Conference examines conflict and security 20 years after the end of the Soviet Union

Posted on Monday 4th July 2011

20 years after the end of the Soviet Union what are the prospects for conflict resolution in the USSR successor states?

The future of security and stability in this region and the influence of Russia will be addressed at a major conference hosted today (4 July) by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the University of Birmingham and the John Smith Memorial Trust. The Rt Hon Lord David Howell, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will open the one-day event.

The break-up of the Soviet Union left several of its successor states struggling with a multitude of problems, from inter-ethnic tension to organised crime, and from poverty to corruption. Over the last two decades these problems have contributed to insecurity and instability across the region and regularly escalated into violence, illustrated by terrorist attacks in Moscow and the North Caucasus, and serious international crises, foremost among them the Georgia-Russia war of August 2008.

Leading academics and policymakers will look at the challenges of managing conflict in the USSR successor states and consider their impact on the sometimes fractious relationship between Russia and the European Union.

Dr Derek Averre from the University of Birmingham comments: "*In a year, which has seen a wave of revolutions across the Middle East, now is a perfect time to examine the security challenges emanating from the post-Soviet space facing Britain, the EU and NATO and to assess whether Russia can play a constructive stabilising role in dealing with these challenges in order to mitigate division and conflict.*"

His colleague, Professor Stefan Wolff, added: "*Russia remains a dominant force in the European and global security order. Russia faces very similar threats arising from instability in the USSR successor states as the EU, NATO and their member states while playing a far greater role in managing conflicts in countries like Moldova, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan – conflicts that cannot be settled sustainably without Russian cooperation.*"

One of the areas under close consideration will be the North Caucasus, which has been a flashpoint for conflict over the last decade. Dr Cerwyn Moore, from the University of Birmingham's Department of Political Science and International Studies, will be presenting on the future of Chechnya: *"Over the last eleven years, Federal policies towards the North Caucasus have evolved within a broader process of political reform in Russia, in which power has been centralised in the Kremlin. Russia's policy towards the North Caucasus has remained contentious. Chechnya and the North Caucasus have undergone a radical transformation, following years of war. But Russia's attempts at stabilisation have left pervasive poverty, corruption and growing anti-Russian sentiments that have produced a new generation of militants who have swelled the ranks of a regional, Islamist insurgency."*

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Programme

The Rt Hon Lord David Howell, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mark Webber, Head of the School of Government and Society, University of Birmingham

Brian Brivati, Director, John Smith Memorial Trust

20 YEARS ON FROM THE END OF THE SOVIET UNION:

PROSPECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

Locarno Suite, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH

09.00 *Arrival and Registration*

09.30 Welcome

10.00 The Rt Hon Lord David Howell, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

10.30 Mark Webber, Head of the School of Government and Society, University of Birmingham

Chair: Brian Brivati, Director, John Smith Memorial Trust

Papers:

11.45 Keynote Address / The Birmingham Conflict and Security Studies Lecture

Out of the freezer: time for new approaches to conflict settlement in the post-Soviet region

12.00 Walter Kemp, Director, Europe and Central Asia, International Peace Institute

Chair:

Papers: Panel 1: Post-Soviet Conflicts 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union: where do we stand?

13.15 Alan Parfitt, Eastern Research Group, FCO

The South Caucasus: a new freeze?

14.15 Nina Caspersen (University of Lancaster)

Chair: *Beyond the Chechen Independence Struggle: Evaluating the Regional Insurgency in the North Caucasus*

Papers: Cerwyn Moore (University of Birmingham)

15.30 *From Confidence Building to Conflict Settlement in Moldova?*

Claus Neukirch (OSCE Mission to Moldova)

15.45

Chair: *Coffee break*

Papers:

17.00 Panel 2: Local and regional dynamics of conflict resolution

17.15 Josephine Gauld, Head of South Caucasus Section, Eastern Europe & Central Asia Directorate, FCO

The Paradox of Autonomy: Explaining the Linkage between Democratisation and War in the Post-Soviet States

James Hughes (London School of Economics)

The 'Frozen Conflicts' in the Eastern Partnership: Russia versus EU or prospect of cooperation?

Bogdana Depo (EXACT Marie Curie Fellow)

Why Secession is not a Viable Tool for Conflict-Resolution: The Case of Georgia

Nino Kemoklidze (Norwegian Institute for International Affairs/University of Birmingham)

Lunch

Panel 3: Limits and prospects of international mediation: ways forward

Peter Bateman, Her Majesty's Ambassador-designate to the Republic of Azerbaijan

Civil society and elites: (Mis)matching perspectives on conflict resolution in Nagorno Karabakh

Licinia Simao (University of Coimbra)

New Approaches to Mediation: Managing the Russian Factor

Dennis Sammut (Links-London)

The international community and Eurasia's de facto states

Nonna Gorilovskaya (University of Edinburgh)

Coffee

Panel 4: Opportunities for pan-European security cooperation and conflict resolution in Europe

Laurie Bristow, Director, Eastern Europe & Central Asia Directorate, FCO

The EU and conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space

Sabine Fischer (EU Institute for Security Studies)

Protracted conflicts in the context of evolving Russian-Western relations in Eurasia

OksanaAntonenko (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London)

Frozen conflicts, frozen Europe? Russian approaches to European security governance

Derek Averre (University of Birmingham) & Oscar Pardo (University of Birmingham)

Concluding remarks

Stefan Wolff, University of Birmingham

Close

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