

EDITORS' PREFACE

East by Mid East: Studies in Cultural, Historical and Strategic Connectivities

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Connections between Asia and the Middle East are current in everyday politics, economics, and culture. These connections are nothing new. They have their roots in ancient, even pre-historic, ties between two parts of the world that are often thought of as being separate but have always been closely connected through trade, language, religion, technology and the continued need for cooperation across a common geo-physical environment.

While the United States continues to be engaged in negotiating peace between Israel and the Palestinians as well as fighting terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere, countries in East, South and Southeast Asia have been developing profuse economic, political, and cultural interaction with the Middle East, in some cases for many decades.

Countries such as China and Japan pay close attention to Central Asia and the Middle East because of their strong political and economic ties to the region. Indeed their roles in this vast region have become so prominent that one cannot afford to ignore them. *The Washington Post* reported on May 1, 2011 that a modern version of the Silk Road was underway. An ambitious \$7 billion project involving sponsorships of the World Bank,

1. The view expressed here is solely the author's and not necessarily that of the Library of Congress.

the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and other institutions, this 1,700-mile high-speed railway is planned to connect China (northeast to northwest, i.e. Lianyungang, Zhengzhou, Lanzhou, and Urumqi), Kazakhstan (Khorgos, Almaty, Shymkent, Kyzylorda, and Aqtobe), Russia, and eventually Western Europe.

In his first visit to China in November 2009, President Obama pinpointed the strategic correlation between Central and South Asia. He emphasized the importance of taking Asian countries into consideration of the overall political and military strategies and policies toward Central Asia and the Middle East: “[We] also discussed our mutual interest in security and stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan. And neither country can or should be used as a basis for terrorism, and we agreed to cooperate more on meeting this goal, including bringing about more stable, peaceful relations in all of South Asia.”² This further confirms the timeliness and inevitability of examining the juncture of Asia and the Middle East.

Besides these major powers in Asia, other Asian countries interact with Central Asia and the Middle East in ways that facilitate cultural and economic engagements across regions. Since the post-1973 oil-boom, members of the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) have been seeking an expatriate labor force from the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. For example, the report, “Arab versus Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries,” by Andrzej Kapiszewski at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region in Beirut 2006, cited the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh that in 2005 there were between 850,000 and 900,000 Filipinos in Saudi Arabia.³ Labor migration has been linked to the economic development in South and Southeast Asia. It should also be taken into account that the decades of these micro-interactions with the Middle East facilitate Asian countries’ more in-depth understanding of the Islamic and

2. Taken from “Joint Press Statement by President Obama and President Hu of China,” Office of the Press Secretary of the White House, Nov., 17, 2009.

3. Andrzej Kapiszewski, “Arab versus Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries” (http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/EGM_Iltmig_Arab/P02_Kapiszewski.pdf). Accessed August 15, 2011). United Nations Expert group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, Beirut, 15–17 May 2006.

Arab culture in comparison with the U.S., which comes in handy when dealing with contemporary political, military, and economic affairs.

As Asian countries play an increasingly important role in the Middle East with respect to economy, military, regional politics, and international relations, academic interests in Central Asian and Middle East studies in Asia grow stronger in breadth and depth accordingly. Scholars based in Asia contribute to these subject areas by introducing their unique perspectives that deserve to be analyzed in comparison with their western counterparts. The growing presence of this Asia-based scholarship in academia, and cross interests in other regions, also indicate that the traditional demarcation of area studies by geographical boundaries—for example, the study of East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and Middle East and North Africa, just to name a few—is becoming gradually more blurred and that more cross-regional comparison and inter-disciplinary efforts are being rapidly adopted.

Without a doubt there is a high level of international interest in the Middle East and Asia. It is almost universally recognized, in academic and policy-making circles, that the Middle East and Asia constitute two of the most important regions today when thinking about international relations, energy and sustainable development, economics, religion, culture, and the so-called “clash” or “dialogue” of civilizations. Both the Middle East and Asia are, independent of one another, significant sources of natural resources, military conflict, cultural production, human migration, and political attention. There have been, however, relatively few academic conferences and publications focused on the interactions of the two regions and how the two regions are inextricably linked in the economic and political impact they have on the rest of the world.

