

**CONFERENCE ON
INTER-ASIAN CONNECTIONS III: HONG KONG
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**CALL FOR WORKSHOP PAPERS
DEADLINE: Friday, June 24, 2011**

Workshop Title:

Shifting Geopolitical Ecologies and New Spatial Imaginaries

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Asia as an area of study was contoured by the geopolitical imperatives of the Cold War – despite a long history of interactions across this geographical expanse, before the end of the Second World War, there were few references to Asia as a coherent unit and there is no term for the continent in any indigenous language. This constitution of Asia, accompanied by the independence of former colonies, also led West Asia to be restructured as the ‘Middle East’ and separated from ‘South Asia’ to which it had long historical connections. ‘Southeast Asia’ was similarly divorced from both ‘South’ and ‘East’ Asia. These arrangements were framed by U.S.-sponsored alliances (SEATO and CENTO) in which Pakistan played a bridging role as a member of both, while India, Indonesia, and many other regional states joined together to launch the Non-Aligned Movement.

The end of the Cold War has created new fractures as the demise and breakup of the Soviet Union rendered Non-Alignment anachronistic, and new cultural geographies have come into being in material and political practice, as well as in the imaginary of the elites and the populations involved. The changed geopolitical ecologies reconfigure alliances which parallel earlier historical patterns.

This is evident in West and South Asia where deeper American involvement has been accompanied by Turkish and Indian bids for regional prominence, evoking memories of coeval dominions of Ottoman and Mughal empires. Sited at the confluence of several emerging networks, this region is crucial in understanding new realities of strategic alliances and interests. The expanded scale of production in China and India has intensified trade relations with the energy-rich states of West Asia. Denser trade in the neighboring seas accompanied by state failures in east Africa has also spurred a rise of piracy inviting new forms of cooperation between global and regional powers. If increased prosperity has made the ‘emerging economies’ more confident in their dealings with the West, their roles in their ‘near abroad’ has been akin to satrapies vying for greater autonomy. At the same time, the end of the Cold War has encouraged ethnic groups to tap into and revive their collective memories to challenge their fragmentation across national borders.

This workshop examines these realignments in their historical context. It is based on the premise that spatial imaginaries are generated by a broad parallelogram of forces, but have to resonate successfully with collective historical memories and cultural practices. We invite original contributions from scholars of different disciplinary affiliations and regional interests to situate historical and contemporary spatial imaginaries of Asia within a broader global geopolitical and historical framework.

Possible themes include:

- historical roots of emerging alliances;
- collective memories and new identities;
- changing self-perceptions of states and their implications for global politics;
- new patterns of cooperation and conflict; and
- emerging security concerns in finance, energy, and other arenas.

For additional details and application guidelines, please visit the Conference website: <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/pages/interasia-program/conference-on-inter-asian-connections-iii-hong-kong-june-6-8-2012/>.