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- Jon Thares Davidann, "An Intellectual 'Great Game': The Origins of American and East Asian Concepts of Modernity, 1860-1920", *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 317-342.
- R. Charles Weller, "Modernist Reform and Independence Movements: Central Asian Muslims and Koreans in Comparative Historical Perspective, 1850-1940," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 343-372.
- Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox, "French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Examinations, 1862-1919," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 373-393.
- Heather Streets-Salter, "The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 394-414.

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Introduction by Jon Thares Davidson, Hawai'i Pacific University¹

"The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia, 1850-1950"

The theme of the Great Game for this Special Issue of *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* which focuses on colonialism and anti-colonialism in Central, East, and Southeast Asia, arises from the original Great Game, which involved a clash of the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia in the nineteenth century. There are several important similarities between the newer and original Great Games. Both are located in Asia, they both feature the Great Powers of Europe, and Western imperialism is a prominent feature in both cases. However, they are also quite different. The timeframe of the new Great Game is more recent, many of the players are new, and the approach to it has changed completely. This new Great Game covers East and Southeast Asia in addition to Central Asia. The United States is involved in addition to Europeans and Asians. It includes the rise of nationalist ideologies and fierce battles between international capitalism and communism. And it is more interactive, cross-cultural, and gives agency to those fighting against the imperialists. This helps redefine the Great Game away from competition among the imperial powers to a Game played between the powers and their subject peoples. Because the essays in this issue focus in part on these subject peoples, this Great Game is also a story of important reformers and great reforms. This is a Great Game of ideas as well as action. Even when they failed, these reformers are important to understand because they mark the limits of reform. When reform failed to create needed change, it sometimes gave way to revolution. Thus, revolution and the revolutionaries themselves became an important part of the new Great Game.

East and Southeast Asia, comprising much of the geographical area included in the new Great Game, has become a very important part of the global economy since World War II, especially in the last twenty years. From Japan's recovery and transformation into 'Japan Inc.' to China's more recent emergence as the world's second largest economy to South Korea's rapid development to a ring of Southeast Asian nations including Singapore, Vietnam, and several others whose economic performance has produced tremendous wealth, Asia has emerged as the most dynamic region in the world in the twenty-first century. As these nations have played a bigger role on the world stage, their influence begs the question of how they accomplished this feat and what the future holds for them. In addition, why did other parts of Asia continue to struggle with political instability and economic stagnation such as Central Asia? Study of the new Great Game can help us understand Asia's modern foundations, which were built in the postwar period but also in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century when much groundwork was done.

The shadow of Japanese modernization in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century looms over this Great Game as an early model for others and later as a hegemonic imperialist in its own right. Its expansive influence in Asia is on a par with the Western Powers of the new Great Game: the British, the French, the Russians, and the Americans. And yet the West never recognized Japan as one of the truly great powers. Resentment over this treatment fueled its own Great Game to modernize Asia outside of Western imperialism. The extent to which Japan was both initiator of its own modernity under the threat of Western imperialism and then an imperialist itself, imposing the conditions of modernity upon China, Korea, and a range of other Asian countries is one of the remarkable stories in the twentieth century, maybe even more

¹ This introduction was published in *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 311-316 and appears here with the kind permission of the editor of *JAEAR*, Professor James I. Matray.

significant than the original British and Russian Great Game. In addition, those who were missing from the original Great Game, the Central Asians with whom it was concerned, make an important appearance in this Special Issue as far-thinking modernizers and Pan-Islamists, standing ready to use Western and non-Western ideas such as the Japanese model to renovate their states.

