



Praise and Criticism of 'We Don't Do Area Studies'

(Critical Response to Bo Petersson's "We Don't Do Area Studies: Reflections on the Development of the Genre of Research from a Political Science Perspective")

The author's criticism of the prejudices in political science against regional studies or so-called Area-studies, related to misconceptions and undue attention to disciplinary borders (but also undeniably due to ideological tendencies in area studies like during the Cold War), I believe is generally valid and to the point.

I also applaud the author's argument for greater attention in political science to what area specialists can contribute in understanding nationalism and related phenomena—and for more multidisciplinary research within and beyond political science, making maximum use of the multidisciplinary tendencies among area specialists to begin with. I consequently agree with the author's call to "boost the academic credentials of area studies, as well as indeed the practicing of cross-, inter- and multi-disciplinary research in general".

However, at times it is not clear whether or when the author talks about:

- a) interdisciplinary cooperation between political scientists and regional researchers;
- b) integration of area studies within political science or one of the latter's sub-disciplines (like international relations and/or comparative politics i.e. comparison of political systems);
- c) a multidisciplinary field covering (parts of) political science, sociology, anthropology and other social sciences and regional studies in general;
- d) a cross-disciplinary field in the broader sense between the social sciences and humanities, which makes area-studies the glue that holds the elements from all the other disciplines together.

In other words, the author seems to switch back and forth between levels a) to d) and back again, without necessarily or always explying about which level he or she is talking about.

In short, to me it is not fully evident what the author's priority or immediate goal is: a reformed political science that incorporates the insights and methodologies of regional studies, or a new, overarching Area-studies discipline that is the nucleus of multi- and cross-disciplinary research not only in political science but also in the other social sciences (and humanities). Or does he or she wish to prioritize both goals in equal measure?

Finally, it is not really clear whether or to what extent the author voices a lone viewpoint even if citing Middell, Bates, Katzenstein and other scholars—or already represents a recognised if unnamed burgeoning (sub)field within and beyond political science, in Germany, Norway and perhaps other countries, that not only incorporates Area-studies, but effectively puts in on a pedestal.

- Anonymous