

**The Unveiling Ceremony of PKUIAS &
the 1st Academic Seminar
April 12, 2018**

I Unveiling Ceremony

The unveiling ceremony of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS) and its first academic seminar were held in the Yingjie Exchange Center on April 12, 2018. More than 200 officials and scholars participated, including Liu Xincheng, vice chairman of the National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and executive vice chairman of the Central Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy (CAPD), Tao Hongjian, counsellor of the Ministry of Education, and Shi Zihai, deputy secretary general of the National Development and Reform Commission.

PKU Vice President Wang Bo chaired the ceremony, with PKU President Lin Jianhua making a speech. Lin Jianhua discussed in his speech the necessity of strengthening area studies and the advantages and challenges for PKU in conducting area studies.

He said that China is at the critical moment of transforming from a "regional" country to a "cosmopolitan" country, which requires its academics to transfer from focusing on China to

focusing the whole world. The development of two concepts -- the One Belt and One Road initiative and the community of common destiny -- in recent years has imposed higher requirements on the academia.

Lin stressed that universities and research agencies should provide academic support and nurture talent for the country's development. PKU has always attached importance to area studies and has already explored talent cultivation in the field. Taking advantage of the opportunity brought by a new round of the government's "Double First-Class initiative" education strategy, PKU has established three major fields within the school in hope of integrating different subjects. They are area studies, "Clinical Medicine +X," and data and intelligence science.

Lin said that he hopes humanities and social sciences teachers will not only concentrate on their own study areas but also pay attention to the country's development and today's world, especially the politics, economics, culture and history of the countries along the One Belt and One Road.

Lin pointed out that IAS also faces some challenges. In particular, the teaching of language is separated from other fields of study, and academic studies are separated from devising solutions to practical problems. Therefore, the university hopes

to establish a platform to help teachers strengthen their academics and further broaden their horizons, which is rightly the function of IAS.

In fact, PKU has made interdisciplinary efforts to integrate different subjects, such as the establishment of Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences and Institute of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, PKU.

Lin said that academic research should not only be about theory but also apply in real-world practice. Therefore, in the future, the research team will contain scholars who are experienced in practical research as well as talent cultivated from classrooms.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said that we should let the world understand China, establish our own humanities and social science research system and cultivate our own humanities and social scientists. Lin said that to fulfill this goal, we should pay attention to China's practical problems and the world's practical problems, because these tasks need cooperation and efforts from universities.

Lin has high expectations for IAS and hopes the platform will be open to scholars from both home and abroad and play its role in cultivating promising young scholars and providing strategic consultation for the country.

Lin awarded a letter of appointment to Qian Chengdan, the director of PKUIAS. Wang Bo announced the appointment of the other administrators of the institute. Ning Qi is the executive deputy director, Wang Suolao, Zan Tao, Zhai Kun and Xia Hongwei are the deputy directors, and Li Yun is the chief.

Director of PKUIAS Qian Chengdan gave an overview of the institute's design and goals from three aspects.

The first aspect is “Why focus on area studies?” He pointed out that the world is experiencing the most dramatic changes since World War II. Among the changes, China's reform and opening-up is the biggest one, which has changed the world power structure. At this critical moment of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we must be ready to face all changes. The precondition for this is to understand the world. Although Chinese people started to pay attention to the rest of the world during the Opium Wars, constrained by various factors, our understanding of the world has been far from adequate. With the deepening of China's reform and opening-up, China has become inseparable from the world, which requires us to correctly understand the world, including each of its countries and regions. Area studies rightly serves as a tool to understand and study the world.

Qian said that over recent years, the Chinese government has

attached much importance to area studies and the Ministry of Education established the Expert Committee of Area Studies a few years ago. Many colleges and universities have gradually set up research centers for area studies, and the establishment of IAS in PKU signifies that area studies in PKU has been raised to the “school-construction level.”

The second aspect is “the PKU edge.” Qian said that PKU has kept pace with the changing world. PKU has a long history of conducting area studies. There are a lot of scholars engaged in foreign affairs studies in different departments and institutes of the university, such as the Department of History, Department of Chinese Language and Literature, School of Foreign Languages and School of International Studies, and they’ve made great achievements. But these scholars are working separately and not combining their resources and efforts. To change this status quo, PKU has made a slew of efforts over the past years to explore how to integrate the subjects. Led by the university leaders, the area studies committee was established in 2016. There are now about 50 area studies centers in PKU which target major countries and regions in the world. They serve as an important foundation for future work. Qian believes that the establishment of IAS will contribute to an adjustment of the structure of academic disciplines, and the strategic upgrading of PKU.

The third aspect is “the way forward.” Qian said that there are four main functions of IAS. The first function is academic research. PKUIAS will insist on the primacy of basic research, and conduct both fundamental and predictive studies covering major issues in key countries and regions. Through holding activities including Broadyard workshop and the New Buds Salon, the institute hopes to explore research topics, garner research achievements and publish journals, monographs and books.

The second function is talent cultivation. Qian Chengdan pointed out that talent cultivation is the priority and the long-term goal of IAS. Although it is not easy to cultivate high-quality talent that meets the needs of the times, the institute will work hard to explore new training programs, curriculum systems and teaching models. He believes that the new type of talent the institute should cultivate should have a broad knowledge structure, a clear learning direction, and master English and the language of the countries or regions that they study. They should also develop one or two professional areas of expertise based on their broad knowledge (such as sociology, economics, politics and history) and obtain a degree in these areas. After graduation, they should be able to undertake practical work and also be specialized scholars.

