

Evaluation of the GCOE-SRC Border Studies Second Summer School Program

“Eurasia Border Review: From Northeast Asia to the Middle East”

Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University (August 01-08, 2011)

In August 2011 I took part in the Global COE Border Studies Summer School Program as a foreign guest lecturer.

One of the principle objectives of the GCOE “Reshaping Japan’s Border Studies” is to create a network of young and promising researchers on border studies in Eurasia and East Asia and gradually equip them with adequate professional skills to become experts capable of presenting their research results to the policy-making communities in their countries to help resolve long-standing border related issues.

This Summer School Program served that purpose in several ways. Firstly, I would like to mention the high quality and well-thought selection of the program participants. They comprised of a very representative group from countries in Europe, North America, all parts of Asia, and even from Africa. Program participants were a good mix of young scholars from research centers and institutes specializing in border studies (Research Center for Chinese Borderland History and Geography, CASS, China; Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, India; Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland), and from other well known universities (University of Durham, UK; South Asian University, India; University of Victoria, Canada; University of Freiburg, Germany; Waseda University, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Hokkaido University, etc.).

Guest lecturers included well known foreign scholars from several European and Asian countries, as well as a group of top-notch Japanese experts from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Hokkaido University. Foreign and Japanese guest speakers did not limit their participation to making presentations, but took part in all Program activities thus contributing to the quality of Q&A sessions.

Secondly, it is important to mention the wide geographical scope of discussion. Though the main focus of attention at the Program was Eurasia, a special emphasis was placed on such important geopolitical areas as East Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Discussion on the latter was of particular value due to recent and unexpected Arab revolutions.

Thirdly, the organization of the Summer Program was excellent (all lectures and other program events, including a field trip to Nemuro, started on time, everything had adequate logistical and digital support, etc.).

Lastly, I should mention the high quality of the presentations made by participants during a special workshop on the fifth day of the Summer Program. Overall, it was a good demonstration of their individual professional skills.

However, my recommendation for next year's Program is to add one more event that has an interactive format. It could be any kind of joint exercise that would generate discussion on some theoretical aspects or practical cases pertaining to border studies. This would be helpful in acquiring the practical habit of working collaboratively for the common purpose of securing peace in different parts of the world.

So, my overall evaluation of the Summer Program is very positive, and I hope that it will get adequate financial support in 2012.

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The Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University is now becoming one of the leading centers for border studies in Asia and beyond. This year, between 1-8 August, it held its Second GOE Summer School Program entitled "Eurasia Border Review: From Northeast Asia to the Middle East".

The program brought together a number of scholars and postgraduate students from across the globe. The program, which even included a field trip to Japan's northern borderlands to highlight Japan's dispute with Russia over the Northern Territories, was a success in terms of its achievements. As one of the participants in the forum I believe the event made a very valuable contribution to border studies as an academic field of study with an interdisciplinary nature. Both lecturers and postgraduate students who were present at the program dedicated their lectures and presentations to a variety of issues related

to border studies from the heart of the Middle East to the Balkans, to Eurasia, to North America, and to South and South East Asia. The participants managed to portray a relatively accurate image of the borders in these regions and offered a detailed and deep analysis of the opportunities and challenges that the borders of these regions are facing. This year's program was a great accomplishment for the organizers of the event and surely has enhanced the name of the Slavic Research Center as a center dedicated to border studies. I am sure that next year's program will have more to say and more to add to the frontiers of knowledge in this particular field bearing in mind that the experiences gained from the two past events will be an asset to the Slavic Research Center.

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