



Politics Research, Comparative area Studies, and area Studies: contextual, substantive, and Methodological Considerations

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Abstract

This article thoroughly analyzes the continuing discussion regarding comparative area studies, which is a branch of area studies that is not well recognized or valued. While the research generally centers around political science, it is important to highlight that many of its themes have relevance and applicability to other academic areas. Ensuring that the scholarly discussions and advancements in the field of area studies after the end of the Cold War are given proper attention. Following our presentation of a distinct concept of comparative area studies, we proceed to examine several current viewpoints regarding the topic. An important section emphasizes the significance of conducting research that includes both comparative and individual locations. This study will thoroughly analyze two methodological difficulties that commonly emerge in the field of comparative area studies: the selection of research methodology and the application of concepts. The inquiry concludes with a succinct summary of the major arguments put forth.

Keywords: Comparative Politics · Comparative Method · Comparative Area Studies Plan for Research

INTRODUCTION

The process involves: (1) studying one or more languages, (2) conducting thorough fieldwork in the local language(s), (3) analyzing local histories, perspectives, resources, and interpretations, (4) using careful observation to test, refine, or develop theories based on evidence, and (5) engaging in interdisciplinary dialogues that often go beyond the limits of social sciences and humanities. Szanton (2003)



defines "Area Studies" as a broad phrase that encompasses a wide range of academic activities and disciplines, leading to a full comprehension of the subject. Prewitt (2003:8) notes that the Social Science Research Council (United States) and the American Council of Learned Societies have officially defined "traditional area studies" and "area-based knowledge". The Social Science Research Council (United States) and the American Council of Learned Societies have developed similar distinctions. A scholarly approach that seeks to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a specific region of the world, including its languages, cultures, politics, history, and religions, places emphasis on studying the entire area and considers it the central aspect of the analytical process. On the other hand, an alternate viewpoint begins by focusing on the body of knowledge related to a certain geographical place and then extending this knowledge to include larger patterns and events that go beyond any specific location. Differences in the use of distinct criteria among countries might lead to discrepancies in the definitions and extents of regional studies. The geographical provenance of an individual can sometimes play a role in certain situations, even though it is not always taken into consideration when computing specific measurements. However, there are instances where such information would be advantageous. Research related to Western Europe or the European Union (EU) can be classified as area studies in some countries. However, inside Western Europe, such intellectual contributions are generally recognized as part of the established academic canon and are not classified as area studies. Area studies encompass a range of subdisciplines that are generally associated with specific institutional structures and commonly used research approaches. According to Szanton (2003), the Area Studies disciplines exhibit inherent diversity and cannot be compared to one other. This is because there is a lack of internal coherence among the disciplines within the Area Studies field. Upon



closer scrutiny, significant differences become apparent in the political, institutional, philosophical, and disciplinary backgrounds of these entities, as well as the historical events that have influenced their interconnections. There are important differences and divides between the many domains of area studies. These differences help to guide and organize the relevant academic discussions and research goals. This can be attributed to the existence of these institutional divides and differentiations. Essentially, "area studies" pertains to a comprehensive range of academic inquiries characterized by their specific concentration on a certain country or geographical area. The term "area studies" is used to collectively refer to these investigations. The field of area studies does not have a clear and specific definition based on a particular research approach or disciplinary framework. The origins of area studies can be traced back to the academic disciplines of cultural studies, social sciences, and humanities. In addition, field research encompasses a wide range of philosophical and methodological frameworks. To gain more insight into the significance of social science-based area studies in studying, establishing, refining, or reviewing regional and global conceptualizations and theories, please consult Section 5. These inquiries are based on thorough observations of specific regional occurrences. There is a proposal suggesting that area studies need not always include qualifications such as in-depth language study, considerable fieldwork conducted in the local language, or collaboration with numerous or transdisciplinary academic disciplines. On the other hand, these components should be considered as the specialized fields of knowledge of certain researchers or preferred methodology, and their importance should be decided based on the nature of the research topic being addressed.

What Are Area and Comparative Area Studies? Why Do They Happen?



CAAS, also known as comparative and area studies, should not be considered as the final goal in and of itself. They have a responsibility to fulfill the duties that have been assigned to them. Engaging in research within the area studies discipline to get a more profound comprehension of particular topics of interest is not inappropriate or unachievable. The scientific community acknowledges that studying global players, structures, and processes, as well as the various expressions of political, economic, social, and cultural events, is both valid and possibly beneficial. On the other hand, accurate and trustworthy representations obtained from a deep understanding of the unique circumstances can improve our understanding of individual cases and form the basis for broader explanations that go beyond the actual situation being discussed. In terms of numerals, the number is six. These particular descriptions, often ignored by social scientists who focus solely on developing theories, are crucial as initial steps in creating comprehensive theoretical and analytical frameworks, as well as transferable concepts. More information can be found in section 5. Furthermore, by explaining occurrences in different settings, individuals have the capacity to enhance their understanding of their own context and also contribute to improving comprehension in the previously described situations. According to Sartori (1994:16), even if someone has extensive information about one country, they are completely unaware of all other nations. One could argue that the well-being of society as a whole would be negatively affected if research efforts focused solely on obtaining funding or disregarded totally utilitarian pursuits. However, we believe that the ACAS, being rooted in social science, should aim for more than just meeting an individual's aesthetic preferences. ACAS must build strong cooperation with the appropriate academic fields and give top priority to their efforts. Individuals must engage in these initiatives with the specific objectives of: a) expanding the current body of knowledge in these fields; and b)



