

Educational Resources and Developments

Using the Study of Eurasia in the Training of Military Professionals

Deborah Sanders, Senior Lecturer at the Defence Studies Department, King's College London, located at the Defence Academy, Joint Services Command and Staff College, Watchfield, Swindon, UK, dsanders@jscsc.org

The Defence Academy is a national and international center of teaching and research excellence, offering primarily graduate-level training. The largest academic program at the Academy is the Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC), a residential, full-time course of study which takes place over 46 weeks. King's College London (KCL) accredits the ACSC, and students who successfully complete the program are awarded an MA in Defence Studies from KCL. The MA program is designed and taught by faculty of the Defence Studies Department of KCL, approximately 50 academics drawn from the social sciences and humanities. As a specialist in the political and military transformation of Eurasia, I began developing in 1997 an MA Option, titled "Conflict, Instability and Cooperation in the Former Soviet Union."

The students in the MA program are a diverse group of mid-career professionals, admitted upon passing a rigorous entrance exam in a defense-related subject. They include senior military officers from the UK and overseas and defense-oriented civilians such as civil servants and police officers who all go on to senior command postings within their own service. Some 80 percent of the entering students generally have an undergraduate degree, which is most likely to be in the hard sciences such as engineering and physics rather than in the social sciences or humanities. In addition, about 40 percent of the students are from overseas, including the former Soviet Union, Asia, and the Middle East, and they face the additional challenge of studying at the graduate level in English, which is often their second or third language.

For part of their program students study an MA Option of their choice with an expert from the KCL Defence Studies Department. The goal is to develop a range of skills, including critical analysis and intellectual creativity through an interdisciplinary approach to scholarly study and

research. Various teaching methods are used to facilitate these goals, among them student-led debates, in-depth case studies with formal student presentations, and crisis gaming. These provide the opportunity for students to develop a wide range of transferable skills and knowledge. Military officers require many of the skill sets of their civilian counterparts, but they also face unique challenges of command, requiring that they assimilate and analyze information quickly to make decisions, often in life and death situations. Key skills for military officers include time management, the use of initiative, and effective communication of ideas and information.

The MA Option which I offer, "Conflict, Instability and Cooperation in the Former Soviet Union," uses Eurasia as a fascinating case study to develop the range of transferable skills required for effective military officers. This Option runs once a year and has approximately 20 hours of contact time. Its goals are to broaden and deepen the students' understanding of the causes of conflict and instability, to consider why these have been so prevalent in certain parts of the former Soviet Union (FSU), and to examine what steps can be taken by the military, governments, and international organizations to facilitate conflict resolution and security. The students apply current models of conflict to analyze case studies drawn from individual conflict zones as well as areas of stability and determine why some newly independent states have experienced unrest and civil war while others have remained relatively peaceful. These case studies include: the conflict in Chechnya and its effect on stability in the Caucasus; the effect of the recent war in Afghanistan on stability and security in Central Asia; post-9/11 issues of Islam in Central Asia and the Newly Independent States; relations between Russia and Ukraine; Abkhazia's attempts to secede; and the ongoing war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Student feedback during the development of this MA Option suggested that background material in a subject quite new to most students should best be provided through a didactic approach to learning early in the course. Thus the course begins with a series of lectures covering the unique features of the USSR, the underlying contradictions that explain its collapse and which continue to affect the 15 Newly Independent States, the role of identity politics in accelerating that collapse, and the strengths and weaknesses of models of conflict for explaining conflict and stability in the FSU. The lectures are supplemented with videos and group discussion.

Each student is provided as well with an extensive reading list from which to prepare a 5,000-word essay on a specific study topic and thereby demonstrate some in-depth understanding of the literature. Feedback is provided both in written form and in individual conferences. Assigned topics include: Has the ongoing conflict in Chechnya fundamentally destabilized the whole of the North Caucasus region? Can the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh be resolved? In light of the ongoing struggle in Abkhazia, can Georgia ever be a stable and democratic state? Using Tajikistan as a case study, is Islamic fundamentalism a major cause of instability in Central Asia? Have recent events in Afghanistan fundamentally destabilized the whole of the Central Asian region? Is Uzbekistan an oasis of stability in Central Asia?

The other major component of the course is work in small groups on two detailed case studies, the ongoing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the UK position on Tajikistan. These examples encourage students to consider the diversity of internal, regional and international pressures and constraints on the Newly Independent States in Eurasia.

