studies, and in linking the research output of these departments/programs to foreign policy. This has spawned a sizable academic literature describing this relationship and its evolution over the last 70 years. Scholars have analyzed area studies departments/programs in the US in some depth, generating important insights regarding their advantages and disadvantages compared to alternative sources of research such as think tanks.

In contrast to the US case, the literature on the genesis of foreign policy in the GCC countries is very limited, and to the best of our knowledge, nobody has examined the role that area studies

departments/programs play in GCC foreign policy. In this paper, we seek to answer the following questions.

First: how does the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC compare to that in the US? Second: what accounts for the GCC-US difference in the incidence of area studies? Third: what role do area studies play in foreign policy in the GCC and US? Fourth: should the GCC countries consider allocating a larger volume of resources to area studies departments/programs in the pursuit of more effective foreign policy decisions?

Answering these questions contributes to our understanding of foreign policy in the GCC, which is itself an important topic due to the central role that diplomacy plays in these countries' sovereignty, security, and economic prosperity. Moreover, the need to have a dynamic and scientifically-grounded foreign policy is heightened at present due to the turbulent nature of geopolitics. The era following the global financial crisis of 2008 has been characterized by a reversal of the prevailing trend toward globalization, and a weakening of the multilateral systems that have maintained global peace in the postwar period (James, 2018). Complex problems such as the disruptions to Arabian Gulf maritime security which emerged in 2019 have ratcheted up the pressure on GCC diplomats (Krane and Finley, 2019). As a result, restructuring the methods by which policy-relevant research is conducted may contribute to superior outcomes.

Beyond the policy-relevance of this research, it also bears academic significance due to the aforementioned lack of scholarship on the genesis of foreign policy in the GCC countries. As we will show below, the difference in the incidence of area studies between the GCC and the US is extremely large and is therefore worth understanding on purely intellectual grounds.

We use a combination of methods to answer the research questions. We begin by reviewing several academic literatures that shed light on the role of area studies departments/programs in foreign policy, both theoretically and in practice. We then gather primary data on the incidence of these departments/programs in the GCC and the US. Finally, we conduct structured interviews with a diverse range of foreign policy stakeholders in the GCC and the US. Our main findings are as follows.

First, there is a massive gap in the incidence of area studies departments/programs between the GCC and the US. In fact, most American universities individually have more area studies departments/programs than all the GCC universities combined. Moreover, this difference is a long-term fixture, as the GCC countries appear to have no appetite for area studies at present.

Second, the large gap can be attributed to a combination of factors. On the US side, knowledge-producing organizations, such as universities and think tanks, are institutionally linked to policymaking entities across all disciplines, and the links are reinforced by large funding commitments to education and research by the Federal government. Moreover, a unique set of historical factors (the Cold War) gave area studies departments/programs a large boost in the postwar era. In contrast, in the GCC, universities have weak or non-existent institutional ties to policymakers. Furthermore, both university students and their Gulf societies more generally appear to place little weight on the benefits of studying other geographical areas and peoples.

Third, by virtue of their near total absence, area studies departments/programs are effectively totally irrelevant to foreign policy in the GCC. In the US, in contrast, there exists wide variation in the extent to which the foreign policy organs have sought the assistance of the experts residing in area studies departments/programs, both across region and time. For example, Eastern European studies used to carry great importance to policymakers during the Cold War, before becoming largely irrelevant during the last 20 years; Latin American studies have attracted very little attention from policymakers throughout their existence; while Middle Eastern studies have maintained at least a minimal level of importance in the eyes of policymakers for an extended duration. The relationship continues to evolve as think tanks supplant area studies departments, and as ideological and political differences between area studies researchers and policymakers have widened.

Fourth, the GCC countries would benefit from establishing a few area studies departments/programs. While the US experience indicates that such entities are likely ill-suited to being the primary option for foreign ministries seeking to outsource research, they can still contribute in a highly constructive way as part of a diverse knowledge ecosystem. Policymakers who have access to good think tanks, university-based area studies departments, and private intelligence consultancies are in a much better position to

make effective foreign policy decisions than are policymakers with only one option. The political and social upheaval underway in several Middle Eastern countries at present accentuates the benefits accruing to the GCC countries from investing in high quality knowledge production entities, including area studies departments/programs in their local universities.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents our research questions and outlines our method. Section 3 presents the theory of outsourcing and applies it theoretically to the problem of procuring research as an input into foreign policy. Section 4 presents a primer on area studies programs historically. Section 5 analyzes data on the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC compared to the US. Section 6 presents stakeholder perspectives on the GCC-US differences garnered from a series of interviews. Section 7 synthesizes the findings. Section 8 concludes and presents recommendations.

2. Research Questions and Method

This paper's primary research question is: what role do area studies play in foreign policy in the GCC? Further, this paper examines whether the GCC countries should consider allocating a larger volume of resources to area studies departments/programs in the pursuit of more effective foreign policy decisions.

To answer these two questions, we begin by noting that when a foreign policy organ involves a university-based area studies department/program in foreign policy - be it through formally subcontracting for research or via an informal discussion between policymakers and researchers - this represents a form of outsourcing. Accordingly, we first (section 3) provide a primer on the organizational theory of outsourcing, and apply this theory to area studies departments/programs contributing to foreign policy.

Following this largely theoretical exercise, we then conduct a detailed literature review about the role that area studies departments/programs play in foreign policy. To the best of our knowledge, there are no papers on this issue in the context of the foreign policy of the GCC countries, and the extant literature focuses heavily on the US. This literature review reveals that area studies departments/programs

originated in the US, and that the US maintains what is by far the highest incidence of such entities anywhere in the world. Moreover, the US has a rich history of interactions between its foreign policy organs and external knowledge institutions such as consultancies, think tanks, and universities, including area studies departments/programs in those universities.

While the US is by no means a model which the GCC countries should look to emulate with total fidelity, the US remains an excellent benchmark for understanding the role that area studies departments/programs can play in GCC foreign policy. For this reason, our paper also features a comparative analysis of the GCC with the US, taking the form of two additional research questions: how does the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC compare to that in the US? And what accounts for the GCC-US difference in the incidence of area studies?

In light of the total absence of a scholarly literature on the role played by GCC area studies departments/programs in GCC foreign policy, to execute the comparative analysis, we begin by gathering data on the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC and US. After analyzing the data, which reveal a large difference between the incidence of area studies departments/programs between the GCC and US, we then proceed to conduct a series of personal interviews with key stakeholders in the GCC and US, such as those in the two locale's foreign policy establishments and academic communities. The interviews yield a large volume of qualitative data, which shed light on the reasons for the differences between the GCC and the US, as well as helping us to understand the advantages of allocating a greater volume of resources to area studies departments/programs in the GCC.

As will be demonstrated in the next section on the theory of outsourcing, readers might be wondering why we are focusing on area studies departments/programs while ignoring the remaining outsourcing options available to foreign policy organs, such as consultancies and think tanks. Our decision is due to two factors.

The first is the simple goal of parsimony: in the interests of making our research readable and digestible, we focus on one of the options, rather than tackling all. Second, in light of the desire for focus, we chose area studies departments/programs because we observed casually (and this was confirmed when we collected data) that these entities were totally absent from the GCC knowledge ecosystem, as compared

to consultancies, think tanks, and traditional discipline-specific departments in universities, which exist in abundance. We regarded such an absence to be anomalous and therefore deserving of deeper understanding.

3. The Theory of Outsourcing Expertise in Foreign Countries

This section introduces the general theory of outsourcing, with the aim of subsequently applying it to the specific task of generating research that acts as an input into foreign policy decisions.

3.1. The Economics of Insourcing vs. Outsourcing

In 1937, the British economist Ronald Coase published a paper titled: “The nature of the firm” (Coase, 1937), wherein he attempted to answer a deceptively simple question: what determines whether a firm decides to get something done within its organization versus procuring that activity from the market? For example, when a company wants a new electronic human resources system, should it be developed by the in-house IT team, or should it be purchased from a dedicated software company?

Coase’s paper, which has been cited almost 50,000 times on Google Scholar, and contributed to his winning the 1991 Nobel Prize in economics, spawned a massive literature on optimal outsourcing, sometimes referred to as the debate on markets (outsourcing) versus hierarchies (insourcing).

The paper’s importance is partially attributable to the breadth of its applicability. Coase used the word “firm” in his paper’s title, and the narrative was about businesses making decisions, but the theory applies to outsourcing decisions in all organizations, including those that are in charge of a country’s foreign policy, most notably the foreign ministry. The ensuing literature has identified the following series of advantages associated with outsourcing (Quinn and Hilmer, 1994).

The most salient benefit of outsourcing is that, under certain conditions, it can lead to both lower costs and higher quality, through three distinct but complementary channels. The first is specialization: different organizations and/or groups of individuals have a comparative advantage in performing certain types of activities, allowing them to produce at a lower cost and with higher quality (Munch and Skaksen,

2009). This is one of the reasons why a management consultancy organizing a conference will usually outsource catering to a third party that specializes in preparing food and drinks, as the latter organization's dedication to catering makes it considerably more competent in delivering that service. This is a straightforward application of the Ricardian theory of international trade, whereby it is better for countries to specialize in producing the goods and services in which they have a comparative advantage rather than trying to produce everything themselves (Eaton and Kortum, 2021).

The second is economies of scale: even if all organizations are homogenous in terms of their capabilities, some produce at scale while others have only low levels of output (Cachon and Harker, 2002). In many sectors, scale production yields substantive cost advantages that can then be passed on to consumers. Thus, a printing shop does not possess any fundamental technical or organizational advantage over a normal business when it comes to printing flyers, but businesses prefer to outsource to the printing shop because the large scale of its printing means that buying industrial printers is commercially viable, creating a cost advantage.

The third is competition: when an organization chooses to outsource in a competitive market, the prospective supplier has an incentive to try to provide the service at the lowest possible cost - otherwise it will lose clients to competitors (De Fontenay and Gans, 2008). In contrast, when insourcing, the employees assigned the task will have a limited incentive to deliver the service efficiently or at low cost due to the absence of competitive pressure. Employee evaluations, promotions, pay rises, and other methods of motivating employees are a substitute, but in many settings, they are only a weak substitute for the disciplining power of the market.

Outsourcing does not just improve the quality/cost of the service procured - it can also improve the quality/cost of the services that remain insourced. This is because an organization that outsources a peripheral activity can then focus its resources on its core business, which then allows it to exploit its comparative advantage and economies of scale (Quinn and Hilmer, 1994). Organizations that grow to a large size and undertake a wide range of non-core activities tend to suffer from diseconomies of scale, whereby they become administratively bloated and inflexible in the face of changing external circumstances. This is why large businesses periodically spin-off non-core elements of their portfolio as

they try to focus on their core competence, as occurred when IBM sold its laptop manufacturing division to allow it to improve the quality of its consulting services (Musthaler, 2005).

The final benefit associated with outsourcing is the added flexibility it affords the outsourcing organization (Choi et al., 2018). When the organization's demand for certain non-core activities is unstable, investing in insourcing those activities can be risky because market conditions might change, rendering the investments worthless. Under these circumstances, outsourcing via spot markets affords the outsourcing organization the opportunity to flexibly scale its activity up and down, without having to worry about costly redundancies or stranded assets. This is why hotels outsource airport pickup and dropoff to dedicated taxi companies rather than hiring their own permanent drivers, as the demand for airport pickup and dropoff is highly seasonal, and the hotel does not want to be either short-staffed in peak season or stuck paying idle drivers during low season.

However, as indicated at the outset, the advantages of outsourcing are not absolute, depending instead on the circumstances under which the outsourcing is being considered. Moreover, the literature has identified three general drawbacks associated with outsourcing.

The first is the search and contracting costs associated with outsourcing (Barthelemy, 2001). Drafting and circulating terms of references to prospective suppliers can be a time-consuming process, and drafting a contract that safeguards each party's interests satisfactorily can be quite expensive under certain circumstances, making management prefer to simply assign the task to an existing employee within the organization.

The second is the loss of control associated with outsourcing (Quinn and Hilmer, 1994). When assigning tasks internally, management has near total control over the product's specifications, and they can monitor at will. In contrast, when outsourcing, management cannot be sure that their precise instructions are being followed, partially due to their inability to physically observe the production process - they are not authorized to enter the outsourcee's premises at their own convenience. An example of this is a car manufacturer outsourcing the production of the vehicle's computer to a third party; the car manufacturer cannot inspect the computer manufacturing process with 100% accuracy, opening the door for possible quality defects that do not become apparent until several months after the sale of a vehicle. In fact,

outsourcers might knowingly exploit these monitoring flaws to cut costs or to extort the outsourcing organization, an act termed “hold-up” in the markets and hierarchies literature (Rogerson, 1992).

Note that a partial solution to these monitoring and hold-up problems is longer and more comprehensive contracts. However, these come with considerable up-front costs, and the sizable ex-post costs in case of litigation undermine the effectiveness of such contracts as deterrents.

The final disadvantage associated with outsourcing is the threats it poses to security (Tafti, 2005). Certain activities are technically highly suited for outsourcing, but they contain sensitive information which - if leaked - can cause major damage to the interests of the outsourcing organization. For example, a military organization might benefit hugely from an external financial audit in terms of identifying ways of saving money, but the option of outsourcing is declined due to the risk that critical security information will reach the organization’s adversaries.

To summarize, outsourcing has a general series of pros and cons, and the extent to which they apply to a given scenario depends on its specific properties, such as how competitive the market is, how strong the economies of scale are, and how sensitive the information is associated with the activity.

Further, certain classes of commodity or service have special advantages and disadvantages associated with outsourcing. One of those is research, which has a unique set of considerations when a closed entity such as an intelligence agency is considering outsourcing to an open entity such as a university, all of which accentuate the advantages of outsourcing.

First, outsourcing brings the benefits of diversity of ideas, and this is especially valuable when the organization that is considering outsourcing has a small in-house research unit (Maxwell, 2006). There exists a large literature in innovation on the benefits that diversity brings to the development of new ideas, stemming from the fact that fresh perspectives spur innovative thinking. Thus, when a four-person in-house research team that is not allowed to publish its findings or share them in conferences chooses to outsource its research to a university full of intellectually diverse scholars, the resulting research is likely to be of higher quality as a direct consequence of that plurality.

Second, there is a very large literature - with firm empirical foundations - regarding the benefits of open innovation, i.e., of developing ideas collaboratively and in a non-proprietary manner (Reed et al., 2012). Scholars have known for millennia that sharing their ideas with their peers to solicit their feedback - be it through the informal exchange of papers or via the participation in formal conferences - is a highly effective way of improving the quality of those ideas (Ware, 2008). In fact, during the Enlightenment era, this process was formalized via the establishment of peer-reviewed academic journals, and in the ensuing three centuries, the open innovation model is a central reason for the continued excellence of universities in the innovation domain.

Equivalently, the inability to share ideas with peers is a major impediment to the quality of research conducted by in-house researchers in organizations that value secrecy. This reinforces the benefits that such organizations can secure by outsourcing parts of their research to academics working in universities, research centers, and think tanks.

Finally, the open innovation environments of universities ensure that they attract scholars who want to produce the highest quality work, and scholars who want to be recognized internationally for their contributions to human knowledge (Hayter, 2015). Both of these mutually inclusive groups tend to be the highest echelon of researchers, making them capable of producing higher quality research than the researchers housed in a ministerial research unit. A genius like Albert Einstein is extremely unlikely to be satisfied with writing confidential internal research memoranda at the Department of Energy, and so the only way for the Energy Secretary to be able to benefit from Einstein's genius is to outsource research to him.

We now proceed to apply these principles to a foreign ministry's decision on whether or not to outsource the research it uses.

3.2. The Outsourcing Options Available to Foreign Policy Decision Makers

Information is a critical input into important decisions. Making an optimal choice requires knowledge of: what has happened in the past; what the options available to you are; what the options available to your

partners and adversaries are; how the different options affect your interests and those of others; what the characteristics of other decision makers are; what is likely to occur in the future; and so on. Policy research is the process of acquiring this information with the aim of improving the quality of decisions.

Foreign ministries must make important decisions on a daily basis, and these decisions have consequences for the entire population. Examples include negotiating free trade agreements, allocating foreign aid, issuing official statements in response to emerging developments, and so on. Evidently, research is a valuable input into these decisions.

Like many goods and services, research can be insourced or outsourced, and foreign ministries regularly do both. For example, all foreign ministries have in-house research departments that produce internal memoranda that assist diplomats in decision-making, and they also interact with think tanks and universities in the pursuit of policy-relevant information (Haass, 2002).

Generally speaking, the aforementioned advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing apply when a foreign ministry considers whether or not to outsource a piece of research. For example, an embassy has a small number of employees, and so it may wish to outsource some intelligence gathering processes to a third party that can exploit economies of scale, or that has access to a higher quality selection of scholars than the foreign ministry's in-house team. This is similar to the preference that many embassies have recently expressed for outsourcing consular services (issuing visas), as it allows the limited staff to focus on their core competencies, which are diplomatic representation and interlocution (Kuula, 2013).

In contrast, the foreign ministry will likely refuse to outsource the preparation of an internal report on counterterrorism policy, due to the need to maintain strict control over the drafting process, and also due to the sensitivity of some of the information required to prepare the report.

When it comes to outsourcing research, we distinguish between four major options available to foreign ministries. The first is think tanks, which are non-profit research institutions that have the explicit primary goal of influencing government policy. This is the option that Lord Wellington, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, selected when he established the world's first think tank in 1831 (Bidwell, 1991), the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

The second is a private consultancy which produces research on a contractual and/or subscription basis. An example is the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which generates a large volume of data and analysis on economic, financial, and political issues, both at the country and regional levels. Foreign ministries are among the clients for this class of research entities, which differs from think tanks due to the primarily closed nature of its research, and due to its political and ideological neutrality.

The remaining two options are both within universities: traditional discipline-specific academic units, such as political science or international relations departments; and area studies units, which are usually programs but sometimes take the form of traditional departments (we elaborate on this distinction below).

Finally, all four options are available in two forms: local and foreign, e.g., the US State Department outsourcing to a think tank can choose between an American one such as the Brookings Institute or a British one such as Chatham House. In the case of the GCC countries, it is also worth further breaking down the local options into homegrown and non-homegrown, where the former denotes an entity that is incorporated and owned locally, and that is staffed primarily by citizens of the host country. Thus, for example, New York University has a branch in Abu Dhabi, but it is not a homegrown entity, since it is a branch of an American institution, and its research staff are almost exclusively non-Emiratis (Foderaro, 2010).

Another useful distinction is between formal and informal outsourcing, though there is a large gray area. The extremely formal elements of the spectrum involve official contracts, such as when a foreign ministry commissions a research paper, or formally summons a researcher to testify before a committee. In contrast, the informal elements involve diplomats having a coffee with colleagues from the local university while discussing foreign policy, or diplomats following the Twitter accounts of think tank scholars. Figure 1 summarizes the key dimensions of outsourcing options available to GCC foreign policy decision makers.

Figure 1: Research Outsourcing Options Available to GCC Foreign Policy Decision Makers

	International	Local: Non-homegrown	Local: Homegrown
Private consultancy	Eurasia Group (New York)	KPMG (Kuwait)	3BL Associates (Manama)
Think tank	CSIS (Washington DC)	IISS (Manama)	KAPSARC (Riyadh)
University: Traditional discipline	Harvard University Department of Sociology	NYU Abu Dhabi Legal Studies	Sultan Qaboos University Department of Political Science
University: Area studies	Stanford University Department of German Studies	N/A	Qatar University Gulf Studies Center
Spectrum of outsourcing types			
Extremely formal	Moderately formal	Moderately informal	Extremely informal
Commissioned research Targeted research grant	Closed seminar Invited lecture	Discussion at a conference Reading papers	Chat over coffee Social media interactions

It is worth affirming the aforementioned advantages of outsourcing that are specific to research services. The in-house research teams in foreign ministries can be highly productive, but the fact that most of their work is confidential means that it does not benefit from peer review, and it also makes it much harder for these teams to attract the most outstanding scholars. This is why think tanks and universities continue to make important contributions to foreign policy in most countries, in tandem with the work conducted by in-house research teams (Haass, 2002).

We now briefly describe some of the theoretical pros and cons associated with the various outsourcing options available to the foreign ministries. First, building on the above benefits of open research environments, private consultancies suffer from the same fundamental deficiency that the in-house research teams in foreign ministries do, i.e., the limited capacity to benefit from peer review, and the difficulty of attracting the highest echelon of scholars because they cannot publish their research and gain recognition from their peers. Nevertheless, private consultancies do have the advantage of access to good quality resources - considerably better than what a think tank scholar would have access to due to the high fees they are able to charge clients. Moreover, they are generally less likely to have a political

or ideological agenda because their research is produced in response to the client's demands, and because it will not be released to the general public.

Think tanks have the advantage of openness, but in general the work is only informally peer reviewed at most, and is often subjected to no peer review. This is due to the fact that their goal is to influence policy, which means that they have to produce research in a timely manner, and in a non-academic style that is suitable for reading by lay policymakers. Peer review is a process that takes weeks - usually months - and is generally incompatible with the need for high frequency research output typical of a think tank. However, from the perspective of a policymaker, this lack of peer review is a double-edged sword, since it is a crucial factor in enabling think tank scholars to produce work that suits the policymakers' needs. A minister does not have time to read a 30-page paper on the history of a country's political system - they need a 500-word brief that contains specific policy recommendations, and this is where think tanks excel.

