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Russia and Eurasia Summary

Conflict Management in Central Asia

10 September 2013

This is a summary of a seminar on conflict management in Central Asia, held at Chatham House on 10 September 2013. A group of experts discussed the current security situation in the region.

SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF NON-WESTERN ACTORS IN CENTRAL ASIA

The ESRC-funded project on rising powers and conflict management in Central Asia was introduced by its principal investigator John Heathershaw (University of Exeter). The project involves collaboration between academics from University of Exeter, Newcastle University, University of Bradford and the non-governmental organisation *Saferworld*. It focuses on the local response to armed conflict, as well as how global actors like Russia, China, India, Turkey and the United States may react. The research looks at the discourse that shapes political action and the frameworks that inform policy. States are constantly. The complexity of practice and the immediate impact of conflict on the population are areas that the project will cover. It is also interested in civil society and informal alternatives to the governmental approach to stabilization, such as local groups and initiatives, and how they respond to conflict.

Theoretical Overview

There is no single framework or theory for approaching the study of conflict management, but instead a set of alternative paradigms. Conflict management is dominated by the liberal idea of peace, but we must reflect on how and why great powers, external to the region, involve themselves in Central Asia. There are three explanations for this. First, traditional geopolitics and the primacy of security. Second, the international political economy: the emergence of a new kind of empire based on economic and financial capital. Third, the symbolic nature of geo-power politics, which emphasizes the importance of reputation and conflict management as public performance in order to gain legitimacy.

The term ‘rising powers’ is vague as it is not clear relative to what these actors are rising. The traditional great powers are in decline and their capacity to subjugate others has been undermined. Although the West is declining, that does not necessitate the ‘rise of the rest’. The term primarily voices a Western *concern* over rising powers, which says more about the West than about the rising powers themselves. The question of ‘what is Central Asia?’ should also be addressed. It can include five post-Soviet Central Asian states,

or defined as 'Kazakhstan and Central Asia' or it can be even broader to include Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan. There are certain cultural and historical factors that mediate between societies and governments, which is significant as Central Asian people feel more comfortable with Russia due to similarities in political cultures.

There is appetite for expanding the theoretical explanations for the nature of conflict management and its effect on state formation, including the sense that Central Asia could be viewed in identity terms as part of a larger category involving Russia and Turkey.

China and India

Central Asia is not China's main focus, as China is currently concerned with its relations with Taiwan, the West and India. However, China has had a presence in Central Asia for the last 20 years; bilateral trade has multiplied by factor of 65 since then and Chinese companies involved in oil, gas and mineral extraction have been established in the region. China's increased presence has been warmly welcomed by Central Asia's political elite, but the public is suspicious towards China. China is keen to be seen as non-threatening and trustworthy; it prefers not to meddle in internal politics or domestic affairs. However, it is not always possible to separate business and politics when two countries are trading together.

China often abstains from UN votes, minimizing its interference in geopolitics. Overall, China has no calculated hegemonic plan in Central Asia but it is a major player and its pragmatic engagement is not without strategy. China's priorities are economic issues, particularly natural resources extraction and internal security. Both have a direct relationship to China's investments. Energy cooperation is the highlight of Central Asian-Chinese relations. China imports huge quantities of oil and gas and it wants to minimize its dependence on Middle Eastern sources and maritime routes. Finding energy sources in Central Asia also dovetails with China's security issues. It will likely become more involved in Central Asian security in order to protect its interests there.

China's security engagement has been modest; it has left military issues in Central Asia to Russia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), with its emphasis on combating terrorism, is the one of the few regional organizations that China has joined. It remains to be seen whether the collaboration between Russia and China will lead to competition for resources, confrontations or cooperation. Russia aims to strengthen its role in

Central Asia, but this is not compatible with strengthening the SCO and Chinese presence.

The last decade has seen India increase its efforts to engage with Central Asia politically, economically, culturally and in the security sphere. India's relationship with in Central Asia is similar to that of China, as India is keen to secure its energy supplies and to monitor radical Islamic groups. India has domestic energy resources but there is domestic demand is too great and so Central Asia's energy resources are appealing. India is to invest in Kazakhstan, and a pipeline between Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India has been discussed. Jihadist groups and the Taliban in Afghanistan are also a security concern for India.