The first of these cases addresses specifically the question: Can the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh be resolved? As a means to facilitate student understanding of this complex issue and to deepen the level of debate, I introduce the key themes to be discussed: the growing involvement of the US, Russia, Iran, and Turkey in resolving this regional conflict; the division between adherence to territorial integrity of existing sovereign states and the right of self-determination; and the effect of domestic political pressures and opportunities in shaping the parameters and

possibilities of resolution. To assist the discussion of these issues each student was asked to read Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (2001).

The students then form five groups, each of which is required to prepare a ten-minute presentation applying one of the five proposals discussed in Cornell's book, for resolving the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹ The presentations take the form of addressing an official forum at the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the body responsible for coordinating conflict resolution. The possible solutions to be considered include: a return to the status quo ante within the region, with Azerbaijan retaining Nagorno-Karabakh and reclaiming the other territory it has lost to the Armenian Karabakhis; the secession of Nagorno-Karabakh, thereby accepting the Armenian Karabakhis' right to self-determination; renegotiation of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy within Azerbaijan; a territorial swap between Armenia and Azerbaijan involving the area around the Lachin Corridor and Zangezur; and joint sovereignty by Armenia and Azerbaijan over that key area.

This session proves to be particularly effective in developing skills such as marshalling evidence to draw up a detailed proposal, arguing the case for it, responding to questions, and then summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the particular proposal. Student feedback indicated that this format worked well to strengthen students' mastery of complex subject matter. Each student benefited from the research and analysis of other student teams and acquired a greater degree of knowledge and understanding about Eurasia than would have been achieved individually.

The assignment for the second case study is to develop policy briefings on Tajikistan. Each of two student groups presents a thirty-minute briefing to the UK foreign minister (the role taken by the instructor). One group advocates closer UK relations and involvement in Tajikistan in light of UK and NATO participation in the peacekeeping force in neighboring Afghanistan. The second group advocates closer ties not with Tajikistan, but rather with Uzbekistan, the West's partner of choice in

¹ For details of these five proposals, see Cornell 2001: 125.

Central Asia. After each presentation, I ask each group to reconsider its position in light of new and emerging intelligence about an alleged bomb attack by al-Qaeda in London and the beginning of a backlash against Islamic groups in the UK.

This crisis game allows military officers to build up their knowledge and understanding of the dynamics in Eurasia and adapt to a new and changing strategic situation. Student feedback on this case study suggests that it could be developed further with crisis reports being fed to the students by me every ten minutes, building up a scenario where the source of the attack can be traced to either Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. Students would then be called upon to present crisis briefings as the scenario

unfolded as well as a summation at the end of the class. To add an element of such rapid change in events would be an excellent test of the ability to analyze, conceptualize and assimilate information quickly to make timely and informed decisions in crisis situations. The study of Eurasia thus clearly can develop the transferable skills required by military officers in their diverse and demanding careers.

Reference

Cornell, Svante E.

2001 *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. Surrey, Eng.: Curzon Press.

A New Course in the Economics of Central Asia at the University of Washington

George E. Wright, Associate Professor, Family Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash., USA, gwright@famned.washington.edu, and **Haideh Salehi-Esfahani**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash., USA, haideh@u.washington.edu

In the spring quarter of 2004, the University of Washington offered an advanced undergraduate course, "The Economic Transition and Development of Central Asia." To the best of our knowledge, this is the first course in the US devoted strictly to economic description and analysis of the region. Originally envisioned as a research seminar, it drew an enrollment of 45, largely economics majors. Our experience as Fulbright Scholars teaching economics in Uzbekistan in 1996-1997 gave us the background to teach this course. Prof. Wright has long been involved in the activities of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister Cities Association and specializes in the economics and design of health programs. We benefited from the expertise of an economics graduate student originally from Kazakhstan and a guest lecture by a historian who used slides to provide a cultural overview. The course developed from our direct experience with the often shocking economic reality of the region, which we felt was compelling and important to share with colleagues and students.

Why offer such a specialized course? The answer lies in both the crucial geopolitical role of these new old nations and their unique experience,

which casts in sharp relief many key policy debates swirling through the broader field of economic development. Located atop vast fields of oil, gas and other minerals and surrounded by instability, the region is a topic of keen interest to analysts and policy makers.

