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EDITORIAL

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Introduction to the Centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution

This special issue of the *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* is devoted to 'One Hundred Years of the Bolshevik Revolution: Contested Visions for International and Regional Order'.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 has been a matter of utmost importance for world politics. It is a well-established fact that the history of the twentieth century cannot be understood without taking account of the transformative power of the Bolshevik Revolution on international and regional politics.

It provoked a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the major capitalist states and challenged the West in the field of welfare, civic and economic reforms, exposing the inadequacies of free market capitalism to deliver social justice and equality. This confrontation lasted throughout the twentieth century, although it took different forms and shapes according to the states and societies in which it developed. Not only did the actual conflict affect the lives of millions throughout the twentieth century, but its demise also had tremendous impacts on world politics.

The primary objective of this special issue is to foster an academic debate on the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 as well as to shed new light on its implications for international and regional order, with a special emphasis on the Balkans and the Near East.

The five papers which are collected in the special issue as a result of the regular peer-review process address some, but by no means all, important aspects of the Bolshevik Revolution. This introductory essay attempts to portray the main question each paper raises, to show the overall contribution to our understanding of the Bolshevik Revolution and finally to point out new research questions that may be inferred from this special issue as a whole.

Before highlighting each article's major concerns and contributions, let us proudly state that all of the contributors made extensive use of published and unpublished archival documents from the related archives and/or the primary sources that are essential to examine the subjects in question and substantiate the arguments put forward, and are all well equipped with theoretical debate on the subjects. They are all strictly academic. Needless to say that each contributor has relied on a specific analytical framework within which they worked.

We open the special issue with Olga Aganson's paper, 'The Versailles Order and Perplexities of the Comintern's Policy in the Balkans in 1930s: Departure from the World Revolution'. Aganson raises the important question of 'how multi-variable trajectories of interaction between the Soviet Union and the Versailles order projected at the level of the Balkan politics'. She assiduously consulted Soviet archival sources in Russia. Aganson claims that the Soviet Union had a dubious status regarding the Versailles order. She points to the difficulties that the Soviet policy makers faced: on the one hand they were ideologically against the international order, and on the other hand they had to have some sort of

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relationship with the Versailles order. She also explores the role of the Comintern in the Soviet policy making. She points out that 'in comparison with Russia's substantial role in Balkan politics within the pre-World War I international system and extension of the Soviet sphere of influence to the Balkans in the bipolar era, the USSR's involvement in the affairs of South-Eastern Europe was modest in the interwar years'. Finally, she shows 'how the USSR moved from the initial world revolution endeavour to realpolitik'.

The second of the articles included in this special issue is by Dragan Đukanović and Marko Dašić, titled 'Effects of the Ideas of the October Revolution in Russia on the Foreign Policy of Yugoslavia in the Period 1945–1947'. Đukanović and Dašić begin with a clear question of 'how the ideas that initiated the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 were embedded in the foreign policy of Yugoslavia after the end of World War II'. Đukanović and Dašić point out a double effect of the Bolshevik Revolution on Yugoslavia: on the one hand 'the emergence of a socialist state on the ground of the former monarchy completely changed the internal social order' and on the other it 'imposed the need for repositioning in international relations'. They argue that political actors in Yugoslavia steered their foreign policy towards cooperation with the Soviet Union and other like-minded people's democracies between the years of 1945 and 1947. However, they state that this 'lasted until the end of 1947'. Đukanović and Dašić take the whole question from a very different angle, which is quite different from many studies which reduce it to the contestation between Stalin and Tito. Đukanović and Dašić consider that 'there had been an October Revolution sentiment in Yugoslavia long before the adoption of the socialist organization of society after 1945'. Đukanović and Dašić pay attention 'to the analysis of the continuity of the idea of the revolution in Yugoslavia (1919–1945), and then to the foreign policy practice of Yugoslavia'. Like the other studies in this special issue, Đukanović and Dašić look at the first-hand documents and primary sources and present many significant points that had not previously been deeply thought about.

The third article is by Gözde Somel, titled 'Soviet Russia's Foreign Affairs with Turkey in 1923: Reports of Ambassador Surits'. Somel takes up a highly controversial topic, particularly in Turkish historiography: the history of Turkish–Soviet relations. She underlines that 'the controversy was largely a product of the Cold War interpretations when the USSR and Turkey were in hostile camps'. She explores a topic on which so far very little has been written, and no study has yet revealed the content in its entirety. Somel examines Soviet documents in Russian and available primary sources in Turkish as well. She illustrates the way in which the Bolsheviks reappraised and readjusted their policy towards Turkey during the transition of Turkey from the war of independence to the foundation of a New Turkey. To do so she focuses 'specifically on Ambassador Surits' detailed reports on Turkey in 1923'. She shows us 'the essence of Soviet–Turkey relations' as assessed in a specific report produced by the Soviet Ambassador to Ankara, Surits.

The fourth paper is by Tolgahan Akdan, titled 'An Appraisal of Debates on the Turkish–Soviet Break-up and Turkey's Reorientation to the West from a Systemic Perspective'. He takes up the most controversial topic in Turkish historiography concerning the debate on the question of how and why cordial relations with the Soviet Union that had been established in the early 1920s and lasted until World War II failed to be sustained so that Turkey swiftly drifted towards the West. He identifies two major categories on the debate. One is the mainstream and the second is the radical circles.

Akdan suggests that 'neither mainstream nor radical circles have adequately taken into consideration the fundamental changes in the international order in analysing pre- and post-war developments'. He points out the shortcomings of researchers' focus on 'either geopolitical factors or socio-economic dynamics with the aim of explaining the pre- and post-war Turkish foreign policies; they tend to evaluate the geopolitical and socio-economic dynamics as independent from each other'. He underlines that 'by ignoring the transformative impacts of the changing patterns or forms of the inter-imperialist and inter-systemic relationships', both mainstream and radical accounts 'fail to differentiate the changing dynamics behind the pre- and post-war Turkish foreign policies, which in turn led to ahistorical interpretations of Turkish foreign policy'. Finally, he suggests that both mainstream and left-radicals have so far failed to look at the whole issue of the rift between the Soviet Union and Turkey and Turkey's drift towards the West from a systemic perspective.

The fifth article in this special issue is 'Internationalism and the Emergence ofCommunist Politics in Greece, 1912–1924 by Nikos Potamianos. Potamianos is primarily concerned with 'the development of internationalism in Greece during the "war decade"', and thus examines 'the extent to which this development constituted a significant break with the past of Greek radicalism'. He underlines that 'the Bolshevik paradigm affected socialist politics in Greece' and indicates that 'anti-nationalist and anti-war theses' of the Bolsheviks helped 'bolshevization' of politics 'inside the Socialist Workers' Party' in Greece. He gives us a good account of anti-war activities in Greece as evidence for the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution.

All in all, it may be stated that each paper contributes greatly to our understanding of the Bolshevik Revolution and its impact on domestic politics, international and regional aspects. As a whole this special issue shows that the subject in question still needs to be explored further.

Editor of the Special Issue

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