

FOREWORD: EAST AND WEST OF WHAT AND WHERE?

What do we mean when we say East and West? Like any relative term, perspective is inherent in any understanding and common experience or shared meaning one hopes to convey. In this issue of East West Studies, we examine the basis of what we hope to explore in our journal, understanding what exactly are the East and West, how we decided that, and what effect that understanding has on the world we live in and analyze in our fields.

In our first article, we welcome a team from Harvard and Yale Universities – Brendan Case, Flynn Cratty, Tim Lomas, and Alexander Batson. Their piece *The Dance of East and West: A Brief History of an Unstable but Enduring Conceptual Partnership* gives historical insight into the questions above. By endeavouring to “explore variations on the East-West theme throughout six key historical eras: pre-history; the Classical Age; the rise of Christianity; the medieval world; the Enlightenment; and the Cold War”, they offer essential context for any understanding of our titular dichotomy – its origins, its evolution, and its effect on the world we find ourselves in today.

We then move to the fault lines that exist between these ideas and actors, these nations on the knife-edge of shared understanding of history and identity. From Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan, we welcome Nora Gevorgyan with *Small States in Great Powers Geopolitics: Armenia’s Role in the U.S. Policy on the South Caucasus*. The interplay of Armenia’s location, diaspora, identity, and resources within its understood relevance to East-West power centres gives clear example of how the factors we consider in this dichotomy are both static and fluid given the moment and need of the perceiver. Similarly, Tampere University Emeritus professor Jyrki Käkönen’s *Ukraine War in the Context of World System Analysis and Power Transition Theory* shows how core power dynamics can shape the lived reality of frontier states, and transition of power dynamics can create both opportunity and risk, as it ever has, with benefit weighed to powerful and risk weighed to the margins. Mariam Tarasashvili of Caucasus University, Tbilisi, then gives us practical application of the issues associated with shifting frontiers in *New Era of Uncertainties: How U.S. Foreign Aid Works in Times of War*. In this, we see the dynamics created when the demarcation line in this dichotomy is pushed into doubt.

Are East and West ideas, places, both, neither? Are these terms for collective identities with meaning and shared experience, collected sets of values and aspirations, or shifting geo-political edges on the limits of empire, subject to the whims, aspirations, and capabilities of competing cores? In this issue we thank our authors for exploring these questions. As with any compass points, to know East and West you have to first know where you stand.

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