The third function of IAS is serving as a think tank. Prof. Qian believes that the function of think tank must be based on basic research. The work of a think tank should not be superficial, but should consist of in-depth observation and analysis of society, economics and politics using a profound understanding of culture, history, national characteristics, belief systems, etc. This work should provide ideas for the government and general public in decision-making.

The fourth function of IAS is expanding academic exchanges at home and abroad. Prof. Qian promised that the institute will make efforts to use various resources to do a good job in academic communication, extend its academic network, absorb the world's advanced cultural achievements, and disseminate Chinese wisdom and China's programs. To this end, he is especially grateful to the teachers and students who participated in the first activity of PKUIAS. It marks the beginning of the institute's academic exchanges and symbolizes the great support for the institute. Prof. Qian knows that the development of IAS has a long way to go. All the staff will redouble their efforts and work hard to complete this task.

President of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) Peng Long delivered a speech on behalf of peer universities. He said that a good university should not only pay attention to the past

and the present, but also study the future. PKU is a model for other universities in many aspects, he said. Peng reviewed the situation of area studies in domestic universities. Some domestic schools started to do area studies very early, especially foreign language universities, such as BFSU and Shanghai International Studies University. But so far the results are far from the country's expectations.

Traditionally, foreign languages and literature dominate research at BFSU. More than a decade ago, when Hao Ping was BFSU's president, he proposed that the number of languages on the curriculum should be increased to 90. When he left BFSU, there were 57 languages at BFSU. After the 18th CPC National Congress, central government ministries attached great importance to the construction of multilingual bases at BFSU and the need for fostering talent in area studies and languages. Due to several years of hard work, BFSU now teaches 98 languages, and promised the Ministry of Education that by 2020, it will open classes for all the official languages of the countries that have established diplomatic relations with China and will send dozens of young teachers to these countries every year.

Mastering English is insufficient for area studies. Peng said that without the support of China's central government, it would be very difficult to rely on a single university's strength to develop

area studies. He thanked PKU for its long-term contribution of outstanding students to BFSU, many of whom have become leaders in various fields.

Party Secretary Hao Ping said that BFSU had always treated introducing the world to China as its mission, but now BFSU also must introduce China to the world. Peng expressed hopes that PKUIAS could serve as a model for area studies programs in colleges and universities nationwide and solve many obstacles facing this field during its development. Peng offered his congratulations on the establishment of PKUIAS and said he expected that PKUIAS would contribute to the development of the country and all humanity.

Liu Xincheng shared his insights in how to conduct area studies in terms of the think tank function of IAS.

He first posed the question, why did the China Association for Promoting Democracy Central Committee propose to set up area studies centers in colleges and universities? He said that China is moving from the sidelines of global affairs to the center, and moving from outsiders and observers of global governance to participants and rule-makers. The community of common destiny and Belt and Road Initiative are concrete manifestations of the transformation of China's international role, and China's influence is universal. To complete this transformation in its role

on the global stage, China should proactively learn about the world's different regions, countries and ethnic groups. Liu said that there are two advantages to establishing area studies institutions at universities. Universities have the advantages of conducting comprehensive studies and making independent and objective analyses. In addition, universities have deep pools of talent in a wide array of disciplines as well as rich governance and foreign exchange platforms, which helps them to conduct comprehensive, in-depth and ongoing studies on issues.

Liu then discussed how to develop area studies centers. He suggested that such centers should clearly establish their functions and goals. A good center should meet the following three requirements. First, it should be able to make an in-depth interpretation of the major events occurring in the target country and the target area. Second, it should be able to make predictions about the development of the target country and the target area. Third, it should be able to provide effective suggestions on strengthening mutual understanding between China and the target countries, and provide effective consultation for organizations and personnel who travel between the two countries. Liu Xincheng emphasized that area studies centers of Chinese universities should distinguish themselves from the international think tanks of Western countries, and

should not regard the target country as an “enemy” but as a “friend.” In cooperation and exchange, all parties should be equal participants in a democratic consultation, who learn from each other and develop together.

He also pointed out that the institute should not only complete building up its management and assessment systems on the school-level, but also establish a cross-disciplinary talent pool and information pool, and properly handle the relationship between academic research and applied research. The think tank should not only develop in research along the traditional academic path, but also be open to demands from the country and society. He said that the establishment of PKUIAS will further leverage PKU’s advantages in the new era, and lead to more profound and innovative research achievements by supporting the development of the community of common destiny, playing an extraordinary role in pushing forward area studies in the country.

After the speeches from the guests, Liu Xincheng, Tao Hongjian, Lin Jianhua and Qian Chengdan jointly unveiled the nameplate.

Appendix 1

Speech by PKU's President Lin Jianhua

Distinguished fellow guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning! I am very happy to participate in the unveiling ceremony of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS). First of all, on behalf of Peking University, I would like to express my warm congratulations on the establishment of the institute and express my thanks to Liu Xincheng, the Ministry of Education, the National Development and Reform Commission, peer universities, experts from the China Scholarship Council and the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs for their continuous support to us.

