

A Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

IN THE DECADES following the end of World War II — years marked by recovery from the ravages of that conflict, an unraveling of old colonial orders, the emergence of various regional and multilateral initiatives, and the Cold War — Asia's economic renaissance stands out as one of the major transformations of that period. So too does the relative political stability that accompanied, and indeed contributed to, that rebirth. What stands out equally, however, is how much of that progress for many years was confined to East Asia and parts of Southeast Asia. South Asia has been slower to the banquet table. With India taking the lead, there is the promise of change in the decades ahead.

Still, within the region South Asia remains an arc of unreason, a place where tenacious conflicts over ethnic, religious, social, cultural, caste and tribal differences threaten the political stability of individual nations, as well as Asia as a whole. In this issue of *Global Asia*, we explore the complexities of the problems faced in this part of the region, and what stake the rest of Asia and the world have in their peaceful resolution.

The demons that stalk South Asia are neither simple to fathom nor easy to exorcise. Too often in such a political context, the allure of appealing to extremist sentiment is both intoxicating and politically expedient. There is plenty of evidence of that in many of the countries discussed in this issue of *Global Asia*. We do not, however, believe the nations of South Asia are condemned to political instability or the paroxysms of violence that so often make the headlines. But the path to peace and reconciliation will be arduous.

Chung-in Moon
Editor-in-Chief

Elsewhere, in this issue of *Global Asia*, we provide a debate on one of the other flashpoints in this region, Taiwan. As Taiwanese go to the polls this month, we asked two prominent political thinkers there to ponder the question, should Taiwan declare independence? We also provide a personal reflection on the death of Suharto, and the legacy he has left Indonesia; an assessment of the challenges facing the new South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak; a moving eulogy to the historic Namdaemun Gate in Seoul, which burned down in February; a comprehensive evaluation of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum; a thought-provoking essay on the future of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; and an excerpt of the Report on the US-ROK Strategic Forum. In addition, we are pleased to announce that with this issue of *Global Asia*, we will publish fiction by noted Asian writers, beginning with the Indonesian writer, Dewi Anggraeni.

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Sincerely yours,

David Plott
Managing Editor



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