

## IRAN COLLOQUIUM/INTERNATIONAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

### *Duping the British and Outwitting the Russians? Iranian Foreign Policy and the 'Bolshevik Threat', 1917-1921*

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The University of Manchester



The developments following the Russian Revolution of November 1917 that culminated in the Bolsheviks' victory in the Civil War were initially welcomed by Tehran but would soon throw up severe challenges including the invasion of Iran by Soviet-Russian forces in May 1920. The talk explores how Iran's foreign policy-makers dealt with this *crisis* not merely by reacting to the *dangers* it created but also by attempting to seize the *opportunities* that it harboured for their pursuit of an independent 'peace aim diplomacy' that tried to exploit the post-WWI situation – Iran's very own *Wilsonian Moment* – in order to remove once and for all the question mark that had been hanging over Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity ever since the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Thus charting the genesis of the (in)famous Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921 from an Iranian perspective the talk challenges the prevailing view of the era's Iranian politicians as either helpless victims of foreign powers or those powers' willing executioners. The paper seeks to contribute to the early 20th Century history of Iran, to the history of the Paris peace settlements and the creation of the League of Nations, as well as to the question of agency vs. dependency of Middle Eastern political elites in the face of post-WWI imperialist ambitions in the region.

**Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

**12:00-1:30 pm**

**102 Rosenkranz, 115 Prospect Street**

*Light lunch will be provided*

<sup>\*)</sup> Oliver Bast, Dr. phil., Maître-ès-Lettres, is Senior Lecturer [Associate Professor] in Middle Eastern History and Persian at the University of Manchester. He read History and Persian in Berlin, Tehran, Paris, and Bamberg. He is currently a Visiting Fellow in Iranian Studies at the MacMillan Center. A publication of his that is related to the topic of the talk is 'The Council of International Propaganda and the Establishment of the Iranian Communist Party in 1920' in Atabaki, T. (ed.), *Iran and the First World War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), which is based on research in the archives of the Komintern in Moscow. Bast is also author of *Les allemands en Perse pendant la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Peeters, 1997) and editor of *La Perse et la Grande Guerre* (Tehran/Paris: IFRI/Peeters, 2002).