The establishment of PKUIAS is of great significance. We've believed that China is at a critical point of change, from a regional country to a cosmopolitan country, which requires our academics to switch from focusing on ourselves to the world. Of course, the country has changed a lot. The One Belt and One Road initiative and the concept of the community of common destiny have actually proposed higher and new requirements for our academics. Both our universities and research institutions must provide our country both academic and talent support in the development of the whole world. Academic and talent support is our important responsibility. PKU has always

regarded area studies as a very important field, and we carried out some explorations in talent cultivation in this field in the early days. This time, combined with the latest round of the “Double First-Class initiative” strategic plan, PKU has set up three key areas at the school-level, which are neither a project, nor a specific study to conduct. Rather, we hope to integrate various disciplines of the school into the three areas, which are respectively:

First, “Clinical Medicine+X.” We hope all disciplines will support the development of clinical medicine based on the needs of clinical medicine. This is an interdisciplinary direction.

The second is area studies. We hope our humanities and social sciences will not only focus on ourselves, on the research fields of our own professors, and on our country’s current problems, but also on the world today, especially the politics, economy, culture, and history of the countries along the Belt and Road.

The third is data science and intelligent science.

I think these are the three major areas at our university that will carry out key discipline adjustments in the future.

We are all very clear about the problems and enormous challenges we encounter nowadays. For example, although we have enough basic language instruction in our country, it is actually separated from many other disciplines. Many teachers

who study history and culture are very specialized, but their area of study may be far from actual and practical problems. There are also many other problems. Therefore, we very much hope that through various platforms, we can help our teachers not only deepen their own knowledge, but also focus on broader and larger problems. IAS is actually a very important platform in the development of our university. In addition, we also established the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences earlier, which aims to carry out academic exchanges in a wider field and expand the horizons of young people. There is also the recently established Institute of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, PKU. We hope that this institute can conduct more in-depth research on many issues in China.

Nowadays, I feel that our research should not only stay in the theoretical level, but should find some practical problems in China and the world. In the future, the people we hire from other universities to strengthen our research team should also be scholars who have excellent experience in practice. Recently, President Xi Jinping has proposed that we must let the world understand China, establish China's own humanities and social science research system, and train our own humanities and social experts. To realize this, we must pay attention to the

practical problems of both China and the world.

I am very happy that many colleagues from our peer universities are able to attend the conference. To accomplish these tasks needs everyone to work together and needs a wide range of cooperation. I think that our platform should be a platform open to both China and the world. It must play a better role in cultivating young people and outstanding scholars, and providing strategic advice to the country. At last, I wish great success to the institute in its future work. Thank you all.

Appendix 2

Speech by Liu Xincheng, vice chairman of the National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

Dear President Lin, experts and scholars,

Good morning! I am very glad to attend the event today to join with so many old and new friends and witness the unveiling of the nameplate of PKUIAS. The Central Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy (CAPD), as an advisor for the establishment of area studies centers, is really glad to see PKU's participation. PKU has played a very important role in the international research and decision-making of our country. I believe that the establishment of the institute will surely further

exert PKU's advantages in this new era and lead to more profound and innovative research achievements by supporting the development of the community of common destiny, playing an extraordinary role in pushing forward area studies in the country.

Everyone here is an expert in area studies. Taking this opportunity, I would like to talk about my personal thoughts and also ask for advice on how to do a good job in area studies. Both the CAPD Central Committee's advice and my personal thoughts on how to properly conduct area studies are mainly from the angle of think tanks, and can be used for reference in the future development of the institute.

First is why the CAPD Central Committee proposed to set up area studies centers in colleges and universities. China is a country in revival and moving from the sidelines of global affairs to the center, and moving from outsiders and observers of global governance to participants and rule-makers.

The community of common destiny and BRI are concrete manifestations of the transformation of China's international role, and China's influence is universal. To complete this transformation of roles, China should not only change the situation of being poor and weak, having a lot on its plate and being unwilling and unable to pay attention to the external

situation, it should also proactively learn about the world's different regions, countries and ethnic groups, including their historical traditions, political system, religious beliefs, values, credit system, and customs, which will not only contribute to economic cooperation and wealth growth, but also meet the needs of building a better world. And the latter is precisely the basis of China's being a responsible big power.

There are unique advantages to establishing area studies institutions at universities. Universities have the advantages of conducting comprehensive studies and making independent and objective analyses. In addition, universities have deep pools of talent in a wide array of disciplines as well as rich governance and foreign exchange platforms, which helps them to conduct comprehensive, in-depth and ongoing studies on issues. In short, universities have both teaching resources and talent, and establishing think tanks within universities could influence the new generation and young people. The hope of constructing and really forming a community of common destiny lies in the future generations.

Second is about how to properly develop area studies centers. Firstly, we should set its functions and goals. I think that a good center should meet the following three requirements. First, it should be able to make an in-depth interpretation of the major

events occurring in the target country and the target area. Second, it should be able to make predictions about the development of the target country and the target area. Third, it should be able to provide effective suggestions on strengthening mutual understanding between China and the target countries, and provide effective consultation for organizations and personnel who travel between the two countries. In addition, should we make some attempts to transcend the framework of the nation-state and incorporate regional and global connections into the research horizon? Secondly, we should actively develop new types of international cooperation. Take the BRI as an example. The direction of the “road” is clear, that is, the common development of participating countries. The purpose is “consulting with each other to gain win-win cooperation.” Participants in all international think tanks related to the BRI, both domestic and foreign, should hold equal democratic consultations to explore how globalization can be implemented in the BRI’s international cooperation, explore how to learn from each other and explore how to develop together. Area studies centers at our universities should distinguish themselves from the international think tanks of Western countries, and should not regard the target country as an “enemy” but as a “friend.” Area studies centers are not to promote speculation and