In the first article, Jon Davidann studies the Japanese model, and the beginnings of modernity in East Asia and the United States. He points to Japanese innovations in from 1870 to 1900 as impacting Chinese attempts at modernization in the initial decades of the twentieth century. Davidann shows the strong connection between modern thinking and the rise of civic nationalism in East Asia and the United States. Japanese intellectuals, led by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), brewed a complicated mix of Western and indigenous ideas, rather than simply substituting Western concepts for outdated Confucianism as many historians have argued. The Japanese and later the Chinese, according to Davidann, picked the most useful parts of Confucianism such as Wang Yangming thought, which allowed them to abandon the strictures of orthodox Confucianism to save the nation. He argues that modern thinking among American intellectuals arose at approximately the same time as East Asian modernity but under very different conditions. Modern thinkers in East Asia, under intense external pressure from Western imperialism, were highly motivated and innovative in projecting forward a vision that later was carried out in a full-scale modernization. In the United States, on the other hand, the conditions of modernity arrived first. Industrialization, urbanization, and immigration appeared in the post-Civil War period with a vengeance, and modern American thinkers responded by creating innovative new perspectives and approaches to these challenges. Davidann provides a broad template to think about this new Great Game by connecting modernity and nationalism and laying out a Japanese-led alternative to Western imperialism, which was of course very appealing to any Asian country under threat or reality of Western hegemony.

Charles Weller next reveals a broad set of interconnections in Central and East Asia among Tatar, Kazakh, Korean, and other modern reformers within the sphere of influence of the Russian Empire. Set mostly in the geographical area of the original Great Game, Weller's analysis, like Davidann's, identifies Japanese influence over these reformers, although certain Korean reformers reacted against Japanese influence following the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. Weller's article shows that these reformers fought back against internal weakness and external pressure with modernization agendas. Similar to East Asians, Central Asian intellectuals such as the Volga Tatar Shihabetdin (or Shihab al-Din) Marjani studied traditional thought and combined it with modern ideas within the context of broader Westernizing reforms in the Russian Empire in the mid-19th Century. Pan-Islamism in Central Asia and Pan-Asianism in East Asia became important channels through which modern thinking was transmitted. The modernizers themselves were mostly moderate and pragmatic in their reform efforts. They used the social media of the 19th Century—journals, newspapers, and educational institutions such as schools, universities, and seminaries to attempt to educate and mobilize a wider public. The Russian political leadership engaged these subject peoples in enlightened interaction in the eighteenth century in the hopes of exerting more influence over them, but this later gave way to repression and brutality.

Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox's article connects the Vietnamese examination system to another imperial power in Asia—France during its rule in Vietnam in the late nineteenth century. This novel approach helps Gadkar-Wilcox enter the world of Vietnamese intellectuals through their test questions and answers at a time when the world was shaking under their feet. The French had engaged Vietnam in imperialism since the 1850s and this culminated in French control over large parts of the country in 1885. Gadkar-Wilcox argues that the examination system shows evidence of a shift from the universalism of Confucianism to a particularistic world

of different civilizations. This point connects with the pragmatic insight of Japanese intellectual Fukuzawa Yukichi that civilizations were relative. The Vietnamese began to move away from Confucianism and saw it as a particular tradition instead of a universal lens through which all intellectual activity passed. Vũ Nhự (1840-1886), an 1868 palace examination graduate, argued in his examination answers that Vietnam should engage in self-strengthening and used few references to the Confucian classics. This was a substantial shift, according to Gadkar-Wilcox, who argues that the Japanese experience of self-strengthening and modernization had spread to Vietnam by this time. The difference between Vietnam and Japan was that the Japanese never had been as deeply embedded in the Confucian system and could treat Confucianism more easily as one set of ideas among several. Therefore, while the Japanese moved quickly to invent a modern hybrid system of thought, the Vietnamese shift from universal Confucianism to particular modes of thinking came more slowly because of the magnitude of the change there. Gadkar-Wilcox also notes that Asian intellectuals had come to see the Western onslaught in terms of the superficial strength of the West's material civilization as against the deeper moral foundations of the East, which would allow Asians to eventually prevail, according to this view.

