

Contemporary Security Challenges in Eurasia

A conference presented by the
Center for Slavic, Eurasian
and East European Studies -
April 10 - 12, 2003

Keynote speaker, Michael Klare, says center of gravity in world affairs is shifting to Eurasia

Michael Klare, professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College and the keynote speaker for the "Contemporary Security Challenges in Eurasia" conference, told a packed auditorium at Rosenau Hall that Eurasia was increasingly becoming the center of gravity in world affairs. Klare's talk, based in part on his book, *Resource Wars – the New Landscape of Global Conflict*, included some discussion of current events, most pointedly the American capture of Baghdad just a day or two earlier.

Klare asserted that the United States' occupation of Iraq was not the end of American presence in the region, but rather the beginning. He noted the great increase in American military influence in the area since 1991: from U.S. forces in

Georgia training troops to protect the oil pipeline running through that country, to new U.S. bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgistan, to the build-up of the Azerbaijani Navy (with American assistance).

liberation of Iraq during that time.

In explaining the significance of oil to the United States' economy, Klare said that Americans' "rise in affluence to a



Keynote speaker, Michael Klare, and Director of the Center for Slavic, Eurasian and East European Studies, Bob Jenkins, take questions after Klare's talk on April 10.

Klare noted the Carter doctrine, put forth in a 1980 State of the Union address by Jimmy Carter, which states that oil is a vital security interest and that the U.S. will consider a threat to oil as a threat to national security. Klare was frankly skeptical about American motives in Iraq, noting that Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, among others, had funded Saddam Hussein for 10 years – even after he had used chemical weapons against his own people – and that they did not seem very much concerned with the



Ghia Nodia makes a point to fellow panelist, Richard Giragosian, and moderator, Patrick Conway, on the Problems of Governance I: Caucasus panel on Friday afternoon./photo by Will Bettmann

Panels and Speakers - Friday, April 11

Resource Competition and Economic Challenges

By John Surface

Kathleen Collins, Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, began the first panel of the conference, *Resource Competition and Economic Challenges*, by raising the ghost of the “Great Game” of superpower and colonial intervention and discussing the interests of Europe, Russia, the U.S. and China in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

She said that while the region holds little territorial interest for any major player other than Russia, its oil reserves are already attracting numerous business interests. Collins argued that superpower interests are ultimately not a zero sum game, rather that their interests are more aligned than competitive. In opening the region to balanced, inclusive resource development, all of the states in the region and all of the major powers have more to gain from cooperation and

negotiation than confrontation, in matters both of economic development and governance.

Elin Suleymanov, Senior Associate at Cornell Caspian Consulting, placed development and competition in perspective by noting that the Caspian’s reemergence as a major oil producer is in the role of a significant alternative to the reserves in the MidEast. He said the interest of outside states was a tool for strengthening state autonomy and development of the producers, particularly as development has not led to welfare state handouts as in the Persian Gulf but rather the growth of private business.

Suleymanov said he found Russia’s unwillingness to cooperate in the process of state building both ineffective and damaging. The geopolitical consequence of Russia’s approach will be a further diminishing of Russian influence in the region as the

SEE RESOURCE - PAGE 3



Martha Brill Olcott speaks on “Problems of Political Succession” in Central Asia

by Jeff Jennette

Martha Brill Olcott, from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, talked to conference participants about political succession and generational change in Central Asia. She emphasized the upcoming generational change in the leadership of all five Central Asian countries. She

believes that a profound and prolonged period of change will commence in the region in the next 2-3 years, due to the inevitable change in leadership. This change is inevitable if for no other reason than the advanced age of many of the leaders of the region, many of whom have been in power since

SEE OLCOTT - PAGE 6

Problems of Governance I: Caucasus

RESOURCE
FROM PAGE 2

P3

Ghia Nodia, chairman of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, opened the *Problems of Governance I: Caucasus* panel by discussing some differences between Southern Caucasian states. He said Georgia was the weakest state in the Southern Caucasus followed by Azerbaijan, with Armenia being the strongest. He also noted the nonstate-entities, regions struggling for independence such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Ossetia and Abkhaztia.

