



THE POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES IN CHINA: TOWARDS A MORE INFORMED GLOBAL STRATEGY?

Ricardo Barrios

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Co-Authors:
Margaret Myers
Guo Cunhai



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LEARNING LATIN AMERICA: China's Strategy for Area Studies Development

Margaret Myers, Ricardo Barrios, and Guo Cunhai*

Introduction

Chinese think tanks, such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), and universities, such as Nankai University in Tianjin, have studied the Latin American region for many decades. However, as China assumes an increasingly prominent global role and is exposed to higher levels of risk, the country's central government is working to expand and improve its global awareness, including of the Latin American region.

Most of the country's Latin American studies centers are affiliated with universities in China's major coastal cities, although a few have opened in inland provinces in recent years. A handful are dedicated to the study of individual Latin American countries, such as Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, or sub-regions, such as the Andean region.

Since 2010, a series of Chinese government policies has supported the development of increasingly high quality Latin American and other area studies centers across the country, primarily in an effort to inform China's foreign policy-making. In addition to the creation of new centers, the policies encourage upgrades to existing ones through formal registration and accreditation processes.

Area studies are likely to remain a priority for China in the coming years. The country's growing cohort of foreign affairs specialists is still largely focused on neighboring regions and relations with major or rising powers, but the field of Latin American studies continues to benefit from new area studies policy. The Belt and Road Initiative's extension to Latin America will likely further promote Chinese study of the region and its languages in the coming years.

China now boasts nearly 60 centers focused on the Latin American region alone. These range considerably in both size and capacity, from those with only one or two dedicated staff to well-established institutions like the CASS Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS), which employs dozens of researchers.

Although much still remains to be done to achieve in-depth understanding of Latin America in China, efforts to develop homegrown expertise will undoubtedly benefit Chinese policymakers and investors as both work to strengthen ties to the region.

*Margaret Myers is director of the Latin America and the World program at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, D.C. Ricardo Barrios is program associate for the Dialogue's Latin America and the World program. Guo Cunhai is co-founder and director of the China-based Comunidad de Estudios Chinos y Latinoamericanos (CECLA). The authors are grateful to Huang Ruiyang for her contributions.

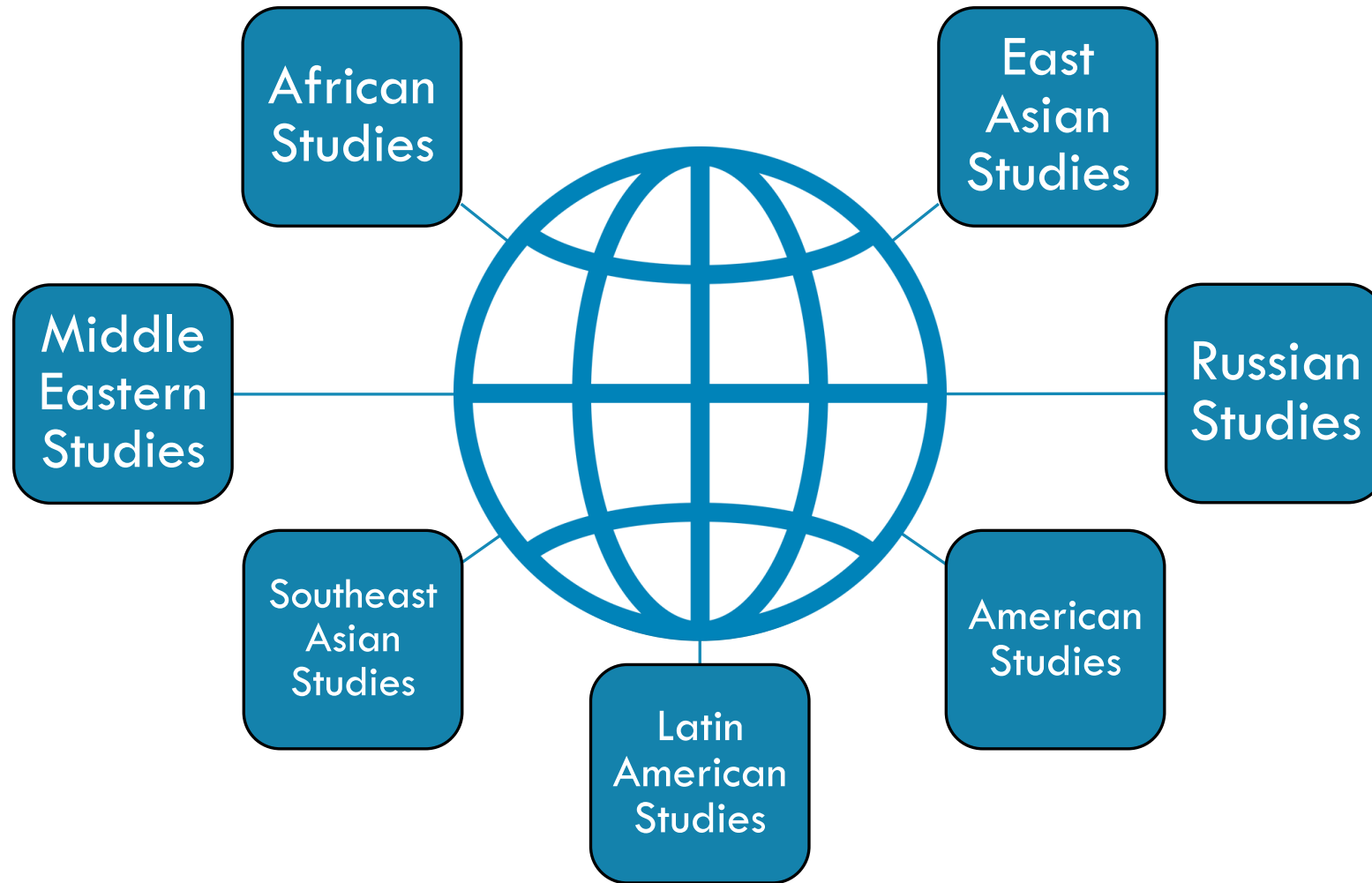
We'll cover:

I. Area Studies Initiative

II. Latin American Studies

III. Appraisal

AREA STUDIES



Why area studies?

It's a **domestic** process aimed at improving the effectiveness of China's **overseas** efforts.

**It's an effort to
address
challenges
of being a
global power.**



Global Events



Global Markets



Global Messaging

en.people.cn

*“Promote the strengthening of **area studies** in qualified schools, letting these play a role in promoting people to people exchanges between China and the outside world and in increasing China’s soft power.”*

State Councilor **Liu Yandong**
National Education Work
Conference (2011)



AREA STUDIES CENTERS

（“区域和国别研究基地”）

GUIDING POLICY DOCUMENTS

Year	Document Name	Document Name (Chinese)	Reference Number
2011	“Notice on Fostering Area Studies and International Education Centers”	《关于培育区域和国别以及国际教育研究基地的通知》	Department of International Cooperation & Exchange Document No. 1512 [2011]
2014	“Notice on Effectively Constructing Information for Area Studies Centers”	《关于做好国别和区域研究信息建设的通知》	Department of International Cooperation & Exchange Document No. 836 [2014]
2015	“Interim Measures for the Cultivation and Construction of Area Studies Centers”	《国别和区域研究基地培育和建设暂行办法》	Department of International Cooperation & Exchange Document No. 4 [2015]
2017	“Notice on Effectively Conducting Work Related to Area Studies Centers for the Year 2017”	《教育部办公厅关于做好2017年度国别和区域研究有关工作的通知》	Department of International Cooperation & Exchange Document No. 8 [2017]

CENTER ACCREDITATION AND REQUIREMENTS

Requirements to Register an Area Studies Center

- Possess a strong desire to serve the country
- Have a concrete institutional structure and a designated office space
- Employ leading figures in the field and a research team with diverse disciplinary backgrounds; ensure that over 40% of staff is comprised of senior researchers
- Possess knowledge of foreign languages, especially critical languages
- Possess an academic evaluation system that includes and properly weighs government consultation activities
- Incorporate center funding into the school's management budget, guarantee a clear amount of funding support
- Have already established an overseas academic research institution, such as a Confucius Institute, or an alternative exchange-cooperation relationship
- Employ center directors with "sturdy political postures," profound academic accomplishments and rich administrative experience

Requirements for Achieving Area Studies Center Accreditation

- Hold at least one mandatory or elective course on the center's area of specialty per year; formulate and implement a curriculum that covers both undergraduate and graduate study
- Establish and implement plans to have researchers study and train overseas, while closely integrating nationally-sponsored programs for the study of critical languages
- Hire at least two external experts influential in their area to serve as distinguished researchers, with special preference for retired personnel from overseas posts
- Coordinate basic research and applied research and endeavor to strengthen center policy consultation abilities
- Complete the assignments issued by the Ministry of Education
- Organize scholarly forums—at least one scholarly meeting a year—and take part in international academic events
- Establish academic committees, broadly recruit the participation of specialists from outside their host institutions
- Formulate and implement a system of basic regulations on matters such as professional development and staff hiring
- Construct comprehensive, accurate, and dynamic research information systems
- Compete for donations and financial assistance from domestic and overseas institutions and individuals
- Receive direction from the relevant departments

What about the Latin America?

**Since 2011, a surge in
China's Latin American
Studies Centers.**

CHINA'S LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES CENTERS (2018)

<60
Centers



In a range of schools:



With various specializations:

- Center for **Latin America Studies**
- **Peru** Research Center
- **Brazilian Culture** Center
- **Pacific Alliance** Research Center
- **China-Latin American Legal** Research Center
- Center for **China-Latin American Management Studies**

With partner institutions and consortiums:

- **National Autonomous University of [Mexico](#)**
- **University of the Pacific ([Peru](#))**
- **Fudan-Latin America University Consortium**
- **Consortium for Chinese-Latin American Research ([Arizona](#))**

With supporting programs:

- **Roughly 120 Spanish**

Departments

- **Roughly 40 Portuguese**

Departments

And this is only part of the picture.