Unlike China, India has deployed its military in Central Asia. It has observer status in the SCO, but it is unlikely to make use of this platform. China's economic influence, which totals $46 billion of annual trade, is too great for India to compete with. Geographically, China has an advantage, and is in the process of building a new Silk Road. In addition, Russia is unlikely to allow India to project a meaningful military presence in Central Asia. Although India's alliance with the United States may offer it a greater role in regional politics, India remains a minor player in a Central Asia while China continues to increase its presence.

Russia and Turkey

In the post-Soviet period, Russia has had to come to terms with its diminished influence in former USSR countries. In the past 20 years, it has intensified its desire to strengthen its role in Central Asia, with a focus on the Eurasian Customs Union. China's increasing role as an economic actor may pose a choice as to whether Central Asian countries want trade from China or remittances from Russia. The formal and informal nature of trade and remittances means they can avoid making a marked choice between the two. The five Central Asian countries do not want to be dominated by Russia or China, preferring to have the option to trade with both.

After the disarray of the 1990s, and the post 9/11 effect in the region, Moscow's approach to Central Asia has focused on a narrower cluster of countries. Russia is unable to decide if Central Asia is a foreign or domestic policy issue. Domestic considerations suggest a withdrawal from Central Asia, but foreign security pulls Russia to the region. An emphasis on bilateralism dominates in the security sphere. Russia is likely to remain a prominent power in Central Asia due to its security cooperation agreements

and investments, but it is now only one player among several as China's role as an economic actor grows.

Moscow is not sure whether China is an opportunity or a threat. In the medium to long-term, China could become a problem for Russia. Thus far, Sino-Russian cooperation in Central Asia has worked because Beijing wants to keep Central Asia in Russia's security fold.

Turkey has an historic role in Central Asia, but its promotion of the Turkic community as the bridge between Asia and the West merely raised expectations and was ultimately a disappointment. Ankara is keen to present itself as a global player. Turkey has played a notably active role in other conflicts, particularly in comparison to China and India, but it has preferred to focus on the Middle East rather than become embroiled in Central Asian issues. The risks of a Middle East-style eruption in Turkey are a priority for the government. Turkey should be viewed as a pivot partner in the region due to its relationship with the Arab League, the SCO and others. The question is whether Turkey has the political will or the appetite for change if the opportunity presents itself, and will it opt for a business-first policy in Central Asia or take a back seat role.

Discussion

China

Central Asia is a secondary priority for Chinese foreign policy, which is why Russia and China have thus far been able to get along. It is in China's interests to underplay its differences with Russia. While China is significant, its expanding footprint is in fact still rather narrow in Central Asia, and its presence is fundamentally about the economic relationship. Although China has no hegemonic plan, some would also say that China has no strategy at all in Central Asia. China is a participant but not a major player. Even though China maintains that it will not expand its geopolitical footprint in Central Asia, it may do so with ad hoc policies. Non-state actors do play a role in Chinese foreign policy toward Russia, but it is more about state actors.

China's energy strategy in Central Asia is to buy up resources by trying to buy as much equity as it can get away with, which is why its energy cooperation with Russia has not developed. China has a series of policies that are not coordinated into a strategy. Central Asia is a further indication that China abstains from other countries' internal issues. However, there are recent

cases demonstrating that when there are economic interests at stake, China could intervene (e.g. in South Sudan). What may be a convenient laissez-faire approach for China now is not sustainable in the long term. Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to its economic engagement in the region may help to safeguard China's own interests. This means understanding conflict dynamics and reaching out to civil society, since China has a poor image in Central Asia.

China views itself as participating in political development through its economic manoeuvres, and that it views the SCO as an economic vehicle with strong security links if required. Being stable is China's contribution to the world. However, the peoples of Central Asia regard China as a major contributor to security-building and view this as sophistry. There is a conflict of opinion in China between the political elite and the public over how to handle Central Asian conflicts. China wishes to expand popular support for its activities in Central Asia; but so far the benefits of projects financed by China have not percolated into the Central Asian communities.

Russia

Russia's demise in Central Asia is sometimes exaggerated; it is still the number one external player in the region. Its main purpose in Central Asia is to project geopolitical influence; Russia cannot be a global power if it is not a power in its own region. It does not see itself as just another player in the region; it sees Central Asia as its own space. Russia examines its strengths in Central Asia and where to concentrate its efforts. A corollary of that is the issue of migrant workers in Russia, and how President Vladimir Putin's tightening measures against immigrants is likely to play out. The Russian political elite tend to view the West as a more immediate threat than China, but China is perhaps the greater long-term threat.

