

Geographies of Globalization in Eurasia

September 30 and October 1, 2013

An abiding feature of the modern world is its complex connectivity. This is perhaps best exemplified by the networks of interconnections and interdependences that characterize every aspect of modern social life. It is this connectivity that pervades all accounts of globalization. Connectivity can be simply taken to imply global-spatial proximity in the sense of the shrinking of distances through the dramatic reduction of time taken to cross them. At another level of analysis connectivity shades into the idea of spatial proximity via the idea of "stretching" of social relations across distance. The discourse on globalization is replete with metaphors of global proximity of a "shrinking world". The creation of globalized spaces also inevitably implies the creation of a degree of cultural "compression". The resulting deterritorialization is then taken to fundamentally transform the relationship between the places that one inhabits and cultural practices, experiences and identities.

Yet, paradoxically, this world of expanding deterritorialized boundaries is also a world of many more and in numerous cases stronger states. And the politics of identity is even today, largely determined within the old structure of the state. The extent to which groups have boundaries and conversely the extent to which cultures have borders, in other words the relationship of culture to territory remains a significant part of the discourse on identity given the complex ways in which frontiers, even those determined by imperial partitions, continue to influence the determination of cultural identities in regions such as Eurasia. Yet, the question as to whether there is an essential correspondence between territory, nation, state and identity remains unanswered. The cultural permeability of borders, the experience of people who are more comfortable with the notion that they are culturally tied to many other people in neighbouring states and the rigidity of states in their efforts to control cultural fields that transcend their borders demands that a variety of political and cultural boundaries be constructed. In fact the durability of cultural frontiers long after the political borders of the state has shifted implies the widening of perspectives to take note of the formal and the informal ties between local communities and the larger polities of which they are a part.

This seminar will be an attempt to discuss Eurasian engagement with geographies of globalization from a variety of perspectives. These include issues such as energy and transportation, management of resources like oil and gas, environment as well as demographic patterns and flows. It would also need to take note of challenges encountered by social groups and communities in the face of globalizing tendencies and intricate patterns of roads and routes. The role of emerging alternatives within the region and community partnerships in Eurasia will also be addressed. As the world recrystallizes along new political, economic, social and cultural lines, this seminar seeks to examine these issues in the Eurasian context through an understanding of the following:

1. Intersection of space and place in Eurasia
2. Eurasian engagement with globalization: shifting spheres in politics, economics and culture and levels of integration
3. Connectivity and Globalization: Roads and Routes in a Globalized Eurasia
4. Global challenges in Eurasia
5. Global strategies and architectures --- Russia, US, China, EU, Turkey, Iran, India and the neighbourhood
6. Alternative globalizations and Islam

Round Table

Are regional initiatives meaningful in the Eurasian context?

October 1(afternoon)

Despite the argument that globalization is ushering in the so-called “global” village the process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of regional identities and organizations continues. It can be argued that globalization reinforces the need to identify more and more with one’s regional identity lest one is lost in the seemingly endless boundaries of the global village. There then remains the possibility that “region” becomes even more relevant in the context of globalization as the individual is likely to use region as an instrumental category to resist marginalization in a globalized world. In this search for alternative boundaries linkages that move beyond the bounded ones of the state or the endless ones of the “global” village often assume significance. Exploring regional linkages also assume geopolitical significance in terms of projecting a unified perspective on certain issues that then carry more political weight on the international arena. This round table will initiate a discussion on the various regional initiatives in Eurasia in the last two decade from the CIS/CSTO/SCO/CICA/GUUAM/APEC/Eurasian Economic Community/Siberian Agreement/Baikal Economic Forum/ Turkic Commonwealth to the most recent one the Eurasian Union. This becomes important in the context of India’s negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with Eurasian countries.