

## Launching *All Azimuth*

International Relations theory is in crisis: it does not appear to have been successfully accumulating in an integrated manner. Despite abounding theories and concepts aiming to explain what happens globally and to draw lessons for improvement, casualties continue to pile up, and the world is not becoming a safer place to live in. Our supposedly revolutionary new concepts and approaches still tend to remain ‘event-driven’, and in fact follow things that happen in the field, rather than precede them. One needs only to look at the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Arab Spring for recent reminders of this shortcoming.

The problem is perhaps even more acute when we look at one of the earth’s ‘old worlds’, a region sometimes referred to as ‘Eurasia’, and sometimes as “The Greater Middle East’. Geographers have, since the ancient world, made numerous proposals to establish borders between Europe (the West) and Asia. All these attempts to determine acceptable and meaningful geographic lines of delimitation have at best, remained fuzzy and disputable. These efforts of separating Europe from Asia have only confirmed that Europe is not even a separate continent, but a peninsular prolongation of Asia, stretching to the Atlantic Ocean. For our purposes therefore, we will refer to that vast zone of the globe stretching between Western Europe and China; and from Russia to the Maghreb—a ‘Middle World’, where ‘West’ meets ‘East’, and ‘North’ meets ‘South’; where encounters lead to interpenetration as well as confrontation.

This Middle World is old in many ways. It was here that the first agricultural produce was grown, the first cities were built, the first coins minted, the first translations of Greek philosophical texts were made and kept in libraries, the early organized states and universal religions emerged, algebra was conceived, gunpowder was invented, the first conventional wars were fought, and the first peace treaties were signed. At the same time, these ancient lands are very much a part of the complications connected with ‘new’ aspects of the discipline of International Relations, from globalization to transnational movements.

The Middle World takes on additional importance when we consider that the gravity of global politics is increasingly bound to this area. In the Middle World we find evidence not only of traditional IR issues such as major power rivalries and interstate competition, nuclear weapons, state-building related civil strife, or terrorism, but also of relatively newer dynamics such as transnational social movements, demands for political development and better welfare distribution, the evolving role of religion in politics, and energy security. More than ever therefore, there is a need to develop better conceptual and practical tools to understand and explain this world and the areas it impacts upon (the rest of the world), and to present innovative and feasible visions for peace, security and development in the Middle World and beyond. All Azimuth aims to give voice to those who envision and want to help create a new International Relations—in theory and policy—for peace, security, and development.

How can we best accomplish this? As has been argued many times in past decades, IR scholarship and theorizing have traditionally stemmed from the newer ‘West’, and spread Eastward or towards the so-called periphery—perhaps due at times to a lack of adequate voices coming out of the latter region, and at times because of a failure on the part of the core to listen. A starting point to understanding both ‘why’ we are launching this journal and

'how' it should be done, therefore, is our belief that we should try to explain and understand this Middle World, with its ancient philosophies, traditions, and practices, both as problems and as sources of potential solutions. Relying only on the 'new world's ideas and proposals cannot allow us to fully understand the old world, and also means that we are wasting this potential treasure of reason, experience, and information for understanding the whole world.

It is vital therefore, that our analyses and approaches come from every angle; that they be without methodological, theoretical, or political prejudices. In James N. Rosenau's words, we must escape from our conceptual jails. We must understand that we should not be prisoners of primarily Western-produced concepts and ideas (though not being so naive as to dismiss the immense accumulation of theoretical and empirical knowledge in social sciences as developed in the United States and Europe). On the contrary, we should assume that something potentially better has or could come out of these lands of ancient history and practice. For this primary reason, we have selected the name of All Azimuth for this journal, from the navigator's term meaning from all angles; a term that exemplifies 'globalness', as it has been borrowed from Arabic into French and later to English.

It is also important that in launching this journal, we do not intend to shy away from being normative—in the sense of openly prioritizing the end point to which we hope the knowledge produced here will serve: peace, security and development. All Azimuth seeks therefore to give voice to scholarly and intellectual efforts stemming from within the Middle World, for the purpose of promoting peace, security, and development throughout the region and beyond. In terms of who may be a part of this discussion, we do not wish to impose geographical discrimination on our writers and contributors. In terms of the ideas and approaches discussed, however, they should stem historically, culturally, or philosophically from this region and/or aim to contribute to the peace and well-being of this region, and globally.

As the founders and members of the İhsan Doğramacı Center for Foreign Policy and Peace Research, and editors of All Azimuth, we believe that the ancient history and practice of international relations in this part of the world, centuries of dealing with problems of peace, security, and development, must surely have produced local visions and voices as responses. We would like to revitalize these indigenous ideas and voices, and allow them the opportunity to become promising components of current knowledge production.

On a final note, we would like to mention why we believe Turkey to be a relevant location in which to launch this initiative. Turkey is one of the leading places in the 'Middle World' to highlight the aforementioned meeting of the old world with new dynamics. Turkey has a centuries-old history of relationship with the West and, as such, it reflects most vividly the paradoxes of modernity. Moreover, emerging Turkish visions and interests in the broader region are greater than ever and need to be both conceptualized but also supported with intellectual foundations. Finally, as Turkey grows politically and economically, it also does so academically. Though scholarship is booming in Turkey, the Western 'core' concepts remain dominant in the Turkish disciplinary community. This limits the academic expansion—not only for its own potential in understanding the region, but also for not materializing its great potential to contribute back to IR theorizing overall. Turkish scholarship can be more constructive in linking this region, and its homegrown concepts and ideas, to the core, rather than trying to simply fit external, younger constructs into these ancient

lands. Therefore, a new approach with indigenous resources and sensibilities is very much needed for this exploding scholarship. We believe All Azimuth will serve best for this aim.

Ali L. Karaosmanođlu and Ersel Aydınlı  
January 2012, Ankara, Turkey