Putin does not have a strategy for Central Asia. Russia has an overall vision in the region and tactics but lacks the middle level of strategy to realize its Eurasian vision. Its foreign policy vision comes up against inconvenient realities that foil its objectives. Central Asia is not a pawn in the game; its states are independent actors with more than 20 years of exercising sovereignty. Russian foreign policy often interacts with the world as it wishes to see it. Russia constantly tries to forge a reputation in the hope that people will buy into it. However, Russia is not monolithic, and its demography and international priorities have changed in the past 10 years. It has a frequent rhetoric of reintegration with Central Asia but this is a costly endeavour. Other

than Putin, Russia's political elite are not interested in Central Asia. A key issue for Russia is drug trafficking in the region through Afghanistan.

Turkey

Turkey is an economically dynamic model of democracy with an Islamic government, which causes significant problems for the way Ankara is perceived in the region. Turkey first put effort into Central Asia in the 1990s, but failed to develop its potential. It engages on business but not political or security terms. Dealing also with Europe and the Middle East, Central Asia is a low priority. The identity dimension is important and may be significant in the future. Turkey does not have the same political, economic and security influence as Russia and China, but it may play a critical role in future developments.

SESSION 2: NON-LIBERAL APPROACHES TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The debate on how states respond to internal conflicts has put liberal and non-liberal approaches to conflict resolution into focus on a global level. The norms, practices and discourse of liberal peace have faced a backlash from more statist approaches.

After the events in Osh in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, one could observe resistance to liberal ideas of peace-building, e.g. those of OSCE. The liberal approach was seen as leading to separatism, while local elites in Osh have strived to build peace by exercising total control.

According to conflict theory, there are two basic sources of conflict:

- Grievance: conflict arises if there is dissatisfaction. Thus to deal with this type of conflict one should address the source of dissatisfaction.
- Feasibility: conflict arises if there are sufficient incentives in place. Thus the way to deal with the conflict is to close down the space for rebellion; meeting demands would mean more opportunities for conflict.

The idea that grievances are secondary in any conflict is common in Russian and Chinese discourse; China sent in assessment teams to determine who was to blame for the events in Kyrgyzstan. In the case of Osh, the choice is between granting the Uzbek minority greater autonomy and closing down the space for their mobilization.

There are four dynamics in which liberal and non-liberal approaches are markedly different:

- Use of coercion/violence: The non-liberal approach uses targeted violence to prevent mass violence. However, the use of force may eventually lead to mass violence, as seen in Andijan or Syria. Non-native actors are sometimes used to reinforce state coercion, e.g. there are reports of Uzbek security service personnel working in Russian prisons.

- Actors: Liberal approaches to peace-building emphasize the role of non-state actors, such as civil society and NGOs. Non-liberal approaches focus on the role of the state and see NGOs as a source of conflict. At the same time, they reject international resolution of internal violent conflict, e.g. in Chechnya or Andijan. There is also a tendency to throw money at problems, albeit through a system constructed around control over key economic resources.

- Space: Non-liberal approaches attempt to control spaces, e.g. city spaces where rebels can mobilize. In the case of Osh, providing more space for the Uzbek minority is not seen as a solution.

- Discourse: Authoritarian governments tend to link internal issues to global discourses, e.g. the War on Terror, as it provides self-justification for the elites and a way to reduce international pressure on their treatment of internal conflict.

The liberal approach to peace-building involves clusters of actors – NGOs, international organizations, etc. – and the main challenges are coordination and competition for resources. NGOs often struggle to make their work more relevant and adapt their global brand to local concerns, while maintaining the moral authority that comes with universal values. Donors tend to favour the groups they see as underprivileged, which can exacerbate tensions. The forces of market segmentation can go against the liberal concept of an 'integrated public space'. The main challenge in the non-liberal approach is to contain one's clients.

The differences between the two approaches provide clout for local actors, who often leverage external mediators to their agenda by using one side's priorities to get access to resources and resist attempts to impose conditions. For example, Tajikistan's turn to China allowed it to break off discussions with the World Bank. China has financed infrastructure projects in Central Asia, e.g. the Dushanbe-Kulma highway. However the local population is unlikely to

benefit – toll booths operated by affiliates of the political elites will doubtless be installed as soon as construction is finished.