Beyond these factors, chronic funding issues - think tanks do not have a tenure system (Lah, 2017) - mean that think tank scholars are more susceptible than university scholars to biases in their research stemming from financial conflicts of interest, most of which are undeclared due to the absence of peer review (Coombes, 2019). This can be reinforced by the explicit ideological or political goals that many think tanks have (Rich and Weaver, 2000).

At the institutional level, universities usually have no ideological or political goals, though the proclivities of individual university-based researchers can be very strong (Gross and Simmons, 2006). Nevertheless, they are less likely than a think tank scholar to have an explicit financial conflict of interest, especially in traditional departments where faculty members have tenure and therefore face modest or even zero financial pressure. Moreover, they are afforded the time to produce deeper and more considered research, and to subject that research to peer review. This allows universities to attract the nation's foremost scholars who crave the adulation of their peers and the academic freedom of a college campus. However, from the perspective of a foreign policy decision maker, these advantages come at the expense of esoteric and policy-irrelevant research that is frequently impenetrable even when it does have a relation with an ongoing foreign policy issue.

Within universities, traditional discipline-centric departments and area studies departments/programs also differ in their value to policymakers through both intellectual and administrative channels. On the intellectual side, scholars in international relations and political science departments may have expertise in a country or region, but they have a lower incentive to maintain that expertise than do area studies scholars, because their discipline evolves and applies its tools to other geographical locales. For example, an academic expert on terrorism working in the 1970s and 1980s might have had deep knowledge of Ireland and Spain, but in the 2000s and 2010s, their knowledge of those two countries would have become obsolete, being replaced by up-to-date knowledge of Afghanistan or Pakistan. In contrast, an area studies expert focusing on the Iberian Peninsula would have maintained current knowledge about Spain throughout the entire period.

Also on the intellectual front, area studies scholars have a belief that knowing the language and culture are both essential to acquiring the deepest insights regarding a country or region. In contrast, due in part to their transient interest in certain countries or regions, traditional social scientists will not learn the language, arguably denying them an important source of scientific knowledge about the country or region (Snyder, 1988).

When area studies academic entities take the form of conventional departments, with guaranteed funding and tenure lines, as well as with the need to comply with all university bylaws, they are administratively equal to political science and international relations departments. However, they are often classified as programs and/or centers within universities, which has a bearing on the nature of their research output.

When they are programs, this creates a chronic funding problem that is not quite as acute as the one faced by think tanks, but certainly enough to create potential conflicts of interest in research output, reinforced by the absence of tenure. However, programs do have the advantage of administrative nimbleness as they do not have to comply with the entire suite of university bylaws. They can secure external funding more easily, and can convene conferences, meet with policymakers, give TV interviews, and so on in a much less bureaucratic and restrictive manner. Under certain circumstances, this can make them more attractive to policymakers seeking research as an input into their decision-making processes.

The advantages of local institutions - especially homegrown ones - also merit elucidation. In principle, upon being convinced of the value of outsourcing research, a GCC foreign ministry could decide to outsource to German universities or Italian consultancies; or they may opt for local, homegrown options. The latter has two distinct advantages over their foreign counterparts.

First, local homegrown researchers are more likely to be aware of the specific needs of domestic policymakers, and to be attuned to the aspects of the area being studied that are most interesting or noteworthy to their fellow citizens and policymakers. For example, American think tanks studying China are likely to focus on political and military aspects of Chinese society, because they are the most relevant and interesting aspects from the perspective of Americans. In contrast, a homegrown Gulf researcher studying China will know that economic relations - especially those relating to energy - bear the greatest importance for their compatriots, and will therefore produce research products in that vein, and will accumulate expertise within that specific sub-field. In other words, local homegrown researchers may possess the same headline specialization as a foreign researcher, but at the sub-field and sub-sub-field levels, the homegrown researcher is much more likely to possess the nuanced knowledge that foreign policy decision makers are looking for.

Second, local homegrown researchers are less likely to suffer from a conflict of interest with foreign policy decision makers than are foreign researchers. This is a direct result of national interests (the homegrown researcher will be a citizen of the country whose foreign ministry they are advising), and also reflects the mutual affinity one develops from being in close physical proximity with their clients. Thus, while the US government might happily seek the council of expatriates on non-sensitive foreign policy issues, when it comes to the most sensitive dossiers, such as those relating to security and defense, a preference for US citizens will surely emerge.

It is important to note that the various pros and cons are never absolute, and so the richest and most productive intellectual ecosystems will have all four forms of outsourcing options represented. The level of representation changes over time, as factors such as funding and politics evolve, but in general, each element retains at least a niche market. For the remainder of this paper, we will be focusing on the specific

role played by area studies departments/programs in the US and the GCC, and on how that role might change in the coming years.

In summary, under certain circumstances, outsourcing can help an organization realize higher levels of efficiency and quality. Moreover, in the context of outsourcing research, a key driver of these advantages is that researchers benefit hugely from being able to develop ideas in open environments, and they also regard the recognition that they gain from their peers when they advance science in open environments as an important motivator. Consequently, policymakers working in foreign ministries across the world regularly outsource research both formally and informally; and they will outsource to think tanks, consultancies, and universities, including area studies departments/programs within universities.

4. Background on Area Studies Departments

The role the area studies departments/programs play in foreign policy has evolved considerably over time. This section exposes the history of these academic entities and their contribution to foreign policy.

4.1. Key Characteristics

Area studies originated in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s, during and after World War II and amid the Cold War. During this critical juncture of a shifting global order, the United States noticed it had a lack of reliable information on the non-European world, which was considered crucial for creating political strategies and policy positions (Harootunian, 1999; Walker and Sakai, 2019). At the time, the solution was to hire the few regional specialists in the country - mostly based in Ivy League universities - as intelligence analysts for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Cumings, 1997; Szanton, 2002). After their roles were fulfilled, many of these intelligence analysts returned to academia and “became the founding generation of many campus-based area programs” (Lambert, 1989).

While recruiting these intelligence specialists worked as a temporary solution, this acknowledgment of a lack of research on the non-Western world led to efforts across the federal government, private research

institutions, and private foundations to create and train more area specialists across the United States. Several official and non-official commissions across the country issued reports in the immediate post-war period “calling for the rapid installation of multidisciplinary programs, composed of specialists in a variety of disciplines, to train a post-war generation as area specialists” (Harootunian, 1999).

The purpose of area studies was straightforward: to “know the enemy” and gather intelligence about them (Harootunian, 1999; Szanton, 2002). Following this logic, the key framework of this discipline was policy relevance, and its main aim was to “develop a body of elite scholars capable of producing knowledge about other nations to the benefit of ‘our’ nation” (Bilgin, 2004; Rafael, 1994). In fact, the earliest instances of area studies centers - the Russian Research Center at Harvard University and the Russian Institute at Columbia University - had close ties to the CIA, FBI, and other intelligence agencies (Cumings, 1997; Diamond, 1992). Similarly, the most prominent foundations that funded area studies in the country, including Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford, also worked closely with the state and the CIA, suggesting a strong political and military bent to the establishment of area studies in its early days (Cumings, 1997).

While the earliest area studies centers focused on politically and strategically relevant regions, such as Russia and China, the relationship between area studies scholarship and policy was slightly more fraught for other regional specialists: many Latin Americanists, Africanists, and South Asianists, among others, were less accepting of this direct link between area studies scholarship and policy, and in fact viewed it as a “[threat] to academic integrity” (Hershberg, 1998).

Nonetheless, between the 1950s and 1960s, funding for area studies exploded in the United States. The Ford Foundation alone invested approximately \$278 million in area studies across 34 universities, with a focus on “foreign languages, literatures, arts, music, and philosophies” (Ashutosh, 2017; Cumings, 1997; McCarthy, 1987; Szanton, 2002).

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC), a private research organization, also played a significant part in funding and promoting area studies by working alongside the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) on the Foreign Area Fellowship Program (FAFP), previously owned by Ford Foundation (Szanton

2002). Through this program alone, thousands of students were supported between the 1970s-1990s and trained to become area experts and subsequently teachers in universities across the country (Hershberg, 1998). The SSRC also played a significant role as a “broker” between government, private funders, and businesses to continue supporting the establishment of area studies centers across the nation in other ways (Harootunian, 1999). Through these private organizations and programs, the field of area studies was established as “a powerful and academically legitimate approach to generating knowledge about the non-Western world” (Szanton, 2002).

In addition to private funding and support, federal support was also provided by US policymakers in 1958 in the form of Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), the “single most important piece of federal legislation for the funding of area studies programs” (Rafael, 1994). This bill, which was enacted as a response to the launching of the Sputnik satellite by the Russians, was a reaction by US lawmakers who became more aware of the necessary role that area studies programs would play in supporting the “successful exercise of US world power” (Morris-Suzuki, 2000). Title VI’s support focused on the funding of administrative, language teaching, and public service costs of area studies centers, and it gave six languages the highest priority: Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian (Ashutosh, 2017). Through Title VI’s support, approximately 125 university-based area studies centers were funded as “National Resource Centers”, making it the most valuable source of support for area studies in the United States (Szanton, 2002).

Thus, through the impetus of the Cold War, and as a result of the efforts of the military, US federal government, private research organizations, and private foundations, area studies came to be a fixture of American higher education by the 1960s. See Condee (1995) for a retrospective examination of how Soviet studies in particular evolved, and its potential future directions following the conclusion of the Cold War.

While the initial goals of area studies were aligned with US military and political priorities, with time the official opinions on said goals varied. Academics and scholars conducting area studies research in the early years believed that the primary goal of area studies was to reduce the intellectual isolation of Americans, promote tolerance and diversity of thought, and promote interdisciplinarity among the social

sciences (Rafael 1994, Szanton 2002). By the 1970s, the scope of area studies had expanded even further to include “the study of modernization and development”, more specifically the extent to which non-Western civilizations could adapt and within the modern social and economic order (Morris-Suzuki 2000; Worcester 2001, 112).

In recent years, the military and political focus within area studies seems to have vanished almost entirely. Area specialists have become increasingly more critical of the decisions made by the government, and the relationship between area studies scholars and the military apparatus of the United States has changed significantly since its early years of implicit collaboration. As such, area studies scholars nowadays are much more critical of foreign policy, as they continue to see the government and military go against their better judgments as area specialists. Because of this, area scholars have slowly distanced themselves from the US Department of Defense, the military apparatus, and the state in general (Lambert 1989). This led to scholars being less interested in articulating their research in ways that would benefit the state. That, in addition to reduced hiring across academia in general, and, as a result, reduced the amount of funding that area studies secured throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Hershberg 1998).

Thus, the academic productions of area studies centers in the present day no longer serve the same functions as they once did at their inception, and currently, much of the research produced by area studies scholars is “relatively lightly utilized” by foreign policy decision makers (Lambert 1989, 105). This topic is discussed in greater length in Section 4.2.

4.2. Contribution to Foreign Policy

While the link between area studies and foreign policy was clear in the early days of the field, the relationship between area studies scholars and foreign policy decision makers today is slightly more strained.

As mentioned in Section 4.1, area studies scholars have distanced themselves significantly from the Department of Defense and foreign policy in general, as they have become more critical of the foreign

policy decisions being made. In a similar vein, policymakers' reliance on scholarly output by area studies scholars has also decreased significantly. As it currently stands, much of the information utilized by foreign policy decision-makers come from confidential internal analysis, which is too highly classified and fast-paced to share with academics, whose publications are not "current" enough to keep up with the daily needs of policymakers (Lambert, 1989). Therefore, the relationship has deteriorated from both ends, albeit for different reasons, and the scholarly products of the area studies community are no longer utilized as extensively and reliably as they once were by the intelligence and policymaking community.

This weakened relationship between area studies and policymakers is also seen in the reduced Title VI funding for area studies programs. Traditionally, the Department of Defense continues to provide funding and moral support to language and area studies through Title VI, however traditional support for Title VI has "wavered" considerably in recent years (Brown, 2014; Lambert, 1989). In 2012, a 48% reduction was made in funding towards all National Resource Centers (NRCs). Between 2014-2018, funding towards NRCs increased, however nowhere near their original levels, and only after significant delays by politicians (Brown, 2014). Therefore, the weakened relationship between area studies and foreign policy can also be seen institutionally by the reduced amount of funding being allocated to these centers each year.

In a recent study conducted by Avey and Desch (2014), senior national policymakers in the United States were asked directly about how and when they utilize social science research to inform their decisions on national security. The findings from this study confirm the above: overall, policymakers do not utilize academic research for day-to-day policymaking, due to policy implementation being "too complex for outside analysis to be relevant"; and the challenges faced by policymakers being too "real time, in the moment, and situational" to be able to utilize academic analysis. Policymakers also stated that academic analysis is far "more focused on theory than practice", which makes it less-than-useful for policy making purposes (Avey and Desch, 2014). Thus, overall, it seems that policymakers do not find much day-to-day value in the research produced by academic entities.

It is important to note, however, that policymakers did show a bias towards area studies in particular. When asked which academic discipline they found most useful, approximately 65% of respondents

selected area studies as “very useful” when compared to all other social science methodologies provided to them (Avey and Desch, 2014).

Expanding on this, several of the policymakers stated that area studies research was useful in providing background context for decision-making, explaining that area studies research can have deep policy value if it “gets at the underlying causes, rather than current symptoms, of problems” (Avey and Desch, 2014). Many respondents also stated that while they may not rely on scholarly research for their daily policymaking needs, they still see value in scholars contributing to policymaking needs in the form of “informal advisors”, “creators of new information/knowledge”, and “trainers of policymakers” (Avey and Desch, 2014). Research also suggests that policymakers continue to rely on research produced by think-tanks due to the “policy-relevant” and “theory-free” nature of said productions (Bilgin, 2004). Thus, while policymakers may not utilize academic research as heavily as they would utilize classified information or newspapers, some reliance still exists on external researchers and on area studies researchers in particular.

Finally, our efforts at locating scholarship on area studies departments/programs in the GCC, and on the role that they play in GCC foreign policy, were unsuccessful. Due to their high frequency in the US, and to the fact that the US was their starting point, the literature is heavily skewed toward studying area studies departments/programs located in the US. Therefore, to answer this paper’s research questions, we must collect new data.

5. The Incidence of Area Studies Departments in the GCC and US in 2021

Our first data-gathering exercise is the collection of data regarding the frequency of area studies departments/programs in the GCC and US. This section describes the method and the findings.

5.1. Method

At the outset, we note that due to resource limitations, the data-gathering exercise described in this section was not designed to be comprehensive in its coverage nor absolute in its accuracy. However, as will become apparent upon presenting the data, any flaws in the processes described, such as universities that were accidentally omitted or academic units that were incorrectly classified, have no bearing on the main findings.

The US has thousands of higher education institutions, and so collecting primary data from all of these universities would be a time consuming and resource intensive process. In contrast, the GCC collectively has dozens of universities only. Accordingly, our strategy was to collect data on all the universities in the GCC, and to then construct a comparison group for the US which we would collect data on.

In the case of the GCC, using basic web searchers, we were able to determine that in 2020, there were 170 universities, with the oldest being King Saud University, which was established in 1957. The definition of university used was very wide as it included technical colleges and some higher training institutes; we did this to minimize the likelihood of omitting possible area studies departments/programs.

To construct a comparison group with the US, our strategy was to find a global ranking that included both GCC and US universities, and to then find US universities that were comparably ranked to the GCC universities. In addition, we would also gather data on the top 10 US universities.

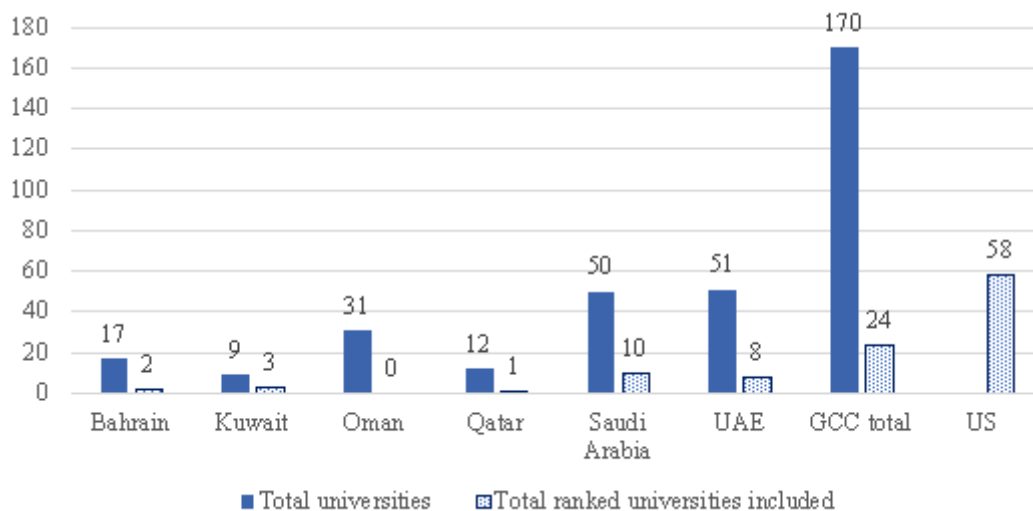
Many popular rankings of the world's universities have limited coverage. We opted for the QS rankings, as they had the widest coverage. The QS ranking uses six main criteria for ranking universities: academic reputation; employer reputation; faculty/student ratio; citations per faculty; international faculty ratio; and international student ratio.

According to the QS rankings, 24 of the GCC's 170 universities were ranked. It is safe to assume that the unranked GCC universities would have been ranked lower than those that were ranked had they been ranked, since the ranked GCC universities are the ones that have the highest prestige colloquially, and have the most recognizable brand names, such as King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals in

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait University in Kuwait. However, an exception should be made for the GCC branches of top western universities, such as the Rochester Institute of Technology in Dubai, as these are high quality academic institutions that are unranked because they presumably bear the rank of their parent branch. Nevertheless, as will become apparent below, this once again has no bearing on our findings.

For each of the 24 ranked GCC universities, we found the closest (in terms of rank) US university that was ranked higher than it, and the closest US university ranked below it, yielding two comparison US universities for each ranked GCC one. For example, King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia is ranked 143rd in the world according to the QS system, and the two closest US universities were the University of Southern California (ranked 121st) and the University of California at Santa Barbara (ranked 152nd). The goal of this comparison group was to be able to determine if GCC-US differences are attributable to differences in rankings, or if they remain even when one controls for ranking.

Figure 2: Universities by Country, 2020



While the QS rankings are detailed for those ranked in the top 500, further down the rankings, it uses rankings bands; for example, Applied Science University in Bahrain is ranked in the range 651-700. In such cases, we took two American universities at random from the same rankings band if possible, or went up or down one ranking band as appropriate.

We repeated this for all 24 universities, resulting in 48 comparison US universities; in addition to the top 10 US universities. Figure 2 shows the number of universities included by country.

Table 1 shows the 24 ranked universities with their global QS rank, along with the comparison of US universities. The top 10 US universities that we also included in the sample were (in descending order): MIT, Stanford, Harvard, Caltech, University of Chicago, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, Yale, Cornell, and Columbia.

Table 1: GCC Universities by QS Ranking and - with Comparison - US Universities, 2020

Country	GCC U.	Rank	Comparison US Universities
Bahrain	Applied Science U. of Bahrain	651-700	U. of Denver, American U.
	U. of Bahrain	801-1000	Binghamton U. SUNY, Baylor U.
Kuwait	American U. of the Middle East	801 -1000	U. of the Pacific, U. of San Diego
	Gulf U. for Science and Tech.	801 -1000	U. of Wyoming, Fordham U.
	Kuwait U.	801 -1000	Loyola U. Chicago, U. of New Hampshire
Qatar	Qatar U.	245	U. of Colorado Boulder, U. of Illinois at Chicago
Saudi Arabia	King Abdulaziz U.	143	U. of Southern California, U. of California (SB)
	King Fahad U. of Petroleum and Minerals	186	U. of Minnesota Twin Cities, Vanderbilt U.
	King Saud U.	287	The U. of Arizona, U. of Miami
	Umm- Al-Qura U.	474	Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst., Wayne State U.
	King Khalid U.	601-650	Smith College, Michigan Technological U.
	Prince Mohammad bin Fahd U.	751-800	U. of Tulsa, Rutgers U.-Newark
	Islamic U. of Madinah	801-1000	Clemson U., Kent State U.
	King Faisal U.	801-1000	Auburn U., Utah State U.
	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman U.	801-1000	George Mason U., San Diego State U.
UAE	Khalifa U. Of Science and Tech.	211	U. of California, Irvine, U. of Notre Dame
	United Arab Emirates U.	284	The U. of Arizona, U. of Miami
	American U. of Sharjah	348	U. at Buffalo SUNY, George Washington U.
	American U. of Dubai	601-650	U. of Vermont, Syracuse U.
	U. of Sharjah	601-650	U. of Oregon, U. of Kentucky
	Abu Dhabi U.	701-750	Stevens Inst. of Tech., Worcester Polytechnic Inst.
	Ajman U.	701-750	Southern Methodist U., U. of Maryland BC
	Zayed U.	701-750	Temple U., U. of Houston

Upon determining the sample of universities to be studied, the next step was to measure the frequency of area studies departments/programs. We did this by going to each university's website and recording its departmental structure. Most universities follow a structure where the organization is divided into colleges, which are then divided into departments. Sometimes, the departments are listed immediately, without being grouped into colleges or divisions.

For example, the University of California at Santa Barbara has a college of letters and science, a college of engineering, a college of creative studies, a school of environmental science and management, and a graduate school of education. Within each college, one finds the departments one would expect; for example, in the college of creative studies, there are departments of art, music composition, writing and literature, and so on.