suspicion, but to promote mutual understanding through consultation and cooperation. Based on this principle, the research centers we have established will be a new type of national think tank, which will explore the future direction of humanity and how the human community can achieve peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit. Thirdly, area studies centers should pay attention to several questions on the school level. At this point, I should especially thank President Lin Jianhua, for his spearheading the establishment of PKUIAS because the development of area studies cannot depend on a few people or a certain institution. It needs a multidisciplinary integration of linguistics, anthropology, history, geography, economics, international politics, etc. It can be seen as a “headmaster project” and needs the school-level management mechanism and evaluation system.

At the same time, we should also establish two tanks. One is the talent tank, which pools talent from every corner. They are not necessarily transferred into PKU, but PKU should master their information and know about their research progress, and be able to incorporate them into PKU’s research team when they are needed. The second is the information bank, which includes newspapers, materials, building websites, and the accumulation of deep research on the target countries and target areas, and so

on. What's also very important is to deal with the relationship between academic research and applied research. China's area studies is still weak but is in great need, which is a contradiction. Paying attention to the two aspects, we can neither apply the concept of building an academic institution to build a think tank, nor to unilaterally pursue praise from the leadership department or the ones who need the research results. Instead, the think tank should not only develop its research along the traditional academic path, but also be open to requirements from the country and the general public to serve the country and the public.

I hope PKUIAS will make fruitful achievements during its future development, and have great success with its academic seminar.

Thank you!

Appendix 3

PKUIAS Director Qian Chengdan's report about the development of the institute

Distinguished leaders, fellow guests, ladies and gentlemen,

At the point of the establishment of PKUIAS, I would like to report on our future work on behalf of our institute.

First, why conduct area studies?

The world is experiencing the most dramatic changes since World War II, and the world political situation is also seeing big changes. Over the past 20 years, we have witnessed many changes happening to the world, such as the changing situation in the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East and the continuing wars in many regions. This has greatly influenced the world. We see the European debt crisis and the wave of refugees. Europe is facing new challenges and choices. We see that the US has met institutional obstacles, with both its hard and soft power declining. We see the rise of new economies. Their regional and global influences are increasingly obvious. We see that Russia has stepped out of its economic ebb and is trying to restore its status as a big power. We see developing countries are together claiming their rights to development, and economic and scientific development is changing these countries. We also see globalization has brought about both hope and confusion. The confrontation between globalization and anti-globalization is emerging. In short, the world is seeing major changes, among which China's development is the biggest one. This has fundamentally changed the world political situation. Right now, the Chinese nation is at the moment of experiencing a great rejuvenation. We must make proper responses toward all these changes. The precondition of making right responses is

understanding. Therefore, understanding the world has become an urgent priority and an unavoidable task.

Objectively speaking, since the Opium War, Chinese people started to look out into the world and tried to understand the world. But constrained by many factors, our understanding of the world is far from adequate. Over the past 100 years, we have mainly been concerned about our own business and paid little attention to the outside world. But with the deepening of China's reform and opening-up, today's China is already the world's China. China has become deeply embedded in the world and inseparable from the world. China's development is the development of the world. The world requires us to understand it accurately, and to understand each country and region. Therefore, understanding the world and studying the world has been an indispensable duty of the Chinese academic community. Area studies rightly serves as a tool to understand and study the world. It is both an endowment of the times and our consciousness. Contemporary China needs us to conduct area studies. This has been recognized by more and more people.

However, the current situation is not satisfactory. Although the older generation of scholars made many efforts to accumulate a basis of knowledge for us, in the broad scope of the "world," our knowledge is still limited, partial, and not comprehensive

enough. Our research work only concentrates on a few major countries in Europe and the Americas, but even for them, our understanding is not comprehensive enough and often floats on the surface. We know little about other countries, especially developing countries, and even smaller countries in the Americas and Europe, including southern Europe and northern Europe. Few people do studies on them, which has greatly restricted the development of China. This does not match with China's decades-long rapid economic development, its increasingly important international status, and the practical requirements for it to become more global. This is also contrary to the international obligations China must perform. China's pace of progress will be seriously affected if we do not improve the current academic situation. Because of this, the importance of area studies has been put on the agenda.

The Chinese government has attached a great deal of importance to area studies, and the Ministry of Education established the Expert Committee of Area Studies a few years ago. Many colleges and universities have gradually set up research agencies for area studies. At present, more than 400 research centers have been approved by the Ministry of Education. The establishment of the PKUIAS reflects school leaders' strong emphasis on area studies and signifies that area studies in PKU has been raised to

the school-construction level.

The second is the PKU edge. PKU has a long academic heritage and its disciplines have a rich history. It opened its doors from the beginning of its establishment and has kept apace a changing world. China's opening-up also means PKU's opening-up. PKU has witnessed the journey of China walking toward the world. PKU has been teaching and researching the history of foreign countries since its establishment. Its discipline of world history, which has long been studying many regions of the world, has always been at the forefront within the country. PKU's School of Foreign Languages dates back to the School of Combined Learning established in 1862. That was the earliest official school in China that taught foreign languages. It has always proactively taken part in the modernization of the country. At present, PKU's School of Foreign Languages has nearly 60 language resources for teaching and research and conducts in-depth research on relevant countries and regions through the acquisition of first-hand documents. The languages include ancient Icelandic and Syriac, which are extremely rarely studied in China.

