



inflections

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Valerie Bunce speaks on lessons learned from democratization in the post-Soviet world

Valerie Bunce, Professor of Government at Cornell University, said that a number of assumptions and generalizations in the field of transitology do not hold up well in the post-communist world. Bunce is a specialist in comparative and international politics, as well as post-communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Her talk at UNC-CH on April 24 was entitled "Comparative Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience."

She began by noting some of the "common wisdom" and generalizations widely made about transitions to democracy. In the area of common wisdom, she said the focus of transitologists tended to view transitions as 1) highly uncertain; 2) very short-term events; 3) based on political rather than economic factors; 4) very elite-centric (with the focus on authoritarian rulers vs. an opposition party); and finally, 5) based on domestic rather than international factors.

In discussing generalizations made in the field, Bunce said the case of Spain had been a big influence, and some of the most common generalizations were that the more successful transitions take place when

1) publics are outside of the process; 2) national boundaries are well established; 3) gradualism is employed; and 4) pacts between old rulers and the opposition are employed.

Bunce then went on to list a few of the major factors that differentiated the post-communist world from transitions in other regions. She said the communist past "has emerged as surprisingly important in terms of shaping political and economic trajectories."

She said the state socialism of the Soviet Union was not "garden-variety authoritarianism," and that it had a profound long-term impact, not necessarily seen in other regions of the world.

Other important factors were the speed at which the Soviet Union collapsed and the importance of mass publics. Bunce said the countries which have had the most successful transitions to democracy are



Valerie Bunce addresses the audience at the faculty lounge at Gardner Hall during her speech entitled "Comparative Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience" on April 24./photo by Will Bettmann

ones in which the oppositional forces won decisively in the first elections. She also noted that many countries - Russia as a prime example - had very limited options available, which she referred to as "bounded decision making." She used this concept to rebut the argument that Russia could have succeeded if Yeltsin had just made better choices.

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Laura Janda was the recipient of the A. Ronald Walton Award, given annually since 2000 by the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages in honor of the late co-founder of NCOLCTL and founding Deputy Director of the National Foreign Language Center, Dr. Ron Walton. The award is given in recognition of a career of distinguished service on behalf of the Less Commonly Taught Languages.

Influential texts by nine Modernist Islamic authors from the Russian Empire, plus one from Yugoslavia, are included in an anthology on “Modernist Islam, 1840-1940,” recently edited by assistant professor of sociology at UNC-CH, **Charles Kurzman** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For more information on the anthology, see the project webpage at <http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/ModernistIslam>.

CSEEEES Fellow **Jacqueline Olich** contributed two entries to the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Russian History* and served as a discussant on a panel entitled “Balkan Visions and Identities” at the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies held in Savannah, GA.

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Jeremy Pinkham (top), in just one of his many roles as the CSEEEES office manager, teaches students from Chapel Hill and Carrboro schools the Russian alphabet during this year's Russian Culture Festival at the Carrboro Arts Center. At right, two students work on their "Russian eggs." /photos by Krista Purnell



Ahmed Rashid warns of the rise of militant Islam in Central Asia

by Jeff Jennette

Ahmed Rashid, the Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *London Daily Telegraph*, gave two talks at the University of North Carolina on Feb. 15 - to a smaller session in the afternoon and a full auditorium in the evening. The title of his evening talk was “The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia,” and his overall topic was a critique of western policy towards post-Taliban Afghanistan, and a critique of a (at that time) possible war in Iraq.

He said that nation building cannot be done by the U.S. Department of Defense. He cited the length of the commitment required in Afghanistan as something that the U.S. would not accept in light of requirements in post-Saddam Iraq. He also said that American nation-building efforts under the Department of Defense are

mishandled, and may have the opposite of the intended effect, contributing to anti-Americanism in the Muslim world, Islamic extremism, weapons proliferation, and warlordism in Afghanistan.

Rashid highlighted areas where American policy failed to take certain issues into account that may foster the growth of Islamic fundamentalism. He also addressed the fact that the Muslim world itself was not blameless in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. In his view, Islamic extremism was aided by political failures of Islamic governments, which pushed more people toward extremism. Additionally, Muslim clergy failed to speak out against fundamentalist Islam, the growth of which coincided with an expansion of extremism in all religions in the last decade. He said an issue with fundamentalism for Americans is that fundamentalism is at odds with democracy.

Russian Culture Festival is a hit once again

The Center for Slavic, Eurasian and East European Studies partnered with the University Center for International Studies (UCIS) to present a Russian Culture Festival at the Carrboro ArtsCenter. The Russian Culture Festival complemented the ArtsCenter's School Show series, which brings fun and instructive multi-cultural performances to the area for K-12 students. This year, Russian folk trio *Moscow Nights* performed. Before and after each show more than 600 teachers and students toured the interactive Russian Cultural gallery put together by CSEEEES and UCIS. The gallery included Russian artifacts and books, a table devoted to language and the Cyrillic alphabet, egg painting, and a geography room in which students learned about the Russian land and constructed a wall-sized map of Russia.