He said Georgia had the highest level of freedom, followed by Armenia and then Azerbaijan. In terms of political alignment, Nodia said that Georgia and Azerbaijan tended to be on the side of the United States, while Armenia sided with Russia. He also said that Russian policy in the Caucasus tends to be more obstructive than constructive.

“When you only have a stick and no carrot, that limits what you can do. And even that stick is getting limp,” he said, in reference to Russian foreign policy.

The next speaker, former Ambassador to Uzbekistan Joseph Presel said the U.S. needed to do more to bring about democracy in the Caucasus. He began by cautioning that “there is no social welfare net in these countries so corruption isn’t what we think it is. When we shake our fingers at these countries and say they need to shape up, we should think about that.”

However, he went on to call America the “mother-in-law of the world,” and say that, in fact, the U.S. needs to “continue to nag at these countries to govern more democratically.” Presel spoke about his personal frustration in trying to resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh when he served as a U.S. special envoy to Nagorno-Karabakh, saying that he had come close to resolutions,

but that the Caucasian political leaders were unwilling to take the final step.

Robert Bruce Ware, an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Southern Illinois University, who has regularly conducted fieldwork in the northeast Caucasus contrasted Chechnya with Daghestan. He rebutted the argument that old Chechen grievances with Russia (and the Soviet Union) played a major role in causing the current war in Chechnya. He said other republics also had legitimate grievances (such as mass deportations during the Soviet Era), but that those republics were not embroiled in war with Russia.

Ware also compared ancient systems of government in the two republics. He said Daghestan, which contains over 30 distinct linguistic groups, was governed by *jamat*, a connected village or group of villages, and that *jamat* trumped kinship structures. In contrast, he said, the most significant structure in Chechnya was the clan, or *teip*. He claimed that the lack of a political structure over clans helped maintain a clan-based, warlord-run version of

society in Chechnya.

The last speaker, Richard Giragosian, a visiting lecturer at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center & School, said current U.S.-Russian relations are hostage to the emphasis on security interests. He said America’s predisposition to seek out autocratic states as stable allies regularly leads to a democracy deficit among American allies and fails to address the internal challenges of building a state. Giragosian did note that there were three promising trends in the Caucasus: the environmental movement in southern Georgia; the cooperation of media between the Caucasian states; and the increasing ability of student movements to protest and advocate peacefully. Giragosian said American interests were best served by supporting civil society and grassroots democracy in the region. Yet, he said, the U.S. policy of “train and equip” that has proven so disastrous over the last few decades (as in Iraq), is being conducted in much the same manner today in Afghanistan, Georgia and Uzbekistan.

new Eurasian states build ties with business partners abroad. Similarly, Iranian influence has been severely diminished by attempts to interfere with domestic politics in several states, specifically Azerbaijan.

Roger Pajak, formerly of the U.S. Treasury Department and a former National Security Advisor, said that a major problem in the region is corruption and the underground economy. Pajak said the lack of limits upon corruption can be traced directly to Soviet era attitudes toward government and authority. He finished by noting that nuclear materials are fortunately not part of illegal trade as organized crime groups have a vested interest in seeing to the maintenance of the status quo.

Natalia Mirovitskaya, a Visiting Research Scholar in Public Policy Studies at Duke University and Coordinator of the Eurasian Seas Working Group, began by noting that Russian policy in the Caspian region has been chaotic, inconsistent and controversial. She noted that oil was not the only issue at play for Russians, but that the issues related to the environment and human geography also affected Russian policy. She said there had been paradigm shifts among Russian policy-makers in the last 10 years which also led to seemingly inconsistent policies.

Mirovitskaya further noted that the Caspian Sea is unlikely to become an alternative Persian Gulf since there is not the same quantity of oil there, but that it is still of significant strategic interest to Russia.



