



# Are Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

## Just Pawns on the Geopolitical Chessboard?

27 June 2014

9:30–13:00

Lesesaal, 2nd Floor  
Bavarian State Parliament  
Max-Planck-Straße 1  
München, Germany

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



XVII Session of the Unrepresented Nations  
and Peoples Organization Presidency

27 – 29 June 2014

# Are Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities Just Pawns on the Geopolitical Chessboard?

## Conference Overview:

The emphasis placed on geography when analyzing international relations, security questions and power shifts within the international system can help shed light on the complex forces at play: the struggle for territory and power is exemplified by many of the pressures endured by Members of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). In light of large scale globalization and constant quests for scarce resources and trade ties, climate change and geopolitical issues have become top security concerns, while economic priorities have influenced the global political discourse - in some cases fueling domestic social and political tensions.

In light of the increasingly alarming situation various regions are facing in China, and Crimea in Ukraine, the conference aims to provide a better understanding of the geopolitical complexities that shape the lives of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in the mentioned regions. To address these issues, international experts, community representatives, academics and high-ranking politicians will come together to share their insights and expertise, bearing in mind that both Crimean Tatars and Uyghurs live in geopolitically strategic locations, and incidentally face escalating discrimination and oppression emanating from various geographical, political and economic factors underpinning regional security challenges.

People's Republic of China (PRC)'s continued ruthless oppression attests to the fact the East Turkestan ('Xinjiang') and Tibet are undoubtedly valuable; economically, strategically, and militarily. While, both regions remain pivotal for PRC's national security interests, as both buffer zones and anchors, they are also rich in natural resources. As China attempts to cement its economic achievements and access to oil transportation routes, it becomes clear that rising resource insecurity and political tensions over access have made international commerce the new frontline for conflicts. Considering that China sees the Uyghurs and Tibetans as an obstacle in achieving its economic interests and solidifying its global leadership position, will anti-minority policies intensify?

As Ukraine plunged into political chaos, the Crimean crisis has highlighted the geostrategic significance of this Black Sea peninsula, with old Cold War enemies using the occasion to wage a battle to expand their spheres of influence. Russia insulted the territorial integrity of Ukraine by invading Crimea under the pretext of protecting minority rights and the right to self-determination – something which Crimean Tatars and others have spent decades struggling for, using strictly non-violent means. For Russia, Crimea is pivotal not only for historical and identity related reasons, but also for its access to warm water seaports. Russia also has greater geographical leverage over Crimea, leaving Ukraine dependent on the superpower for trade and energy. While Europe has offered a trade deal to Ukraine to entice it into intensified cooperation, Russia provided its own deal with the Russian President fully aware he has far more at stake in Crimea's destiny than Western powers. Ukraine, on the other hand, due to its location, cannot completely sever its relations with Russia.

9:30 - **Opening remarks**

**Ms. Margarete Bause, Chairwoman, Greens, Member of the Bavarian Parliament**  
**Marino Busdachin, UNPO General Secretary**  
**Dolkun Isa, WUC Chairman of Executive Committee**

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9:45 - **Panel I - *The Geopolitics of China's Minority Rights Suppression***

**Keynote address by Ms. Barbara Lochbihler, Green Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the EP**

**Dr. Fiona McConnell, Associate Professor in Human Geography, University of Oxford**

**Elena Gaita, International Campaign for Tibet**

**Erkin Alptekin, Former President of World Uyghur Congress and Honorary President of UNPO**

10: 45 – **Q & A**

11:00 – **Coffee Break**

11:30 **Panel II – *Are the Crimean Tatars just pawns in Eastern Europe's latest geopolitical game?***

**Bernd Posselt, German politician**

**Abduraman Egiz, Member of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People**

**Dr. Mieste Hotopp-Riecke, Institute for Caucasia, Tatarica-and Turkestan Studies**

**Elzbieta Kuzborska, Expert on minority and language rights from Lithuania**

12: 30 – **Q & A**

12: 45 – **Closing remarks**

**Marino Busdachin, UNPO General Secretary**

## Speaker Biographies

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### **Ms. Margarete Bause, Chairwoman, Greens, Member of the Bavarian Parliament**

Margarete Bause is the head of the Green Party and a representative of the Society of Threatened Peoples, which is an international NGO and human rights organization with headquarters in Germany. It aims to raise awareness of minority issues and strengthen the protection of minority peoples around the world who are threatened by oppressive governments.