In a minority of cases, rather than having departments, there are programs, or simply majors. This often arises in liberal arts colleges, such as Smith College, which has 50 total programs/majors.

Some universities have a hybrid structure, whereby traditional disciplines such as physics and sociology are given departments, which is the higher status administrative assignment, whereas lesser disciplines are housed in programs. In all but the best universities, area studies often find themselves relegated to the role of program. Centers are another example of a lower status designation. Departments have much more stable budgets, and have other advantages such as tenure lines. For example, the University of Connecticut has a college of business and a college of agriculture, each of which has numerous departments therein; yet Latin American studies are in an institute, as are Asian and Asian American studies.

Notably, deans sometimes use centers and programs rather than departments because it affords the researchers therein greater flexibility in securing external funding, organizing conferences, hiring and firing, and so on. Therefore, being classified as a program is not always a mark of administrative relegation, though it usually is.

For our purposes, we are interested in counting the absolute number of academic area studies units per university. We assign equal weight to departments, programs, institutes, centers, and so on. Since our study is not looking at the incidence of such entities compared to those relating to other disciplines, our failure to discriminate between departments, programs, and so on does not affect our findings.

When counting area studies departments/programs, we used two definitions. The narrower definition required the academic entity to explicitly focus on a geographical area, be it defined politically (Chinese studies, Russian studies) or otherwise (Middle Eastern studies, African studies). The broader definition

also allowed for cultural, ethnic, or religious groupings, such as Islamic studies or Slavic studies, since these tend to reflect contiguous geographical areas but not necessarily so.

5.2. Results

Finding 1.1: Area studies departments/programs are almost completely absent in the GCC.

The data for the GCC countries are very straightforward to analyze. For the 170 universities, in 2020, we were able to find one bona fide area studies department/program according to the narrower definition, which was the Gulf Studies Center in Qatar University (Qatar).

Zayed University (UAE) offered students the opportunity to specialize in Middle East and Gulf Studies under the international studies major, but there wasn't an academic unit dedicated to area studies. The American University of Dubai (UAE) had a department of international and Middle Eastern studies, which barely qualifies as an area studies department, if at all. Zayed University (UAE) also had Islamic studies in 2020, which again pushes the boundaries of what one might classify as an area studies program. However, whichever definition one uses, it is clear that area studies are at best barely existent in the GCC.

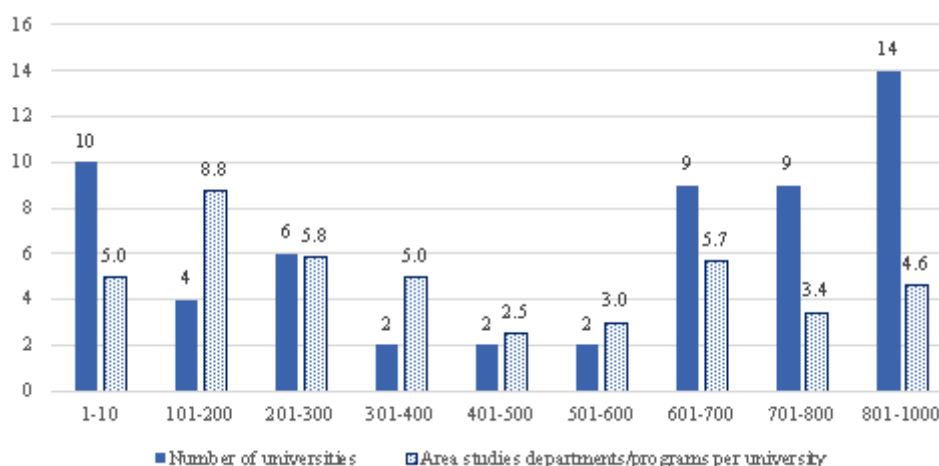
Finding 1.2: The few examples of area studies departments/programs that do exist in the GCC are inward looking, in that they include the host country.

As can be seen above, the only instances of area studies departments - however inclusive the definition used - involve areas that contain the host country: Qatar is part of the Gulf region, and hence part of the Gulf Studies Center in Qatar University.

Finding 1.3: Area studies departments/programs exist in abundance in the US.

In the 48 comparison universities considered, there are a total of 238 area studies departments/programs, which is almost five departments/programs per university. A similar figure emerges for the top 10 American universities. Figure 3 shows the average by ranking group.

Figure 3: Area Studies Departments/Programs per University in American Universities by Ranking Group, 2020



These data indicate that the stark difference in the incidence of area studies departments/programs between the GCC and US is not an artifact of focusing on universities that lie within a specific ranking group. Rather, American universities of all ranks have a strong presence of these departments/programs. Using the broader definition of area studies departments/programs means an additional 26 such entities within the 48 US universities that comprise the comparison group.

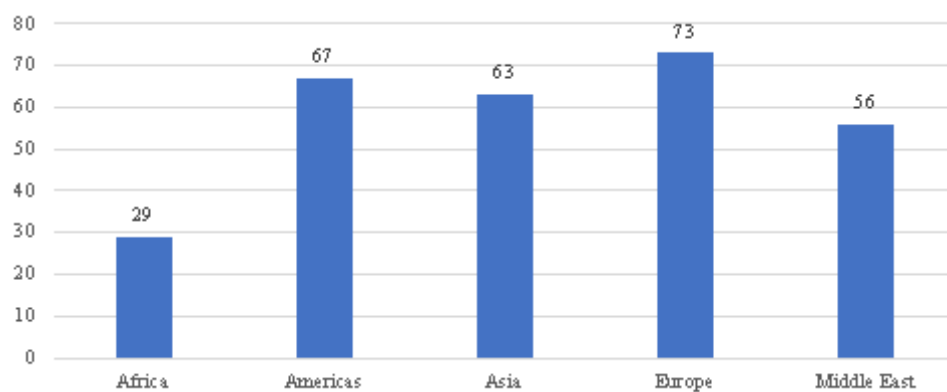
To illustrate the American affinity for area studies, consider the case of the University of Oregon, which has 15 area studies departments/programs: African studies, Arabic studies, Asian studies, East Asian studies, East Asian languages and literatures, European studies, German and Scandinavian studies, Judaic studies, Latinx studies, Latin American studies, Middle East and North African studies, South Asian studies, South East Asian studies, and Russian, East European and Eurasian studies; in addition to the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies.

Moreover, only nine of the 48 US universities have no area studies, and in some of those nine cases, this can ostensibly be attributed to the fact that the university is a technical institute, such as the Stevens Institute of Technology or the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Finding 1.4: Area studies departments/programs in the US are mostly outward looking.

We can classify the area studies departments/programs in the US according to the continent in which the locale being studied lies, e.g., German studies would be under Europe. We report this for the 288 area studies departments/programs in US universities, where we have combined North and South America with the Caribbean; and where we have made a category for the Middle East that includes Jewish/Hebrew/Israeli studies.

Figure 4: US Area Studies Departments/Programs by Area of Focus



In general, we see the same pattern displayed by the University of Oregon data: the area studies departments/programs focus on geographical locales that do not include the US. While there are numerous instances of American studies, these represent a small minority of the 288 cases (most of the programs that cover the Americas are actually Latin American studies, which exclude the US).

In summary, the GCC has dozens of universities, many of which are ranked globally. We can compare these to US universities that have a similar rank, or to the top US universities. We can use a narrow definition of area studies departments/programs or a broad one. Whatever conditions we select for the comparison, a massive gap exists between the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC and the US, with the GCC exhibiting zero outwardly looking area studies entities, and almost zero inwardly facing ones.

Given the absence of a relevant literature for the GCC, explaining this anomaly and analyzing its consequences requires gathering new data. In the next section, we conduct a series of interviews with stakeholders in the respective foreign policy and area studies communities to provide us with the requisite insights.

6. Stakeholder Perspectives on GCC-US Differences in the Incidence of Area Studies Departments

6.1. Method

In the pursuit of novel data to answer our research questions, we decided to use qualitative interviews with key stakeholders for two reasons. First, resource limitations meant that we had to gather data in a cost-effective manner, ruling out large-scale data harvesting or surveys with hundreds of participants.

Second, due to our limited starting knowledge on the issue of area studies, we (correctly) anticipated that the answers to our initial questions would result in a desire for targeted follow-up questions, and so the semi-structured format of interviews was more suitable for our needs.

Naturally, other forms of data retain advantages over semi-structured interviews, and so we hope that future research can complement the data gathered in this paper.

We initially designated six classes of stakeholders: GCC diplomats; US diplomats; GCC academic administrators; US academic administrators; US area studies researchers; and in-house researchers working in US foreign policy institutions. After conducting a few interviews, we also added US think tank scholars to the list of classes of stakeholders. Our goal was to interview at least two people in each category.

The participants were a combination of a convenience sample and, when our personal networks did not yield suitable willing participants, people with whom we were not previously acquainted whose participation we solicited by email. For GCC and US diplomats, we leveraged our sizable professional networks, as we did for GCC academic administrators. For the remainder, we used the internet to find suitable prospective interviewees and sent them an invitation by email. Unsurprisingly, the success rate was quite low, but we were able to realize our target by sending enough invitations.

In both the convenience sample and the email solicitees, we provided the participant with a short memo that included an overview of the project, a list of the questions we were planning on asking them, and

the names and bios of the research team. The memo also described the steps to be taken to protect the participant, namely that the interview would be recorded purely for the purposes of producing an anonymized transcript, after which the recording would be deleted. Participants were free to withdraw at any time and to refuse to answer any questions without the need to provide a reason.

Due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic, and also due to the inconvenience and cost of traveling to the US, all interviews were conducted via Zoom's video conferencing software. The questions were delivered by one of the three coauthors of this paper, while the remaining researchers assisted in the production of a transcript.

After a prospective participant agreed to participate, the two sides would determine a mutually satisfactory time for the interview. When the interview started, before starting the recording, the interviewer would explain the confidentiality protocol to the participant, before orally requesting permission to record. Once approval was gained, the recording would commence, and the interviewer would begin posing questions. We also explained to participants the distinction between intramural researchers, who are in-house scholars working inside the government's foreign policy organs; and extramural researchers, who work in universities, think tanks, consultancies, and other entities that are outside the government's purview.

The questions we posed were as follows:

GCC diplomats:

- American universities have area studies departments, such as Middle Eastern studies and Chinese studies, and the foreign policy establishment sometimes calls upon the scholars working in these departments to ask them for advice regarding foreign policy issues in their domain. These departments do not exist in the GCC. If they existed, do you think that their scholars might be called upon in a similar way?
- Why do you think these departments don't exist in the GCC, while they exist in abundance in the US?

- Do you think the GCC would benefit from having area studies departments in universities? Why or why not?

US diplomats:

- How does the research performed by intramural researchers feed into foreign policy?
- How does the research performed by extramural researchers, including those in universities and think tanks, feed into foreign policy?
- How do the State Department's intramural researchers interact with those working extramurally?
- Is there a special role played by area studies departments, such as African studies and Latin American studies?
- American universities have a wealth of area studies departments, and much more than in other countries. Why do you think that is the case?

GCC academic administrators:

- Area studies departments, such as African studies and European studies, are extremely rare in the GCC countries, whereas they are very common in the US. This is true even in highly funded Gulf universities when compared to modestly funded American ones. Do you see this as a good or bad thing? Why?
- What explains this phenomenon?
- Do you think that if there were more area studies departments in the GCC, they might be able to contribute to foreign policy?
- Do you think the GCC would benefit from having area studies departments in universities? Why or why not?
- What changes do you think are necessary for area studies departments to become more prevalent in the GCC countries?

US academic administrators:

- Area studies departments, such as African studies and European studies, are very common in the US, and more common than elsewhere in the world. Do you see this as a good or bad thing? Why?
- What explains this phenomenon?
- What role do you think that these area studies departments play in US foreign policy?
- What do you think the future of area studies departments is?

US area studies researchers:

- Area studies departments, such as African studies and European studies, are very common in the US, and more common than elsewhere in the world. Do you see this as a good or bad thing? Why?
- What explains this phenomenon?
- What role do you think that these area studies departments play in US foreign policy?
- What do you think the future of area studies departments is?

In-house researchers working in US foreign policy institutions:

- How does the research performed by intramural researchers feed into foreign policy?
- How does the research performed by extramural researchers, including those in universities and think tanks, feed into foreign policy?
- How do the State Department's intramural researchers interact with those working extramurally?
- Is there a special role played by area studies departments, such as African studies and Latin American studies?
- American universities have a wealth of area studies departments, and much more than in other countries. Why do you think that is the case?

US think tank scholars:

- Area studies departments, such as African studies and European studies, are very common in the US, and more common than elsewhere in the world. Do you see this as a good or bad thing? Why?
- What explains this phenomenon?

- Think tanks play an important role in shaping US foreign policy. What role do you think that these area studies departments play in the research that is produced by US think tanks?
- What role do you think that area studies departments play in producing talent that can then go on to work in US think tanks?
- What do you think the future of area studies departments is?

We conducted 17 interviews in total: 3 GCC diplomats; 3 US diplomats; 3 GCC academic administrators; 0 US academic administrators; 5 US area studies researchers; 0 in-house researchers working in US foreign policy institutions; and 3 US think tank scholars. The failure to secure interviewees in two of the US-based groups was because our networks did not include anyone in those groups, and because our email solicitations did not yield any responses (not even refusals). We hope that future research can secure participants from these groups.

6.2. Results

We believe that the extended participant responses that we report below will be of great interest to many readers of this paper. However, for those who wish to focus on the main results, we begin by presenting the results without the supporting data.

Finding 2.1: Each of the US' foreign policy organs has in-house research departments that produce analytical reports for their organization's decision makers. These departments can be quite large and well-staffed. The extent to which these analytical reports affect foreign policy partially depends on the strength of the personal relationship between the research department's director and the organization's chief, as well as on the chief's affinity for in-house research.

Finding 2.2: External (outsourced) research has a considerable impact upon policy, and through a variety of channels: policymakers and their aides read research directly, they attend seminars delivered by external researchers; they invite external researchers to lecture in foreign policy institutions; they meet external researchers informally; and many policymakers and their staff are trained in area studies departments. However, the impact of think tanks is generally larger than that of universities, because

they produce the research at a much higher speed than universities, and in a format that suits policymakers' needs; and also because there is a revolving door between think tanks and key policy positions, meaning much stronger personal relations between think tank researchers and policymakers.

Finding 2.3: The in-house researchers working in the US foreign policy organs regularly interact with external researchers, both formally and informally, as part of the in-house researchers' process for producing analytical reports. Therefore, external researchers influence policy directly by interacting with policymakers, and indirectly by interacting with the in-house researchers who serve policymakers. However, think tank researchers have greater access to the in-house researchers than do university academics.

Finding 2.4: The role that area studies departments play in US foreign policy is more geared toward being a pipeline for civil servants and researchers working in think tanks and the foreign policy organs. They also provide pedagogical services to civil servants, researchers, and diplomats within their area of expertise. In some cases, area studies scholars are actively averse to interacting with policymakers, or being seen to have an influence on policy, due to deep-seated political and ideological differences between area studies academics and the US foreign policy establishment.

Finding 2.5: American universities have a deep tradition in area studies dating back to the start of the Cold War. All facets of American society feel that advancing US interests in a region requires intimate knowledge of that region. Area studies departments are important in this regard due to the key role that learning a language and understanding a culture can play in enabling people to analyze a region economically, politically, socially, and so on. Accordingly, the US government has provided robust funding for these programs, allowing the US to be a world leader in them.

Finding 2.6: The abundance of area studies departments/programs in the US, especially when compared to the rest of the world, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it reflects a commitment to understanding foreign cultures in an institutionalized and intellectually open academic environment. On the other hand, it reflects latent historically imperialist tendencies in the US' foreign policy establishment, and raises concerns about the possibility of policy-relevance leading to the intellectual corruption of research, especially when funding is tied to perceived policy relevance.

Finding 2.7: Academic area studies research can be an input into think tank research, but the relationship between the two is not particularly strong.

Finding 2.8: Area studies departments/programs make a significant contribution to the research corps of think tanks.

Finding 2.9: If the GCC countries were to establish area studies departments/programs, additional hurdles would need to be overcome before they could make a substantive contribution to foreign policy. This is partially because the genesis of foreign policy in the GCC occurs at such a high level that the connection to a university is inevitably weaker; and partially because there is a reluctance among scholars to express views that might not be fully congruent with the foreign policy decision makers' favored policy trajectory.

Finding 2.10: Gulf universities don't have area studies for a variety of reasons. These include an excessive emphasis on the job-market prospects of degree programs - which works against area studies; and a general indifference toward such studies throughout society, sometimes verging on a form of anti-intellectualism. Ordinary people are simply not curious about the rest of the world.

Finding 2.11: By underinvesting in area studies departments/programs, the GCC countries are denying themselves the opportunity to improve their intellectual ecosystems through substantive interactions with the rest of the world; and they also miss out on important intelligence information that can inform foreign policy, and that can contribute to realizing the country's strategic foreign policy goals.

Finding 2.12: The GCC countries would benefit considerably from investing in area studies programs, initially in a few select areas of elevated importance, such as the US and Europe. This would help close intellectual lacunae in the foreign policy establishment, and would also widen societal perspectives on external issues.

Finding 2.13: If the GCC countries allocate resources toward the establishment of area studies departments/programs, they would be able to make a positive contribution to foreign policy, especially in light of the dearth of alternatives.

Finding 2.14: For the incidence of area studies departments/programs to increase in the GCC, there needs to be a signal from the highest echelons of leadership that such studies are truly valued, based on a conviction that such pursuits would actually contribute to the foreign policy ecosystem, coupled with an increase in the availability of funding for such academic units. Moreover, at a societal level, there needs to be a greater embrace of the unknown, and less fear of exploring new areas of knowledge.

Finding 2.15: In the US, the future of area studies is uncertain due to a persistent downward trend in funding for higher education in general, and for area studies programs in particular. They are likely to continue to thrive in top universities, but they may be forced to contract in smaller ones. It is likely that the number focusing on China will increase considerably due to the growing Sino-American rivalry. However, many will adapt in innovative ways, as occurred following the end of the Cold War. They continue to complement traditional academic departments by exploiting their administrative flexibility, and by acting as brokers when policymakers seek experts in a certain area.

We now restate each finding while also presenting the supporting evidence gleaned from the interviews. Note that in the transcripts below, we removed any information that might reveal the identity of the participant. Those uninterested in the data can proceed to the synthesis in section 7.

Finding 2.1: Each of the US' foreign policy organs has in-house research departments that produce analytical reports for their organization's decision makers. These departments can be quite large and well-staffed. The extent to which these analytical reports affect foreign policy partially depends on the strength of the personal relationship between the research department's director and the organization's chief, as well as on the chief's affinity for in-house research.

Data: In response to the question "how does the research performed by intramural researchers feed into foreign policy?", which we posed to US diplomats, we received the following responses.

Participant 1: *State has a bureau called Policy Planning, which is the research institute of the State Department. It also has a Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), which is the State department's intelligence analysis branch. It is not an intelligence agency. INR, because of its ties, it's part of the broader*

intelligence community, but it's not a collection institution. It's research and analysis, and it produces its own analysis.

Policy Planning tries to integrate all source materials, including academic materials and publicly available materials, and both of them report more or less directly to the Secretary of State or the Secretary's office.

So those are two key parts of the State Department. They're almost always staffed by a mix of foreign service officers, some civil servants, and outside experts, usually for a couple of years at a time, to serve that reporting and analysis function for the Secretary's office.

Their impact varies considerably, depending on the Director's relationship with the Secretary. Some Secretaries rely on these institutions heavily - for instance, George Schultz was a big consumer, it was a very influential institution, and in the Cold War, the ex-document about containing the Soviet Union came out of the Policy Planning Office of State, that was the beginning of Policy Planning. There were other times when the office was less influential. Depends on the preferences of the Secretary. Different Secretaries have different approaches to absorbing information and looking for outside sources, but those are the two primary parts of the State that do this function.

The Department of Defense (DoD) doesn't have anything precisely the same as that. It brings in political appointees who take either a fresh look or a look reflecting policies and political biases of a given administration in power. DoD has some function along these lines, but it's most institutionalized at State.

The CIA has an enormous analysis branch that is mostly staffed by analysts, not by operators. Operators tend to be more valuable overseas. Defense Intelligence reporting, other agency reporting -- [these] feed into the analysis of the CIA, who produce the analytical products. But those are not just for the Secretary of State, they're written for the President or the National Security Council, for Secretaries of Defense and State and Treasury, and the foreign policy apparatus in Washington, which is huge. Different weights can be assigned to different parts of, depending on the administration.

When there are big divisions in Washington, for instance in the George W. Bush administration between Colin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney on the other hand, it disrupts the process, and you don't always get a clear decision-making process because they're running bureaucratic battles against

each other on policy issues. So, all these things depend on the personalities and politics in Washington at any given time.

Participant 2: *It depends what part of the US government you are talking about. About the State Department in particular, there are several different intramural sections. They mostly do policy related academic studies. The one which has the most impact on policy is called the policy planning bureau office branch depending on who the secretary is. It is generally made up with an outside think tank person to lead it, along with a mixed team of academics, civil service, with a more policy focus and foreign service officers together in one office.*

They generally are responsive to specific requests to policy suggestions from the Secretary of State and senior leaders including the White House. Their mandate is usually the longer-term view. It's the one part of the State Department that tried to look out for say 50 years. To find what the major trends are, what the US should look out for, and what are the coming generation or two, some Secretaries have used this, and a good example should be going back to the book written by the former CIA director of the policy planning staff. He has a number of products from his policy planning branch which are both long term and short term. In the short term was how do we manage the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' in Eastern Europe, and how we establish new relationships with all the new countries in the former Soviet Union, and how to let go of Eastern Europe before it fell by 1989-1990.