Panelists Abdoumannob Polat, Elim Suleymanov, and Richard Giragosian take a short break outside in between panels./photo by Will Bettmann

P4 | Ambassador Presel questions depth of U.S. interest in Eurasia

Former Ambassador to Uzbekistan Joseph Presel looked at the past, present and future of U.S. policy in Central Asia and the Caucasus in his special address during dinner at the Carolina Inn on Friday night.

“Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, we really didn’t have a policy either toward Central Asia or the Caucasus,” he said. “To the extent we thought about the Caucasus at all, it was a problem of Turkey, Russia and Iran.”

He said our knowledge of Central Asia was all “Great Game stuff,” and that it was always in the context of the Soviet Union, rather than of Islam or of Southwest Asia.

Presel said after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has let a few early successes give way to a general failure of democracy in Central Asia. Early successes included the removal of all nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan and some significant humanitarian aid.

“Democracy is not doing as well as it should,” he said. “All Central Asian states are corrupt. We’re beginning to learn that these are not European countries.”

Presel said the U.S. still has no regional policy, that we don’t differentiate between different countries, and that we have “not been as successful as we should have.”

He agreed with other conference speakers that “9/11 changed everything.” All of a sudden, he said, everyone in America knew where Central Asia was, and troops started

pouring into the region.

In his conclusion, Presel said U.S. interests in the region revolve around oil and gas, drugs and terrorism. He predicted that the U.S. government will begin to think about Central Asia as one region and the Caucasus as another, but despite that “neither of these regions is ever going to become a major interest of the U.S. government.”

Problems of Governance II: Central Asia

By Elizabeth Michalka

The focus of the second panel of the afternoon was Central Asia, and four distinguished speakers voiced their opinions on security, democracy and human rights, both before and after Sept. 11, 2001.

“Post 9-11 Iraq is a major earthquake in terms of global politics,” said Mehrdad Haghayeghi, professor of political science at Southwest Missouri State University. He said that Iran’s neighboring countries are not promoting stability in the region. He noted that there are very high levels of anxiety and anger over U.S. actions in Central Asia. Haghayeghi also said that Russia and China are both trying to create instability and undermine the democratic process in Central Asia.

AbduMannob Polat, director of the Central Asian Human Rights Information Network said, “The current



Former Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Joseph Pressel, and Professor of Political Science, Kathleen Collins, continue their discussion after Saturday’s panel./photo by Will Bettmann

situation of democracy in Central Asia is very poor. Respect for human rights is very poor.” He said that dependence on the United States, the West and the oligarchy is too high and a middle class needs to be formed in Central Asia in order for democracy to succeed. He also stressed a point made by other speakers: that the United States generally only takes action in the region when its own interests are at stake. Finally, he suggested that the focus in Central Asia should be on making step-by-step reforms, rather than on making one huge leap to democracy.

Rafik Sayfulin from the Institute for Strategic and International Studies in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, said that his country will be essential in the democratization of the area. He said that Uzbekistan has begun a relationship with the United States and is forming a strong military collaboration,

but they have to be cautious with Russia. “Tashkent would like to be close friends with the U.S. but not the opponent of Russia,” he said. “We want to see the U.S. not as a teacher, but as a friend.” Sayfulin said many conflicts in the world (and in Central Asia, in particular) reflected the larger clashes of value systems, which he described as civil, open society vs. religious, nationalist fundamentalists.

Anara Tabyshalieva from the Institute for Regional Studies in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, said that political exclusion is the biggest challenge to democracy in the area. She said that there is not a strong link between the people and the government, and minorities are excluded from political life. Drug trafficking is also a big problem in the area, and the abuse of opium, heroine and morphine is on the rise in Central Asia. “The Silk Road is now the Drug Road,” she said.



Mirsky warns of ethnic conflict

by Christian Sellar

In his luncheon address on Saturday, Dr. Georgy Mirsky addressed the rise of political Islam in the post-Soviet world. He said he does not believe in a Yugoslavia-like scenario of civil wars, coups and disintegration. But he considers possible the ascension of authoritarian regimes across the region, fuelled by economic crisis.