China's experience of managing domestic discontent is relevant to many Central Asian states. One of China's main preoccupations is with addressing domestic grievances – the political legitimacy of one-party rule depends on addressing grievances. Beijing's approach to internal issues is to rely on local authorities to resolve issues; if they fail, the problem is taken to the national level, the grievance is redressed and any wrongdoers punished. The local authorities are also punished for not managing the situation. However, there is a limit for expressing grievances, e.g. demands for political autonomy are not considered legitimate. Grievance is a vague term. In China, it is defined by the legitimacy of the Communist state. Similarly, Kazakhstan has treated the incidents in Zhanaozen as symptoms of economic grievances. The Chinese model is therefore not a blueprint; it works in the short term, but it is not clear whether the control mechanism is sustainable in the long term.

NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan will create potential for armed conflict and criminal activity. The situation in Baluchistan in particular may worsen. Emergence and re-emergence of extremist groups has its own dynamic, not necessarily linked to NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan. Some would argue the way forward is through discussion with religious activists, but in Central Asia the trend has been overwhelmingly towards repressing the sources of religious conflict, e.g. Tajikistan has witnessed a gradual closing of the opposition space. The spillover of extremism after the withdrawal is an elite agenda. The danger comes from actors positioning themselves and over-reacting to the withdrawal; borders may become more militarized. The withdrawal will not create a power vacuum, but it may serve as an excuse for Russia to take a stronger stance in Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan.

The differences between the liberal and non-liberal approaches are not always sharp. The liberal approach also emphasizes the role of international organizations and the role of the state in building polities and providing security. The failed state discourse argues that any state in power is better than an artificial regime, hence international organizations often work to rebuild failed states. Co-option is a widespread practice in both models. Are power-sharing agreements and mechanisms more important than elections? There are grey areas between the liberal and non-liberal approaches. Not all states are good at interpreting events. At the same time, each liberal peace-building project has its own discourse (e.g. Kosovo). In the case of Sri Lanka, local actors were the leading discursive actors; they were influential in forming

UN resolutions, for example. The SCO is a great resource for Central Asian leaders – they can adapt resolutions to their own circumstances.

For Russia, there is a constant tension between security and geopolitics in Central Asia. On the one hand, Russia would like the West to stay in, but on the other hand, a Western presence would be contrary to Russia's long-term interests in the region. It is interesting to observe how China manages its presence in the peace-building space and its approach to diffusing tensions; Chinese representatives never attend donor coordination meetings in Central Asia, although they always do in Africa.

SESSION 3: INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH OF KYRGYZSTAN IN JUNE 2010

Alternative local responses to managing the Osh 2010 violence are required. There is a focus on international interventions to promote peace, and the assumption that Western actors should not focus on improving things in the region, but more how things could be prevented from worsening.

There are five common factors to what happened in Osh in 1990 and in 2010. First, titular ethnicization. Second, Kyrgyz fears of Uzbek separatist leaders breaking up Kyrgyzstan. Third, shortage of economic opportunities. Fourth, political instability and power vacuum. Fifth, inability of security forces to de-escalate the violence.

At the end of 2010, the UN and EU (both key donors) extended their reconciliation projects for 2011-13. They argue that the individual is the only true agent of peace. Interviews have been conducted on this idea and the concept has been critically analysed. Mediation programmes have limited appreciation of conflicts, and tend to assume that locals have backward attitude toward each other. The delivery of mediation seminars may be inappropriate, particularly when they are led by outsiders with limited understanding of the context and language. This merely perpetuates the conflict. The hiring of mediators is also flawed, and appropriate demographics are not always recruited. Important social groups are often not incorporated and mediators often choose to work in ethnically mixed villages where conflicts did not originate.

International organizations claim that they are successful, citing the numbers of mediators trained. This success rate is difficult to measure, as those awarded with certificates to enter conflict zones can also bring with the

prejudices of their social group. Thus far, the mediation projects might have symbolic value in challenging enmity, but evidence has not been found to suggest that they are useful in conflict management, and they could be ineffectual or even counterproductive. External actors hoping to mediate fail to address the above five factors. Political instability in particular is the key to creating the kind of power vacuum that allowed the violence to occur. Outsiders ought to spend less time on promoting mediation and more time putting aside their own biases in order to prevent conflict.

The conflict in 2010 was caused by longstanding factors that international actors do not understand. They attempt to alleviate the symptoms rather than address the causes. The 2010 ethnic conflict and the violent overthrow of the Bakiyev government were symptoms of the longstanding transition to independence that started in the 1990s. Kyrgyzstan is divided over whether to preserve Soviet institutions, establish a Western-style democracy or find an alternative path. It is also economically divided and is grappling with its own identity. Kyrgyz citizens are not consulted, and there is much unhappiness with the current arrangements. Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy is equally conflicted, and Bishkek has tried to play Russia off against other countries. Kyrgyzstan likes to compare its ethnic conflict to difference between Switzerland’s German and Swiss-German speakers. In 2010 the ruling regime lost its monopoly on violence and could not restore it, opening the floodgates.