These are directly policy responsive, but they tend to try to look at the long-term trends. And it is not about how we can establish relations with Poland now, but rather what sort of things should the US take into account as we try to figure out how to deal with the Baltic States, and all of Eastern Europe, Romania, and Bulgaria as the Soviet Union is falling apart. It's still less specific. That is a general description. It's largely consistent across generations. There are also other parts of the State Department; more specifically the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, which is both formally an intelligence agency within the State Department, but is also for people like me, I often went to the Bureau of Intelligence Research to do all source/resource projects that I did not have the time to do myself and neither did my day to day staff as we are trying to put out fires, back when I held relatively senior positions.

These are people that you can simply call and ask if you have seen anything. Since now he seems like he is in a position to make more decisions, so you call and see what they have to say if they have seen anything. As you are looking how to respond to more specific short term events, they are often a good source of information and recommendations. They are among the members of the US intelligence community. Among 15 of them, they are the ones most policy prescriptive, and they are the smallest. They are the ones that use the least amount of intelligence information. Relying more on diplomatic reporting, press reporting, personal knowledge, and academic studies. There is also something called the Congressional Research Service. It is both a policy directive, looking at congress, and also asks and answers different congressional questions about different policy issues and issues that aren't from inside the administration, but have a significant impact on the way that congress uses foreign policy, and how congressional committees' and individual members of congress' view foreign policy.

Participant 3: *Usually there are a couple of offices that produce such research, the largest being INR. They feed into the boroughs, they are organized within that department on the basis of the boroughs. You would have NEA, which is Middle Eastern North Africa, Europe and so on. Their research tends to be focused on specific policy issues in the State Department or current administration.*

Finding 2.2: External (outsourced) research has a considerable impact upon policy, and through a variety of channels: policymakers and their aides read research directly, they attend seminars delivered by external researchers; they invite external researchers to lecture in foreign policy institutions; they meet external researchers informally; and many policymakers and their staff are trained in area studies departments. However, the impact of think tanks is generally larger than that of universities, because they produce the research at a much higher speed than universities, and in a format that suits policymakers' needs; and also because there is a revolving door between think tanks and key policy positions, meaning much stronger personal relations between think tank researchers and policymakers.

Data: In response to the question "how does the research performed by extramural researchers, including those in universities and think tanks, feed into foreign policy?", which we posed to US diplomats, we received the following responses.

Participant 1: *In my opinion, this is much more relevant in terms of think tanks than university area studies departments. Most of those are quite academic in the products they produce, as opposed to think tanks that write, research, and publish intentionally to influence foreign policy. Whereas at least in the US, the regional area studies programs in universities produce some students who go on to work in government or think tanks, but most of the research and publications aren't directed at trying to influence policymakers.*

Particularly in Washington, there are so many think tanks and they're very competitive with each other - there's a scramble, a high degree of competitiveness, to try to influence policy. But most are perceived to have a political bias or political approach to policy issues. So, in some cases, they may not be trying to influence the administration that's from an opposing party, or opposing ideological view, and instead they'll be trying to influence the other political parties in Congress or key members of that party. And it's become a revolving door - a lot of political senior officials, when they leave office, will stay in Washington and work in think tanks. It gives them an income stream and so forth, and an ongoing sense of being relevant, and they're often waiting for the opportunity to come back into government when their party once again has the White House and Executive Branch. So there's a fair amount of that.

There are some large think tanks that try to be non-partisan, such as the Atlantic Council. Some of the other big ones, like Brookings, tend to be associated with the Democratic Party but that's not true of all the researchers.

Interestingly, one of the areas of convergence between Democrats and Republicans over the last 4-5 years is over China policy, where to a large extent the Biden team adopted much of Trump's China policy without some of the rhetoric, but still the policy approach hasn't changed much - China being a near-peer competitor and regional power that seeks to have a global role, and challenges the U.S. in that sense; there's a fair amount of overlap.

In some other areas, for instance Iran policy, you see very strong differences.

Regarding universities, I myself am a product of an area studies program, where I did my master's. At that time [the early 1980s], there was still a desire by large/prominent universities to have some influence on

policy. It was very true in the Middle East, but also true in Soviet policy. I took a seminar on Soviet foreign relations under a professor who was very active in trying to have some influence on policy issues.

I think what's happened since the 1980s is that universities have become more and more focused on academic approaches to these issues that are of less relevance to policymakers. The style of writing, the length of papers, etc. - it's not very accessible.

The thing to remember when writing for policy makers, is the more senior they are, the less time they have to read. If you can get them to read the first page of a report, you've done pretty well. You want to have your judgments, key points, up there, up front, where they're easily accessible, and whoever has time to dig in the paper more deeply and read the argumentation that leads to those points, that's great, but most people don't have the time to do that.

There's been a huge explosion of the information that's available, between the internet, all of the different sourcing material that comes through the intelligence community, the State Department reporting, and through journalism, and think tank products - when you add it all up, it's vast. So if you want to cut through that, you have to time your papers to be available -- some think tanks have quick response pieces, so that when there's a major event, they'd scramble to have very short papers out and circulated within hours of the event hoping to get out in front of the chain of materials that were going to come in, and thereby have some relevance/impact. The weakness of that is that people can make mistakes when they're trying to judge something very quickly, and all the information may not be there to balance what they think has happened, but that's the environment.

Maybe in Senate staff, it may be a little different. There are some key foreign policy staffers in the Senate who have the time to really dig down into reading materials that interest them, but people like that are fairly rare in Washington. They want a quick judgment of "what does it mean", "why is it relevant".

Participant 2: *That varies significantly between administration, and has to do with the personality of senior officials as well as party affiliation. One thing that I found interesting there is generally an interchange between at the minimum Washington and East Coast think tanks and administration positions. There are a number of think tanks that are more closely identified with one party or another.*

You often see people going back and forth from a think tank to an administration position with a chance of administration. The Trump administration surprisingly used a number of think tank people in relatively senior positions in the administration, largely because they did not trust the career people. That said it was in an area that didn't think about research, but people brought up doing think tank research. At that point, they were not all republican directed, but they were seen by the administration as reliable outside actors.

Think tanks do a number of different things, which I know from my experience now. This is not some policy prescriptive, but think tanks often work in the training of the State Department, military officers, Department of Commerce or energy officers. Diplomats do lectures at the foreign service institute to train junior to mid-level and senior-level officers on either career paths and how to get things done, or on specific types of policy background. This is the environment you will go into when you drop down in the field. This is the best way to conduct negotiations with the European Union on trade issues. They were not policy-specific but they helped educate the policy practitioners to use the mechanisms that are available to them. There are also a number of academics and think tank people who teach academic classes at the Foreign Service Institute and universities they support.

Academics and think tanks also do regular informal conversations, coffees, lunches, dinners, with senior admin officials; not always based on personal relations, but often it is. Certainly during the Trump and Biden administrations, they are often looking for people who are no longer part of the bureaucracy and have no party affiliation, and can provide an objective opinion. This is probably the way in which individual academics and individual people from think tanks can have the greatest impact, by these informal connections.

The last thing that academics and think tanks do is that they often prepare papers, and prepare day-long programs to brief incoming senior officials and outgoing ambassadors. So if someone is going to be ambassador to Bahrain, they will have academic senior people in think tanks and other senior officials who dealt in Middle East policy, they will have a day-long seminar about the various issues the person will face in Bahrain, and will have economists, activists, private sector investors, people who worked in business in Bahrain. These day long seminars are usually organized by the Bureau of Intelligence and

Research. But it is not intelligence focused, outside information and non-government information, but focused on exactly what an ambassador will face in his upcoming duties. Beyond that, there are a lot of ways in which think tanks try to affect universities, recruiting and sending speakers out for lectures, to teach the basis of US policy. When I was a diplomat I spoke to dozens of American universities, to explain policy to students or academic audiences.

Participant 3: *Depending on the players in the policy making community, or at the White House, or at the State Department. They look at that because usually depending on the academic institution and reputation of the think tank and its credibility. Along with the volume of research that think tanks produce will be looked at. In the think tank world and in the Washington community. The think tanks usually are earmarked as either liberal, centrist, conservative, etc.*

The academic community research work that is published and shared with the think tank world, and the government is obviously looked at a little differently. Say, academics researchers at Yale, Harvard, their research is a little broader, not as focused like think tanks are. So in many cases, if there is a significant paper by a highly thought of organization and/or scholar, it gets a lot of attention, even if it was shared quietly within.

There are certain institutions in Washington DC that have more weight than others. In terms of being considered balanced, centrist and non-partisan. One of them being the Council on Foreign Relations. However, in today's political environment, even the Council on Foreign Relations is seen as a liberal institution, now that we have labeled everything in the foreign policy and domestic policy community. It's very hard to find a name that both sides would consider as equally credible and centrist. That is the challenge the community faces today. The political party will often look for either a similar outlook of the think tank or differing one to strengthen their position. In some cases, they would look for a think tank in the opposite political spectrum to either expand their viewpoint or make their argument even stronger, classifying it as extreme or over the top or to further their position.

Now, keep in mind that within the Congress, and the staffers who staff the Congress, whether they are House of Representatives or Senators, they tend to bring in different perspectives and bring to their supervisors' attention on both sides. If you look at the testimony for the House Foreign Affairs Committee

on a particular topic, such as human rights issues, gender issues, or climate change, there are usually four or five people invited and there will usually be one fourth or one third of the panelists who will reflect a different perspective, so that it is heard at the Congressional level. They invite both academics and other think tank experts. Sometimes they invite retired officials who have expertise in that particular field, but oftentimes they are think tanks or academics from different perspectives. Sometimes these sessions are also publicized on C-SPAN, and you can listen to them as they are public. If however they are classified, then it's a different ball game. It is usually very hard to know how balanced or imbalanced those are.

Finding 2.3: The in-house researchers working in the US foreign policy organs regularly interact with external researchers, both formally and informally, as part of the in-house researchers' process for producing analytical reports. Therefore, external researchers influence policy directly by interacting with policymakers, and indirectly by interacting with the in-house researchers who serve policymakers. However, think tank researchers have greater access to the in-house researchers than do university academics.

Data: In response to the question "How do the State Department's intramural researchers interact with those working extramurally?", which we posed to US diplomats, we received the following responses.

Participant 1: *Quite extensively. On any given day, you can get a schedule of all the conferences and seminars and webinars that are available in Washington. There may be 20 events a day on a topic that might be interesting to a specialist in one of those offices. Often, they do seek to get invitations to these events, or to attend them, to get a chance to listen and ask questions. Those offices are very much engaged with the think tank world, and to some extent with some key journalists. Less so, again, with academics, though there are some exceptions. Some academic conferences are policy-oriented, but I think they're relatively rare. It seems that most of the academic conferences are designed for other academics. They have their own discourse that's a little different than what policymakers are interested in.*

Participant 2: *The impression that I get, since I never worked in the INR or Policy Planning Bureau, is that the people in the Bureau reach out routinely to prominent academics, even people they don't know, to get an opinion on a policy issue. They try to get background information in anticipation of getting a*

question from a policy maker on a subject. This often takes place due to personal relationships, however, sometimes not based on personal relationships.

I know a number of retired foreign service officers and retired diplomats who work in universities who are routinely contacted, and professors who have no connection with the State Department or because they publish material or work are asked to contribute in either writing, or phone calls, or individual meetings at specific topics. The Policy Planning Bureau, since it usually has a significant amount of people who come from academia, they probably have more established ties and do more informal consulting outside of the department, because the work is not as classified as the Intelligence Research Bureau, also because they have quarter or one third of staff come from the university environment. They can therefore easily access their colleagues formally or informally. For the Policy Planning Bureau, it's much less formal. For example, someone asked "now since Kim Jong-Un developed new nuclear missiles, what are America's options?". They will then find people who are biographers about Kim Jong-Un and see if they will find more information that is outside the system, to put together a bigger package for policy makers. However, those are less formal than the Intelligence Research Bureau operations.

Participant 3: *Quite a bit of interaction, I know that the state department teams who do research on specific topics and for specific boroughs often invite outside (extramural) researchers from think tanks to come in and have a discussion on a specific topic. So, the researchers on both sides argue perspectives and present their analysis, and they receive feedback, challenge or pushback. They do this quite often because they want to be able to say that before sending that special report or research forward, to say that it went through a process of debate and discussion with outside experts, before the report is forwarded on to the policy makers and specific boroughs. Pre-pandemic world they would invite you to come into the State Department and hold these discussions there. Now sometimes they attend academic conferences virtually and get reactions that way. However, they used to make an effort to have these roundtable discussions prior to the pandemic in the State Department.*

Finding 2.4: The role that area studies departments play in US foreign policy is more geared toward being a pipeline for civil servants and researchers working in think tanks and the foreign policy organs. They also provide pedagogical services to civil servants, researchers, and diplomats within their area of

expertise. In some cases, area studies are actively averse to interacting with policymakers, or being seen to have an influence on policy, due to deep-seated political and ideological differences between area studies academics and the US foreign policy establishment.

Data: In response to the question “is there a special role played by area studies departments, such as African studies and Latin American studies?”, which we posed to US diplomats, we received the following responses.

Participant 1: *I don't think area studies departments have that much influence on policy. They do produce graduate students who go on to be policymakers, so in that sense they influence people through the educational process. They produce graduates who then become involved in these issues. But I don't see them orienting their products and their work towards influencing policy. There are some exceptions, there are people who appear on television talk shows as experts. I think it may be different in the UK, so in other countries the role of area studies departments may be different, but in the US, it's more think tanks and journalists that write specifically to influence policy and orient their research in a way that whittles it down to a 2-page report that people will actually read, as opposed to universities that write much lengthier products that are academically oriented.*

Participant 2: *In my interaction with universities, I have generally been with the political science department, economics, religion, and not area studies departments. Area studies departments are often interdisciplinary, so often you will have an economics professor leading the Asia Studies Department but it's not a separate department. There are generally people that I interact with when I go to universities from the Middle East or European Area Studies department, whether they are there in that capacity or because their interests are more. I'm dealing with the political science department. It's not clear to me. When area studies departments play a role is when you have ambassadors or senior officials coming in.*

They look for people that have on the ground research experience, and have writing experience and have kept it over time. They look for people who have maintained the kind of relationships so that they understand the dynamics of policy on the ground, which often comes out of area studies programs, that is where the focus has been, in the programs I talked about. Another thing not policy related is the interaction between area studies programs and the foreign service institutes. Orientation programs for

different parts of the world; for example, an office moving from China to Brazil; they will go through a Latin America course that will have several professors from the Latin America program, and a person who studies Portuguese and Brazilian interaction in the world. That isn't exactly policy related about why they are trying to adapt the office to the new part of the world they are going into.

There are two ways to be hired into the State Department. To become a diplomat, it's a very specific highly competitive exam-based process. However, to be hired as a civil servant who lives in Washington and not overseas, it's a more standard civil service process that looks more closely at CV and previous experience. For the foreign service entry program, people who have more experience in a particular area overseas, particularly language experience, they may be better in taking the test, however, the test is incredibly general and looks at general knowledge. It tests the ability to extrapolate information into action steps and the ability to write proper English. That part is expected far less by the academic background. And you only have to be 21 years old to join the service or have a university degree, you just need to pass the test and you will get a job. It's a written exam and several oral exams over the course of several months.

For the civil service, it's a traditional hiring system, where they say they need a person who can work on administering assistance in Tunisia, Libya. And if that someone has a background in grant making or handled money in the past, that would be much more resume based, and if the CV included a graduate degree studying north Africa would be very helpful in that case. For the US foreign service officers since Henry Kissinger, have theoretically been required to be picked up from one job in Paris and be put in a similar job in a different country and perform at an equal level. For the civil service they try to hire people with specific skill sets.

Participant 3: *Area studies are extremely valuable in the United States, as they produce talent and expertise that otherwise would not be there without academia. People who go to area studies and travel to the countries they are studying and the issues they are involved in are considered reputable and credible. Area studies are the pipeline to academia, think tanks, Peace Corps and USAID and more. Within the State Department there are area studies, less academic environment, in the FSI they train diplomats and their mandate is to provide an ongoing curriculum for those who are going to be serving in those*

areas to prepare them as they are going into these countries, unlike academic area studies, they are shorter term courses. They are very much part of the diplomatic training effort. To ensure that if you serve in NEA or Africa, that you have gone through an area studies program at FSI before you are assigned to those countries.

FSI will often invite lecturers teaching, retired academics or retired diplomats, but oftentimes they will bring in guest lecturers, or for the whole course - someone who has an academic background to teach these outgoing diplomats on that part of the world they will go to. So you are usually getting a very short but credible 2 week course, on Saudi Arabia or Bahrain, which focuses on the region that you will be going into, and then some specific time spent in the country which you will be going to. It is very tailored in that sense and has a lot of breeding in the academic community into these courses.

We also asked area studies researchers: "What role do you think that these area studies departments play in US foreign policy?" and received the following responses.

Participant 6: *Speaking beyond Latin American studies, think tanks have supplanted area studies departments. Area studies academics have less purchase in the room where decisions are made now than at any point previously since WW2. Part of this has to do with lots of broader trends such as a certain decline of expertise and the way culture war nonsense has impacted higher education. The idea of expertise being problematic, and the notion of knowledge production not being able to be trusted. The issue of seeing academics as closet left wingers, perhaps communist. The fact that the word communist has some kind of traction still in 2021, just shows how easily recyclable these caricatures are.*

Nevertheless, those are in the ascendency, and it's made academic knowledge particularly irrelevant for policymakers, who also work on a professional cycle that precludes any thoughts. It's a constant administrative churn and nine to five meetings, and no one has any time to absorb information.

We at our center do projects that might include as intentional beneficiaries foreign service folks and State Department folks. We understand that we must deliver those products as short punchy infographics. It's like if it's anything more than a memo, forget it. The think tank world used to be an intermediate place where academics could reside to have different kinds of conversations with people who might also not

be academics. At least all the time, and that was a significant kind of fall through. Evolution of think tanks is to become increasingly political in orientation: you have Brookings and the Heritage Foundation. Underneath those umbrellas you have the organization of knowledge and then those folks pursue typical kinds of work designed to promote positions for their constituencies, and those are predictable in advance. You don't really need to know what to conclude and what they will say.

With universities in DC, these are all theaters, and it's very much location, location, location! Students that are coming to such universities are very much doing so because they want to be in Washington, because they are thinking about their career and some dimension of growing their networks, getting an internship, it's all about getting a finger into universes that you want to be a professional part of.

Whether it's about rebuilding the foreign service establishment as a present unfortunate state, or some other dimension of governance at the federal level, that is a major function being performed by universities right now. American University has a school of international service, and it's the oldest think tank from 1959 to the present, and it's very big, and a lot of the students in that school are explicitly going to be going into the foreign service, and going to be working in the international NGO context, with connections to the world of international policy making. That is one continually important function.

But when you teach students, one of the things is, when teaching students, one of the things we see is a narrowing of perspective of these students. Rather than coming with all the critical skills we expect from a typical liberal arts education, where you can write, think, and articulate ideas. They come with a very specific "I want to work in X place" and they really don't care how they get there. They just see education as a means to an end, on a very transactional level. It has been encouraged by this role, like paying for a doorway where I can walk through. I don't care what I have to do when I need to do it, which is why I'm doing all these internships. My goal is to walk through that door, and that is all I care about. At the transactional level, it is much more prevalent now than 30 years ago.

Participant 7: *Yes, I believe some of the research made in these area studies goes into think tanks. However, we are not talking about a large labor market, we are talking about a small world think tanks are in. It is however much more common for them to go into nonprofit work, like community development agencies or humanitarian relief. The majority of people taking up these area studies*

masters, what they want is to try to go to work for Oxfam, Doctors without Borders, or UN humanitarian agencies or other organizations similar to that. There aren't enough of those jobs for them, but those are the jobs that they would like to have. However, a minority of them want to work for the State Department.

I would think more expansively, rather than strictly about that think tank. I would think about places outside of academia that try to draw on knowledge about the world, in an effort to change it. It's not about feeding into foreign policy or feeding into the American state and its project. We don't just try to influence policy, we try to influence practice and advocacy, and if you expand it into the worlds of practice and advocacy rather than limit it to the very numerically small university think tanks, then you capture a little bit better where those flows of personnel may be going.

In terms of percentage of people who come out of these area studies programs, many more of them are going to be going onto these sorts of things, which are about impact in the world, then strictly the government or the think tanks around it. The other thing I would say is, the think tanks don't read a lot of academic literature. The stuff produced by faculty, is done in interdisciplinary journals and thematic journals, but the world of practice in social science and international affairs in the United States just aren't very deeply engaged with academic production, so if you counted how many people read the Latin American Research Review and where they worked, you would find almost nobody who is not full time in a university. If you went up to the top 10 think tank people in New York and Washington who work on Latin America, and asked who worked on Latin America, when the last time they looked at the flagship journal, which is the Latin American Research Review, or the Journal of Latin American Studies. I bet you can't find anyone other than one or two in the last three years who had read them.

So we are similar in that aspect, but if you expand us to the world and advocacy, you capture better where those flows personally are going. Another thing I would say is that the think tanks do not read a lot of the literature. Almost nobody, for example, read the Latin American Literature Review. You might find it in the Journal of Democracy (not an area studies journal), which does get input from some scholars, who think of themselves as regional experts. It is written for a non-academic audience with the notion that it carries with it standards associated with high quality academic production. It's written in a different

language and written for a different audience in mind. The area studies journals themselves are invisible, however.