The establishment of the Biannual International Forum on Asia-Middle East Studies in 2007 reflects the effort to address such academic interests. Established by the Middle East Studies Institute of the Shanghai International Studies University and the Washington DC-based U.S. Asian Cultural Academy, this unprecedented forum aims to provide a platform for western and Asian scholars to converge and exchange views on major issues concerning Central Asia and the Middle East and their relationship with Asia, the U.S., and the rest of the world. The first biannual conference, “China’s Middle East Policies and the Dialogues among Civilizations after the Cold War,” was held in Shanghai in November of 2007. The second biannual conference, under the theme of “Transcend-

ing Borders: Asia, Middle East, and the Global Community,” was hosted jointly by the U.S. Naval Academy’s Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, U.S. Asian Cultural Academy, the Shanghai International Studies University, and the Library of Congress Asian Division. It was held in October of 2009 in Annapolis, MD. Over eighty academics, diplomats, policy analysts, and subject experts from around the world attended this conference. Over the course of two days, the speakers and participants investigated, through lectures and panel discussions, the areas of energy and the environment, economy and trade, cross-regional relations, and social and cultural perspective.

As a result of this ongoing series of conferences, this special issue of *Comparative Islamic Studies* provides a multi-disciplinary and trans-regional approach to the historical roots and continued development of ties between the Middle East and Asia, from Muslim-Confucian relations to nuclear technology exchange between China and Saudi Arabia. The papers are contributed by specialists who live, research, and have spent considerable amount of time in institutions in the Middle Eastern and Asian countries, including Japan, Israel, China and Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Kuwait, Philippines, Australia, Malaysia, North Africa, Indonesia, Lebanon and Syria, India and Kashmir, Egypt, and Korea. The contributors include academics, policy makers and consultants, leaders in international business, law professionals, and military.

The goal of this publication is to reach out to the research, diplomatic, and commercial communities. The subjects are addressed to attract individuals and groups from academia, think-tanks, NGOs, members of Congress, the US government, the private sector, and those involved in the policy-making, strategic planning, and public diplomacy in the fields of transnational studies, across-cultural comparison, international relations, energy security, global Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism, and terrorism.

The articles are broadly divided into three main areas: (I) Cultural and Historical Connections (II) Transnational Allegiances and Local Culture in Asia, and (III) Strategic Relations between Asia and the Middle East.

I. Cultural and Historical Connections

In “The Muslim Appropriate of Confucian Thought in Eighteenth-Century China, Sachiko Murata analyzes the concept of Huiru, “Islamic Confucianism.” From the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, a school of thought known as Huiru flourished in the Chinese language

and produced many books on Islamic teachings taking full advantage of the rich vocabulary of the Neo-Confucian philosophical tradition. Probably the most influential of these books was *Tianfang xingli*, “Nature and Principle in Islam,” published by Liu Zhi in 1704. In contrast to the vast majority of modern-day books about Islam, which focus on legal, social, and political teachings, Liu Zhi addresses the underlying principles of the Islamic worldview—specifically unity, prophecy, and the return to God. The result is a surprisingly harmonious synthesis of Islamic and Confucian thought that can provide inspiration to those of us today who would like to carry out a meaningful “dialogue among civilizations.”

“Xinjiang as Portrayed in Qing’s Historical Gazetteers Housed at the Library of Congress” by Anchi Hoh, focuses on Xinjiang during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). Hoh argues that to study the relationship between China and the Middle East it is unavoidable to form an understanding of the Xinjiang region as a bridge between the regions. Focusing on the expansion of China control of Xinjiang and the bordering regions of Central Asia during the Qianlong period (1736–1795) and the significance of these regions from the eighteenth century to the present, this article demonstrates the fervent relationship between East Asia and the Middle East. Unlike many studies focusing on contemporary political intricacies and independence movements in the region and Xinjiang’s possible ties to terrorism, this article concentrates on historical roots and landscape as an attempt to form meaningful assessments of contemporary politics and society. Moreover, in dealing with the current Chinese government on Xinjiang related issues, it is imperative to study the relevant historical documents in order to form a full understanding of the current Chinese thinking. This article emphasizes Xinjiang’s regional development during the Qing dynasty, as well as the Qing’s attitude toward Xinjiang’s bordering countries in the historical Chinese documents housed in the Library of Congress. The Library’s Qing collection, unavailable elsewhere and was underutilized in Xinjiang study, includes historical maps, archival records, individual diaries and essays, gazetteers, travelogues, and historians’ accounts.

