

Editor's Introduction

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Editors' Introduction

We are delighted to present the combined second and third issue of the *Griffith Asia Quarterly*.

Following on from our inaugural issue's exploration of how key Asian states themselves perceive their role, interests and capabilities in the 'Asian Century', this issue turns our attention toward those states that either through their own design or through the neglect of the international community have remained relatively isolated or unintegrated into the diplomatic, political, and economic fabric of their immediate regions and Asia more broadly.

In this respect, contributors to this issue address a number of major regional outliers and the factors that have constrained their integration into their immediate regions and the implications of this for regional and international security.

The issue opens with a comprehensive analysis by Benjamin Habib of North Korea's place in the Northeast Asian strategic environment. He investigates the factors constraining North Korea's further integration into the Northeast Asian region and the implications of the maturation of its nuclear weapons program for regional security. He argues that North Korea's doctrine of simultaneous nuclear weapons and economic development heralds the end of regional denuclearisation politics, which in turn is shaping the nature and extent of North Korea's integration into Northeast Asia.

Claude Rakisits' article focuses on Pakistan, arguing that there are three major factors that have constrained the country's capacity to integrate with South and Southwest Asia: the violent partition of the sub-continent and the unresolved issue of Pakistan's identity and the role of Islam in the administration of the country; the multi-ethnic and odd geographic nature of the country; and Pakistan's alliance with the United States. He suggests that Pakistan has sought to compensate for this isolation by building ties with countries outside its own region, notably China and the Middle East. This has not only further isolated

Pakistan from its immediate region but also fuelled subsequent domestic instability.

Matthew Gray then presents a thoughtful analysis of the factors that have led to the emergence of 'two Middle Easts'. He argues that the past two decades has witnessed a dramatic rise in the wealth and economic power of some parts of the Middle East, especially the Arab monarchies of the Gulf, while the non-energy exporting states, especially the republics such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and even Tunisia, lagged or even stagnated. He also notes that the first, wealthy Middle East is increasingly engaged with Asia and the world and adapting to external change, while the second Middle East is being left behind due to economic stagnation, political dissatisfaction, and a failure to address underlying problems such as rapid population growth, urbanization, and deteriorating social services. This shift has also transformed regional power relations as power has shifted from the republican Middle East to the Gulf one, and the nature of this regional power has transformed from something primarily military to increasingly based on economic and 'soft' power. He concludes that the future of the Middle East is becoming bifurcated, with one part looking increasingly active and open, while the other, after the shortcomings of the 'Arab Spring' and without dramatic reform, is at risk of remaining on the periphery of the international economic system.

The issue concludes with Vanessa Newby's insightful analysis of the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian split in the Middle East through the prism of the Syrian crisis. She explores the sectarian split at three different levels of analysis - the local, regional and international - arguing that in terms of motivating political actors, religion and politics form a hierarchy of importance. She suggests that at the local level religion has the strongest effect, and is where we see the greatest level of violence, while at the regional level politics and religion appear to be of commensurate import. Significantly, while she notes that at the international level of Great Power politics religion plays the weakest role in motivating actors, what she terms the 'Sectarian Lifecycle' has contributed to international affairs in the Middle East assuming a religious significance.

We hope that readers find the articles in this issue to be both thoughtful and stimulating contributions to debates on these key states and regions and their place in the Asian Century.

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