2010 saw both human and material losses, but it also had a constructive side; Kyrgyzstan came full circle and resolved its issues of transition. The outcome saw a more equal division of power in politics, a more stable balance of power, and a foreign policy decision to remain close to Russia, a predictable ally. However, Kyrgyzstan may have invested too much faith in Russia. Some analysts maintain that the new arrangements reflect popular will, and that most stable democracies are shaped in an initially violent way. Tensions remain, as the ethnocentric model discourages ethnic minorities from entering into politics.

International donors are far from monolithic and are aware of the faultlines of the conflict. Although donors have flaws, such as shortages of resources, they also have different priorities that move with the times. There is insufficient evidence to suggest that international donors are ineffective, although criticism is healthy.

Discussion

Soviet policy promoted affirmative action and the protection of minorities. After the USSR's collapse, Kyrgyzstan preserved affirmative action but discarded the policy of protection.

It is possible to measure the success of international donors through the number of communities they have mediated and whether they achieved significant public resonance. The highlands in Kyrgyzstan are an issue, as the district authorities do not know how to bring them to order, and so it is difficult to expect international NGOs to fulfil the roles that citizens find hard. The donors in Kyrgyzstan did not challenge human rights abuses as they had done in other countries, and so they ought to have some power. It was argued that the donors in fact 'choke Kyrgyzstan with kindness', and the country has become a business for foreign conflict management prevention organizations. International organizations' aims appear to steer the situation more towards inaction than action, and that that ought to be rethought.

It was questioned whether current initiatives facilitate the social conviviality of informal modes of inhabiting space such as markets or public transport. While familiarity is no guarantee of cooperation, ignorance is a guarantee of enmity. The criminal element has also been underplayed, since the region is a trade route for the trafficking of arms, human and drugs. A further issue is that formal communications channels of grievances are more available to Kyrgyz than Uzbeks. There are many different ethnicities in Osh, and consequently a number of different narratives so it is interesting to note how grievances are channelled and articulated. Kyrgyzstan is in a period of transition that is not helped by the flattery that it receives from the international community. Despite the so-called successes of Kyrgyzstan's civil society, when violence broke out in 2010 there were no Kyrgyzstani civil rights organizations present. International actors must take accountability for their actions in the country if the situation is to improve.

The research project on rising powers and conflict management in Central Asia aims to carry out a number of ethnographic studies to assess the long-term impact of the violence in Kyrgyzstan. The project hopes to uncover how the authorities could mobilize the narratives of cooperation and marginalize the narratives of competition. Although the research is focused on peace-building, there is a limit to what outside donors can do.

Peace-building is a 'cross-category' relationship, and work needs to be done on the rural and highland residential areas throughout Kyrgyzstan. The ties

between East and West Kyrgyzstan need to be improved. The ultimate future of good ethnic relations lies in the state's hands.

SESSION 4: HOW CAN RESEARCH EFFECTIVELY INFLUENCE POLICY?

The relationship between scholars and government has a long history. In liberal democracies over the past fifty years many have advocated a special place for academics in the policy process. Unlike public servants, they are not required to serve the population who elected them. Unlike professionals such as accountants and lawyers, they do not need to consider the effect on a user or client as they do not share the moral obligation to protect. Finally, they do not need to consider the short-term effects as, say, bankers or entrepreneurs do.

In the United Kingdom, attempts to incorporate academia into the policy-making world have been on the increase, partly as a consequence of Education Secretary David Blunkett's speech to the Economic and Social Research Council in 2000. He stated the government should be able to rely on social science and social scientists 'to tell [it] what works and why and what types of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective.'

This defining of the role of social science as about 'what works' set out a clear and unequivocal agenda for the future: public policy had to be driven by 'evidence' and policy research focused on find out 'what works'. Documents that come out of Evidence-Based Policy-Making EBPM emphasize two forms of knowledge: academic/research evidence (episteme) and professional/institutional (techne). The academic knowledge should above all provide causal explanations and for this reason quantitative methods are preferred – i.e. knowledge that can be added up, joined up and wired up.