It is also clear from the evidence of these essays that modernizers did not reject Confucianism and other traditional Asian ideas outright. In the case of Vietnam, Confucianism was reconfigured and in the case of China and Japan cherry-picked to find concepts that could be adapted to these new uncertain times when change happened rapidly and Asian responses could mean the difference between independence and colonial subjugation. In Central Asia a similar process took place. Modernizers drew from their traditions and fused these ideas with modern thought. Intellectuals throughout Asia invoked a form of civic nationalism or regionalism (Pan-Asianism or Pan-Islamism) to build modernity, arguing that their populace needed to be educated and galvanized to revitalize their nations.

Heather Streets-Salter's concluding article comes closest to the original Great Game with her focus on imperial geo-politics and the Western European Powers against Soviet Russian influence. But this is where the similarities end. Streets-Salter locates the Great Game in Southeast Asia and traces the early development of communism among Southeast Asians and anti-communism among their Western rulers by studying the Noulens Affair of 1931. She uses the incident as a lens to argue that the foundations of Cold War tensions lay in the prewar era, not in the immediate post-World War II period. The rise of Communist parties throughout Asia in the 1920s signaled that although some of the players were the same, the Game itself had changed dramatically. The Communist activists became the focus of the Great Game, instead of the Great Powers alone. Here the Great Game became a contest of spies, codes, and hidden caches of papers. Streets-Salter explains how British and French intelligence exposed a major East and Southeast Asian Communist organization, the Far Eastern Bureau of the Comintern led by a European couple using the name Noulens. Communism was a very different approach to national renovation and the building of modernity from that of the Japanese, Chinese, Central Asians, Koreans, or Vietnamese earlier in the century. Streets-Salter also indicates that this was a Game the Great Powers were winning, even before Noulens were arrested. Communists' activities in Southeast Asia were fragmented, disorganized, and lacking in support from the Soviet Union. It would seem that this Game would have ended with the loss of this region for international communism. Instead, communism rose in the postwar period to become powerful there resulting in large Communist parties and Communist states in some cases. One reason is that Europeans, infected by racism, underestimated the effectiveness of indigenous leaders in the region to mobilize their forces for victory.

This was a Great Game in which resistance to hegemony mattered a great deal, whether it was the development of modern forms of civic activism and education in Central Asia and Korea, civic nationalism in

Japan and China, nationalist resistance in Vietnam, or the formation of Communist organizations in Southeast Asia. All Asians eventually came to recognize that their nations had the obligation to defend themselves. Even the renowned American education reformer John Dewey resisted the hegemonic power of American business and political elites in the Gilded and Progressive Age, with his concept of modern democratic activism. The reformers and the revolutionaries did not always have their way in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. But in the postwar period, as the Western imperial powers receded or were forced out, it is clear that their ideas and actions had a huge impact and ultimately succeeded.

Participants:

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Review by David Johnson, Texas Tech University

The Great Game,' a term customarily reserved to refer to the imperialist competition between Russia and Britain in Central Asia during the nineteenth century, is expropriated and redefined by the authors contributing to a special edition of the *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* on "The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia, 1850-1950." These authors expand the geographical and temporal scope of the term, focusing primarily on East Asia, rather than Central Asia, and extending its time-frame to cover events as recent as the post-World War II era. The most significant revision, however, as Jon Thares Davidann states in his introduction, is to "redefine the Great Game away from competition among the imperial powers to a Game played between the powers and their subject peoples."¹ Examining various modernization and reform movements that emerged and evolved in colonized Asian nations during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the contributing authors describe the complex relationships Asian intellectuals had with western influences and ideas. This series of four articles reveals the effects of imperialist expansion on changing conceptualizations of modernity in Central, South, and Southeast Asia, as local reformers engaged in national self-strengthening campaigns. The authors describe what Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox refers to as the "intellectual resistance" of these anti-colonial reformers and the complex interactions between colonizers and colonized that defined imperial conquests in Asia.² This refocus of the Great Game to include Asian responses to European imperial competition, including modernization and independence movements, provides an innovative and valuable revisionist perspective on the impact of colonization on both Asian intellectuals and European imperialists. The contributing authors' focus on the intellectual responses of the colonized peoples of Asia to imperialism provides a more nuanced and accurate conception of the global historical context of the period reviewed and of what Davidann identifies as "the new Great Game" (311).