One of the reasons for the divide between foreign policy and area studies is from bureaucratic politics. When you plant the seeds for a knowledge production space, and that betrays you. That simple story is why the US has a vast number of people with expertise in all these area studies. Sometimes they took on the perspectives of those who you hoped were going to help you manage from. So we have this bureaucratic inbreeding, where they only share information from within. Where they will very seldom open up the walls as they share some assumptions, if they believe you share similar goals.

Participant 8: *I think they play a role that is much greater than the centers themselves are fully aware of. Meaning that so much of our time and energy is focused into language training. Language training programs that offer strategically important languages for the State Department and Department of Defense. Our students may be interested in studying for example Pashtun or Arabic for very academic reasons, but they may find that those skills could track them into government positions that can utilize those skills in a way that does have strategic national security influence. Now we at our centers may not be aware of that to an extent, fundamentally that is the pipeline.*

Participant 9: *There was a time where there was a much tighter relationship between some of the northeastern universities especially and the State Department and policymaking in Washington. Back when the Middle East was less vital or strategically important to the US. It was more of a hobby almost in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. But I think as the profile of the region rose in Washington and became much more politicized -- Middle East studies moved away from the old white man in the armchair studying the Middle East and going on to work in Washington and in the CIA kind of thing. That's a good thing but it also means it's a two-way street. It also means that what American academia is doing and talking about when it comes to Middle East studies is simply less relevant to a lot of policymakers, they are just not as interested in debates and theoretical conversations that are taking place in American university campuses. American academics have an allergy from being involved in policy making/CIA/State Dept. - people don't want to be seen doing that. As it marks them out in a certain way and they would much rather be doing scholarship on the Middle East. Certainly, a lot of the students do end up going on to*

these kinds of jobs, but it's a two-way street. At the same time the policy world in the last twenty years had not paid a lot of attention to what Middle East specialists have to say.

Our university has a strong connection/pipeline with the powers in Washington, which is partly because we are close by, and it would be different if we were in Georgetown or George Washington University or something like that. The political science department at our university is very much connected to Washington.

For the most part people are just doing their thing, if it's reading their Arabic poetry or 19th century Iranian history, and our graduate students are usually more focused on these esoteric topics. So there is some overlap between these worlds, but they are very different worlds and they both exist in our university.

Participant 10: *Lest we flatter ourselves, I do know for having been in the field for 55 years, certain people decide to follow what specific scholars write, particularly when they are working on a project that requires them to know, for example, the cultural politics of cinema, at any given moment, and it seems to be pro Ukraine or Anti Ukraine, pro or anti Crimea, that they may know to read on that topic from X and Y person. As they cherry pick who that person is for their own needs.*

I believe that you could say that one of the top five channels that people go into is the State Department, DoD and those. Another thing that I would say is that the value of a think tank is that you can fire someone from a think tank, but you cannot fire a tenured professor who is the director of a Title VI center. And when you speak about us, we are not departments, we are never departments, and by getting Title VI we are center status. So we are soft power that provides a wide variety including those that will populate the think tanks.

Finding 2.5: American universities have a deep tradition in area studies dating back to the start of the Cold War. All facets of American society feel that advancing US interests in a region requires intimate knowledge of that region. Area studies departments are important in this regard due to the key role that learning a language and understanding a culture can play in enabling people to analyze a region

economically, politically, socially, and so on. Accordingly, the US government has provided robust funding for these programs, allowing the US to be a world leader in them.

Data: In response to the question “American universities have a wealth of area studies departments, and much more than in other countries. Why do you think that is?”, which we posed to US diplomats, US area studies researchers, and US think tank scholars, we received the following responses.

Participant 1: *Some of it goes back to the Cold War, where there was a burst of federal government funding of studies about the Soviet Union, and developing world economies, and understanding the strategic competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and their roles in the world. More recently, there's a lot of funding, sometimes by foreign governments, of American university research programs.*

And then I think that university administrations may see these as prestigious programs that attract top-rate students, and some serious talent. I'm still not sure that area studies departments, at least what I'm familiar with, mostly in the Middle East, have all that much relevance to government policy making anymore. I think back in the Cold War that was very different. We didn't have enough relevant speakers and experts on the Soviet Union, and so there was great weight attached to experts who knew the Soviet Union and could write about it in a serious way.

But I think - and this is my view - that the academic discourse in the U.S. has removed itself from practical decision making, and it's gone off in areas that may be of interest to academic researchers, but by and large not top tier issues to policymakers.

Participant 2: *As a rise of post WWII American influence across the world, the US has interests everywhere. Economically and culturally. I grew up thinking a lot about Russia and Russian culture. In my mind, and I believe a lot of Americans are taught to think, when I was a little kid in the 1960's the Soviet Union was really big and really scary. I need to learn more about the Soviet Union so I will know how to deal with it and how my country will deal with it.*

There is a sense in American university programs in the US that the more the student knows about a different area of the world; the more language, culture, religion, society, politics, defense and economics; the better they will be able to deal with it as a government official, citizen, non-governmental

organization worker, and businessman. The best defense of the best guide to good policy is a good education in that particular area in the world. That philosophy that is born from post WWII America is also based on the idea that the more Americans sit and learn the more they can deal with certain situations.

I never felt at any point in my area studies education constrained at what I could say, read or write. I did a lot of original research. The library back then had an entire floor of original sources and had unrestricted access and I spent thousands of hours there. I am not entirely sure why that happened but, compared to the region, I have noticed and been surprised by the lack of area studies programs and even in Israel and the Middle East. And when talking about area studies programs in Israel it doesn't go further than Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. I suspect that's mostly based on the worldview of people running the country and universities.

I would like to see it in the Middle East and more Asian studies. Asia is so important for Gulf markets and politics, and if the world is becoming multipolar and places like Russia, China, the United States, and Turkey competing for influence. I feel it's necessary for people to understand China's intentions in the Middle East; do they want us to supplant the US and do they want to get the 5th fleet out of Bahrain? What do the Chinese want and what does their history look like? Bahrain would have a better policy if it could understand more about what's happening in Beijing or happening in Seoul. I have always been baffled by and don't understand why all these states in the Gulf have been more outwardly focused and these universities in the Middle East.

I would recommend looking at how recruiting is done in diplomatic services into major government positions and the people who have to deal with outside actors, if academic qualifications and knowledge of language and region are not major factors. And there is no market for area studies programs. Even in Europe there is an internal market to study for a specific area and that has baffled me as to why most of the Middle East there is not an internal market. And no desire to create an academic cadre that speaks Chinese, Portuguese, Hebrew, or Turkish. As I said, I grew up studying Russian at a time when the United States was particularly anti-communist and anti-Russian. That never stopped me from doing research

against what I saw as the biggest adversary at the time for the USA. That may just be a particular American cultural trait, however, I just don't know.

I know my colleagues and I have asked ourselves this question so many times, being why are there so many people going abroad for British and American universities to study. And perhaps it is seen as more effective to study abroad at the top schools rather than have them study in the Middle East. It's a difficult topic to try to unravel and I thought that human curiosity and university findings would create a variety of research centers with differing objectives.

Participant 3: *It's a unique tradition in American education. I have not found it at the same level in Western Countries. I have always felt that Middle Eastern Countries have not given this enough priority or investment, because while they have extraordinary relations with the USA and the West, they have a very little pipeline of knowledge and expertise in those countries. The number of times I have run into people in Egypt and other places where I served; they feel they know the United States, because they have traveled there, or went to school there, however nine times out of ten they haven't got a clue how the country's government works, because it's a very complicated system. A lot of things that they saw from a foreign policy perspective were actually domestic issues. The flow over from domestic to foreign policy was never understood I think overseas with the exception of very few people, who study the branches of government and studies how the three branches of government interrelate with one another, as well as the role played by the state, as this is still a federation. They rarely understand how the three branches of government work, and how the states affect the foreign policy of the US. Even people in the United States rarely know how the three branches of government work.*

Without establishing area studies programs in the United States or other regions, they really cannot understand how policy is made in the United States, which impacts them greatly because many of them have important ties to the US. Without that investment, countries miss out a lot and in some Arab states they try to supplement that with think tanks, however, it's not enough. Really the addition of higher education to area studies programs is really the best way to provide the upcoming generation with a better understanding of the world, and feed that into the government till the policy makers are better

informed in the relations that they have; if you look at most countries in MENA between what they think their relationship should be and their understanding of US policy and domestic policy.

If I were to give some additional notes, I would state that one should not forget the language piece. The Gulf has recently paid a lot more attention to languages like Chinese and Japanese, and it should be a big part of area studies and be integrated somehow, however, it is not always integrated in American higher education. You will find both at Harvard and Yale in, say, Middle Eastern studies you will have to take a number of courses in the Arabic language. It is not just to read the language, it's giving the researchers the capacity to understand the culture. And without that you really don't have it. English speaking is easier when you are from the Gulf looking at the US, but there are these hard languages that are becoming increasingly important, whether it's Chinese, Russian or anything else I would add those studies.

Participant 8: *I believe that area studies in the US are very linked due to the Cold War and the Cold War legacy of international relations and geopolitics, with the US being a very dominant player. Area studies and their culture have been so embedded within higher education that it has become part of the architecture. Whether or not it still served the interest of the State Department and DoD, I am not sure. I think it may be a consequence of the institutionalization of area studies as a part of higher education more broadly.*

Policy simply reflects the historical strategic interest of the United states, building in area studies into the fabric of their professional school training. Despite the changes in the twenty-first century, it continues as a consequence of the legacy of the cold war. Area studies centers have really important work in cultural politics vs. political interventions, which are more explicit. This is by producing contact within which students can learn about diversity to everyone's advantage. Despite the connection between area studies centers and national interest. It's just inevitable when you have an area studies center in Israel that will to some degree reflect Israeli priorities, or Saudi priorities or Iranian priorities. Fundamentally, area studies even in those national contexts, work against the problems associated with nationalism more generally. I believe they are incredibly valuable as sources that constantly question the assumptions of nationalism. That's something that is true of area studies in any part of the world that questions

nationalism in a post-colonial context. In the context of American exceptionalism and the context of the European Union, it's kind of a source of critique that emerges from within political structures.

Participant 9: *Institutional inertia; it's to some extent institutional inertia, departments exist and they tend to perpetuate themselves. Departments sometimes have renamed themselves, for example we have a department here that is called [name redacted], that used to be called [name redacted], which recently rebranded themselves, because they also have a lot of ancient historians and archeologists as well as modern historians and literature specialists, so they came up with that name. In our center, it's a question of funding, we have always been funded from the beginning, from the Title VI program, out of the US Department of Education Title VI funding created in 1968. We have been funded almost every four years ever since. We are overwhelmingly funded through that funding stream, so for us to substantially change what we are doing would require us to think about how, what it is to me, a Middle East Center, and whether that's even the right name for us. It should be more of a MENA center or Southwest Asian Center or something like that.*

Participant 10: *A need to maintain US hegemony, and I say this with a heavy dose of irony in a sense of humor, but it would be wrong not to say this first and foremost. As they give us money to get something out of us, and that is to provide experts who will advise them.*

Participant 14: *The US has always prided itself to be a multicultural country, and multiculturalism in the last five to ten years has become very politicized and that is a very unfortunate thing in my view. Going back to the roots of American history, America has always seen itself as a multicultural country and the idea of having studies and programs devoted to looking at other cultures and looking at them in a very interdisciplinary way, to me it seems a very natural thing for a country that has that as its self-image. Politically and globally the US has seen itself as a major player on the world stage, some say that's good some say that's bad. Having the attention to and knowledge of how other cultures and parts of the world and how things operate and connect with one another, to me that is what drives it.*

Participant 15: *I would say that the other interesting question is if you haven't already done it, comparing how many university programs existed in US universities programs before World War 2 and after World War 2... I mean of course there was an overall explosion in the prevalence of higher education broadly*

speaking but my guess would be the prevalence of area studies in the US is a reflection of the global responsibilities the US took on in the postwar era and knowledge of other regions and cultures became extremely important, not only for the public but also the private sector, in general, along with area studies, where knowledge of other regions became very important. The founder of [an organization] was in the private sector and believed that in the postwar era the US needed to understand [a region] a little better and he became enamored by his research himself. He went to work in the [region] and then when coming back to the US he founded [that organization].

Participant 17: *I don't know. I think we got used to area studies by studying the Soviet Union during the Cold War, there was habituation with area studies that were supported by the government.*

Finding 2.6: The abundance of area studies departments/programs in the US, especially when compared to the rest of the world, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it reflects a commitment to understanding foreign cultures in an institutionalized and intellectually open academic environment. On the other hand, it reflects latent imperialist tendencies in the US' foreign policy establishment, and raises concerns about the possibility of the need to make research policy relevant leading to the corruption of that research, especially when funding is tied to perceived policy relevance.

Data: In response to the question "Area studies departments, such as African studies and European studies, are very common in the US, and more common than elsewhere in the world. "Do you see this as a good or bad thing? Why?", which is a question we posed to US area studies academics and US think tank scholars, we received the following responses.

Participant 6: *The history of area studies in the US is well known, to folks who have spent a lot of time thinking about this. I think it's simply an artifact of the post WW2 US expanding footprint globally. I would place area studies as an academic development in universities both public and private, as a reflection of the increasing call of military security and diplomatic dimensions of knowledge production as it relates to the US coming to terms with its production as an expanding global role. The first days about area studies were very much about that. I would emphasize the role of organic intellectuals and public defense intellectuals that sprung up in the 20th century.*

The flow from people from area studies to more of intramural researchers' roles onto areas of federal governments and state departments and such.

Either good or bad, universities have struggled with legacies of area studies, which started toward the end of the 20th century and after the fall of the Berlin wall and end of the Cold War in the early 90's, there was a real debate about the relevance of area studies, and whether or not that is a paradigm for organizing knowledge, was now obsolete.

These days we see more lack of consensus around what is the specific role of area studies. It's no longer just "what is the role of these criminologists of sorts to generate knowledge about areas that we have no political or economic investments in". This is now being perceived in the global competition against US-China, you see a retrenchment of some kind of area studies' resources reflecting that interest.

Increasingly over time, people have become more critically engaged in area studies as more problematic. As the history of area studies has been written by history in the US and elsewhere, reflecting on what exactly was that role, it raised questions on autonomy in universities vs. the state, and the problem of defense intellectuals as providing distorted frameworks of which knowledge is produced. The inability to be free of policy priorities, and to explore other perhaps not on the table problems and that kind of stuff. It has increasingly dominated the area under area studies, which I think that a lot of area studies programs in the US are seen as an antiquated frame of reference. There are a lot of nuances there. I think in a lot of places, various studies that have been published over time are having to justify their continued existence in interesting ways.

Furthermore this points to the hand in glove relationship between higher education in the US and knowledge for the purpose of policy making. This is a major connection between the two. Why so many? Because there are so many universities. We have over 3,000 institutions, where we have a redundancy factor at play here. If you don't have this, it's like you aren't competitive as a university institution. So we have this proliferation of uniformity across the institution building of universities, that mainly had to reinvent the wheel rather than occupy a specific niche of their own.

Mostly if you are a research-born university in the US you must have a set of things, otherwise you are not considered complete as there are gaps between your curricular offering. We see this happen in various waves, with the unending US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 20 years. You see a push to fund Middle Eastern area studies, and other area studies programs kind of languished a little bit, more specifically around language learning deficits that were obvious around US professional staff engaged in parts of the big picture in the relationship between those countries and the changing US policy in the region.

Even now you see an imbalance between the funding of those programs, even as those wars have somehow finally wound down. We see a sort of transitional push to now make sure that adequate amounts for Mandarin studies are available, but it's important to note that the changing landscape of area studies with respect to that. Because in the US in the past decade and other western settler nations, like Canada, US, New Zealand. You see a lot of push back against Confucius Institutes, as they are basically like the British Council or Alliance Francais, that provoked intense debate between the relationship of universities and knowledge generated by and for specific parts of the world, and so the problems for these Confucius Institutes are things like the funding coming from the Chinese government, which is seen as [having relations with] the government in universities, and so it provoked a very typical US type debate around free speech, that you don't necessarily see elsewhere in the world. However, this has colored how the areas studies capacity has sharpened up, as we see retrenchment where US funded programs have to be the cutting edge of how this is going to unfold otherwise there is going to be suspicion of interference or something.

One of the ways in which looking at area studies would be as an institution building exercise is to see it as getting out from under the historical term itself, area studies, which carries a lot of baggage. In our center, we are in pain to kind of frame the things that we do, in a post area studies mode. So yes, we have specific geographical interest in the Caribbean and Latin America, but this is not to subjugate the people of this part of the world. That involves putting behind us some of the well-grown grooves of area studies' expectations. One of the ways we do that is by often doing comparative work, even though we are a Latin American studies center.

We carried a fairly ambitious project early on, looking at regional differences and similarities in response to global climate change. The idea is to disrupt the area studies exclusive focus on just that one unique region as if it's a self-evident unit, that should naturally exist on the globe. When we say area studies we could mean different things. We could mean language social arrangements of other parts of the world or cultures, or an undergraduate curriculum of courses about history of politics, culture, social arrangement of other parts of the world, which might not necessarily have the overt connection with the fence between intellectual communities and policy making institutions and other entities. But it's just part of an undergraduate curriculum diffused in the undergraduate curriculum.

Another way is looking at it as a parallel center or institute in a parallel institution building as part of the university, but somewhat separate from it - that's how we historically see the growth of area studies centers in the US. Because it's easier to set up as a center and institute, than to evolve the entire curriculum of a university. Another way of doing it is when you have these well-developed civilizational or organically organized universities, like when you have a South Asian studies and Middle Eastern studies programs.

The University of Chicago is an extremely prestigious and well considered entity that attracts top level scholars from all over the world. They are in a kind of situation where even recognizing this antiquated nature of South Asian studies, whatever that might be, as such a high-profile thing that they keep it. So there is something like institutional inertia happening there, because they have the resources where they can kind of maintain all of that.

That model is true of an increasingly smaller slice of the institutional cross-section of the higher education establishment in the United States. Eventually, you see like twenty programs that can continue to do that, Harvards and Yales, Chicagos and Stanfords, and so on. A few public land grant universities that have a very well-developed institution building for a specific kind of area studies program, like the University of Texas, for Latin American studies, that is very highly-developed and has become part of the institutional identity of the school, and so it doesn't make sense for them to take a left turn from that, so they are constantly rebranding and reframing. What all this is for? It's not a static thing. In the middle of the twentieth century, we could perhaps have hypothesized a sort of two-way flow between academic

knowledge production and the defense, security, and diplomatic foreign service communities in government. I would say that today it's not necessarily descriptive of the reality on the ground, as I don't see a policy making community in the Latin American space, which admittedly is often not the first priority for US policy makers. I don't see the Latin American policy space as well informed by cutting edge scholars who have come.

One might wonder: if I did the same research in a different department, would they still have the same problem with it that they would with an area studies department?

We're in an era of hyper-concern about such things. Post-colonialism and quite similarly anthropology have positioned themselves in the morally good space. That seems to be among the overriding concerns for the kind of work people do, as a fellow traveler and ally. Allyship has become the main orienting purpose of research, which is concerning, partly because this is a response to some very well documented instances where anthropology got out of hand during mostly the Vietnam era, and mostly around problematic initiations with intelligence gathering (e.g. Project Camelot). So this overreach by academic centers that are associated with universities' Project Camelot essentially being an effort to open source data gathering on countries during the Cold War that seems to cut a lot of corners around transparency, this was carried out around a research center here in a university.

American universities have this kind of split personality, as a student body that's very well-known and ranks very high on some indexes on social justice issues, but also has been involved in some nonsense where area studies type efforts have been located in problematic espionage. So we have to be hyper-aware of these contexts when we operate. Thus being in an area studies center (although we think of ourselves as post-area studies) opens us up to heightened scrutiny, but I would also say that being someone in an anthropology department or political science department, and possibly not associating it with an area studies center, does not preclude you having these same problems.

I think it really is just things as simple as who is your funder, and that is a big deal across the social sciences these days. If you have federal funding and it's not the National Science Foundation or National Institute for Health, then that's going to be scrutinized by colleagues as potentially problematic, like – "why are you getting funding from the Department of State?". Recently, there was a major controversy around

DoD's efforts (re. Minerva Fellowships). The DoD has been the entity that does the most work on climate research when this was not considered a major issue for the government, and/or was run by climate deniers or whatever.

Partly this was because DoD saw it as a source of global conflict in years to come, so they wanted to understand it. To what end they wanted to understand it? Such questions do need to bear certain scrutiny. What is the DoD trying to achieve in conflict mitigation in regards to climate, and we can see some of the glimmers of that in migration studies and environmental displacement and disaster? Like what we recently saw having Haitians coming to the United States. They did solid research in that area, but there's no way we can take DoD money. We could, but it would fundamentally compromise us, especially with colleagues in the US and the region.

Why? Because that's the climate for funding in higher education in the US, especially for social sciences, including history, political science, and certainly anthropology.

Any social science with an international studies dimension is part of it. In all those fields, there are very strong antagonistic responses to "the militarization of higher education". In this ideological environment, there's no room for it.

One function of area studies departments -- with a research dimension attached to them -- continues to perform in addition to the student dimension discussed earlier, building out networks of relations across international and transnational boundaries. So we build relationships with centers, institutions, universities, and scholars in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that transnational network is one of the most important products of our work. That lack of insularity is an important dimension.