Currently, the main guarantor of stability is the fact that youth see the opportunity of personal improvements and enrichment arising from their new freedom. Unfortunately, he said, the youngest generation will not have the same opportunities as their older brothers, and consequently, the frustration of a very important and dynamic layer of the society is growing.

He also said that the contrast between communism and capitalism didn't mean much for people, while the re-emerging ethnic and religious issues are much more "real." He said the root of terror is always humiliation, not poverty, and that much of the Muslim world sees itself relegated to second place, which has led to the birth of prominent terrorist groups, which he defined as "militant Islamism, the cancer of the Muslim world."

Finally, he said the Putin administration understood the importance of keeping an alliance with the United States, despite the rise in anti-American sentiment in Russia.

Russia and Beyond: A View of the Future

By Amanda Jacobson

The final panel of the conference focused mainly on the current state of affairs in Russia and possible courses for the future of Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. The first speaker was Georgi Derluguian, a Sociology professor from Northwestern University. His comments covered a larger era of Russian (or regional) history, beginning with the 16th century and working his way up to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. His basic premise was that the collapse of the Soviet Union was just one in a series of transitions that Russia had faced in its long history. Derluguian argued that in the 1980s, a group of intellectuals tried to de-bureaucratize the government. To hold onto to power, the current bureaucracy began to liberalize the government and in 1989, began transforming the government by taking the previously state run economic and political assets and making them private. He argued that the transition was one of bureaucracy to neo-patrimonialism. This former bureaucracy treated former state assets as their own private assets to do with as they pleased. Control

was still in the hands of the bureaucracy, but now it was decentralized control. In closing, Derluguian stated that the future of Russia relies on the recentralization of the state. He claimed that Russia must rebuild its military empire and become more like China. However, he cautioned that U.S. hegemony would stop this process at every turn and ultimately, the future of Russia was very bleak.

The second speaker, Mark Katz, a professor of Government and Politics at George Mason University, talked mainly about Russia's foreign policy dilemma, from which he outlined three main threats. The first was American hegemony, the second radical Islam, and the third China. He argued that Russia was trying to ally with Western Europe as a way to prevent the first and second threats. Katz said that this was not a smart idea for Russia in that such an alliance is very limited. The European community will never support Russian actions in Chechnya and Kaliningrad, and they would never accept Russia into the European Union. Therefore, he argued, Russia will have to come to some alliance with the United States. The United States, in his view, is the only power who

has the ability to help Russia overcome some of its main problems.

The final speaker, Jonathan Weiler, a fellow at the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies, spoke on the current situation in Russia with regard to human rights and personal security. He stated that throughout the conference, speakers had defined security primarily in geopolitical terms, and that he wanted to look at security on a more personal level. He began by citing three important human rights statistics. First, there are about 30,000 murders in Russia per year, mostly of women. Second, the state of Russian prisons, filled mostly with petty criminals, is appalling. Third, the opening of Russia's borders have allowed a huge increase in the sex trade and trafficking of woman, drawing on the large demand on the international market for Russian women. He argued that all of these security issues in Russia stem from the type of regime existing in Russia today.

The panel concluded with a lively question and answer session, moderated by Steve Levine, which included questions on everything from political Islam to glasnost under Gorbachev.



Georgi Derluguian addresses a member of the audience, while panel members Jonathan Weiler and Mark Katz and panel moderator, Steve Levine look on./photo by Will Bettmann

CSEES Director, Robert Jenkins, summarizes conference

In concluding comments at the conference, Robert M. Jenkins, Director of the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies, noted the largely implicit definitions of security at work. In contrast to the traditional “hard” security threats of military challenges to states, he emphasized that most of the conference had been devoted to new “soft” security issues, like resource competition, regime stability, radical Islam, human rights, and personal security.