While endowed with key resources and a Soviet legacy of human capital, Central Asia confronts daunting challenges. At independence it was a generally poor and undeveloped region, caught in the same colossal economic depression that engulfed the rest of the former Soviet Union. The Central Asian countries are now simultaneously transforming the structure of their economies, easing the government out of the business of production and distribution, and creating completely new legal and institutional infrastructure to support a market-based economy. In addition to having to realign their trade from CIS members to world markets, they have to manage a series of shocks and instabilities. Apart from political (and Islamic) insurgencies, the region has been hit with drought and natural disasters, unanticipated shifts in prices of its primary export commodities, collapsing currencies of its trading partners, and pressure from international

organizations for a rapid and simultaneous transformation of the various economic, social, and political systems. A key question is whether these economies can grow fast enough to absorb a rapidly expanding young labor force — obviously crucial to political stability. An understanding of the important forces and constraints driving the policies of the leaders in the region will help the international community steer these countries in the right direction. Anything short of correctly understood conditions and implementation of sound economic policies will lead to further deterioration of social and economic stability.

The second reason for the course is Central Asia's challenge to economic analysis. Most of what has been written about the economies of the post-Soviet era is based on "transition economics," in which the experience of the East European bloc and Russia has stimulated a vigorous debate about the merits of "shock therapy" versus a gradualist approach. However, this eurocentric formulation ignores the central reality of Central Asia: these are largely low-income developing countries. The challenge is thus to integrate transition and development economics. Moreover, the region is a fascinating natural experiment where areas with similar institutional and social structures have followed very different paths. Kyrgyzstan followed international advice and was the first CIS nation admitted to the WTO, but now (by the IMF's assessment) has an unsustainable international debt burden. Uzbekistan, extraordinarily slow to reform, has consequently received comparably little foreign aid and investment. It has so ignored the "established" policy prescriptions emanating from Washington that the IMF permanently closed its Tashkent office. Yet until last year Uzbekistan's economy grew much faster than that of Kyrgyzstan. The often strident debate over globalization and the power of the "Washington Consensus" is perfectly mirrored in the region.

Given these complex but highly relevant issues, the course goals were: 1) to understand the recent history and current issues of Central Asian economies; 2) to use basic economic tools of analysis to probe the complexities of transitioning from socialism and accelerating economic development in the face of a region-wide depression; and 3) to develop the ability to view economic problems and policy from different national perspectives. We pursued these goals through analysis of the development process, institutional change and the implementation of

policies regarding individual property rights and the privatization of state enterprises. How are Central Asian states meeting the simultaneous challenges of stabilization and liberalization, the latter, being necessary according to Western theory to sustain economic growth? What is the impact domestically of exposure to an uncertain and changing world economy? One of the important topics is the pitfalls of "oil-fired" development. The foreign exchange management, debt, and foreign trade policies of the countries in the region, especially in Uzbekistan, have raised concerns over a future economic collapse.

The course provided positive learning experiences for both students and instructors and also posed some challenges. On the plus side, students who had no previous knowledge of the region learned a great deal about it and were able then to debate important policy questions about the direction of economic change in Central Asia. Classroom activities included seven formally structured debates, each on a different current policy issue. Some debates were set up with "Tashkent" on one side and "IMF" on the other. Students learned that it was possible to make an intellectual defense of unconventional policies; the debate format provided a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience, and for many students was the best feature of the course.

Setting overly ambitious goals is common in new courses. We faced particular teaching challenges by including a broad spectrum of economic concepts and analytical tools, some of which were unknown to the few students from the university's School of International Studies (or in need of review by some economics majors). As with all such area studies courses, this one spanned a wide spectrum of fields: microeconomics, macroeconomics, economic development and growth, and institutional development. While it thus proved an excellent review for senior economics majors, particularly those with a prior course in international trade, other students had to scramble a bit. The students' lack of any prior knowledge about Central Asia was another challenge. Often there was too little time to discuss important topics. It would be relatively easy a second time to focus on a more manageable list of topics and also to streamline the rather imposing reading pack which was provided in the absence of any appropriate textbook.

Another way to enhance student interest and remove Central Asia from the realm of an abstract

academic subject would be to use multimedia and live video conferencing with teachers and students of economics and possibly also policy makers in the region. It should be possible to meet in real time with a class in Central Asia in order to discuss students' and instructors' views about their country's pressing economic issues. To promote such a possible exchange we have shared the syllabus and reading packet with the Tashkent State Economics University, and we hope to build on the framework that is already in place for exchanges between our university and its counterpart institutions in Central Asia.

The course could also benefit from more comparative discussion regarding, for example, how institutions and laws are different between Western countries and the countries formerly part of the Soviet Union. Such comparisons would enable students to move from that which is familiar to what for most of them is an alien culture of work and economic life in post-Soviet Central Asia. We anticipate making these and other modifications to the course when we teach it for a second time in the Winter 2005 term.

The course syllabus for the Spring 2004 term is available at <http://www.econ.washington.edu/user/haideh/Ec406B-S04.pdf> in PDF format.