Instead of privileging the state, our third article, “The Cosmopolitan Canopy of East Maritime Southeast Asia: Minority citizenship in the Phil-Indo Archipelago” by Bruce Lawrence examines the elusive yet decisive role of the public square. He explains that the “public square” is the crucial category for understanding the scale and scope of citizenship. Both Indonesia and the Philippines resemble other contemporary

polities in so far as their subjects/citizens project public faith, or religion in the public square. Minorities, like their majority neighbors, are “pious patriots,” but they are patriots first. Lawrence demonstrates that to understand minority citizenship, individual voices from both polities must be analyzed. In doing so, he questions whether they can be simply categorized as full-fledged citizens of nation-states. Key terms that define minority relations are IP (Indigenous People) for the Southern Philippines, and *adat* (native practices) for many of the newly autonomous regions within Indonesia. By examining both IP and *adat*, Lawrence underscores the benefits, but also reveals the shortcomings, of the public square as it functions throughout the Phil-Indo Archipelago. This study concludes with a projection of what future changes in the public square will augur, not only for the region but also for its neighbors.

II. Transnational Allegiances and Local Culture in Asia

Carool Kersten’s contribution, “Cosmopolitan Muslim Intellectuals and the Mediation of Cultural Islam in Indonesia,” describes how Indonesia plays a key role in connecting East and Southeast Asia with the Middle East and the rest of the world. Aside from progress in scholarly research on the historicity of these relations, Kersten analyzes contemporary developments. As the largest Muslim nation in the world, Indonesia has positioned itself in the vanguard of ASEAN as the main architect of the region’s relations with other parts of Asia, the Islamic world and the West, while simultaneously avoiding overtly political Islamic agendas, relying instead on a notion of “cultural” or “civil Islam.” This chapter discusses the alternative discourse of civil or cultural Islam developed by a cosmopolitan Indonesian Muslim intelligentsia who was given a space by the consecutive regimes following the ousting of Sukarno. Kersten identifies this uniquely Indonesian Islamic discourse as the outcome of the compounded efforts of three generations of Muslim intellectuals, loyal to the Pancasila ideology and embracing the slogan “Islam Yes! Islamic Party: No!” In defiance of the growing antagonism following the re-emergence of Islamic political parties in the post-Suharto era, also the youngest generation of “liberal” and “post-traditional” Muslims continue to give shape to this cosmopolitan Islam.

The key concept of the fifth article, “Emerging Islamic-Confucian Axis in the Virtual Ummah: Connectivity and Constraint in the Contemporary China” by Ho Wai-Yip, is that while the predominant focus of the rise of cyber Islamic environments (CIEs) has been on the Middle East

and the West, there exists a neglected but emerging trend of the Chinese-speaking Islamic websites in the midst of growing autonomy of civil social movements as well as the state surveillance. Among the ten Muslim nationalities in China, Ho firstly surveys the general situations of the cyber environments in China, in which the Hui Islamic websites are embedded. He then goes on to explore the development and features of some representative Hui Islamic websites. This chapter illustrates the challenge for Chinese CIEs is to resolve the identity politics, on the one hand demonstrating the political loyalty to the sovereign power of People's Republic of China (PRC) and identifying the global *ummah* in terms of transborder religious solidarity on the other hand.

Vivienne Angeles examines the intriguing topic of labor migration and Philippine Islam in "The Middle East and the Philippines: Transnational Linkages, Labor Migration and the Remaking of Philippine Islam." She explains how historically Islam in the Philippines has been identified as a religion of ethnic groups that are concentrated in the southern part of the country. Yet Islam in the Philippines has now transcended ethnic boundaries with the increasing number of Filipino Catholics converting to Islam. This chapter describes how labor migration to the Middle East has led to changes in the composition of Muslims in the Philippines, which in turn has resulted in the growing plural nature of Philippine Islam. This change is demonstrated by the growth of the *Balik Islam* (converts/"reverts" to Islam) movement in the country and the changing material culture of the religion (Islamic dress, mosque architecture). Angeles traces the historical development of Philippine labor migration to the Middle East, explores the linkage between labor migration and conversion, and then studies the composition, purposes and aims of the *Balik Islam* movements that are linked to labor migration. She goes on to analyze the patterns that emerge out of these movements and their implications for Philippine Islam.