Austrian diplomat discusses rift in U.S.-European relations

Ernst Sucharipa, Austrian Ambassador to the UN, appeared on behalf of CSEEEES and CES on March 28 to discuss U.S.-European relations in light of the then-impending war in Iraq. The majority of his talk was devoted to how different perceptions of the terror attacks of September 11 had led directly to the breakdown in diplomacy before the war.

According to Sucharipa, many Europeans have failed to grasp the extraordinary level of shock from the attack within the US and have therefore misunderstood the resulting fundamental shift in U.S. policy. With the rise of American unilateralism and the announcement of a preemptive foreign policy, the earlier and immediate solidarity with the U.S. has faded to be replaced by real concerns over American hegemony.

Sucharipa referred extensively to Robert Kagan's article, "Power and Weakness," and the popular discussion of

its premise that Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. Sucharipa offered the difference in reaction of a man with a rifle and a man with a knife to illustrate the distance between US and European perceptions of how to react to a perceived external threat.

Differences in European and American military conduct are further dictated by the enormous inequality of military power. Sucharipa noted other systemic problems to American and European agreement. The legacy of war has shaped European perceptions of conflict and the need to avoid conflict through diplomatic means. He said American religiosity is little understood in the more secular Europe.

Additionally, the lack of American concern over excessive oil consumption and the consequences of setting foreign policy to meet domestic dependence are highly problematic for the greener political cultures of Europe. Sucharipa also noted that the failure of

American diplomacy over the Iraqi war and the lack of a concerted attempt by the State Department to actively engage foreign leaders could be directly contrasted with the success of the previous Bush administration when James Baker travelled extensively to build an international coalition.

In summary, Sucharipa noted that NATO had functioned successfully for half a century as a pluralist, secular community of like-minded states and indicated that it continues to be the most viable forum for American-European security concerns. He further pointed to the need to bridge relations by finding common positions on how to perceive and react to threats as well as how to better balance the burden of defense spending. Sucharipa saw no long-term threat to positive relations between the U.S. and Europe, but did acknowledge great European concern over the current misunderstandings.

Gordon Bardos talks about the presence of Al Qaeda in the Balkans

Gordon N. Bardos, Assistant Director of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University, gave a talk entitled "The Balkan Front in the War on Terrorism: History and Current Developments" on March 19 at UNC-CH. Bardos said his research in the Balkans was part of a larger effort by the National War Institute in Washington D.C. to assess the effectiveness of the war on terror.

Bardos began by saying that although the threat of an

Islamic revolution in the Balkans was quite small, there was still a danger posed by small groups of extremists. He said some of the Al Qaeda terrorists involved in both the African embassy bombings and the USS Cole had links to the Balkans, and also that Iran had been active in destabilizing the Balkans in order to prevent the emergence of a multi-ethnic, secular state in Bosnia.

Bardos said the U.S. had followed an "extremely short-sighted" policy in the 1990s when

in an effort to oust Milosevic it joined with some of the groups it is now fighting.

"Before 9/11, it was common for the U.S. government to look the other way," he said. "But the policy post-9/11 has been very energetic, very unforgiving."

Bardos said the decade that Muslim extremist groups have had to embed themselves in the Balkans has made the effort to clean them up more difficult.

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This spring, she will present a paper entitled, "'A First Five-Year Plan for Children's Books?' Russian Children's Literature, 1927-1933" at a conference on Childhood and the State sponsored by the Society for the History of Children and Youth in Baltimore, Maryland.

Freud and the Bolsheviks (Yale, 1998), a book by **Martin A. Miller**, Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at Duke, was translated into French last year as "Freud au pays de Soviets (Le Seuil) and is currently being translated into Turkish. Also, a paper he presented at an international conference in St. Petersburg in 2001 has just been published as "Kino: avantgard i vlast' v 20-kh godakh," in the volume *Vlast' i nauka* (ed. N. Smirnov. Moscow, 2003).

Jehanne Gheith has been made Director of the Comparative Area Studies Program at Duke. She has also had two co-edited books come out in the last year: Robin Bisha, Jehanne Gheith, Christine Holden, and William G. Wagner, eds., *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression. An Anthology of Sources* (Indiana University Press) and Adele Barker and

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, eds., *A History of Women's Writing in Russia* (Cambridge University Press).

Sharon A. Kowalsky, a PhD. candidate in History at UNC, presented "Moonshine and Murder in Early Soviet Russia: Crime by Sex in the City" at the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies (SCSS) Annual Meeting in Savannah, GA in March 2003. She was awarded the 2003 SCSS Graduate Student Essay Prize for

the best seminar paper by a graduate student for her work on infanticide in Russia. She has also been elected as a graduate student representative to the board of the Association of Women in Slavic Studies (AWSS).

Vasa Mihailovich, Professor Emeritus in Slavic Languages and Literatures at UNC has had a book of haiku poems, "*Vrane na snegu*" (Crows on the Snow) published in Serbia recently.

Rosa Magnusdottir, a PhD. candidate in History at UNC, presented a paper this semester based on findings in Moscow archives at the Third Annual Harvard Graduate Conference in International History: "The United States from the Outside In, 1776-2000." Her paper was entitled "Long Live Free America! The USA in the Mass-Consciousness of Ordinary Soviet Citizens, 1945-1956."

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