These threats come from both external and internal sources. Potential external threats arise from the actions of the Great Powers

(United States, Russia, China) and regional powers (Iran, Turkey, Pakistan) as well as radical Islam, environmental problems, and trafficking (weapons, drugs, humans). Internal threats come from primarily from the weak and failed states of the region, which typically combine corruption and organized crime with lack of human rights, limits on democratic participation, and uncertainties about leadership succession. These weak states in turn threaten human security in the region. Ethnic conflicts and lack of economic development provide are threats both to state and individual security.

Jenkins pointed to two

opposing views expressed at the conference on the importance of Eurasia to U.S. policy. From the viewpoint of Michael Klare, the substantial fossil fuel reserves and transportation routes of the Caucasus and Central Asia guaranteed the central role of the region in the coming decades. Jenkins noted that the Eurasian region is also closely linked to the new center of international politics, the Middle East, and serves a base for operations in the war on terrorism. Ambassador Joseph Presel offers a contrasting perspective, suggesting that the countries of the region are hard

to reach, difficult in which to operate, and offer limited opportunities for business. From this perspective, U.S. policy interest is transient and not likely to persist.

Jenkins finished his remarks by thanking the participants for their stimulating presentations and the audience for its attention and involvement. He expressed gratitude to the sponsors who made the conference possible, the U.S. Department of Education; the UNC Curriculum in International and Areas European, Eurasian, and Slavic Studies Association; and the Eurasian Seas Working Group.

KLARE – FROM PAGE 1

large extent was fueled, quite literally, by the fact that we had a large, relatively inexpensive source of petroleum.” He said oil was vital to the growth of a number of industries: automobile, airline, petrochemical, agriculture, the military-industrial complex and housing. He also said oil played a decisive role in our victory in WWII, and that Germany’s failure to take the city of Baku (an oil center) was a crucial blow (points whose validity was later questioned by audience member, UNC Professor Richard Kohn).

Klare discussed the fact that the center of “oil gravity” has been gradually shifting to the Persian Gulf from the United States (which was the world’s leading producer and exporter until around 1950). Klare estimated that within the next 20 years the percent of Persian Gulf oil produced relative to the world total

would rise from 33 to 50 percent.

“In order for us to be able to continue to live the way we live in the coming years, we will need to get more and more oil from one small area of the world, the Persian Gulf,” he said.

He also said that the great rise in interest (not only in the United States, but also in China and Russia) towards Caspian Sea oil was related to the preeminence (and political instability) of the Persian Gulf.

In concluding his talk, Klare predicted that there will be a build-up of arms and troops in both the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, and that our only alternative to reliance upon oil from these regions is to greatly reduce our use of oil. He said we needed cars with that get better gas mileage, and cars that run on alternate fuels – like hydrogen fuel cells, or even gas/electric hybrids.

OLCOTT – FROM PAGE 2

before the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Olcott covered the common background that these countries share in their history. None of the central Asian countries had a long history of modern statehood prior to the Soviet period. They all came into existence as pieces of the Soviet Union and inherited many problems by breaking apart from a formerly integrated structure. She highlighted the fact that the leaders of these countries had much in common with each other from their common Soviet experiences, but that in the future, Central Asian leaders would not be so similar.

She predicted that once political change began in one country, it would prompt change in the neighboring countries. This change would either be a reaction to changes ongoing in one country, or a change by internal forces within the Central Asian republics taking advan-

tage of instability in neighboring countries to further their own agendas.

Olcott said ethnic issues are an area that could play a destabilizing role in future political change in Central Asia. The use of ethnic identity by a rising political power or personality in Central Asia may appeal to similar ethnic groups within the country but have a negative effect on ethnic populations outside the country in question. For example, how Uzbeks treat the other ethnic minorities in their countries as part of an internal power struggle may encourage other republics to take action to look out for the interests of ethnic minorities in Uzbekistan, provoking interstate instability.

She said Russia, Iran, and China could have a stake in how power is distributed when power transfer is complete and could feel the need to try to directly or indirectly affect the transition process to guarantee their own interests.