In the next article "Globalization, Modernity and Migration: The Changing Visage of Social Imagination," Darlene Machell de Leon Espena asserts that the recent phenomenon of migration is one apparent and fundamental process that shapes human communities, transforming cultural variation, and distorts the constructs of distance and space. She points out that the boundaries of nation-states and identities are constantly being challenged, restructured and interrogated and the trends of modernity and globalization, new ways of projecting feelings and dif-fusing cultures among displaced communities are produced. This chap-

ter looks for the new stories that are produced with this vibrant intersection of globalization, modernity and migration. In particular, Espena focuses on the distinct Sikh migrant community in the Philippines: how they have evolved, how the forces of globalization have pervaded their lifestyle and how they have utilized the benefits of recent trends of modernity to survive life beyond India's borders. Espena maintains that Sikh migrants choose to stay in the Philippines because they have produced a simulation of life in their home country albeit with perceptible deviations. This transplanted community utilized the benefits of globalization and modernity to modify the limited space they occupy to re-create their homeland and therefore *India* has been easier to "imagine," "visualize" and "experience."

Sharon Advincula Caringal discusses the Muslim Secessionist issue in the next article, "Shifting Paradigms: Solidarity Groups and the Muslim Secessionist Problem in the Philippines." The Muslim Secessionist issue has already brought tremendous strains on the Philippines and its people, and, in the entire process of finding a solution to this problem, several processes and arrangements had been tried and tested including the use of third party involvement by international, regional and national solidarity groups before, during and after the peace agreement had been reached. Caringal details these activities to include the use of inquiry, good offices, consultation, mediation, facilitation, negotiation, coordination, sanction, regional arrangements, ceasefire monitoring and international support generation. This chapter draws attention to three specific Muslim groups which still continue to define the overall socio-political landscape in the area: the Moro National Liberation Front, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Any internal conflict, Caringal argues, is unique by itself and should be contextualized but there are still commonalities to which lessons can be drawn and subsequently used to benchmark other intrastate conflicts. The adoption of a multi-dimensional approach is hereby being proposed to facilitate the process toward achieving genuine peace and development in Southern Philippines.

III. Strategic Relations between Asia and the Middle East

In "An Emergent Trans-Asian Energy Nexus: the Likely Costs and the Possible Benefits," Leanne Piggott states that the IEA predicts that global energy usage will continue to increase over the next twenty years by as much as 45%, driven largely by the emerging economies of North and

South Asia. This assessment is most pertinent in relation to oil, which currently accounts for the largest share of global energy use due to the oil dependence of the transport sector. Piggott points out that the major supplier of oil to the global market, West Asia's Arabian/Persian Gulf, is also experiencing relatively high energy consumption growth, and the Gulf states have thus found themselves confronted with the paradox of needing to develop alternative energy sources for their own domestic use while requiring the world's traditional dependence on oil to continue so that they can maintain their export revenues. To the extent that alternative energy sources are developed, the commerciality of the oil reserves of supplier states is made less secure. This chapter explains how the growth in oil consumption has also raised questions about the medium to long-term security of supply for Asian oil-importing states which have invested substantially in supply contracts and in acquiring equity in upstream production in the Gulf. Piggott examines both the potential threats and benefits that might arise from this emerging trans-Asian oil nexus including the increasing dependence by Asian oil importers on supplies from an inherently unstable region, and the pursuit of alternate technologies by suppliers and consumers.

In our tenth article, Sumiyo Nishizaki analyzes the Japan-Middle East-U.S. triangle relationship in "A Case Study: The United Arab Emirates and Japan: Diversifying Bilateral Relationships and Challenges in the Context of Japan's New Foreign Policy Focus and US-Japan Relation." Japan's Middle East policies, Nishizaki contends, have been influenced by its energy needs and relationship with the United States. Fully aware of its status as a country with hardly any energy resources, Japan has engaged in energy diplomacy and investment in oil fields in the Middle East. This chapter describes how, despite pursuing an energy strategy largely independent of the United States, Japan has constantly needed to take into account its relationship with the Americans, and Japan has slowly shifted toward more frequent support for American policy especially after the Gulf War in 1990. At the same time, Japan's Middle East policies have been influenced by its domestic politics. For example, former Prime Minister Koizumi's post-September 11 plan to let Japan's military forces play a more prominent role in the War on Terror was crushed by his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). This chapter explains that LDP politicians were afraid that supporting the war would undermine Japan's economic interests in the Muslim world and how the Democratic Party of Japan which took office in September 2009 has attempted to pursue a more independent

position in its relations with the United States. This chapter explores the shifts in Japan's Middle East policies under the new administration and their implications on US-Japan relations.