Now we touched on how it's not necessarily the case that such knowledge is part of the way in which informed decision making happens in a policy space. I think in many ways it isn't, but it allows us to describe how the US is perceived in Argentina or Brazil, and allows us to keep our finger on the pulse of meaningful scholarships in all sorts of issues.

But if we took DoD those conversations would end, except maybe not with the Brazilians, Chileans or Columbians, because of their geopolitical orientation with the US, but certainly with almost everyone

else, which is simply saying what are you doing? You're Not a reliable source, in the social sciences and particularly in how it's a different conversation than the natural sciences. For example, all astrophysics conducted in Chile right now, a current global area for work in this field mainly because they have the Atacama desert, and thus US agencies and institutions have over the last 15 years given millions of dollars to develop the infrastructure for electron telescopes and other apparatus in the location that is becoming part of the Chilean academic establishment.

Now where they have these working relationships and you're an astrophysicist, you will go to Chile at some point, and you will also go to Cern. US dollars flowing into that isn't considered a problem, and if you are a US astrophysicist and you work in one of those facilities and you generate your research and some of that is provided by the DoD, that will not be a problem. However, in social sciences anything having to do with geopolitics and perceived US imperialism, the problem of US influence, and malign influence abroad, will be a problem. Working in area studies today is a major issue. You cannot be seen as working with the wrong parts of government. This further shows whom area studies are intended for.

Participant 7: *As to the question of whether it's a bad or good thing, it's an empirical thing. That's where area studies came from. Now did area studies always perform the function that those who gave it birth wanted it to? I don't think so. Russian and East European area studies; these guys were champions of the Cold War, and were very closely intertwined to what you would call the intramural. There was a traffic back and forth between intelligence and military and security. Henry Kissinger is only one of many. This pantheon of Cold War intellectuals and a lot of them came out of Eastern European studies institutes.*

Note that there were not only the initial and core department of education programs under the Title VI Act, which I don't remember exactly what it stands for, however, there were several ones that are Title VIII that served Russian and Europe area studies which had additional money. You also had a whole set of institutions that bridges the department of education and security agencies and academia; IREX (International Relations and Exchange Board) used to channel all the Fulbright money. I think at times, parts of the Middle East have also seen this kind of intersection, but only at times. As mentioned, I think that the political and ideological divisions between much of academia focusing on the Middle East and US foreign policy agendas, and visions for global governance and the relationship with Israel in particular

made that connection much more difficult. In the end, what has happened are these massive investments which have declined very significantly in recent decades, but those investments that were made in the 60s and 70s did in fact build a very impressive stock of expertise, which is a good thing.

Participant 8: *I see it as a good thing, with the proviso that universities in general in the US take a very dominant perspective on global issues. It's good in the sense that it creates a much more inclusive sense of global area studies. The downside is, and should be seriously considered, is not reflecting US interest in the globalization of those particular areas. In other words, the problem of American dominance is front and center.*

I believe that area studies in the US are closely linked due to the Cold War and its legacy of international relations and geopolitics, with the US being a very dominant player. Area studies and their culture have been quite embedded in higher education to the extent that it has become part of the architecture. I'm not sure though whether it still serves the interest of the State Department and DoD. I think it may be a consequence of the broader institutionalization of area studies as a part of higher education. As a director of an area studies center, I am approaching it very much as an academic, who is interested in academia for the sake of academia, but over the past four years my experience has been so much of institutional support, both from within the university and more broadly from the funding agencies that we are able to tap into. So much of that is dependent on legislation that is put in place by the government, that it's strategically necessary to increasingly link our programs to issues like national security in a broad sense. It's a question of broadening our programming to address security issues in a way that also has academic value for scholars who are in language studies programs, cultural studies, and broader humanities.

Participant 9: *I think it's reflective of trends that have shifted over time. I think initially a lot of area studies departments and programs were created out of the US. They were created out of a Cold War imperative - a desire to "understand" various parts of the world, and help create expertise and pools of experts, language specialists, and area specialists to provide the US government with a better understanding of various parts of the world to help fight communism.*

This has evolved and has become much less fashionable over time, and I think there has also been a tendency in American academia to want to distance a little bit from the idea of treating these areas of the

world as objects of study from the US. Lumping them together, areas that don't even always make sense and coherent areas. The whole concept of the Middle East is really a colonial concept. Most people in the Middle East, as you are aware, don't really walk around all day thinking of themselves as Middle Eastern. They are focused on where they must be, whether it's Bahrain, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, or wherever. It's an approach to studying parts of the world that are not often the United States or Western Europe.

It has really fallen out of favor as people have become much more interdisciplinary in different ways, now a much more post-colonial and anti-colonial perspective is adopted, in which they approach the study of parts of the world that were traditionally in the periphery of the colonial powers. I don't know if things have gone full circle yet, but I do think that there is actually a place for area studies in a way that is more relevant to the 21st century. As researchers have generally become more interdisciplinary, and discipline boundaries have begun to break, that is where there is a creative full circle that we can come to. We don't have to even call it area studies, as I sit here as a head of a Middle East Center, one of the most interesting and creative things we do, is bring together postgraduate students who are in political science, history, sociology, anthropology, and literature, who are all working on various aspects of the region. I would introduce one of them and they wouldn't even know each other otherwise, and talk across disciplines about shared interests in particular parts of the region. Now is that area studies? I don't know, maybe. But I think that's where it can be valuable.

Participant 10: *I see it as a good thing, not but not in an absolute sense, as it trains the next generations of experts, since without those programs we would not have a pipeline of experts that we rely on for the future.*

Participant 14: *I see the prominence of these departments and programs as a very good thing where they exist, and I am pleased to hear they are prominent in the US and elsewhere. Part of my own personal academic training and background was in international affairs and interdisciplinary studies. I pursued a functional area of international security and defense affairs, there are many subdivided regional studies like Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia and many others areas there. I believe that model is very common in those prominent international affairs schools. I believe it's a very good thing for the impact it has on policy making.*

The school I went to and comparable schools are designed to be a training ground for people to go into policy making in international affairs and relations, where they learn how to write a good policy memo, one that a policy maker would read rather than a 34 page paper that a policymaker would not read. It's very important to have that training ground for people who go into consulting or for government service.

I think this is a very large industry in the US of private sector companies that serve the government and that was the route I took. A way to influence policy making from outside the government and still very directly advising government officials on different aspects of policy. Most people who come out of these programs, in their 20s and 30s go into mid-level ranked jobs in government. At the decision maker level, not all those individuals have the same background, there are more of those appointed to the very senior official level. But those in my personal experience, the officials at that level, even if they don't have that level of understanding of area studies and interdisciplinary work, they pay attention to the analysis that is done by the people in those lower levels in their department who have that knowledge. This is invaluable for giving a well-rounded perspective on whatever the policy issue is that is being discussed.

Participant 15: *It's definitely a good thing here in the US. It provides an opportunity for people to gain specific understanding of a region, specifically regions that are not well understood or heavily visited, so regional studies departments play a special role in developing a cadre of people who take on special roles in the private or public sector. I think it's very important.*

Participant 17: *I see it as a good thing for the US, as we need to have a depth of knowledge of what is happening in the world which is maintained by universities as distinguished from think tanks. So when I think of research I think of it as a big river with lots of streams and academic research is one of those streams which is indispensable.*

<p>Finding 2.7: Academic area studies research can be an input into think tank research, but the relationship between the two is not particularly strong.</p>
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Data: In response to the question - "Think tanks play an important role in shaping US foreign policy. What role do you think that these area studies departments play in the research that is produced by US think tanks?", which we posed to US think tank scholars, we received the following responses.

Participant 14: *I have been more of a consumer of think tanks products rather than a creator of them. But certainly even in my work, as a private sector advisor to governments, I have relied on research coming out of those area studies. I can only assume I am fairly typical in that regard. As a private sector advisor to governments, I can say it has been a very prominent element of research as far as I have seen. As an observer of other think tanks, one of the things I give to think tanks is the rigor of their research. And looking for sources that are in disagreement with one another to triangulate among different perspectives, I think that is a hallmark of think tank research that I have seen in area studies products. Certainly a big part of that, the training dimension is invaluable and I'm certain that while area studies departments are perhaps not directly plugged in to government as they were perhaps in the 50s and 60s, many of those individuals are employed at think tanks. So they go along the way so to speak.*

Participant 15: *The line is not a hard and fast one, I think it's a back and forth between academia, think tanks and the government and private sector. The critical role of academic institutions is creating the body of people who are experts, who study languages and cultures.*

Participant 17: *I think that's a very mixed bag, some come into think tanks from academic backgrounds, others come from policy oriented. The connection is not a direct connection and very rarely do you see very deep academic research coming into think tanks or journalism. It is an intermingling of those waters from the stream.*

<p>Finding 2.8: Area studies departments/programs make a significant contribution to the research corps of think tanks.</p>
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Data: In response to the question - "What role do you think that area studies departments play in producing talent that can then go on to work in US think tanks?", which we posed to US think tank scholars, we received the following responses.

Participant 14: *When I think back, there are only two or three routes that [area studies graduates] would think of: going to work for the government, or going into private sector organizations that serve in an advisory role to the government, or going into think tanks. We often look for internships for people who study area studies. Our scholars will take an hour to talk to the interns about their background and their*

work and I've done that a couple of times, where I meet thirty or forty of the interns. For policymakers to leave think tanks and go into government they leave a lot behind, this is a very important role for think tanks as well. This revolving door plays a very important role.

Participant 15: *I would say to a certain extent, I would speculate that because academic research tends to be a step away from the policy relevant analysis which think tanks are trying to provide. Therefore their utility in appearing for congressional hearing are somewhat less, but I would say for the most part the people who are populating think tanks, the scholars who are at [geographically-oriented] think tanks, most of them would have come out of academic institutions where they study the region as part of their background, so academia is producing the same people who populate think tanks and government and those areas.*

[As a former career diplomat] the nature of government changed [over the last few decades], and the nature of the practice of diplomacy changed. I would put the change later a little bit later than you would [the end of the Cold War]. In this sense relating to conversations I have had with others in the think tank community, the interest in in-depth research and the ability for officers working in the government to absorb a 50 page analysis of the economy of Upper Volta really dropped away. The practice of diplomacy became much more immediate and much more about learning what will happen today and tomorrow. The utility of these in-depth and incisive kinds of analysis which are a product of mostly academic institutions became less useful for the practitioners working in these government institutions [and was partially supplanted by think tanks].

And along with that the money went away, the grants for this kind of research also dried up to a certain extent. So it was not useful to produce research. Even when looking at the kind of grants that are offered in the government they are a lot more about operations to promote academic exchanges or bringing journalists or providing fellowships, these things are being funded by the government but the in-depth studies - not so much. So these impacts are part of the broader impacts of society and it was more about influencing how the government operates, and you don't have the depth of offices; they are staffed more thinly now and people simply don't have time to sit back.

When I first joined the government, we had many different kinds of means of communicating back to Washington. We used to use telegrams and our computers. So we did send telegrams but we also had things called airgrams that were sent by diplomatic pouches and we also sent letters back to our desk every week talking about what was going on, and programs which had no restriction on length. Some of our diplomats were extremely prolific and some of them were fabulous writers. They were able to describe a situation or a conversation that was really, really invocative and those would come back and the desk officers would absorb those. This became part of the policymaking process, having desk officers working at the foundational level of the department, who are extremely well briefed and expert on the countries that they are working on. Most of the dialogue now between departments and embassies overseas are via Zoom call, cable or email. If you send a cable more than 5-10 paragraphs you can be confident that nobody will read it. The nature of communication changed completely and the ability of the department to absorb that kind of very detailed in-depth reporting and analysis went away. This was internal to the State Department and the same applies to the think tank community and academic community. So that we as a think tank are trying to figure out essential messages to our core audiences in the private and public sector. The one to two minute videos or podcasts that are five to fifteen minutes long and short analysis, one or two page kind of things as the understanding is there that this is the only way you will capture the attention of people who are inundated with information and quick kinds of policy proposals.

Participant 17: *It's an important role, I see it a lot, interns that come to our think tank come out of area studies, and there is a synergy there. And it's useful to have a background in think tanks even if they want to be academics. There is quite a bit of cross fertilization.*

Finding 2.9: If the GCC countries were to establish area studies departments/programs, additional hurdles would need to be overcome before they could make a substantive contribution to foreign policy. This is partially because the genesis of foreign policy in the GCC occurs at such a high level that the connection to a university is inevitably weaker; and partially because there is a reluctance among scholars to express views that might not be fully congruent with the foreign policy decision makers' favored policy trajectory.

Data: In response to the question - “American universities have area studies departments, such as Middle Eastern studies and Chinese studies, and the foreign policy establishment sometimes calls upon the scholars working in these departments to ask them for advice regarding foreign policy issues in their domain. These departments do not exist in the GCC. If they existed, do you think that their scholars might be called upon in a similar way?”, which we posed to GCC diplomats, we received the following responses.

Participant 11: *My short answer is no. The relationship governing institutions here operates in a very different manner, formulating foreign policies also operates in a different manner, so I think that perhaps if we differentiate the levels, we might get a clear picture of how these things operate and could potentially operate. I think if we look at the role of foreign service departments or foreign offices or ministries, and the roles of the minister and the governing body within the organization in the GCC, you would see as a whole that foreign policies are set at a very high level, near or equal to that of a head of state. So if you look at it from that perspective, it matters because the ministry's role is quite supportive in that sense, we are there to inform policy at a much more junior level, rather than formulating foreign policy at a much more senior level.*

Now in terms of partnerships for area studies and bringing in experts, I do not believe it comes in handy if you have that type of institutional setup, but I think it helps when training diplomats and building partnerships to create a sense of intellectual space for people to better understand a region. I think there is room for that type of partnership, but I genuinely think that in terms of the set up you see in Western Europe or North America, where think tanks and experts are brought in to give advice to understand the history of a unique country and formulate policies based on that expertise; we are somewhat far from that. There are certain steps that need to happen institutionally in terms of our understanding of academics, think tanks, and public institutions and all their roles. Only then we could look at that partnership, and the assumptions are far from where we can see these partnerships happening.

I think in the Gulf the attitude towards Africa is changing, so the priorities are changing, and the culture is changing, and the institutional assumptions and role of institutions are also changing at a very slow pace. I believe it is a very traditional approach to say let's ask the experts in terms of people who are at

our level. Because the think tank world is relatively new to the GCC, it's not a historical organic growth, and to be quite honest, I think it boils down to people's ability to give honest opinions. Perhaps we see a relative fear of the culture and environment in terms of criticizing a policy, because sometimes when you have academic freedoms, you often tend to formulate an opinion where there is judgment, you do fall to the normative world, whether you admit to it or not there is a should or shouldn't. People often would be wary of giving that opinion to a senior policy maker, when it comes to matters related to security and national security. Even if someone is qualified and able, I think the environment is not one that encourages that type of policy advice.

Participant 12: *This will be the missing dimension in our Arab world, so we are missing this specialty. Also, now at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we are facing the same problem, where are the specialists in certain areas, the problem is that the students specialize in political sciences and their information is general and the strongest information they have is about the United States because it is the superpower, with limited information on the rest of the countries or regions... In general, the rest of the countries, even the United States, their knowledge of them is superficial and is not based on deep information and knowledge. Regarding other countries, the language, I believe, is a big obstacle.*

For a long time, the political science major was what we wanted, and we did not have many jobs in the political field. The students say why should I enter this field and there are other fields, so you find that those who specialize are not the most talented, and they always specialize in engineering or medicine, and this is wrong and as I see it this issue is beginning to change but we still need to focus on studying the region.

There are no specialists in a specific geographical area, so you find people so far in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who learn only through their work and do not have prior knowledge or experience on their own or through previous education.

If we had people who specialized in specific geographic areas in our universities, we could have benefited from their opinions through conferences, or we could have asked of them to write a policy paper about a certain situation, and ask them to follow developments firsthand and write reports for us that we could take and analyze later, to see what can be best used and present them to the decision-makers. In fact, this

would have been very beneficial since the foreign policy of many countries depends on the political analysis carried out by their partners from the research think tanks in universities, and we are missing that.

The view towards this issue has begun to change, but to a large extent there is still a lack of awareness of the importance of research centers and the importance of research studies. In fact, there is a disconnect, except on rare occasions when someone comes to you aware of the importance of think tanks, even in many events and forums, towards issues affecting our country. You want someone to whisper in your ear, what is the situation, there are things that we do not know? Unfortunately, this awareness is not there.

But at the same time, I used to find foreign researchers come and approach us and we open the doors for them and they come out with in-depth research on our region and our country which we do not know or have any connection to. This [preference for foreign researchers] is not due to lack of trust in local ones, but rather a desire that the foreigner writes about you in a more positive way than a native or citizen of the country itself. As a native, if you write about your own country, it can be held against you, which is of course illogical.

Participant 16: I cannot tell you whether they might be called upon or not, but I can tell you that people who work in the administration, and the ministries, they are machines working on everyday events and things. They don't have the time to think about the future, and people in the think tanks are those equipped to do this kind of work. I used to work in a think tank, and one of the things we found was every ministry is responsible for something that concerns the other ministry. So everybody is stepping on each other's toes. The situation is much better today, however we always need research centers to give us the visions, whether its economic plans or analysis of the situation.

One of the things I remember very well is that in 1990, [as communism was collapsing] one of the GCC heads of state said that we need to know what the impact on the GCC will be of the changes in Eastern Europe, coming back from communism to normal life. Will they have an impact in GCC countries? At that time who should reply to such a question? If there were research centers all over the Middle East in this time there would have been communication and collaboration to solve such things.

In fact a team was assembled to study the issue, and the study was based on interviews with thinkers and not policymakers in western countries. It's extremely important for such studies to be done in day to day life. To create centers specialized in Israel or Iran studies.

Before France for example went to colonize a country, they sent scholars to study this country, language and culture. So when they go and deal with them it will be much easier for them. This has not been used only by America but also used in ancient times. The decision body will not be able to make decisions without the good analysis done by others. For example as an ambassador before I start my work I have to start my study before I make a decision. I have to see what I should get into specifically and what exactly I should do to have the most efficient way to achieve what I need.

It is extremely important to have a specialized research center. Plato for example was a mathematician, doctor, and more, now things are different one person cannot do everything. In the same way you need different centers, Chinese studies, Iran studies etc.

Finding 2.10: Gulf universities don't have area studies for a variety of reasons. These include an excessive emphasis on the job-market prospects of degree programs - which works against area studies; and a general indifference toward such studies throughout society, sometimes verging on a form of anti-intellectualism. Ordinary people are simply not curious about the rest of the world.

Data: In response to the question "why do you think these departments don't exist in the GCC, while they exist in abundance in the US?", which we posed to GCC diplomats and GCC academic administrators, we received the following responses.

Participant 4: *The Gulf simply doesn't seem to care very much, whereas if you flip it around and look at China for example is putting a lot of money in the Middle East, and you see the Confucius Institutes, and they are studying Arabic studies and Middle Eastern studies in their universities, it's all part of intelligence gathering and information gathering and they use it in a very strategic way.*

So when I think of opening up another Confucius Institute, where are we going to put it? They have the intelligence to help them make that kind of decision. I think that there are lots of different elements to it,

but broadly speaking the gulf beyond the Arab world doesn't seem to have much of an interest in terms of geopolitical developments.

The lack of curiosity as well of people does not help. I think it's sad, seeing the Gulf as my second home, I think a lot about the fact of moving things along from a superficial understanding. People only care about social media and likes, rather than getting into the depth of things and understanding things. And understanding about political affairs, the economy. People in the Gulf often tell me that the economy is doing bad and I ask them. What is your thinking around what can be done? How much does the government support the economy during Covid? For example in other Arab countries the government had done nothing in terms of supporting the economy during the pandemic, every man is for himself. It's a very sobering environment in some parts of town. How much research has been produced on the economic crisis in the Gulf? Very little.

There simply is a genuine lack of thirst for understanding of how countries are and work. However if you cannot get your house in order, you can't do so in other areas.

Participant 5: *I would say that perhaps the USA has more interest in other countries, or more money to fund these programs. Maybe the Middle East simply never bothered to push this idea of area studies. The Middle East perhaps just deals with far less countries than the US.*

Seems like also in the press, nobody writes about this, and it is perhaps possible that simply nobody has pushed for such action. I would compare this to the olden day of Europe, where going outside and getting an education was a luxury.

Participant 11: *I think it's due to several factors. Professionals in the foreign service are not always convinced of the value of studying international relations, and I think this is indicative of a general approach to area studies and international relations in these fields in the Gulf. Moreover, you also have an assumption that education should prepare you for the job market, with an approach to discover its prospects and create programs on such a basis.*

Gulf universities have little variety because people have flawed assumptions. Let's shape education, by looking at what the job market has to offer. This makes you sort of reactive instead of shaping it

proactively. I think there is a lot that is lacking, in terms of what exists in education and educational institutions in the Middle East, whether it's in the Gulf, or public and private institutions at the higher level; I think its very niche and very specialized and often looks at business, management, and occasionally those fluffy degrees.

I think it's the lack of academic freedoms that are given to academics in the Gulf, so area studies often have a mix of people's former intelligence, they have a sense of proper academic weight in terms of actual experts of certain areas. Culturally, it is an environment that needs to be changed top down, and top-down policy making has to happen. Someone has to say that they really want to invest in area studies, and they really want to have experts because they really think they need them. We also don't have a culture of fellows and researchers to be part of universities. Research papers that come out of Gulf universities most often are in medicine and technical research output. I don't think it's indicative of not having the brain power, but of people shying away from venturing into that type of expertise.