A lot of top scholars came from PKU's Department of Chinese Language and Literature. Lin Shu, Lu Xun and Hu Shi are the leading figures in the modern Chinese enlightenment, and also

the pioneers who introduced foreign literature into China. Comparative literature and world literature are still the key disciplines of the department, and are highly respected by the domestic academic community. PKU's Department of Philosophy also cultivated the best philosophers of modern China. The foreign philosophy and religious studies in the department are closely related to area studies, and will provide very important support for the future work of PKUIAS. In addition, PKU's School of International Studies is the first school of its kind established since the reform and opening-up. Its think tank work and academic research are well-known at home and abroad, and the school has cultivated a large number of talented scholars for the country. There are also many successful scholars engaged in foreign studies in PKU's Law School, School of Government, Graduate School of Education, Department of Sociology, School of Journalism and Communication, and School of Arts. Hence we can see that PKU is rich in talent and achievements in area studies, and the only problem is that under the existing administrative system and discipline system, the talent and research fields are separated and do not form a comprehensive force.

In order to change this, PKU has made many efforts and done a lot of work in the past few years. Approved by the Ministry of

Education, PKU has established an undergraduate program of foreign history and foreign languages, which has fostered many students. PKU's School of Foreign Languages has established a master's degree and a doctoral degree for area studies. These programs have started enrollment and are nurturing students. The School of Archaeology and Museology and School of Foreign Languages have jointly established the major of foreign languages and foreign archaeology. The students go abroad, developing new directions for foreign archaeology. The Department of Sociology has carried out overseas ethnographic studies and doctoral cultivation for many years, and has made many achievements.

The Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development has established a PhD program for development studies, aiming to expand the influence of Chinese and expand international exchanges. PKU established the Yenching Academy, which places Chinese students and foreign students coming from dozens of countries in the same classroom, creating space for their mutual understanding. In 2016, under the direct guidance of the school leaders, PKU established the IAS Committee to coordinate the development of area studies. At present, PKU has about 50 area studies centers, with their research covering the major regions of the world, and 20 of them have been put on

record by the Ministry of Education. All of these are important foundations for the future work of PKUIAS. In short, PKU has accumulated rich resources for conducting area studies, and the establishment of PKUIAS will provide a basis for the integration of these resources, thereby contributing to PKU's thorough discipline adjustment and strategic upgrading.

Last but not least is "the way forward." PKUIAS has four main tasks: 1. Academic research. Organizing various kinds of academic activities, aiming at professional, in-depth and creative academic achievements, and contributing academic insights to society.

2. Talent cultivation. Exploring new curriculum systems and teaching models to satisfy the requirements of area studies, training a new type of student who possesses the capacity for fresh thoughts and the competence for practical work.

3. Think tank. Providing policy proposals for major issues and solutions for theoretical and practical problems with the support of the university's research and teaching sources.

4. Academic exchanges. Expanding academic networks both at home and abroad, absorbing advanced cultural achievements from the world at large, and disseminating Chinese knowledge and Chinese programs.

Specifically speaking, we should do the following:

First, PKUIAS will insist on the guidance of basic research and conduct fundamental, original and predictive studies, achieving a balance between theories and practice, history and current practical problems.

We will break the existing discipline boundaries, launch a multidisciplinary research model which features programs led by questions, form an interdisciplinary team, and fully work according to the core role of being academic leaders. In the research process, we will discover talent and will try the system of resident scholars and part-time professors, recruit talent from all walks including international scholars, and develop their respective strengths.

We will hold various kinds of academic activities, including the All Under Heaven Forum (天下论坛), Broadyard Workshop (博雅工作坊), and New Buds Salon (新芽沙龙). The All Under Heave Forum is a large-scale academic conference which provides a platform for domestic and foreign academics to discuss academic issues. The Broadyard Workshop is the most frequent event. It aims to conduct small, in-depth, topical and dialogue-oriented academic discussions on the theoretical and practical issues that people are most concerned about, and to form ideas in the collision of opinions. The New Buds Salon, as a “family” for young people, provides an academic platform for

young students. Through holding these activities, the institute hopes to discover research topics, garner research achievements and publish journals, monographs and books.

Second, talent cultivation is both the priority and the long-term goal of PKUIAS. Although it is not easy to cultivate high-quality talented people that meet the needs of the times, the institute will try out best. After the establishment of the institute, we will work out the training program as soon as possible. Based on the requirements from the university, we will explore the cultivation procedure from undergraduate to doctoral and postdoctoral periods and design curriculums that are suitable for area studies. All of these are bound to break disciplinary boundaries, attempt to broaden the knowledge of students and make them able to apply what they learn in practice. We believe that the new type of talent from the institute should have a broad knowledge base, a clear learning direction, namely the target country, and master English and the language of the target countries or regions. Students should also develop one or two professional areas of expertise based on their broad knowledge (such as sociology, economics, politics and history) and obtained a degree in these areas. After graduation, they not only should be able to undertake practical work but also be a specialized scholar. Cultivating such talent needs a huge input in resources

and a long time, and PKU is willing to make efforts in this regard.

