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CONGRESS

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Panel 64

Borders and Conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East

The Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean are undoubtedly important spots of disputes and conflicts. At the same time, they are made up of sensitive border zones and border issues, on both terrestrial and maritime levels. They all refer to historical inheritances as well as to exploited or supposed natural resources. If borders are one of the essential components of contemporary states, so do conflicts are. According to Charles Tilly's formula, conflicts are making states while being a product of states. Conflicts and borders thus appear to be linked to questions about states and their relations in this region of the world. Both are the result of political relationships and representations as much as empirical data. In other words, borders and conflicts are two ways of questioning the state crisis today and the reconfiguration of relationships between states in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. This panel intends to focus on issues articulating both themes starting from the issues of sovereignty (border and maritime disputes), local and regional conflicts (conquests, territorial occupations and maritime claims) to address also their outcomes with the refugee questions (camps and border regimes).

Person in charge : Meier Daniel (Sciences Po, Grenoble/Laboratoire Pacte)

Discussant : Marcou Jean (Sciences Po, Grenoble/IFEA Istanbul)

Program

Bakawan Adel (University of Soran, IREMMO)

At the origin of the borders of the contemporary Iraqi state: the Turkish-British rivalry in the appropriation of Mosul

In November 1922, during the Lausanne conference, Ismet Pasha, President of the Turkish delegation, found himself face to face with Lord Curzon, president of the British delegation, to argue and justify «the sovereignty of Turkey over the province of Mosul». This territory is known today, in large part, as the territory of Iraqi Kurdistan. Mustafa Kemal's new Turkey, now in a position of strength against these adversaries, then entered a phase of disengagement vis-à-vis the Treaty of Sèvres, signed on August 20, 1920. To convince Lord Curzon that Mosul was part of Turkey, Ismet Pasha evokes demographic, commercial and political arguments that the first rejects one by one. But what is surprising is the absence of a Kurdish representative at this conference. Yet the Kurdish nationalist elites of the province of Mosul, installed in Sulaymaniyah, were developing a discourse and a strategy of action, both in the face of the British occupation and in the face of Mustafa Kemal's Turkey. Then, an analytical return on the consequences of the forced annexation of the province of Mosul to the Iraqi State in 1925 is essential to better understand the "original sin" which still prevents the formation of a functional Iraqi State.

Mourad Hicham (French University, Cairo)

Egypt's policy on the Libyan conflict, between security imperative and regional rivalry

Since the outbreak of the second civil war in Libya in 2014, Egypt has supported the anti-Islamist camp led by the Libyan National Army (LNA) of Khalifa Haftar, based in the east, against the government of national unity (GNA) of Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj, dominated by Islamists and installed in Tripoli (West). Cairo was seeking, in the short term, to establish a buffer zone in eastern Libya to prevent infiltration of its western border by Islamists who would aim to carry out attacks on Egyptian soil. In the medium to long term, he wanted to prevent the establishment in neighboring Libya of a hostile Islamist regime, backed by regional rivals Turkey and Qatar. While developments on the ground since 2019 have been favorable to Egypt, with the offensive launched by the LNA to capture Tripoli, Turkey's military intervention in Libya from January 2020 has changed the balance because it succeeded in breaking the siege of the capital in June, giving the initiative back to the GNA to the detriment of the ANL. This development has heightened Egypt's fears for its security and exacerbated its regional rivalry with Turkey. Indeed, the two countries are opposed to several regional issues, from the position towards Islamist forces in the Arab world to the sharing of energy resources in the eastern Mediterranean. For Egypt, a military victory for the Islamist allies of Turkey and Qatar is unacceptable. It is for this reason that it threatened in July to intervene militarily in Libya if a «red line» extending from the strategic city of Sirte to the military base of Al-Jufra (center) was exceeded by the GNA forces, opening the way for them to control the Libyan oil crescent. Thus, Libya has increasingly become the scene of rivalry between regional protagonists, especially Egypt and Turkey.

Ollier Johanna (Sciences Po Grenoble)

The security challenges of the Turkish-Iranian border

Turkey shares borders with eight countries. Most are under great tension and regularly covered in the media, such as the land borders with Syria, Iraq, Armenia or those at sea with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus. In this context, the Turkish-Iranian border remains particularly discreet and has been the subject of very few studies. This research, therefore, aims to better understand the dynamics specific to the Turkish-Iranian border through the study of security issues and the social dynamics that structure it. These «security issues» are considered in the broad sense - protection of territorial integrity, preservation of economic and energy exchanges -, with particular attention paid to climate change as potential multipliers of threats. It also suggests identifying the threat perceptions specific to the Turkish and Iranian states. The main objective of this study is to observe to what extent the management of these threats contributes to improving or, on the contrary, to deteriorating cooperation between border actors.

Sayah Jamil (University Grenoble-Alpes)

Turkey on the borders of Tunisia: A new politico-strategic deal?

As soon as one wants to understand the real issue of the conflicts, solidarities and friendships that have together forged the destiny of the Turkish-Tunisian relationship, the past of the Turkish presence (in Tunisia) assert all its rights. It then brings the current relationship between the two countries into a whirlwind, a disruption, where sometimes reason as Shakespeare said «goes out of its hinges». We feel overwhelmed by a multitude of intelligible temporalities. Our awareness of the past, present and future is disoriented. How not to be so? The «Turkish March on Libya» (the title of an article in *Le Point* 2/06/2020) is game-changing and reshaping borders. In such a context, the border reality reappears, in other forms. It is therefore difficult for Tunisians not to see in Turkey's «military return» to Maghreb lands, a resurgence of a past that has not been settled. If any history reference is not here devoid of political ulterior motives, it can be explained by the content of the clandestine ideology that feeds the Turkish-Libyan agreement. The support and adherence to this agreement, without conditions or reservations of the Tunisian Islamists, even playing the role of facilitators (in Parliament) to make Tunisian territory a military relay for Turkish troops, further strengthens with many Tunisians «a certainty of wrong».

This news inevitably leads to advance this other consideration according to which national borders are contested by new territories of international management of public problems, participating in fact in what we can call: a new push for deterritorialization of problems linked to war practices and in the face of which difficulties arise to remedy them from the point of view of national public security. All the major certainties (borders/sovereignty) of international law organized as a world system are increasingly turning out to be decoys.