Participant 12: *I am not sure what the reason is, but I think there is no awareness of its importance... I think there was no awareness because I remember personal relationships counting for more than technical knowledge. For example, when the person holding an important research leadership position is sometimes not qualified in research, what do you expect? Surely, they will not be able to plan and put an excellent influential structure, and we always find this problem in universities, so you find people who are completely unqualified in research and hold really high positions.*

One must specialize in other regions and other countries because we know our own country, therefore one should find another region or country to specialize in. There is also the language issue, there are relatively few people who are proficient in a language other than English. One should try to be proficient in other languages such as Russian, Turkish or Hebrew. When I went to China, I found them very interested in this aspect. Of course, they have an intelligence-gathering rather than a scientific perspective, but the result is the same.

Participant 13: *The fact that we are very new in the PhD game is very much a reason, and having someone to collect the data and drive forward, we also do not have an obvious home or pathway for those who decide to specialize in research. Also, the end of doing teaching instead of research, as our ecosystem*

does not help to clarify how to move further. And there are some challenges around the ability to source data from our part of the world, and say you want to do research on a social sciences topic, the data is patchy and you will be unable to draw conclusions from it. Data in Arabic constitutes only 3% of data out there. So the career paths are limited, and it is an improving picture however this change won't come overnight.

Participant 16: *The US from the very beginning knew that the only way to make a good decision is to understand the country. If you create studies and nobody uses them, then what is the use? I said once that why don't you create a lab to research [an important GCC product] and how to develop it. They said we take the best from the west and bring them here. We don't need to create a lab here. People themselves perhaps think they know everything.*

Finding 2.11: By underinvesting in area studies departments/programs, the GCC countries are denying themselves the opportunity to improve their intellectual ecosystems through substantive interactions with the rest of the world; and they also miss out on important intelligence information that can inform foreign policy, and that can contribute to realizing the country's strategic foreign policy goals.

Data: In response to the question - "Area studies departments, such as African studies and European studies, are extremely rare in the GCC countries, whereas they are very common in the US. This is true even in highly funded Gulf universities when compared to modestly funded American ones. Do you see this as a good or bad thing? Why?", which we posed to GCC academic administrators, and received the following responses.

Participant 4: *I see it as a bad thing. One because, academically, one of the key elements of higher education is to expand knowledge, that means looking above and beyond the immediate horizon. This reflects the lack of internationalization of universities. It has been done at a very superficial level. Beyond that, there is simply no research and analysis. I suspect this could be due to the lack of expertise and lack of genuine interest.*

The other perspective is that the US, UK, and Europe do invest in understanding different parts of the world, and they also need that intelligence for their power and development. There are other Arab

countries where the US government makes a big contribution to the country's GDP. European countries put billions a year into intelligence to fund programs geared toward reforms, whereas the Gulf countries do not do so.

Participant 5: *I think it's a bad thing, one of the human aspects that are vital is knowing about each other and understanding one another. I believe every country should have at least one area studies program. At least the Americans have so many programs and they understand the world. It's one world, I believe we should all know about each other.*

Participant 13: *My view is that this part of the world has a lack of data and research, with multiple areas that can do much more research. It's very interesting to see people from other nations and regions studying the GCC. I do not think that this is a good thing. In many parts of the Gulf higher education is a very young industry although these are young nations. There are few research centers in the Gulf, and two things it is for me, it's about impact and using the research to lobby policymakers and introduce change, and secondly is having a sustainable model. These things can be wonderful ideas, however if not carefully planned, they simply tumble due to lack of funds. You need to be able to attract funding and to have industry to understand the importance of research, however we are not there yet, and we have not been able to do so.*

Finding 2.12: The GCC countries would benefit considerably from investing in area studies programs, initially in a few select areas of elevated importance, such as the US and Europe. This would help close intellectually lacunae in the foreign policy establishment, and widen societal perspectives on external issues.

Data: In response to the question - "Do you think the GCC would benefit from having area studies departments in universities? Why or why not?", which we posed to GCC diplomats and GCC academic administrators, we received the following responses.

Participant 4: *You can start on a small scale, and identify two key areas to start, North America, and Europe. European studies would be fairly simple things to start with, and from there you can build think tanks and cross-cultural communications, and develop real life policy and research. This will lead to*

impact and innovation, and can inform the government in terms of the geopolitical climate in these parts of the world. In fact, it can help better organize and inform the leadership in the Gulf.

Often when you think about world affairs, you will hear from Imran Khan, but it's very rare that you will see the Gulf nations taking a real stance in international politics, and I wonder if this is because of nations not being interested, or they don't have the ammunition in terms of research to make such a stand on things.

Participant 5: *For example, in the BBC they always go to the experts, and we cannot make such educated judgments since we don't have such experts. All we can do is make surface judgements. If I were asked to visit a random country, I might refuse simply due to my lack of familiarity with that country.*

Universities in this part of the world are recent compared to the rest of the world. For maturity to reach all levels of hierarchy, it will take time. Having such programs is a luxury, and from that luxury, you can create wealth. Therefore, I totally support such programs.

Participant 11: *The thinking culture is a culture that we can all benefit from, and that intellectual space in which you get a relatively neutral perspective is different when you ask someone from your own team in the ministry of foreign affairs to give you a policy paper or brief, it comes from within. You would get a more unbiased perspective if you had an academic institution with full academic freedoms to give you analysis. We wouldn't just benefit in terms of institutions or policy, but also in discourse, what exists, and how you formulate public opinions. Looking at what they can be exposed to, sometimes the public could be far removed from reflecting on reality.*

For example, examining foreign relations in the Middle East and the present discourse, if it's just the media that govern and shape public opinion, then we are in trouble. Policies should also represent wider and a more diverse discourse. Therefore, only exposing the public to what is written in social media and the press is very specific, internal, and feels like we are writing for the sake of writing to perpetuate this rhetoric. Offering solutions beyond institutional mechanisms would benefit the public a lot, and jobs in the thinking culture are very important. It's very healthy for a society to be critical, think critically, and have that skill set, because it gives you a more sustainable and less niche environment.

Participant 12: *I think yes the GCC countries will benefit without a doubt. I think our regional surroundings such as North Africa, Asia, the Caucasus, not the Gulf, but the other regional surroundings around us, we have an acute shortage of information about them. I remember, we had a severe shortage of knowledge in a country that would undoubtedly have had a great benefit if [area studies departments] were present, but it needs awareness by those who hold leadership positions at scientific and academic institutions and universities, and it may also be the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education in our countries to focus on it... I think that these are the responsibilities of universities and colleges precisely because this issue is related to the faculties of political sciences in the first place, and it needs awareness by the people responsible for these institutions and colleges.*

Participant 13: *We do need research in multiple areas, such as conflict resolution. There are multiple reasons for this, including the ability to inform public policy agendas. It's also about how we are viewed in our place in the world. More closely to home within the higher education sector, and if we are serious about attracting students overseas and lecturers, we need to provide more than the typical basic university programs.*

Participant 16: *The GCC has done an amazing job, I [am old enough that] I saw the GCC countries and the rest of the world developing. And we were just sun and sand, and today because of our people, they have done a great job and they knew how to use their money in the right place. Who could have imagined how Kuwait could run their government in exile. I'm not saying we are better than the others, but we have done a great job in a short time period. We did things in 50 years while the west did in 200 years. The need for studies will be large as things become increasingly complex. Having an increased number of research centers will be extremely useful for us and for policymaking.*

Finding 2.13: If the GCC countries allocate resources toward the establishment of area studies departments/programs, they would be able to make a positive contribution to foreign policy, especially in light of the dearth of alternatives.

Data: In response to the question - "Do you think that if there were more area studies departments in the GCC countries, they might be able to contribute to foreign policy?", which we posed to GCC academic administrators, and received the following responses.

Participant 4: *Definitely, it needs to work in tandem with Gulf countries actual adoption of more advanced foreign policies as well. Gulf foreign policy only looks at internal problems such as Iran and other regional issues. Looking at this objectively from the outside, Gulf foreign policy tends to really focus on Yemen, issues internally within the GCC, and Iran - the regional issues. I don't even know if they have anyone in Glasgow this week for the environmental summit. I don't even know if they are represented, I believe the entire foreign policy in the Gulf revolves around trade and real estate, as they don't need money or funding from other states. That's all there is.*

There is a way to break this cycle by universities and higher education. Developing these niche areas needs to occur alongside government and university programs. Simply said, the UK has 200+ years of partnership with the Gulf, so we want to develop a better and stronger partnership with the UK. It's about countries establishing foreign policies where they focus their attention above and beyond the Gulf, and working with researchers within universities to co-develop research priorities seem to be currently non-existent.

Participant 5: *Certainly, because once people study something, the next thing they will think of is how they can apply this new degree and knowledge they've learned. Everything happens through education. For example, 90% of shows and films we see are American. However, we don't seem to learn anything from them.*

Participant 13: *Absolutely, it is fundamental in getting a better understanding to not just set agendas but to inform agendas, right now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tends to promote certain areas that are not necessarily well-researched.*

Finding 2.14: For the incidence of area studies departments/programs to increase in the GCC, there needs to be a signal from the highest echelons of leadership that such studies are truly valued, based on a conviction that such pursuits would actually contribute to the foreign policy ecosystem, coupled with an increase in the availability of funding for such academic units. Moreover, at a societal level, there needs to be a greater embrace of the unknown, and less fear of exploring new areas of knowledge.

Data: In response to the question - “What changes do you think are necessary for area studies departments to become more prevalent in the GCC countries?”, which we posed to GCC academic administrators, we received the following responses.

Participant 4: *The biggest challenge was finding the right level of expertise. For example, we wanted a university to start a studies program like Nordic studies. You need to find some academic or person who has a really good understanding of Nordic countries. Unless you are willing to pay the going rate, they will not come to the GCC. So access to talent really is a key issue. Another issue is that it is not deemed a priority by universities, which prefer sexy buzzwords like AI, Fintech, and Crypto. You don't really hear about area studies except from studies from around the world.*

The government needs to say, “Look this is on the agenda for us, we need to develop research and intelligence about different parts of the world to interest universities in our strategic plans. And you need to find some money to fund it, as it will not happen for free. You need money to actually fund such a program if one were to undertake it.”

Participant 5: *There should be changes in higher education policies. Such policies need to be reviewed in the way they mandate certain things to be covered. For example, all universities will have medical schools, engineering is an obvious requirement, and there is no mandate from the ministry of education for graduates to be familiar with other cultures, or any program like anthropology. It's ad hoc within the university. They do market analysis, and someone has to bring it up, that's when they do it.*

Ambassadors for example can play a role, and also educating ambassadors on what their role is in voicing what they want; and on the part of ministries of education, even mandating universities can give back to the community, hence doing more community engagement. Many disciplines fall between luxury and requirement.

For example, no country in the Arab World has a degree in climate. There are a few about the environment, but these are vital issues in our lives. For example, if tomorrow a university went to run a program about space, everyone would laugh. Space? We have no technology and we will not go to space! Why run a program on space?

We also do not have programs for marine science and this is vital, this is food. In summary, GCC countries should mandate necessary programs because they need to come down from the government to certain establishments. These people might not graduate and work in the national oil companies but they are required for society, and the ministries of foreign affairs will be required to refer to learned people to make informed decisions.

I had a colleague that was employed by the British Prime Minister for 6 months as he had certain expertise that was needed. The government can simply create centers as they need them, like a center about dairy science or agriculture. You could also have a center in which the key role is proposing things to the government and universities.

Back in the day, people were prosecuted based on bringing science and change, they called it witchcraft, and people feared that others might cross their boundaries, and we have this issue here to a certain extent. Sometimes placing an opinion can either play a positive or destructive role. It's somewhere in between, and people always fear change. People always feel safe with what they have got. Life is like a bicycle, if you stop it, it will fall, you must keep moving forward. Many of the medicines and inventions came from people exploring other countries. Now the world is like a village, where knowledge is available in so many forms, but this does not change the fact that we need experts in several areas.

Perhaps smaller GCC countries cannot afford to have so many experts in so many places, but I believe in cooperation and that nobody knows it all. Usually in the Middle East, either one country makes a decision and everyone follows, or nobody does anything.

Participant 7: *I think a main building block would be having a robust landscape of the future elites going abroad for advanced study. However, you cannot rely exclusively on people who go to LSE to work on contemporary Israeli politics, or go to SOAS to work on contemporary Yemen programs.*

You need to take advantage of those investments in people going abroad to build domestic capacity and provide some degree of expertise, which matters for the effective conduct of everyday affairs in a place like the UAE. You will not build fully fledged interdisciplinary landscape programs around various parts of the world. This was an American project when they thought they were going to run the world. And it

is a Chinese project today. The situation in the Middle East is akin to what my colleagues in Mexico have. For example, what kind of area studies center does Mexico need? They need an American studies center. There are a growing number of Chinese studies centers as well, and a few old ones that have lost whatever momentum they had that were looking at Latin America, a region that is of decreasing interest to Mexico, as it is less engaged in the region. It makes sense that you have specific areas of specialization for strategic purposes, but you need studies that align to your political agenda.

One of the questions would be, how do the elites in the Gulf approach the question of the relationship between the state and university. When I went to GCC branches of global universities, a case where the leadership had decided this was a strategic investment, what the GCC country specifically was going to be could be seen as this higher education pioneer, but there was a clear distance between that exhibit of grandeur and aspiration, and the corners of power. Elites did not do so in order to inform decision making, but rather to simply project their importance onto the world.

What you have in the Middle East is a will to waste some money. If I were to apply for Minerva funding, they would 100% boycott my program. Looking at the pre 9/11 debates where the Boren program was approved, Clinton managed to put forth an expansion of the Fulbright program, however he could not get it through the education committee. Congress would not approve of such programs. American higher education had to decide if they should apply for these funds, as there were no strings attached. All these area studies were clear that they would sanction anyone who would apply to these funds.

Participant 8: *I don't know, but I sense that it would entail a commitment to a region wide appreciation of the value of developing a global perspective from within the higher education culture of the Middle East. Collaborations between universities could build area studies programs that provide for instance a Saudi perspective on Southeast Asian culture and society, which would make partial sense in a historical connection between the Middle East and Southeast Asia. This differs greatly from the US-based Southeast Asian studies which are oriented towards embedded cultural connections.*

I say this through the experience of working in a university in Singapore for example, and Singapore is incredibly creative from an educational standpoint in developing area studies that are distinctively Singaporean in nature, such as their area studies of East Asia or South Asia, which are linked to the idea

that scholarly approaches to these studies anchored in a non-US orientation towards the world could reconceptualize the way area studies are studied outside the East and West binary dynamic. Singapore may be an interesting model to think about in relation to increasing area studies within the Middle East.

Participant 10: *It's a question of efficiency, and I often have calls from the BBC or a person from the US where they want to get in touch with X person about Y topic. It's much more efficient if they call the centers, it's like a concierge. Close to that notion, where they can broker problems, but your so-called concierge must have a PhD, it cannot simply be someone of a lesser academic level and research capability. It requires someone that listens to you how you structure your question. So you need that center to be run by PhD holders, experienced in producing quality research.*

In Europe, there are people who study American films, and we socialize with them and see each other in festivals and so forth. So that is in a sense a disciplinary question. Even if it's interdisciplinary within its field. I think what you are asking is, are there equivalents in the Title VI type think tanks over there that do interdisciplinary work, like pharmaceutical and security studies and law, and such broad-ranging area studies. Not as much, of course there are policy centers. There is the equivalent of Carnegie in other countries, but owned by those countries, not owned by the US. We interact with them to some extent but we prefer to keep a healthy distance between us because we don't want to appear to be owned by them or them by us. So there is no mutual collaboration, as we are in a new Cold War, so we must not give each other money.

Participant 13: *We don't need every university to have them, we need them to join up thinking and work collaboratively and collectively. We don't have that strength yet, so our strength is in numbers. We need to be dedicated to one or two main objectives, maybe something specific to Gulf studies. We want to learn from that, and why are we as academics going to foreign conferences on the Gulf every year, rather than having them localized. One of the things I find useful is identifying the main themes and wicked problems, and under the leadership of oil and gas, identifying what the big problem we want to address is each year. A university lead and a government lead. This meant that effort was focused collectively in that year towards one goal. Whatever that might be, we commit to delivering that one thing. A*

commitment towards that one thing, a little bit can go a long way. There is some obvious low hanging fruit that we could go for.

Finding 2.15: In the US, the future of area studies is uncertain due to a persistent downward trend in funding for higher education in general, and for area studies programs in particular. They are likely to continue to thrive in top universities, but they may be forced to contract in smaller ones. It is likely that the number focusing on China will increase considerably due to the growing Sino-American rivalry. However, many will adapt in innovative ways, like what occurred following the end of the Cold War. They continue to complement traditional academic departments by exploiting their administrative flexibility, and by acting as brokers when policymakers seek experts in a certain area.

Data: In response to the question - “What do you think the future of area studies departments is?”, which we posed to US area studies scholars, we received the following responses.

Participant 6: *It's tough to say, because it all depends on the business model of these universities. What we will see is an increasingly evident tiered system with expectations around such things. Where liberal arts colleges and universities that adhere to general educational goals maintaining language programs in areas of popularity and interest. Some curricular offerings will revolve around cultural civilization and history in places around the United States. This is going to be almost the extent of what they will have, and surely there will be faculties there, because they ended up worrying that Indiana University, which happens to be amongst the world's most foremost scholars on Ukraine, might have something to offer beyond that. It won't be systematic, organized and grouped into a specific unit or purpose to understand the world.*

A tier above this you will have universities that are intentionally maintaining this capacity and they are few and happy, like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Some have locational reasons for doing so, such as the ones in DC, and that will be kind of it, where there will be a willowing out of the middle. Whether such universities provide a critically engaged area of study is not necessarily evidence of participating in the field, especially in an always readily constructed conversation around what the US foreign policy priorities might be at any given time. However, this remains to be seen.

I'm not very optimistic about it, being in a populist moment. The watering down of those critical discussions is quite obvious, and the people who pass as experts in an area these days are alarming; they are increasingly journalists. You have well established papers that can survive these times.

Newspapers have changed their business model by moving into the "event" business - who knows what their expertise is in country X; we're unlikely to hear from someone with scholarly knowledge from someone in Ethiopia or South Africa. You'll often hear from a former ambassador, or some person somewhere in government speaking off the record, but we are unlikely to hear from someone with deep scholarly knowledge from that region. These journalists are well informed, but only about the last year of what has happened, and that's one way in which these discussions get critically undermined, and are driven by what happened today and what happened yesterday and is undermined by the 24/7 news churn, along with the efforts of ill-informed foreign service analysts that pursue such topics.

We have this experience, this program for finishing up on China's messaging influence in Latin America. This is about how China is communicating and what is their influence on countries in the region. When we talk to folks across the government who are interested in China and China experts, they voice irritation at having to pay attention to this. The attention span is short, even though this is ostensibly the things you should be spending some time to figure out.

Participant 7: *I was trying to say that the resource constraints, I think, have become clearer over time, so the real number in terms of budgets has continued to decline, in the ecosystem of American higher education, and the business model of the universities in the US. Fewer and fewer of these centers are going to be viable as more than undergraduate curricular supplements. So you will still be able to have film series, language club, and might have core interdisciplinary program courses around the region. I don't think that the budgets will be there to build robust programs, but the exception might be where universities are able to secure endowment support from philanthropists who identify with the part of the world, and whose eponymous donations to universities are intended to enable them to contribute to knowledge of that part of the world.*

For example, if you look at Harvard, you have the David Rockefeller Center. Rockefeller spent his life very engaged with Latin America, and when Harvard wanted to raise 2 billion dollars in the 1990's, and

Harvard's president asked David Rockefeller how much he was going to give to the two billion dollars campaign, he said ten million and Harvard said no, It has to be forty. Now the question is: How do you do that? Well, you must find people in his world of Latin American affairs who will contribute to an effective memorial with their name on it in a university.

Therefore, you have the best privately endowed center in a leading United States university organized around an area. This can be seen ever more in Middle East studies in the US, including with Gulf money. It is also visible in donor arrangements and enduring area centers. Where you don't have that, I do not believe they are going to survive, and you can already see that they are very hollowed out, with a very small budget and understaffed. They don't bring outside resources, therefore they are not considered a priority by deans and provost, because they favor units that bring them resources.

Participant 8: *I hope it's good, but I think that the area study centers will continue to be a part of higher education. However, they might change in response to obvious changes in geopolitics, for example, the shift to the importance of Asia, and especially China, and China's role in the geopolitics of Southeast Asia probably will place pressure on area studies centers to become increasingly focused on that, away from the 70's norm, where so much attention was placed on Russian and East European Studies. So there is that kind of change going on. Additionally, it will be interesting to see what happens to language training centers.*

The increased availability of high-quality synchronous AI systems for real time multi-language translation will make learning languages much less important for security and defense department work. If you can have people who have access to an app that allows real time conversation, which is increasingly becoming possible within the next five years, then investment in funding to support the long-term cost of training people in old fashioned language learning may become obsolete. This will fundamentally change the dynamics of area studies that I don't think anybody fully recognizes right now.

In the US, the Department of Education, through Title VI funding for national resource centers, places a tremendous amount of emphasis on language training. Right now our grant application is driven and set by that priority, and as long as it continues to be, we will continue to write our grant applications through

that lens. If the DoD changes that priority then our outlook for grants and research will change along with the whole structure of area studies.