Third, PKIAS will develop its think tank function. We believe that the function of a think tank must be based on basic research. The work of a think tank should not be superficial, but should involve in-depth observation and analysis of society, economics and politics with the goal of having a profound understanding of culture, history, national characteristics, belief systems, etc. The think tank should provide ideas for the government and general public in decision-making. We must attach more importance to providing the reasons behind things that have happened than what to do next. In our opinion, the main function of a university-based think tank lies here.

Fourth, PKUIAS will expand academic exchanges at home and abroad. We will make efforts to use various resources to do a good job in academic communication. To this end, I am especially grateful to all of you for participating in the first activities of PKUIAS. It marks the beginning of our exchanges and symbolizes your great support for us. In the future, we will look forward to your long-term support and will contact you frequently to seek effective cooperation. We have a long way to go in properly developing PKUIAS as one of the “Double First-Class initiative” strategy programs at PKU. We know well

that we are shouldering this important responsibility, and we will work hard to complete this task.

II Academic Event

The academic event was composed of two parts, the All Under Heaven Forum and the Broadyard Workshop.

Prof. Qian Chengdan chaired the All Under Heaven Forum. The forum's Chinese name is *tianxialuntan* (天下论坛). Prof. Wang Jisi from the School of International Studies, PKU, Prof. Shen Zihua from the Center for Cold War International History Studies, East China Normal University and Prof. Rong Xinjiang from Department of History, PKU gave keynote speeches to discuss the academic frontiers of area studies.

The title of Wang's speech was "The Academic Foundation of Area Studies." Wang believes that area studies are not one single discipline. For example, if one studies the US, can US Studies become a discipline? The key issue is the lack of a disciplinary basis. Therefore, Wang said that area studies should be based on traditional disciplines instead of geographical regions. Disciplines such as political science, economics, sociology, and law are the real disciplinary basis of area studies. Without this basis, scholars studying different areas will not be able to

communicate with each other, and it would be difficult to recognize area studies as an integral whole.

According to his own experiences in studying the Sino-US relationship, Wang said that political research in area studies can be based on political science. Political science includes comparative politics, political theory, political thought and political decision-making. But he found that scholars studying different areas' political situations often fail to communicate. Some US scholars once proposed to break through the trap of "uniqueness." This is a warning not to overemphasize the unique characteristics of the country under study. Wang believes that it is necessary to break through this trap, and scholars studying different areas' politics need to have frequent exchanges to make the disciplinary basis more profound.

From a horizontal perspective, is there no commonality between the more than 190 countries in the world? In today's world, all countries claim to be democratic, legal, and even pluralistic. These have begun to become a common feature of different countries. There are of course a few exceptions. For example, Saudi Arabia does not call itself a democratic state because it does not think democracy is a good thing. But overall, the political characteristics of modern countries are similar. They almost all have cabinets, parliaments, political parties, courts,

and even the apparent “tripartite” political system, said Wang. He reminds people to think critically whether two different political systems, such as republicanism and monarchy, can simply be judged as good and bad.

Another common question is whether there is a common political goal pursued by all countries, to which he made a positive answer. However, emphasizing different countries’ commonality does not mean denying their political characteristics. For example, Denmark and Japan are highly developed countries, but their development experiences may not be suitable to be copied by other countries. This is because Denmark and Japan are single-nationality states and it is not easy for multi-nationality states to copy their experiences. Therefore, the role of the disciplinary basis should be to identify both commonalities and unique characteristics.

From a vertical perspective, or a historical perspective, the political history, cultural history or religious history of regions and countries worldwide are different. The themes of each era are also different. For example, peace and development is the current theme, and a few centuries ago it was war and revolution. It is obvious that there are many issues worth studying from a historical perspective. In Wang’s view, the current Trump phenomenon and Putin phenomenon probably

reflect a commonality in today's politics, indicating that a strong populism has emerged in the world. When populism and nationalism are combined, strongman politics reappears. Politics of various countries now interact with each other instead of being completely isolated, which is different from the past. For example, China's political development may affect that of Africa, and Russia's political development may affect China. US political scientist Samuel Phillips Huntington once said that there had been three waves of democratization in the world. The first wave was from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century and was later disrupted by the Russian revolution and fascism. The second wave began with the national liberation movement, when democracy turned into a trend. The third wave appeared after the end of the Cold War. After every wave of democratization, there was a pushback. Some countries might never regard Western democracy as their own goal. Does the current situation indicate that Western democracy has been strongly impacted? Wang believes that these topics should be further explored.

Wang concluded that area studies' disciplinary basis should have at least four dimensions. The first is the geographical dimension or horizontal dimension. Every country and region are different, and need in-depth studies while taking their commonality into

consideration. The second is historical dimension or vertical dimension. The overall history of mankind is actually a process of globalization, with people going from isolation to interaction. This does not necessarily mean a fusion with each other. For example, in the US, black people are generally married to black people, and most Chinese people marry Asians. Therefore, it is a question whether the future of human beings will lead to a fusion or a split. There are many factors that are difficult to neglect, including people's physical and psychological boundaries. The third is the cultural dimension, including ethnicity and religion issues. This dimension is often combined with historical dimension. The fourth is the social science dimension, and relevant areas include politics, economics and sociology.

The four dimensions mean that scholars of different disciplines should learn from each other. Wang pointed out that the biggest dilemma of current academic research is not a lack of material, but theory and disciplinary integration. The disciplinary basis should be consolidated.

