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Mülkiye Congress on International Relations *

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Abstract. The year 2017 welcomed the first of the Mülkiye Congress on International Relations. It was titled as “The 100th Anniversary of the October Revolution: The Soviet Union, the Cold War and the International System” and held on 16-17 October in Ankara. The Congress was organized by Faculty of Political Science, Department of International Relations in Ankara University and hosted many participants from various countries and disciplines.

Keywords. Mülkiye congress, International relations, Hegemony, Prague spring, Soviet Union.

JEL. A14, B10, E15.

Conference Notes

The Mülkiye Congress, held first this year, was organized by Ankara University, Department of International Relations. It lasted for two days, started on October 16 and ended on October 17. Titled as “The 100th Anniversary of the October Revolution: The Soviet Union, the Cold War and the International System”, this Congress aimed to analyze certain developments and actors such as the October Revolution, the Soviet Union and the Cold War with regards to the historical, theoretical, legal and political economy dimensions. There were many participants who presented their theoretical and empirical works related to themes of the Congress. For those interested, the Congress provides several opportunities to publish their works; firstly, the Congress will prepare proceedings book consisting of the abstracts. In addition, selected works shall be published in Turkish Yearbook of International Relations, Journal of Faculty of Political Science and Journal of Ankara European Studies.

The inaugural speech of the Congress was given by keynote speaker Dr. Natalia Ulchenko from Russian Academy of Sciences. It was themed as Turkish-Russian Relations and held in Aziz Köklü Hall in the Faculty of Political Science. At the same hall, the opening session was organized. The moderator was Erel Tellal from Ankara University and the guest speakers was Onur İşçi from Bilkent University, Onur Önel from TED University and Sam Hirst from Bilkent University. The main theme of the session was the historical analysis of the Bolshevik Revolution. The guest speakers gave their speeches in the opening session in the first day of the Congress. There were six halls hosting the sessions and parallel sessions took place simultaneously. For two days, nearly 150 presentations were given in Turkish and English in the several halls of the Faculty of Political Science.

On the second day of the Congress, the work titled as “A Social Challenge to the Elusive “Soviet Hegemony” in the Eastern Europe: The Prague Spring” was presented by me in the afternoon sessions. It was a co-authored work of me and my colleague Research Assistant Bilal Alper Torun. The work of ours had two main purposes, to find a way out of the inherent problems of the conceptualizations of

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hegemony depending on the theoretical assumptions in the literature and to provide a social constructivist conceptualization of hegemony with regards to Eastern Europe under Soviet rule. The question we tried to answer was “Within the framework of constructivist conceptualization of hegemony, to what extent is it possible to discuss the existence of Soviet hegemony in the Eastern Europe between the end of Stalin period and the end of the Prague Spring.”

For that purpose, the conceptualizations with regards to hegemony in the literature were analyzed and in order to overcome the weaknesses of existing frameworks, a social constructivist framework for the conceptualization of Soviet hegemony in the Eastern Europe was given. Within this theoretical framework, the Soviet hegemony was contextualized at both systemic and sub-systemic levels. Lastly, the background of the Prague Spring and the influence of its outcomes on the Soviet’s already elusive hegemony in the Eastern Europe were evaluated. In conclusion, it is argued that depending on the theoretical framework, the social phenomena could be interpreted in a different way. To be able to choose between different perspectives, then, considering the most effective explanatory capacity as a guide could provide the way out. In this regard, that even though Soviets was a preponderant power in the Eastern Europe, since it could not construct a social structure into which the others were incorporated, it was not a hegemon in social constructivist sense. Lastly, pertinent to our theoretical framework and our way of interpreting the social phenomena, there were quite interesting and stimulating questions from participants in the session. Within the scope of the study, these questions were dealt with.



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