

Call for Papers – Abstract submission deadline: 29 July 2016

Conference:

“Post-Communism 25+: Reflections on Social, Economic & Political Transitions” 6-8 October 2016, Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan

Background: On collapse of the Soviet Union, George Kennan, the American author of the seminal 1947 cable “Sources of Soviet Conduct,” wrote in 1995 that he found it “hard to think of any event more strange and startling, and ... more inexplicable, than the sudden and total disintegration and disappearance [of the USSR].” As unpredictable as the Soviet collapse came to be, so have the transition trajectories of post-communism in the past quarter of century amongst the former Soviet republics and post-communist states of the formerly ‘Eastern bloc’.

A good number of the post-communist states, especially those westward and in Europe, have done relatively well in their transitions, going through lasting economic and political liberalizations that have bared fruit for their citizens. On the other hand, many to the east, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia, have only solidified new forms of authoritarian regimes with ruling elites controlling much of their resources, resulting in both increasing income disparities and political repression. It is also telling that in the Eurasian landmass, those post-communist states achieving the largest GDP growth have been states relying on the production and export of natural resources (such as oil and natural gas), while for post-communist states situated in the extended space of the European Union (EU), modest but persistent growth have relied on a diversity of sectors.

There have been key factors globally since the end of the Cold War and collapse of communism that have affected nations, including those in their continued transitions into post-communism. Chief amongst such events have been the September 2001 terror attacks in the U.S. (9/11); the consequent and ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the 2008 global financial meltdown; and the more recent oil glut and freefalling prices of commodities that have exerted pressures on central governments, at times inducing increased political repression and authoritarian rule.

Another factor of importance has been what some have referred to as the ‘new Cold War’, a new form of rivalry and clash between the U.S. and the Russian Federation over their ‘spheres of influence’. An expanding NATO, the attraction of the EU and desires for more political and economic freedoms have been cited as influencing the events in the region, particularly in a divided Ukraine, resulting in the annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation and the ongoing bloody conflict in Eastern Ukraine with its associated human and economic tolls.

Among the domestic factors affecting post-communist transitions have been: History and political culture of individual states/regions; degree of dominance and practice of religion (Christianity and Islam); availability of readily exportable natural resources and state reliance on such income (in way of resource curse and ‘rentierism’); patriarchy and patrimonial rule; degree of freedom and activism of domestic civil society and transnational networks; and geopolitics, post-communist wars and proximity to epicenters of violence.

We have a number of inquires in holding this conference:

- What are indigenous and outside accounts of history of over a quarter-century of post-communism?
- What are opinions on what accounts for the diverging trajectories of post-communism among the many post-Soviet and post-communist European states?
- Why are some post-communist states, especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia, stagnating or even regressing in the areas of human rights and economic liberalization?
- What are feminist, liberal, realist, Marxist, constructivist and other theoretical explanations of diverging post-communist transitions?
- What have been the impacts of the 9/11 terrorisms, the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq/Syria and the formation of new international terror groups on the development of nearby post-communist states?
- Is there such a phenomena as a ‘new Cold War’ or a U.S.-Russia rivalry and how is this affecting the fate of the post-communist states?
- Have the strategies of international organizations, both of the development and financial varieties, been effective in affecting positive change among post-communist states?
- And, overall, what lessons since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union can be learnt in way of strengthening both social science theory and real world praxis?

The Conference: Hosted by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, and titled: “Post-communism 25+: Reflections on Social, Economic and Political Transitions” is part of the annual Central Asia and Eurasia-related international events held by the Academy. The Conference aims to generate informed scholarly discussions on the lessons learnt from the past quarter century since the collapse of communism and its positive and negative outcomes for the populations of a diverse region of the world. Researchers, academics, doctoral students, policy makers and government officials worldwide interested on this theme are encouraged to apply and participate in this Conference. Proposals are accepted both as individual contributions or full panels (consisting of 3-4 speakers).

Outstanding keynote speakers and discussants for this event will be invited in light of the Conference focus. The Conference will be held at a site by the picturesque Lake Issyk Kul, a few hours’ drive outside of Kyrgyzstan’s capital, Bishkek. The OSCE Academy will seek publication of selected Conference papers in a 2017 special edition of a respected international peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the theme of quarter-century of post-communism.

The working language of the Conference is English. Applicants should send their (a) Abstract (150-200 words) and (b) Resume or CV to: Conference2016@osce-academy.net **no later than 29 July 2016**. Please indicate if you seek travel reimbursements, but note that though minimum reimbursements for participants with choice papers and financial need may be available, the OSCE Academy on the whole cannot cover international travel costs of most participants to Kyrgyzstan. However, all participants’ accommodation and meals at the Conference venue of Issyk Kul will be covered by the Academy.