She studied German, Political Science and Sociology in Munich. In 1986 she joined the Greens. On 12 October 1986, she was first elected to the Bavarian Parliament, and retained this office until 14 October 1990. For two years she was President of the Greens. After this mandate, she became active outside of party and parliamentary politics, and worked on a research project about social consequences of human genetics. On 21 September 2003, she was elected for the electoral district of Upper Bavaria in the Bavarian parliament, and then as Chairman of the Green parliamentary group.

She is the founder of the network for ecological management and advisory board member of the Environmental Bank Nurnberg.

### **Marino Busdachin, UNPO General Secretary**

After serving as UNPO Executive Director from 2003-2005, Mr Busdachin was elected as UNPO General Secretary in 2005. He was a member of the Extra-ordinary executive Board of the Transnational Radical Party (2000-2002), and is currently a member of the General Council of TRP. He led the TRP to recognition by the UN as an NGO of the first category, and led and coordinated the TRP in the former Yugoslavia (1991-1993) and in the Soviet Union (1989-1993). As a lifelong nonviolent activist, he founded the NGO "Non c'e' Pace Senza Giustizia" in Italy (1994-1999), as well as No Peace Without Justice USA, for which he served as President between 1995-2000. Mr Busdachin campaigned for the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

### **Dolkun Isa, WUC Chairman of Executive Committee**

Dolkun Isa is a former student-leader of the prodemocracy demonstrations at Xinjiang University in 1985 and 1989. He was dismissed from the university, but completed his physics degree via independent study, and went on to receive a Master's degree in Politics and Sociology from Gazi University in Turkey and a degree in Computer Science in Munich. After enduring persecution from the Chinese Government, Isa fled China in 1997 and sought asylum in Europe. He became a citizen of Germany in 2006. Through his continued activism for the rights of Uyghurs worldwide, Mr. Isa has remained under observation and persecution by the Chinese Government, and faces constant pressure to curtail his travel and work.

## Speaker Biographies

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### **Ms. Barbara Lochbihler, Green Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the EP**

Ms. Barbara Lochbihler is a member of the Group of Greens/European Free Alliance. She is the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, is a member of the Conference of Committee Chairs and a substitute for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Delegation for relations with Iran and the Delegation for relations with India.

She studied political science at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. Between 1987 and 1991 Ms. Lochbihler was a personal parliamentary liaison officer at the Bavarian Regional Assembly, Green Parliamentary Party. She worked at Amnesty International in Berlin and as a General Secretary in Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Human Rights Foundation and a member of the German Committee for UNICEF, the United Nations Association of Germany and the Roland Berger Foundation.

Her professional revolves around eradicating social inequality, especially living conditions of women in poverty, violent conflicts and wars. Her political interests have focused on advocacy for the protection of human rights and commitment to peace.

### **Dr. Fiona McConnell, Associate Professor in Human Geography, University of Oxford**

Dr. Fiona McConnell is an Associate Professor in Human Geography and Tutorial Fellow at St Catherine's College, Oxford and the editor of the Political Geography Section of Geography Compass. Prior to this she was a lecturer in human geography at Newcastle University and has also held a Junior Research fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge and an ESRC postdoctoral fellowship at Newcastle University.

Dr. Fiona McConnell's research interests lie in the everyday construction of statehood and sovereignty in cases of tenuous territoriality. Dr. Fiona McConnell's research aims to develop new areas of thinking regarding governance beyond the state and different modes of political legitimacy. She is interested in how communities officially excluded from formal state politics are nevertheless engaging with aspects of statecraft. At the core of her approach to research is asking important geopolitical questions through a commitment to ethnographic methodologies, and her work intersects with scholarship in political geography, critical international relations and political anthropology.

A significant part of her research to date has focused on the political structures and practices of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile based in India. She has ongoing research projects on: cultures of diplomacy and the diplomatic practices of unrecognised polities; geographies of work and social mobility in India's post-liberal economy; geographies of peace; and constructions and contestations of political legitimacy.

## Speaker Biographies

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### **Elena Gaita, International Campaign for Tibet**

Ms. Elena Gaita is currently a policy and advocacy officer at the International Campaign for Tibet. In the past she worked as an advocacy and communications assistant at the European Coalition for Corporate Justice and as economic, social and cultural rights assistant at Amnesty International, European Institutions Office. Ms. Elena Gaita holds a Bachelor's degree in Foreign Languages and Translations and a Master's degree in European Union Studies.