In the end of his speech, Wang made several suggestions for the development of PKUIAS. First, area studies requires both experts and eclectics. Second, the curriculum should be created with care. Compulsory courses of relevant majors should be able

to be combined with other general elective courses, and some basic courses of each discipline can be set to break the boundaries between departments. Third, scholars must adhere to the correct political direction and obey national interests. It should be noted that political judgment cannot be used as an academic standard. Scholars should stay beyond politics, lay a solid foundation for the discipline and encourage the free airing of views about the country.

Shen proposed that the basis of area research is historical research. The title of his speech was “Doing a Good Job in Collecting and Organizing Files and Advancing Research on China’s Neighboring Countries.”

Shen pointed out that many mistakes we made in China today can be attributed to the fact that we do not know the world and do not understand the history and current situation of our neighboring countries. Do we really understand North Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, Myanmar, India and Cambodia? Shen said China should rethink this question. He took his personal experience as an example to tell people that Chinese people’s understanding of these countries is too little.

Based on this situation, Shen emphasized strengthening research on neighboring countries. The basis of research on neighboring countries is historical research. Our understanding of the current

situation will certainly undergo twists and turns if we do not do enough research on history. Meanwhile, we cannot deny history only based on the status quo, otherwise misunderstanding will continue to deepen.

Shen agreed with Liu's views on think tank scholars. He believes that the main function of university teachers is not to offer ideas. Even if they offer ideas, they can only offer suggestions for basic understanding, not on how to do things. After all, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Security and other ministries have much more information than us. Therefore, what academic research should do is to carry out basic analysis.

For example, historical research is a deep basic analysis technique for the study of our current situation. This is the responsibility of scholars. He also criticized China's existing evaluation system, pointing out that research results should not be linked to leadership instructions. He said that scholars' research, regardless of whether approved by the leadership, is their own achievement and contribution. Scholars provide academic support for decision-making. If scholars cannot produce research results when the country needs them, it is the scholars who should be blamed. Shen warned scholars that they should be practical, do what they can and not to follow others

blindly.

When studying the history of China's neighboring countries, Shen believes that it is crucial to study their historical archives. Without the archives, it is difficult to study their history. He recalled that in the 1970s, the Commercial Press published a number of national history books. He found that the books only contain content up to the time of World War II and the materials were old and without any support from original archives. The history of the development of many countries after World War II, especially their relationship with China, needs to be studied on the basis of the countries' original archives. Shen has made tremendous efforts in collecting archives of China's neighboring countries and has also achieved important results. His project, the Collection and Historical Research on the Relations between China and its Neighboring Countries, was approved by the central government in 2015. The first-phase of the project has been completed.

He specifically mentioned the 500,000-page archive collected in the National Archives UK. The archives involve Myanmar, Tibet, Pakistan and Afghanistan issues and reflect the policies of the British colonists in the South Asian colonies and the methods they dealt with border and nationality issues. These are the basis for future research on South Asia issues. Scholars may

be able to learn from the experiences of the British Empire, such as how to deal with the Afghanistan-Pakistan border issue. The archives of Mongolia, South Korea and Japan are also very rich, because their files are relatively open and the declassification period is short.

For example, South Korea's archives can be declassified after 30 years, and the contents before 1987 can be seen. Soon we can figure out the inside story of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea. Although the archives of Vietnam are frequently not collected, the relationship between the two countries has eased recently, and the relevant archives have been opened. Shen's team has obtained a catalogue of a large number of archives and will send people to organize them. These archives are very precious, since they are the key for us to understand many topics such as China-Vietnam relations and land reform in Vietnam. The opening of the archives in Myanmar and Thailand is relatively smooth compared with Nepal and Cambodia. According to Shen, Nepal lacks archive management and he cannot find certain archives even if he pays. He even consults directly with the Nepalese Foreign Ministry, expressing the hope that the Nepal government could entrust him to organize the archives. If China has no access to the archives, we cannot understand the embarrassing position of

Nepal between China and India, nor can we understand how China helped the Communist Party of Nepal.

Shen said that the second phase of the archival project has begun. He is preparing to collect archives from the Philippines and Indonesia. It requires the help of local Chinese in the two countries. In addition to the national archives, Shen believes that many folk archives are also very valuable.

The study of Southeast Asian issues mainly focuses on two major topics, the problems facing overseas Chinese and the export of revolution. The two topics are closely linked. However, few related archives have been kept in official archives centers, so additional information needs to be looked for in the private sector. Shen once met a secretary of the Communist Party of Malaysia and conducted many interviews with him. He also received three large boxes of letters, diaries, official documents and reports, which are of great significance for the study of the Communist Party of Malaysia.

Prof. Rong Xinjiang gave a speech titled “Inherit the Excellent Traditions of Peking University and Develop Central Asian Studies.” He introduced the excellent tradition and development status of PKU’s Central Asian studies program, emphasized the importance of Central Asian studies, and offered a multi-faceted perspective on future Central Asian studies. Rong first traced the

academic tradition of PKU, emphasizing that it is an excellent academic tradition that inspires scholars to maintain academic sensitivity and constantly innovate.

Scholars from various disciplines of PKU, such as Luo Zhenyu, Wang Guowei, and Dong Kang were able to discover valuable research materials in a specific era and produced the first batch of Dunhuang studies containing Central Asian studies, ancient Dunhuang archives with Chinese annotations and many materials that are directly related to Central Asian studies.