Participant 9: *Trying to position ourselves in the context of the global Middle East, taking into consideration Middle East diasporas, which I think are far more important than they used to be. The Middle East diaspora in the US is far more empowered and vocal than they used to be, and that is a really gratifying thing to see and we need to connect with that. Looking at borders and peripheries, like the Caucasus, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Black Sea, South Asia, and Afghanistan; these are all areas that may not be the absolute core of our region, but we try to offer more in terms of these areas' languages (Berber, Armenian, etc.). We don't think these regions are irrelevant to the Middle East.*

Another part of this global Middle East is the need to stop thinking about the region as a unique one that's hermetically sealed, with special challenges, because at the end of the day, the big challenges are the ones that are global - climate change, water, resources, cybersecurity, etc. These are global issues that are very much integrated. So it's going to be harder for us to separate ourselves into this kind of area studies unit that focuses on a petri dish.

Our main mandate is programming and events. We do a lot of community outreach, and organize professional development workshops. We have majors and minors, but we don't have our own faculty or classes. We are more of an interdisciplinary programming center.

We try to approach the region through the prism of religion, but we need to avoid overdoing it even though it is relevant.

Participant 10: *Well, since I was a teenager, people have been saying that "the Cold War is over" and "area studies thinking is dated". It is very interesting because if they say that and they can convince others that, their paycheck will increase. I see a future in area studies as there is no alternative, and regardless of its flaws, it continues to prepare people who will be your next post-Afghanistan Pashtun expert, but it also turns out people that will work in the local community when the next wave of Afghan refugees lands, and will facilitate how to get their food stamps, in other words there is a wide range, and that portfolio is useful.*

If you go to a think tank and ask for person X, they could say yes they are here, but right now they are branching off to Africa, but you can still speak to them. Whereas if you come to area studies, for example my center, I would say there is Prof X in public policy, so and so in the school of medicine, they may know each other and may not, whereas we are at the crossroads. We are a broker, and these centers operate like the Cayman Islands, brokering deals in your own country but illegal in the Cayman Islands. So there are things that are illegal in your policy as university departments, where you cannot do them. But the centers abide by different rules, they don't break the rules, but they are allowed certain exceptions. We can gather people, convene meetings, propose seed funding, and connect people with each other for a holistic approach to learning, beyond the mere linguistic aspect.

We can cold call people, we can convene meetings and can propose seed funding and connect people with each other. We broker deals is what we do. Now area studies don't value language aspect learning as much but there will be courses here and there to give a holistic approach to learning.

Participant 14: *I think the future is a strong future. Looking at climate change and the increasingly interconnected global economy, looking at our experiences, both policymakers and us as human beings, we see the interconnectedness of the world more and more, and more vividly. We see the impact of this connection, in a more direct way than we have before. I hope that the vividness of the evidence of global interconnectedness of the world will drive more people to go into these kinds of studies. I spent some time with a university professor, looking at the masters of public admin or public affairs programs that train people to go into government positions or any area of policy. I think we will see more of a focus on programs like that as well. I think we will see programs like economics and history and other disciplines in a very interdisciplinary way; things of that sort. I can see that going all the way down to the undergraduate level.*

Participant 15: *In some sense the US even though we like Europe we are much more inwardly focused these days. I think maybe a lot of the energy is focused towards internal problems and issues, and perhaps Afghanistan has reinforced the importance of understanding the world a little better. As long as the US aspires to be a global leader, and sees the importance of containing China, responding to challenges in the Middle East and elsewhere around the world, the requirement of academic institutions for producing*

the people who can help to understand these areas will remain. I don't see the US abandoning this role anytime soon as much as people may want to. I don't see other alternatives in terms of changing this role and In terms of strategic competition or any other things it's hard to say, but I think the requirement to be in the world is not going to go away anytime soon therefore the need for area studies is not going away anytime soon.

Certainly there is an intense interest in young people coming to universities to study international affairs and understand the world and when I was visiting a university at the end of October there was a guy whose interest was understanding the Central Asian republics and well that's a pretty obscure area to occupy your time and attention but we need people like that. I think the interest is still there and that people will continue to be interested in the world. The need for this kind of knowledge will grow and the need for experts will become more significant as the Gulf States become more and more engaged in the world around them and less regionally focused.

And not just traditional partners of the US or Europe. With North Africa and Africa the need for that kind of knowledge will grow and the need to have individuals who need to have as you said experts on those regions is going to become more significant. We see that GCC foreign ministries put their diplomats through extensive programs and invest time and energy. These governments then take people out of their universities and provide the kind of training that we recommend be done at an academic level. However the requirements go far beyond that, to the extent that these governments are diversifying their economies, to be much more engaged and different kinds of activities all over the world, they need to develop a cadre of experts the same way the US and UK have.

I can assure you that of these 25 professors in a typical elite area studies program, many of them, if not most of them who work in these area studies, have at some point in their careers served in government in one capacity or another. So the relationships are there, so it's not about phoning someone and saying "hi my name is Joe and I understand that you study [an area]". These are professional relationships of people in academia and government. It's not just a question of whether the academic expert knows their country really well, it's also understanding the demands of people in government who need a particular kind of advice. What you need as an official is a particular understanding of language or culture. If

someone in academia has that experience, where they know what you need and they have answers to your question that is invaluable. A lot of people in this country complain about the revolving door, about people leaving think tanks going to the government and others leaving the government going into think tanks. This flow of back and forth is very important to have people being able to talk on a professional level and understand how the other needs.

Participant 17: *I don't follow the trends in area studies, but it's possible that they will be hurt by a drawback from international affairs in the states. But with a rise from China there should be expected a greater focus on Asia. I see the infrastructure of policy to be area studies. The idea of the infrastructure around foreign policy is a good one in my opinion.*

7. Synthesis and Discussion

This section synthesizes the information presented in the two literature reviews (outsourcing theory and area studies), the university data, and the interviews with GCC and US stakeholders.

Conclusion 1: When conducting foreign policy, a government that exclusively relies on in-house research - shunning outsourced research - places itself at a disadvantage.

The theory of outsourcing describes a general set of conditions where outsourcing yields superior performance. In the specific case of knowledge and research - especially non-sensitive information, the benefits of outsourcing are amplified.

Foreign policy is a high stakes endeavor, and its complexity means that research is a critical input into good decisions. Consequently, foreign policy organs looking to deliver the highest performance are extremely likely to benefit from the strategic outsourcing of research.

Conclusion 2: Foreign policy institutions have access to a variety of outsourcing options, each with their own pros and cons.

Once a foreign policy organ decides to outsource some of its research, the available options can be classified along three dimensions. The first is the type of organization to which the research will be

outsourced: private consultancies, think tanks, traditional discipline departments in universities, and university-based area studies departments/programs. The second dimension is local versus foreign, with the former being subdivided into local, homegrown, and non-homegrown. The third dimension is formal versus informal outsourcing, though classification along this dimension is not always straightforward.

Each of the numerous options available under this tri-dimensional umbrella boasts its own pros and cons. Moreover, while some of the pros and cons are general in that they apply to a wide variety of contexts; others are highly context specific. Consequently, there is not a strict recipe book to follow regarding the best outsourcing option in any given scenario.

Conclusion 3: Area studies have the advantage of permanent dedication, holistic/integrated knowledge, and administrative flexibility, and so they should be part of any rich policy-support ecosystem.

Area studies departments/programs are interdisciplinary, with scholars from political science, international relations, economics, anthropology, and many other humanities and social sciences. It is very likely that they speak the main language of the country/region they are studying, and that they have spent considerable time in that country, providing them with deeper cultural knowledge than scholars studying these countries from afar. This holistic approach to research provides area studies researchers with integrated knowledge that is arguably more analytically useful than the siloed knowledge of a traditional political scientist or economist looking at an area.

Moreover, area studies scholars have the additional advantage of intellectual monogamy. An American international relations scholar with a focus on security issues will have been an expert on the USSR during the 1980s, the Middle East during the 1990s/2000s, and China during the 2010s, meaning lower volumes of accumulated knowledge on any one of those regions. In contrast, an Arabist working in a Middle Eastern studies program will have exclusively dedicated themselves to knowledge of the Middle East.

Beyond these potential intellectual advantages, area studies units often take the form of programs inside universities rather than departments, affording them a greater degree of administrative flexibility. This can allow for easier hiring/firing, curriculum development, conference organizing, and so on; all of which

can - under certain circumstances - give superior performance than traditional academic departments as outsourcing options.

In light of these general and context-specific advantages, under ideal circumstances, foreign policy decision makers would operate in a rich knowledge ecosystem that includes at least a minimal representation of area studies departments/programs, and ideally a robust one. That way, when the need arises, policymakers can reach out to area studies scholars.

Conclusion 4: Area studies are also a manifestation of societal interest in other cultures, and so their absence indicates societal flaws that cannot be addressed by simply establishing them top down in large numbers.

The importance that universities attach to preparing students for the job market is a 20th century phenomenon, and GCC universities have adopted this into their mission. For this reason, funding and administrative support in universities tends to be garnered by the disciplines that yield labor market success, such as medical schools and business schools.

Nevertheless, in the US, as is reflected in the liberal arts tradition, a large percentage of students select majors without a specific career path in mind, and this is at least partially due to those students having a minimal level of intellectual curiosity. During side discussions with our interviewees, it was evident that students in the US are less likely than their GCC counterparts to have a highly instrumentalized attitude toward education, and are more likely to select majors based on intellectual passion. One of the reasons that area studies have thrived in the US is that Americans are genuinely interested in learning about other cultures, in a manner that seems virtually absent in the GCC.

As such, if GCC governments hypothetically were to establish a large number of area studies programs, such a top-down intervention would not necessarily result in commensurate enrollment, because grassroots interest is severely lacking. Such a deficiency can be corrected, but the reforms would take a considerable amount of time to implement and for their effects to materialize - much more time than it would take to establish an area studies program and to hire faculty.

Therefore, if the GCC countries want area studies to play a sustained, substantive role in foreign policy, any ministerial-level or university-level reforms need to be complemented by an effort to boost grassroots curiosity about the outside world.

Conclusion 5: In the US, the role of area studies departments/programs has evolved considerably over the last 75 years: they went from being espionage support units to being highly academic entities that actively shun policymakers due to disgust at the government's perceived imperialistic machinations.

Academics tend to have a left-wing bias, especially in the humanities and social sciences (Burmilla, 2021), which includes area studies. This has led to area studies researchers having a conflicted relationship with the US government: on the one hand, they are extremely reliant on federal funding for their livelihoods and for their research materials; yet on the other hand, they know that at some level, the government is funding such activities because it wants to use the information to further American interests, which the researchers frequently regard as morally contemptible.

Fortunately for area studies researchers, think tanks have stepped in to serve foreign policy organs directly. Though this has meant decreased funding for area studies over the last 30 years, especially following the end of the Cold War, it has also permitted area studies scholars to conduct research according to their own taste, and for consumption by their like-minded peers, as opposed to being an input into a foreign policy that they find distasteful. They still affect policy, but mostly through producing students who end up working in the State Department or think tanks.

This mutation was only possible due to the depth and breadth of the US' intellectual ecosystem, as think tanks were able to supplant area studies departments/programs. The US has the financial resources to maintain all these intellectual activities as well as the personnel who can conduct all these different varieties of research.

Conclusion 6: In terms of absolute numbers, area studies units continue to thrive in the US, as they exist in large numbers at all rungs in the academic ladder.

Despite their mutating role and the funding challenges that they continue to face, area studies departments still exist in large numbers in the US. In our sample of 58 universities from all ranks (1 to

1,000), we found 288 area studies departments/programs, or 5 per university. The average was surprisingly stable as the university's rank changed: even universities ranked in the range 800-1,000 averaged 4.6 area studies departments/programs.

Conclusion 7: To a large extent, in terms of their direct relationship with policy, area studies departments/programs have been supplanted by think tanks that know how to better serve policymakers' needs.

The mission statement of a university is to advance knowledge - a goal that sometimes coincides with producing policy-relevant research. However, even when a research project is policy-relevant, the target audience is the author's academic peers, meaning that the paper will be written using technical language, and it will be quite long (8,000 words or more). Accordingly, while the knowledge possessed by an area studies specialist may be of great value to a policymaker, there remains a large communication gap between the two, especially if the information is to be transmitted in written form.

In contrast, a think tank's fundamental mission is to influence policy, and so their research output is tailored to the requirements of policymakers: it is short (sometimes three pages or less); it has a punchy executive summary; and can be produced in a matter of hours, allowing it to be responsive to recent events. Think tank scholars usually possess better oral communication skills than do university-based area studies specialists, who anecdotally seem more likely to exhibit the stereotypical personality traits of an eccentric researcher who mumbles to themselves incomprehensibly.

As a result, think tanks have gradually filled the gap between universities and policymakers in the US. Foreign policy decision makers are much more likely to read the research produced by think tanks, to attend the seminars organized by think tanks, and to summon think tank specialists to share their opinion in an official capacity, such as in Congressional hearings. The direct links between area studies departments/programs and foreign policy decision makers have been very weak, and in some disciplines (such as Latin American studies), they are non-existent, and the scholars celebrate the fact that they have zero direct influence on policy.

Conclusion 8: Despite having a minimal direct influence on policy, area studies departments/programs continue to have a very important indirect role via the training of people who work in foreign policy, and who work in think tanks; as well as in producing academic research that gradually feeds into policy and think tanks. The value of policymakers and think tank scholars informally interacting with area studies specialists should not be underestimated, even if it is hard to quantify.

An essential element of area studies programs' missions is teaching, and a considerable portion of those students go on to work in the US' foreign policy organs, such as the State department and the CIA, as their skill set is valued by employers, especially their cultural and linguistic knowledge. A more circuitous route involves working for the think tanks that influence policy directly. Either way, no matter how disaffected area studies programs are with the US government's foreign policy practices, and no matter the size of the gap separating foreign policy institutions from area studies programs, area studies programs continue to operate as a talent pipeline for foreign policy.

Beyond this human capital route, the research that area studies specialists produce is a significant (albeit not critical) input into the in-house research produced by government researchers, or into think tank research. This is especially the case when applied researchers are looking to get background knowledge about a locale, or when a senior diplomat (such as an ambassador) is about to be posted abroad.

These channels are complemented by informal conversations that happen between foreign policy insiders and area studies researchers. They might be over a coffee in a university cafe, or over the phone when a government analyst wishes to sound out some ideas. While difficult to measure, these informal ties are truly valued by foreign policy insiders.

Conclusion 9: In the GCC, these entities don't exist at all, due to a highly instrumentalized view of education; parochial attitudes in all social strata; and a lack of belief among policymakers that such entities could make an important contribution to policy making, reflected in the weakness of institutional ties between governments and universities in many areas of expertise.

In the area studies domain, the GCC occupies the opposing pole to the US: area studies departments/programs are virtually absent, and the isolated exceptions are all inward looking in that the

area that they are studying includes the university's home country. This phenomenon is caused by a combination of top-down and bottom-up factors.

At the level of foreign policy institutions, senior decision makers seem to have a strong preference for relying on the output of their in-house research teams. In all GCC governmental institutions - and not just those that determine foreign policy - there are very weak institutional links to universities, and in this regard, the absence of area studies departments/programs is symptomatic of a fundamental lack of belief by policymakers that academics can contribute effectively to government policy.

At the societal level, limited interest in learning about foreign cultures contributes to the low demand for area studies departments/programs. Generally speaking, Gulf citizens are simply not convinced that it is worth holistically learning about a different country, and this is reinforced by an instrumental attitude toward higher education.

Conclusion 10: Investing in a few area studies programs in the GCC would yield societal returns. For it to improve foreign policy, their establishment would have to be coupled with an explicit and openly articulated commitment by policymakers regarding the desire to leverage academic area studies expertise.

Having a broad and deep intellectual ecosystem confers many benefits upon society, including in the domain of statecraft, where high quality research represents a highly productive input into policy decisions.

In the context of knowledge institutions that support foreign policy, the GCC countries are lacking, and the weakness is total in the case of area studies departments/programs. While their role in supporting foreign policy in the US has evolved, it has never stopped being significant, and think tanks and private consultancies are only partial substitutes.

While the GCC countries need not replicate the US' postwar full-blooded embrace of area studies departments, they would surely benefit from taking a few steps away from the zero pole they currently occupy. However, the potential associated with such an initiative would be squandered if, upon establishing a vibrant area studies ecosystem, the GCC governments proceeded to ignore them.

To maximize the impact of area studies departments/programs, GCC governments need to fund them, and also explicitly declare them to be potential inputs into policy decisions. This will help attract high quality researchers into these units, and it will encourage their scholars to produce policy-relevant research. Moreover, a clear signal from the government would also help to address the apathy that many citizens express toward foreign cultures.

Conclusion 11: Particular areas that GCC area studies departments should focus on include East Asia (especially China), the US, and Europe, due to the complexities of their political and social structures, the lack of institutionalized familiarity with those complexities, and the importance of those countries to the strategic goals of the GCC countries.

The GCC's international relations continue to be influenced by their colonial heritage, and the region's geopolitical and economic importance to the world. This renders the prevailing great powers - the US, the UK, France, China, Russia - as the most significant extra-regional countries that matter to GCC foreign policy. However, in contrast to important players within the region, such as Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, the GCC countries know comparatively little about the peoples, political systems, and economies of these extra-regional powers.

Consequently, these countries would be ideal candidates for the first tranche of outward looking area studies departments/programs should the GCC countries seek to invest in them. For example, the national oil companies of the GCC countries - and hence their foreign ministries - would benefit greatly from expert knowledge about the likely trajectory of the Chinese and Japanese economies over the next three decades. Similarly, GCC policymakers would gain from having access to homegrown experts in the European Union's decision-making processes, or in the relationship between the US' defense and foreign policy establishments. Other areas of secondary but still significant importance include India and Israel.

Conclusion 12: With the passage of time, governments' needs change, hence area studies departments must be able to adapt to survive, which requires entrepreneurial thinking on the part of the academics therein. However, there will always be a value in understanding other cultures, even if the government's geo-strategic priorities lie in a different corner of the globe.

The US' experience following the end of the Cold War shows that area studies departments/programs can still be relevant even if the country they are studying has been neutralized as a geopolitical adversary. Entrepreneurship by academics played an important role in their survival strategy, but at a more fundamental level, they were protected by the existence of a persistent, societal belief in the value of studying and understanding foreign cultures. Therefore, in anticipation of similarly inevitable changes in geo-strategic priorities, the GCC governments should look to maintain the value of their investments in area studies departments/programs by encouraging grassroots curiosity about foreign countries.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper set out to answer four questions. First: how does the incidence of area studies departments/programs in the GCC compare to that in the US? Second: what accounts for the GCC-US difference in the incidence of area studies? Third: what role do area studies play in foreign policy in the GCC and US? Fourth: should the GCC countries consider allocating a larger volume of resources to area studies departments/programs in the pursuit of more effective foreign policy decisions?

To answer these questions, we conducted a literature review on the economics of outsourcing and a literature review on the history of area studies departments/programs. We then gathered data on the incidence of these departments/programs in American and GCC universities. Finally, we conducted interviews with 17 American and GCC stakeholders working in their respective academic, think tank, and foreign policy communities. These rich data yielded the following answers to our research questions.

First, the GCC has 170 universities, and they *collectively* have less than five area studies departments/programs, all of which are inward looking, meaning that they contain the GCC country that hosts them. To the best of our knowledge, there are exactly zero outward looking area studies departments/programs in the GCC. In contrast in the US, whether we look at the best universities, or those that have global ranks that are comparable to the GCC's universities, there are an average of approximately 5 area studies departments/programs *per university*. In other words, there is an extremely large gap in the incidence of these academic units.

Second, this large difference is caused by a combination of factors. At the societal level, in the GCC, there is a basic lack of curiosity about foreign cultures, combined with a highly instrumental attitude toward higher education, where students fixate on the job prospects of a discipline when considering whether or not to major in it. Moreover, there are weak institutional ties between universities and policymakers in all fields, and in the foreign policy domain, policymakers have a strong preference for the counsel of in-house researchers.

Third, in the GCC, by virtue of their absence, area studies departments play no role whatsoever in foreign policy. In the US, the role these units play has evolved considerably over time. Direct links were important in the wake of World War II, when some of these units operated as surrogate intelligence-gathering organizations. However, over time, a considerable intellectual gap has opened up between foreign policy institutions and area studies units, with some degree of distrust between the two sides. Think tanks have supplanted area studies units as the primary extramural input into foreign policy decisions. Yet area studies units continue to play a significant indirect role through training future foreign policy civil servants, diplomats, and think tank researchers. Moreover, their research remains an important source of background information for applied think tank scholars and foreign policy in-house researchers producing policy-relevant analysis.

Finally, the GCC countries should strongly consider establishing area studies departments/programs as a way of improving the performance of their foreign policy institutions. The member countries of the UN Security Council are natural candidates for area studies units due to a combination of their importance to the GCC and the limited GCC-based knowledge about these countries' cultures, political institutions, economies, and so on. However, the long-term success of such initiatives depends critically on policymakers signaling to the newly-established area studies departments/programs that their research is valued by the foreign policy establishment. This is because the GCC countries do not possess the resources required to maintain a knowledge ecosystem that is as diverse as the one in the US.

We hope that future research can gather much more comprehensive and accurate data on the incidence of the various knowledge institutions in the GCC and the US, to gain a better understanding of the ecosystem's nuances. We also hope that the perspectives of US academic administrators and the in-

house researchers at US foreign policy institutions can be considered, as we were unable to secure interviews with representatives of these groups.

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