taking advantage of the advantages of their improved ability to analyze data. It is crucial for individuals to participate in these activities while keeping in mind the ensuing objectives, which include expanding the current body of knowledge in these domains. Area studies were not founded with the same purpose that the United States had after World War II, which was to develop a comprehensive social science (Mitchell, 2003: 8, 23-24). Achieving this goal is challenging because of the increasing chaos in the realms of social sciences and area studies. By embracing the task of creating theories that incorporate global viewpoints across several topic areas such as the state, culture, and economics, the social sciences can utilize area studies as a unifying influence. This is clearly dependent on the social sciences dedicating the required effort to the advancement of such theories. Mitchell argues that some scientists have placed a higher importance on maintaining the integrity of their research methods rather than focusing on advancing their careers within the scientific community (2003: 16-20). The emphasis on the meticulousness of individual researchers has led to the weakening of the previously strong connections that these researchers had with local studies. Nevertheless, certain essential principles concerning the relationship between regional studies and other academic fields continue to be relevant. These two individuals are firmly dedicated to actively participating in meaningful discussions. Mitchell (2003:8) argues that the integration of area studies and comparative area studies is the key to effectively eliminating provincialism from social theory. ACAS, a potentially valuable instrument, can aid in the analysis and potential improvement of theoretical statements derived from North America and Europe. These assertions are supported by empirical data and normative frameworks. Distinguishing the act of challenging deeply held ideas from the creation of generalizations that enhance scientific understanding is a distinct endeavor. To fully



understand the extent of these generalizations, scholars specializing in a specific academic discipline must thoroughly examine the relevant literature in that field. In contrast, the study of comparative areas has the ability to greatly enhance the current body of knowledge in the field of social sciences. Huber (2003:1) identifies three possible reasons for using cross-regional comparisons. The research seeks to accomplish three primary goals: (1) to improve and elucidate conceptual frameworks and theories by taking into account contextual factors; (2) to strengthen the reliability of existing frameworks and theories by identifying similar processes in different contexts; and (3) to emphasize the existence of multiple pathways that lead to the same outcome, thus requiring the creation of new theoretical frameworks.

Problems with the Way Comparative Area Studies Are Done

To fully maximize the potential advantages provided by ACAS, it is crucial to implement a thorough and all-encompassing plan. The purpose of this study is not to comprehensively analyze all the methodological difficulties encountered by ACAS, in order to make the information more clear. This is a crucial fact to remember. This limitation becomes more evident when one considers the discipline of political science. Therefore, the following two paragraphs will focus on two primary concerns that exemplify the three areas of comparative area studies mentioned earlier¹³. It is crucial to highlight that these difficulties have significant consequences for the entire subject of area studies and for other academic disciplines as well. Their breadth beyond the confines of area studies entirely. Choosing suitable comparative research approaches and applying relevant concepts is a fascinating challenge. Comparative area studies provide numerous challenges, both in their literal and figurative interpretations. While comparing different regions can be challenging due to the presence of



contextual variances, conducting comparisons within a single region can be facilitated by the use of consistent context-related features. When conducting descriptive analysis, comparing different phenomena in various situations is usually not very difficult. When utilizing comparative analysis to ascertain the presence of a causal relationship, further challenges emerge. Every comparison endeavor must have a meticulously crafted and thoroughly deliberated study design.

Summary

Following the conclusion of the Cold War, several events took place that prompted scholarly research of ACAS, particularly focusing on its political aspects. These events stated earlier signaled the end of the third phase of democratization, which is now recognized as being non-teleological. Furthermore, it is important not to overlook the growing influence of China and India, as well as the rise of new global issues like the spread of nuclear weapons and transnational terrorism. In the 1990s, area studies faced criticism for being viewed as lacking in theoretical and methodological rigor, and for using terminology and notions that were seen as reflecting a late-colonial or ethnocentric perspective. There were also concerns raised about whether regional studies are still relevant in today's globalized world. In recent years, a discernible trend has evolved, particularly since September 11th, whereby the degree of criticism aimed at area studies has slightly decreased. Nevertheless, there are continuous debates concerning the direction of field studies and its possible linkages with other academic disciplines. Area studies, as a phrase, encompasses a diverse range of concepts. However, they are all united by their primary focus on a certain geographical region. Area studies play a significant role in the progress, assessment, clarification, and examination of concepts and ideas that are specific to certain regions but also have broader applicability. This is because area studies are based on thorough research of local phenomena. Comparative area studies, a subfield of



area studies, involve a comprehensive understanding of one or more specific regions, combined with the use of comparative research methods. Despite being sometimes overlooked, comparative area studies share similar qualities with other subfields. This is possible because area studies can be undertaken using many disciplinary and methodological approaches and are based on thorough investigations of local occurrences. There are three clear categories for this type of research: (1) comparative studies conducted within a specific geographic area; (2) interregional comparisons that assess entire regions as units within a comparable structure; and (3) cross-regional comparisons that involve choosing empirical entities from various regions around the world. Automated content analysis systems (ACAS) are not independent entities; rather, they have the ability to greatly contribute to the systematic representation of political and other events, the evaluation and improvement of conceptual frameworks, and the understanding of both international and domestic realms. This allows them to provide deliberators with a robust scientific foundation for their conclusions. However, there are significant methodological obstacles that need to be overcome in both comparative area studies and area studies in order to achieve success. The most prominent and essential aspect of the procedure is the careful selection of suitable research methodologies and conceptual frameworks. Methodological rigor is essential when researchers aim to determine causal linkages in cross-region comparison studies involving varied conditions. On the other hand, using a variety of research methods can help reduce the limitations that come from relying too much on just one methodology. Having a common viewpoint on the events is an integral part of the idea generation process.

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