He proposed that if we regard oracle bones, bamboo scripts, papers and archives as the four kinds of materials that support four kinds of new discoveries about Chinese history, we can say that PKU has mastered two of these areas. For example, in the 1920s, the university sent a scientific investigation team to Northwest China. And during the arduous period of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in the 1940s, PKU scholars went to the Northwest China again to do historical and scientific research. The cases show that PKU scholars are very academically sensitive to new materials in different eras.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, our Central Asian studies met some difficulties. However, scholars did a lot of research into the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The research started from the ethnic investigations in

the 1950s and lasted until the reform and opening-up was completed. He cited the example of Su Bai's research on the Grotto Temple, and said that generations of PKU scholars, including historians, ethnologists and religious studies scholars, went to Central Asia every year to do investigations, especially after the reform and opening-up. They traveled throughout Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey and Mongolia to go to places where the original archives were saved, and collected research materials.

Rong further introduced the research tradition of PKU. PKU is the core of Chinese academics and its research in many fields has always been at the forefront. Many previous researchers have laid the foundation for the current area studies, including Shao Xunzheng's research on the history of the Yuan Dynasty when China was ruled by a Mongolian minority, Ji Xianlin's research on Central Asia's Tocharian, Zhou Yiliang's research on the history of relations between China and Asia, Su Bai's research on Buddhism and archaeology and Zhang Guangda's research on the history of the Western Regions.

PKU has always had an excellent tradition, represented by a sensitivity to and entanglement in new issues. In the words of Chen Yinque, the school is "within the newest academic trends." Although PKU has a strong liberal arts tradition and

multidisciplinary academic advantages, Rong believes that from the perspective of area studies, scholars in PKU still have a lot of work to do. Building the Institute of Area Studies will precisely push the work forward.

Rong then emphasized the importance of Central Asian studies. The Central Asian countries are generally considered to be the current Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. He proposed that Central Asian studies are the assembly of various studies in Central Asia, including history, geography, languages, literature, religion, politics, economy, law, and state relations. As a research area, Central Asia can create interdisciplinary growth by making different researchers interweave and interact within the region. Central Asia is a very complicated region. It is a channel for interaction and exchange between Chinese and Western civilizations, a place for the exchange and competition of religious civilizations, and a field for the integration and struggle of different nationalities. Elements including the special geographical location, ethnic migration and varied nationalities make Central Asia rather complicated. That being said, Central Asia is also a region that cannot be ignored by China. Studying Central Asia helps us better grasp and deal with the relationship with the

surrounding countries. The study of the Silk Road is a concern of both China and Central Asian countries, and is closely related to China's Belt and Road initiative. The study of the ancient Silk Road, including history, geography, transportation, religion and cultural exchanges, has implications for today's investment and construction along the Belt and Road. These are also the most challenging topics in historical research.

Rong shared his thoughts on the future of Central Asia studies. He believes that any scholar cannot do all-inclusive studies single-handedly. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out academic cooperation, break free from the current discipline system, divide the regions into units, and integrate each discipline to do high-quality Central Asia studies. At the same time, investment in terms of money and talent should be greatly increased to strengthen the construction of teams, materials and language skills. Rong pointed out that the focus of future Central Asia studies should be on contemporary issues and in fields such as politics and economics. He said that only by strengthening Central Asia studies can cultural understanding be strengthened and communication be promoted.

Our research vision has gone from seeing ourselves to seeing the world. PKU also undertakes such a mission. It is very important to strengthen Central Asia studies under the background of the

Belt and Road initiative, so the old traditions of PKU are able to advance the current studies. Rong emphasized that PKU has a good foundation in the study of the Silk Road and many scholars have contributed a lot to the field. In response to the call of the Belt and Road, current Silk Road research should pay attention to the all-round and real situation in Central Asia instead of only emphasizing historical and cultural friendship as researchers did in the past.

In addition, Rong believes that PKU has a profound tradition of Chinese historical archives studies, which is an advantage for Central Asian historical studies. The weakness is in Central Asian languages. Although PKU's School of Foreign Languages has excellent Persian teachers, it is necessary to introduce skilled Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek teachers and strengthen training.

Post-doctoral training and the recruitment of doctoral students are also important factors. At the same time, it is necessary to promote the construction of talented teams, interdisciplinary research and teaching work in Central Asia studies institutes, along the lines of the schools of Chinese Classics and institutes for advanced humanistic studies. On the other hand, it is very important to establish an academic exchange mechanism. He said scholars should actively establish exchanges with Central

Asia countries, and also increase communication with European countries, the US and Japan to improve their academic level and accumulate academic resources.

After the speeches, the teachers and students also had a short interaction with the speakers. Prof. Qian gave a positive answer to a question about whether PKUIAS will recruit postdoctoral fellows in the future.

One teacher asked Shen, aside from the massive archives of China's neighboring countries, what archives are most important. Shen replied that the most important archives should be China's, but they are hard to get access too.

The last question was about the current situation of Central Asian languages being taught at PKU. Prof. Ning Qi, dean of the School of Foreign Languages, PKU, answered this question. She said that PKU has 20 mature language majors, including not only Central Asian languages, but also Azerbaijani, Georgian and Caucasian. Ning said she hopes to promote the studies of other disciplines related to Central Asian languages in the future.