Conferences and Lecture Series

First International METU Conference on International Relations

Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey, July 3-5, 2002

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The Department of International Relations at Middle East Technical University (METU) organized the "First International METU Conference on International Relations" in Ankara July 3-5, 2002. As various aspects of Eurasia were discussed at the conference, I think it would be interesting for the readers of *Central Eurasian Studies Review* to learn more about this conference.

As the international environment surrounding Turkey has changed significantly since the end of the Cold War, the organization of an international relations conference has become an especially urgent matter for the community of international relations scholars in Turkey. For that reason, the conference sought to discuss the key issues of post-Cold War international relations through an interdisciplinary approach.

The conference was a result of the remarkable cooperation of the faculty, the students, the university administration and the sponsors, including the Turkish Academy of Sciences, the Foreign Policy Institute of Turkey, the US Embassy in Ankara, the British Council, the UN High Commission for Refugees, the GAP Regional Development Administration, and others. The main limitation of the conference in attracting even greater participation and attendance was financial. We had to organize this conference with a modest amount of financial support, primarily due to the ongoing economic crisis in Turkey.

We were very honored to host a number of invited speakers including James Rosenau from George Washington University, Stephen J. Blank from the US Army War College, Susan Woodward from City University of New York, Lenore Martin from Harvard University, Peter Duncan from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College, London, Ronen Palan and Kees van der Pijl from the University of Sussex, Loukas Tsoukalis from the University of Athens, Ergün Olgun, the Undersecretary to the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and John Roberts, Senior Editor of Platts Energy Group. In addition to drawing participants from around the world, the conference brought together scholars from nearly all the international relations departments in Turkey.

James Rosenau, the distinguished international relations scholar from George Washington University, delivered the opening lecture of the conference. The title of his lecture was "Ominous Tensions in a Globalizing World." In it he considered the prospects for improving the security of peoples everywhere as quite dim in the age of globalization. His pessimism is evident in the following statement: "Until now, I have always been an optimist about the probabilities of globalization fostering long-term processes of reconciliation among those groups caught up in seemingly intractable tensions. But my optimism is under severe challenge today." Rosenau argued that "the Cold War was at least marked by a form of stability, but today instability, even chaos, seems to mark the prevailing order. And it does so in such a way as to cast doubt on whether the liberating dimensions of globalization are sufficient to reverse the descent toward worldwide chaos, and thereby achieve a modicum of security for both peoples and collectivities."

The main themes of the conference included Eurasia as well as theories of international relations, international security, globalization, energy, Cyprus, Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. The participants in the sessions on theories of international relations discussed the emerging theoretical perspectives in international relations and stressed the limitations of political realism in explaining the developments in the post-Cold War

era. Like Rosenau, most participants in the globalization sessions underscored the complications of the globalization process in both domestic and international contexts. The international security sessions concentrated on the changing concept of security in the light of the current war on international terrorism as well as non-traditional security issues such as ethnic and religious conflicts, migration, and water and environmental issues.

Aside from these sessions on general theoretical themes, there were also panels on regional issues. The sessions on Europe focused on the integration and enlargement processes of, and Turkey's relations with, the European Union. Concerning the future role of the European Union, Loukas Tsoukalis argued that the EU is not likely to become a superpower or a superstate because it is a new type of international actor seeking to harmonize international relations in Europe without falling into the political realist trap of zero-sum games. In addition, the Turkish government's attempts at harmonizing its practices with those of the EU were evaluated by Nilgün Arısan and İnci Ataç from Turkey's Secretariat General of European Union Affairs and Oskar Benedikt from the Representation of the European Commission to Turkey. Regarding Cyprus, a key issue in Turkey's relations with the European Union, the participants discussed the prospects for a resolution to the conflict. Tözün Bahçeli's paper "Searching for a Cyprus Settlement: Considering Options for Creating a Federation, a Confederation, or Two Independent States," was noteworthy in this respect. Concerning the Balkans, Susan Woodward identified the competing definitions of security articulated by the great powers and the regional states. Not surprisingly, discussions in the Middle East sessions revolved around the impact of September 11 on the region.