- **~400 Official Centers**
- **100+ Institutions of H.L.**

Nobody gets overlooked.



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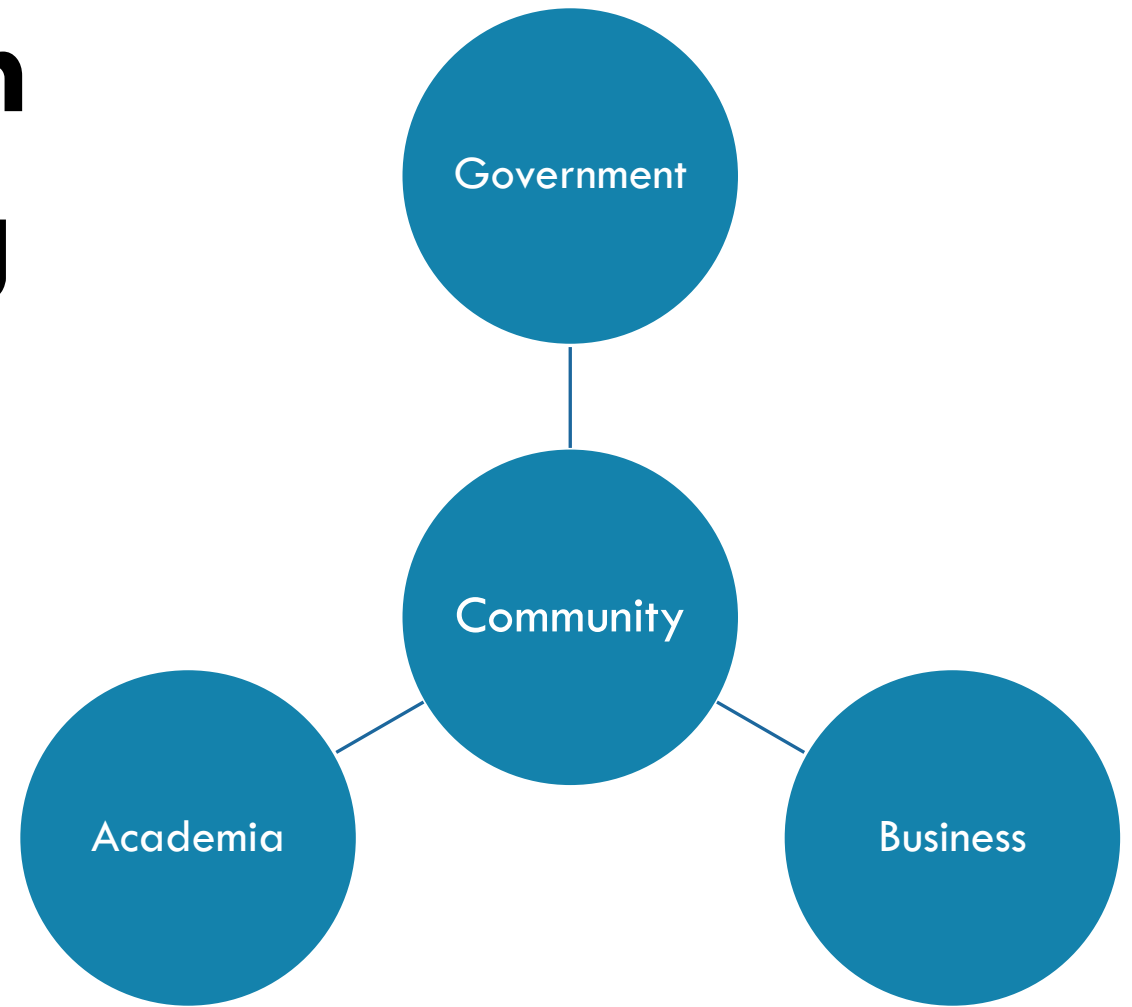
**Has the Latin
American studies
project, and China's
area studies initiative
more generally, been
successful?**

Yes?

China today has...

- + Centers for Latin American Studies
- + Students Studying Spanish/Portuguese
- + Students Studying Latin America
- + Partnerships with Overseas Institutions
- + Participation in Scholarly Community

There has also been progress in creating domestic research communities around these specialties.



But it is **too early to tell
if this will achieve the
intended effects over
China's foreign affairs.**

**Challenges in terms of
policy implementation
and outcomes still loom.**

These include...

- Center **Deficiencies**
- Perverse **Incentives**
- Ossifying **Hierarchies**

Salamat

Thank you

Gracias

谢谢