
Geopolitical Importance of Unrecognized States

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Each year, the section of Geopolitical Studies of the Institute of Political Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University hosts a conference that brings together experts in Geopolitics from around the world to discuss current issues in the field. This year, the conference opened with a special workshop on Taiwan on Thursday, November 12th, in the Jinonice Campus of CU. The rest of the conference took place on Friday, November 13th, in a beautiful building on Novotného Lávka in the Old Town with an excellent view of Charles Bridge. The topic: *Geopolitical Importance of Unrecognized States and Territorial Non-State Actors*.

After opening speeches and two keynote speakers, fourteen presentations were divided between three subtopics: Theoretical Approaches to Recognition, Unrecognized States in the Post-Soviet Space, and Unrecognized States and Territorial Non-State Actors in Global Perspective. Each presenter was given 15 minutes to speak with a discussion open to the audience following each subtopic.

First section was dedicated to the theoretical problems of the unrecognised states phenomenon and the legal issues connected with the topic. I was able to attend the four presentations on the second subtopic of Unrecognized States in the Post-Soviet Space. The first presentation, given by Urban Jakša from the University of York, regarded Ontological Security of Post-Soviet De Facto States. Jakša presented on the importance of de facto states having and pursuing national relational goals. Having these goals promotes self-identity and keeps the states connected to the international community. Jakša claimed, “*behind routines, chaos lurks*”, isolating de facto states through not promoting the development of national relational goals leads to ontological insecurity.

Another presentation on this subtopic regarded the geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West in relation to the development of the Ukraine. University of Pisa Professor Rolando M. Dromundo Valadez outlined some of the geopolitical issues surrounding Ukraine and the territories of Donetsk and Lugansk. Valadez claimed one issue Ukraine faces is a linguistic division, as 45% of Ukraine speaks Russian as their native language and 20% of the population identifies as Russian. Later in the discussion, this initiated a response from a Ukrainian student who believed the linguistic divide in Ukraine was largely exaggerated, and that language differences don't equate to ethnic differences.

The rest of the afternoon consisted of detailed discussions of the issues of unrecognized states in the territories of former Soviet Union, in Africa and Asia (in particular regions of Iran and Taiwan). The conference was closed by a presentation by Přemysl Rosůlek from the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen which discussed the issue of referendum on independence.

As an undergraduate who isn't studying geopolitics, many of the presentations were difficult for me to follow. Each speaker specialized in an aspect of or specific conflict relating to geopolitics in unrecognized states. I lacked the prior which I'm certain would have enabled me to get more out of the presentations. The rest of the audience however seemed more informed about the issues being presented on. For them it seemed this conference enhanced their studies as well as provided a valuable networking opportunity. As an annual event I'm sure many students will return next year.

Makenzie Muilenburg is an exchange student from Seattle, Washington in the United States studying at Charles University in the Faculty of Arts for winter semester. She is in her last year at her home university, the University of Washington, where she studies psychology and business. In her free time she enjoys playing soccer, spending time with her family, and enjoying the outdoors. She is excited to be a part of iForum, and is especially looking forward to working with other foreign students as well as be involved in the happenings of Charles University.