The Eurasia sessions focused on Russia's relations with its neighbors, the nation-building processes in Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and post-communist transitions. Peter Duncan from the University of London gave the keynote speech on Eurasia. The title of his paper was "Putin's Foreign Policy: Before and After September 11." Duncan pointed out that Putin had been pursuing a pragmatic policy towards the West since becoming acting president in 2000, long before the horrendous terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent international cooperation against international terrorism. Unlike much of Moscow's defense and foreign policy establishment, Putin has seen the need to support America in international politics rather than follow an isolationist course. According to Duncan, Putin's decision to share intelligence and welcome American troops to CIS states after September 2001 reflected the convergence of Russia's economic needs and the desire to crush the Chechen rebels. After September 11 Putin seized the opportunity to mobilize international support against what he calls "international terrorism," a security threat the scope of which ranges from the Balkans to Kashmir.

On Ukraine, I presented a paper entitled "Ukraine under Kuchma: Looking East, Going West?" In it I argued that Kuchma's pragmatic policy of "To Europe with Russia" weakens the basis for westernizing reforms in the country. I also chaired a very interesting session on the Caucasus. In that session, Yaşar Onay enumerated the geographical, ethnic, political and economic factors that could explain why the Caucasus has been so unstable. Rovshan Sadıkbeyli's paper underscored that Turkey's policies contribute to regional stability in the South Caucasus. Aydın Ibrahimov and Mustafa Mutluer, on the other hand, argued that the collapse of the Soviet Union undermined the basis for regional stability due to the its negative economic and political repercussions.

The session on Central Asia focused on the role of nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism in post-Soviet transitions. Yılmaz Bingöl evaluated the relationship between nationalism and democracy in post-communist Central Asia. Contrary to the transitologist school's anticipation of liberal democracy, Bingol argued that it is indeed nationalism, not liberal democracy, that is the real successor to communism. Unlike Bingol, Zurab Todua focused on Islamic fundamentalism rather than nationalism. Based on his analysis of the opposition in Uzbekistan before and after the beginning of the counter-terrorism operation in Afghanistan, Todua argued that the complex of deteriorating socioeconomic and political conditions contributes to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Lastly, Kai Wegerich from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London discussed water use problems in Central Asia. There was also a session on Eurasianism, which was conducted in Turkish. Elif Hatun Kılıçbeyli, Ertan Efegil, Erhan Büyükakıncı and Ulaş Mangıtlı discussed the policies of great powers towards Central Asia. In general they agreed that Eurasianism is a conservative ideology that could hardly contribute to attempts at promoting regional stability.

The sessions on energy, an important topic for many researchers, focused on the strategic, political and economic issues in the production, transportation and the marketing of natural gas, oil and alternative sources of energy. Stephen J. Blank from the US Army War College gave the keynote address on "The Transformation of Caspian Security." Blank argued that the United States is likely to increase its role in providing regional security in the Caspian region. The other speakers discussed the politics of pipelines. Emre Engur, from Turkey's main pipeline company, BOTAŞ, evaluated the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as an economically feasible and politically preferred option. John Roberts, Senior Editor of the Platts Energy Group, disagreed with many of Engur's propositions. The disagreements showed that the saga of the Caspian pipelines will continue to be heard in the foreseeable future.

In the closing session, Atila Eralp, Chairman of the Department of International Relations, expressed his pleasure at hosting a community of senior and junior scholars at the conference. Eralp also underscored the importance of having future international conferences with participants from not only the discipline of international relations, but also from other branches of the social sciences. The organizing committee and the participants made suggestions for transforming the papers into publications in order to reach a wider audience. Some of the participants also highlighted their desire to establish an Association of International Studies in Turkey. Furthermore, the participants expressed strong support for having the next International METU Conference on International Relations in 2003.

To conclude, the First International METU Conference on International Relations was a useful event for participating students, academics, and practitioners of international relations. In the coming years it will be an even more constructive occasion if we can increase the number of our guest speakers and turn the conference into a major occasion for scholars and practitioners of international relations to meet and exchange views. It is also very important to organize much more focused sessions on various questions of international relations. The Call for Papers for the Second International METU Conference on International Relations will be circulated by the end of 2002. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could send your suggestions especially on the upcoming Eurasia panels to oktay@metu.edu.tr. The conference program and other METU IR events can be obtained online at http://www.ir.metu.edu.tr. I hope to see all the readers of the *Central Eurasian Studies Review* and the members of the Central Eurasian Studies Society in Ankara in the near future.