Elena has published articles and research on minority rights in the EU, minority rights protection and in particular, the Sinti minority issue in Italy. Her interests include human rights and minority rights, development, election monitoring, gender-based violence and women's issues.

### **Erkin Alptekin, Former President of World Uyghur Congress and Honorary President of UNPO**

Mr. Erkin Alptekin is an Uyghur activist who has helped establish many Uyghur nationalist and human rights organizations, the best known of which are the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the World Uyghur Congress (WUC).

After the Peaceful Liberation of Xinjiang in 1949 and the succession by the new People's Republic of China, Alptekin's family fled to Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir. He graduated from Convent College in Srinagar, and the Institute of Journalism in Istanbul, Turkey. In 1971 he joined Radio Free Europe/Liberty in Munich, Germany. Mr. Erkin Alptekin has been effectively lobbying not only for the Uyghur cause, but also for the rights of many other nations, peoples, minorities and indigenous peoples in the Western countries since 1971.

Thus, he became one of three founders of the Allied Committee of the Peoples of Eastern Turkestan, Tibet and Inner Mongolia in 1985, in Zürich, Switzerland and remains its executive president. Moreover, he founded the East Turkistan Union in Europe. In 1991, he also became one of the founders of the UNPO. During a conference held in Munich in April 2004, Mr. Alptekin was also elected the President of the World Uyghur Congress.

### **Bernd Posselt, German politician**

Bernd Posselt has been a Member of the European Parliament since 1994. He is a member of Christlich- Soziale Union in Bayern e.V. Party and the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) political group at the European Parliament. He was a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and a substitute for the Committee of Culture and Education and the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. At the European Parliament, Mr. Posselt's work within the AFET committee has largely focused on the promotion of cultural and minority rights as an important component of the EU's foreign policy. Amongst others, in January 2014, he submitted a parliamentary question inquiring about the protection of traditional national linguistic minorities, and their unique languages, in Europe. Other important issues he has raised include the right to religious education at European schools and the progress made on culture in the EU's external action.

## Speaker Biographies

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### **Abduraman Egiz, Member of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People**

Mr. Egiz is the deputy head of the Department for Foreign Cooperation of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, the executive-representative body of the Crimean Tatars. He is also a board member of the World Congress of the Crimean Tatar People and a member of the Assembly of the National Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people. Mr. Egiz is the founder and president of the International NGO Bizim Qirim, a youth organization that focuses on Tatar identity retention. Mr. Egiz holds a Master's Degree in International Law from the International Relations Institute of the National University of Kyiv.

### **Dr. Mieste Hotopp-Riecke, Institute for Caucasia, Tatarica-and Turkestan Studies**

Mieste Hotopp-Riecke is currently the head of the Institute for Caucasia, Tatarica-and Turkestan Studies in Berlin. He studied Turkish Studies, Islamic Studies, Sociology, Kurdish Studies in Berlin, Vienna, Samsun, Baku, Istanbul & Simferopol (Crimea / Ukraine) as a recipient of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the DAAD. Dr. Mieste Hotopp-Riecke has been working as a research assistant at the Institute for Kurdish Studies and at the Dept. of Turkish Studies in Freie University, Berlin for several years.

Dr. Hotopp-Riecke is a member of German Working Group Middle East Association (DAVO), German Oriental Society (DMG) and Association for History and Culture-Turkey Ukraine, Kiev. He regularly gives seminars, lectures and workshops in the context of Turkish Studies, Intercultural formality, Migration Studies, Euro-Islam history, Tatarica Research, Tatar societies of Central and Eastern Europe, Eastern European migration networks and Kurdish History and Language.

### **Elzbieta Kuzborska, Expert on minority and language rights from Lithuania**

Dr. Elzbieta Kuzborska is an expert on national minorities in Lithuania, lecturer and author of articles on human rights and protection of national minorities. In 2013, her monograph on the legal protection of national minorities was translated into English ("Legal Situation of National Minorities in Lithuania in the Context of International and Supranational Protection Standards", 2013, "Artprint", Vilnius). As a legal advisor she cooperates, inter alia, with the European Foundation of Human Rights.