Academia and policy-making conflict because of different goals and constraints. Academics seek knowledge and truth without reference to implementation, policy-makers must prioritise context so that policies take into account the effect of their behaviour and the effects on other users.

Policy-makers have to cater to multiple audiences and are unlikely to support extreme solutions. Academics are asked not only to provide evidence-based research but also to provide fresh ideas; their work can help encourage policy-makers to think more broadly. Packaging, framing and selling ideas to communities are essential tasks of the policy-maker and invariably some kind of resolution is expected. By contrast, the packaging of a proposal becomes

unacceptable to academics and they may decide that no resolution is possible.

However, the contradictions can lead to some benefits in that: (1) the philosophers encourage policy-makers to think more broadly using academic research in terms of policy paradigms rather than policy solutions – the broad goals behind policy; (2) policy-makers encourage philosophers to do applied ethics and research that better incorporates social consequences.

To conclude, in the concrete case of conflict management in Central Asia, one of the questions is how to incorporate understanding of the origins of the conflict into an effective plan to resolve it. This is why the research project on rising powers in Central Asia has incorporated non-academic organizations from the start.

UK actors in Central Asia include the Department for International Development, the Ministry of Defence and several others. Achieving a policy consensus is therefore difficult and perhaps not always desirable. Influencing the policies of other, non-UK actors in Central Asia might also be an area worthy of consideration. Diplomats often have to answer questions about the perceived agenda behind their suggestions.

There is appetite for the application of academic research among UK policy-makers, although the impact is not always visible. Early warning systems, influence-mapping and scenario-planning are some of the areas where academics are consulted. Officials generally have a good grasp of open source material. Ministers usually encourage debate. At the same time, policy-makers often engage in 'quick and dirty' scenario-planning exercises which academics are not comfortable with. These focus on drivers of stability and instability and use simple arithmetic to feed into planning.

The purpose of consulting an academic is not necessarily to reach a conclusion, but to discuss elements that should feature in the policy-makers' calculation and to listen to recommendations as to what the academic perceives as the important issues in a given situation. Sometimes the government does not have answers to questions and it has to decide whether or not to act. Academics can help get a long-term view and think from a new angle. They can also provide evidence to those formulating policy and reach out beyond their comfort zones. Academics should give their audience a distinctive perspective, not just rehash what has been written by others – policy-makers are usually familiar with the open source material and they look for analysis and insights. There are always worries that the narrative prevailing in the media will become universal.

Prediction and early warning are some of the functions of social science, but policy-makers sometimes have excessive expectations; some treat academics like oracles. If an academic makes an incorrect prediction, they refrain from consulting them again. There is sometimes a difference between what governments ask for and what should be looked into. Also, linguistic skills and local knowledge are needed by government.

Academics are often accused of not seeing the bigger picture, focusing instead on the micro level. It is not true that focus on the micro level is not helpful. But having just the macro-level is not possible. A lot of research that claims to cover the macro level is based on interviews in the capital and/or with the elites. Micro-level research is not just for illustration, it allows understanding of how locals perceive certain issues and why projects do not operate as expected or have unforeseen results.

There is a risk of trivialization. One needs a framework for thinking in an abstract way for a neutral academic endeavour; i.e. one needs to know how to think of what there is to think about. Keeping focus on alternative frameworks of analysis is important. One often sees a 'pop-geopolitics' approach to Central Asia. Academics can play a critical, advisory role to help run foreign policy better by helping to deconstruct and criticize the policy framework.

The new Research Excellence Framework highlights the institutional power of academics by assessing their work based on the impact of their research. However, the main motto for surviving in the academic sector is still 'publish or perish', and an author's citation index and Google Scholar coefficient are more important for getting a job in academia than the policy-relevance of the author's work.

Academia and policy should be kept separate. Influence in the corporate world, advocacy sector and media is just as important as influence in government. In the United States, for example, there is a difference between the Washington policy community, focusing exclusively on US politics, and the New York policy community consisting of international organizations and NGOs. New York is the centre of the conflict management community.

Presentations to a policy-making audience need to strike a balance between depth and brevity. Over-theorization is a major mistake. One often encounters the perception that academics lack contact with reality. To combat this, academics need to show how their micro-level research fits into the bigger picture. Too much jargon, footnotes and poor presentation skills are frequent

problems. Policy-makers often have limited time and attention span. A summary followed by evidence could be a useful format.

Academics often strive to find channels for communicating their research to a wider audience, e.g. Chatham House. Such fora can draw together officials, NGO representatives and academics precisely because they are different from track one dialogues.