Middle East History and Theory Conference and Central Asian Studies at the University of Chicago

Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA, May 11-12, 2001

Reported by: **Patrick Wing**, Ph.D. student, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Chicago, USA. pgwing@midway.uchicago.edu.

The Middle East History and Theory Conference (MEHAT) is a student organized event sponsored by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago. Founded by University of Chicago graduate students in 1985, the MEHAT Conference has grown in both size and scope. For the past seventeen years the conference has provided a forum for graduate students to present and share their work with peers, colleagues, and professionals in their field. Not only has the conference drawn larger numbers of participants each year, it has also evolved to recognize and include Central Asian studies as an integral aspect of the course of Middle Eastern and world history.

In the past two years the MEHAT Conference has featured panels devoted to the political, religious, economic, and social history of the region which today encompasses the five Central Asian republics, i.e., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Mongolia, China, and Iran. Central Asian studies was well represented at the 17th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference this past spring. The two-day gathering

of students and scholars from around the United States and the world included panels, lectures, and workshops on the history, culture, and society of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Several papers emphasized the international nature of historical issues and modern problems. This has been an encouraging trend in a field which has at times relied on modern, nation-state based paradigms to explain events in a region which has always been connected to the rest of the world as a cultural crossroads. Such papers at this year's conference included "Islam and HIV/AIDS in Central Asia: Crisis of Traditional Values" by Alisher Khamidov from the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. In his paper Khamidov explored the gradual evolution of HIV/AIDS in Central Asia and the response of Islamic clerics to this epidemic. Specifically, he examined local religious initiatives and the efforts of religious leaders to use Islamic teachings in making HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns more effective. Dr. Guli Yuldasheva from Indiana University presented a paper entitled "Iranian-American Relations: Impact for Central Asia." Yuldasheva illustrated the ways in which the relationship between the United States and Iran has historically influenced, and continues to impact, the economic and political development of the Central Asian states. These are just two examples of the seven papers dedicated to Central Asian topics presented at the 2002 MEHAT conference. Another encouraging development was the number of scholars from the Central Asian republics who were willing to attend the conference. Despite the large number of applications to the conference, most of these scholars had to cancel their travel plans due to financial difficulties and restrictions on visa applications.

Additionally, recent conference keynote addresses have related to Central Asian issues. In 2001, Professor Devin DeWeese of Indiana University discussed "History, Hagiography, and the Problem of Religious Language: Some Thoughts on Approaches to Islamic Hagiographical Sources." Professor Richard Foltz of the University of Florida gave the 2002 keynote address, entitled "Does Nature Have Historical Agency? Perspectives from the Silk Road, Central Asia, and Elsewhere."

The musical culture of Central Asia has been a special part of the past two MEHAT gatherings as well, as the conference has played host to the now annual University of Chicago Central Asian Music Festival. In 2002, the festival included a lecture and discussion of Central Asian music with Ted Levin of Dartmouth College and Martin Stokes of the University of Chicago. In addition, there were two nights of performances. Talant Mawkanuli gave a solo recital of traditional Kazakh music and the ensemble Shash Maqam performed Jewish music from Bukhara.

The conference coordinators are now accepting applications for its eighteenth meeting on May 9 and 10, 2003 at the University of Chicago. Papers dealing with Middle Eastern and Central Asian art, architecture, literature, society, history, and politics are welcome. As usual, graduate students are particularly urged to participate. The deadline for the submission of a one-page abstract and curriculum vitae is March 1, 2003. Abstracts and cv's can be sent via email to Patrick Wing at pgwing@midway.uchicago.edu, or by mail to: MEHAT Coordinators, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Chicago, 5828 S. University Ave., Chicago, IL 60637.

Further information regarding past conferences, including papers in PDF format, can be found at the MEHAT website: http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/meht/.

NETWORKS, ALIGNMENTS AND FACTIONALISM IN TODAY'S CENTRAL ASIA

Centre Marc Bloch and Central Asian Seminar/ Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany, June 22, 2002

Reported by: **Ildikó Bellér-Hann**, Orientwissenschaftliches Zentrum/Center for Oriental Studies, Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, beller-hann@owz.uni-halle.de

The workshop was jointly organized by the Centre Marc Bloch (Berlin), in collaboration with the Central Asian Seminar/ Humboldt University, and the European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS). The workshop organizers were Prof. Dr. Ingeborg Baldauf (Central Asian Seminar, Humboldt University/ Berlin), Prof. Dr. Altan Gökalp (Centre Marc Bloch/ Berlin), and Asst. Prof. Mag. Dr. Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek (ESCAS and Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna)

The central focus of the workshop was the creation and/or recreation of networks, alignments and factionalism in Central Asia. Approaching the topic from different angles, including social anthropology, sociology, political science, economics and history, the various papers provided background information and in depth analyses on current developments in Central Asia for a broad public. Most papers presented materials and analyses based on first-hand observations and long term fieldwork in the respective regions.