In "The Vicissitudes of Japan-Saudi Relations" by Michael Penn, presents an outline of Japan's relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since the late 1930s. The Japan-Saudi relationship deserves attention because it has been one of the world's most important economic axes for decades: Saudi Arabia has been the world's leading exporter of crude oil and Japan has been the major industrial economy most directly dependent on Persian Gulf oil. Penn shows how the pattern of Japan-Saudi relations has in fact been rather curious to the extent that while the bilateral oil connection has remained generally stable, the political relationship has gone through remarkable cycles of boom and bust. This Japan-Saudi relationship began strong in the late 1950s but was tried when Saudi leaders responded to Japan's refusal to take a clear stand on the Palestinian issue and other matters of concern to the Arab world. Tokyo was finally forced to come off the fence during the 1973 Oil Crisis, and paid due attention to oil diplomacy for about a decade. Penn analyzes how this relationship develops further through the Kuwait War of 1990-1991, the discontinuation of the Arabian Oil concession in Khafji in 2000, the Iraq War, and the massive PetroRabigh project on the Red Sea Coast.

Itamar Y. Lee adopts a unique angle to analyze China's Middle East policy in "Chasing the Rising Red Crescent: Sino-Shi'i Relations in the Post-Cold War Era." With the end of the Cold War and the political renaissance of Islam, Lee argues that China's strategic approaches towards the Middle East have changed fundamentally. The rise of China on the Middle East coupled with the strategic ascendancy of Shi'i Islam in the Middle East invites a strategic window for the emerging architecture of global geopolitics and world economy. The aim of Lee's study is to make clear the historical trajectories and evolving strategic calculations in China's Middle East policy and its global implications by reviewing Sino-Shi'i relations in general and introducing Chinese strategic interactions with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas in particular. Since the establishment of *zhongguo zhongdong wenti teshi* [Chinese Special Envoy for Middle Eastern Affairs] in 2002, China's economic presence and political clout in the Middle East including the Shi'i region have been advanced obviously. Sino-Shi'i relations in the post-Cold War era, thus, should be seriously examined not only for understanding China's strategic perceptions of the Middle East but also for explaining the pattern of Chinese

foreign behaviours, as well as for expecting the impact of China's rising in the region and its geopolitical implications for the future of China-U.S. relations

In the final article, "Transcending Multilateral Conflicts in Eurasia: Some Sustainable Peaceful Alternatives," Mushtaq Kaw upholds that notwithstanding intermittent conflicts and wars among the nomadic and sedentary peoples since early times, the Asian and Middle Eastern region has been characteristic of relative peace and prosperity. This region has been reinforced with boom in energy trade, globalization and amalgamation of local, national and global economies during the post-Cold War era. Kaw shows how, at least in part, the gradual improvement in the indicators of social sustainability, human security and economic growth, was the natural concomitant of the historical position of this region. Yet, speedy progress in the region, this chapter shows, is impeded by divergent geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic agendas of the regional and global powers; these find manifestation in the conflicts in Middle East, Caucasia, Afghanistan, Indian Kashmir, Chinese part of Turkistan (Xinjiang) etc. The conflicts are diverse in nature, time and space, and are pre-emptive of enormous malice, hatred and heart burning among the contending parties. To down-size one another, they perpetually build military capability and enhance defense expenditure, in tens, hundreds and thousands of US dollars at the cost of public works, human security and precious national resources. Kaw concludes that the conflicts can be overcome through peaceful means than use of force. Several alternatives are warranted for the purpose: (i) engagement of conflicting parties in composite dialogue for generational sustainability, (ii) promotion of regional and economic integration while marginalizing ethno-national, ethno-geographic, ethno-religious and ethno-sectarian disputes, (iii) revival of the region's rich tradition of multiculturalism and human co-existence, and (iv) glorification of peace message in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and other religions. The objective is simply making history relevant to the contemporary society, and bolstering peace efforts of the nations, philanthropists and civil society in an otherwise war-torn and conflict-ridden Asian and Middle Eastern space.