Andrea Berg (Institute for Development Research, Ruhr-Universität Bochum) gave a paper entitled "Women's NGOs in Uzbekistan — Horizontal Networks or a New Elite?" In the first half of her paper she gave an overview of the origins and activities of local NGOs in Uzbekistan. Throughout the Soviet period participation in public organizations in Uzbekistan had an obligatory rather than voluntary character. In contrast, voluntary informal personal networks played a crucial role in everyday life and it is in these networks that post-socialist local NGOs seem to have their roots. Nevertheless, Berg distinguished local NGOs from informal networks since the former were self-help groups, while modern NGOs work for the benefit of a target group. Following network analysis theory, Berg argued that Uzbek NGOs occupy "structural holes" between local society and the international community, and therefore occupy an important broker position. Local NGOs are in competition with each other and personal relations continue to play an important part in their operation. Local NGOs form hierarchical rather than horizontal structures and seem to have provided new frameworks in which members of the former Soviet elite occupy key positions and continue to exert their influence.

Reinhard Eisener (Berlin) gave a paper entitled "Coming to Grips with Islamism in Central Asia?" This paper considered Islamist activities as a current political problem with conflict potential in Central Asia. It also attempted to inquire into the nature and perceptions of this phenomenon, taking into consideration features of its background and possible historical dimensions. The latter concerned in particular the Basmachi movement, the local Central Asian armed resistance against the Soviets in the 1920s-1930s.

Markus Kaiser (Sociology of Development Research Centre, University of Bielefeld) talked about "Cross Border Traders as Transformers." Kaiser analyzed the newly developed international informal-sector trade in Uzbekistan within the framework of bottom-up transformation. The speaker proposed that traders should be considered as transformers in their own right. The role of personal networks in the second and informal economy was considered. Kaiser argued that during the transformation from socialism to a market economy the network structures of the second economy became transformed into opportunity structures for networking in Uzbekistan's informal sector.

Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek (Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna) gave a paper entitled "Alignment Policies and Factionalism among the Uzbeks of Northeastern Afghanistan." Following an analysis of the socio-political structure of the region and a summary of its political history, Rasuly-Paleczek focused on the strategies that the Uzbeks of northeastern Afghanistan (16th to mid-19th century) developed since their subjugation by the Afghan state in 1888. In this area inhabited by a large number of different ethnic and linguistic groups the creation of interethnic networks became one of the major strategies to defend local political interests vis-à-vis the Afghan state, which tried to gain firm control of Afghan society. In this process the former tribal leadership of the Uzbeks, who once ruled

northeastern Afghanistan, lost its prominent political position. Acting as intermediaries between the state and local society, local leaders played a major role in Afghan politics until the communist coup d'état of 1978; they were acting as brokers and defenders of local interests and political autonomy. In northeastern Afghanistan they also functioned as coordinators of interethnic alliances to defend their sociopolitical and economic interests vis-à-vis large numbers of new settlers. The final part of the paper focused on events following the coup d'état of 1978, the Soviet invasion, and the subsequent civil war in Afghanistan.

Ildikó Bellér-Hann (Orientwissenschaftliches Zentrum/ Center for Oriental Studies, Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg) spoke about "Uyghur Peasant Strategies in the Reform Period." Based on fieldwork data, this paper looked at some of the challenges faced by peasants in southern Xinjiang in the socialist market economy. It argued that for many in the countryside the intellectual discourses elaborated, for example, by Rudelson, have little meaning. Peasants are tied to their places of residence and to their land, and they maintain traditional multiple identities which are not hierarchically ordered. They continue to rely on alliances based on kinship and community, relationships which are supported by traditional ideals of reciprocity.

The workshop was concluded by Altan Gökalp (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin). In his paper, entitled "Between Tradition and Revelation: the Contradictions of Present Central Asian Identity," Gökalp summarized the previous papers and considered new directions for research.