Along with his introduction, Davidann also authored the first article, titled "An Intellectual 'Great Game': The Origins of American and East Asian Concepts of Modernity, 1860-1920."³ This study focuses on the intellectual underpinnings of and similarities between modernization movements in Japan, China, and the United States. Japan was among the first Asian nations to modernize, passing a series of reforms aimed to maintain autonomy amidst the threat of European imperialist encroachment during the Meiji period of the late-nineteenth century. This modernization campaign, involving self-strengthening through the adoption of western ideas and concepts, created an alternative to European imperialism. First, as an example of an Asian nation able to maintain its independence amid increasing European imperialist competition and, later, as an imperialist power in its own right, Japan advocated modernization and civic nationalism in East Asia, particularly China. The influence of Japanese modernist thought, however, was not restricted to the Asian continent. As Davidann argues, American modernist thought was also connected, at least dialogically, to Asian reformist movements. Identifying commonalities between modernist reformers on both sides of the Pacific, Davidann claims they shared a focus on civic nationalism and a willingness to experiment with

¹ JonThares Davidann, "The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia, 1850-1950," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 311—hereafter cited as JAEAR.

² Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox, "French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Examinations, 1862-1919," JAEAR, 377.

³ Jon Thares Davidann, "An Intellectual 'Great Game': The Origins of American and East Asian Concepts of Modernity, 1860-1920", JAEAR, 317-342

various concepts and strategies, both indigenous and foreign, to strengthen their respective nations. While Davidann notes these various similarities, his discussion of American modernism emphasizes the intellectuals who were dedicated to “moving beyond a strictly Social Darwinist view” and to challenging the existing racial and ethnic hierarchies in the United States (335). Comparing their theories to Japanese reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi’s statements about the relativity of the term ‘civilization,’ Davidann focuses primarily on American modernism as the embracement of pluralism and pragmatism as a means to achieve a stronger American nation, ignoring other concepts and approaches that could likewise be classified as modern. While this narrow focus limits the scope of American modernity that is being considered, Davidann’s detailing of the commonalities between Asian and American reformers reveals the crosscurrents and shared sense of purpose of modern reform-minded thinkers in Asia and in the United States. The author, however, specifies that modernity and modern thought were not identical in Japan and the United States or even in Japan and the other Asian nations that followed the Japanese model. National and local contexts shaped their various responses to the challenges presented by the modern world. Traditional ideologies, such as Confucianism, continued to influence Asian intellectuals, while ingrained racial and ethnic stereotypes continued to play a role in American modernist thought. The most significant distinction between Asian and American modernist movements, however, was the fact that the United States did not face the same threat of colonial subjugation that Asian nations did. That the United States did not experience such concerns about its independence makes its inclusion in this article somewhat perplexing, but it does demonstrate the far-reaching, global impacts of the Great Game’s imperialist competition on the shared foundations of modernity worldwide. The modernizing concepts elucidated and the reforms made in Asia mirrored and even directly influenced American intellectuals, demonstrating that modernity was not simply diffused from west to east, but was based on a dialogical relationship that existed between reform-minded intellectuals on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

In “Modernist Reform and Independence Movements: Central Asian Muslims and Koreans in Comparative Historical Perspectives, 1850-1940,” R. Charles Weller similarly describes the influence of Japan’s modernist thought and reforms on modernization and independence movements in Asia.⁴ Adopting a comparative approach, Weller examines how Central Asian Muslims reacted to Russia’s imperial presence and how Koreans responded, first, to Chinese domination and, later, to Japanese imperialism. These “distinct, but often similar, responses” to encounters with colonizing powers reveal that these movements shared sources and models for modernization (344). Most notably, Weller discusses the example of Meiji Japan, which influenced reformers in both regions. In attempts to demonstrate their capability to be autonomous and independent, Central Asian and Korean intellectuals followed the Japanese example, adopting western ideas and teachings alongside more traditional and indigenous ideologies to better compete with the imperial powers. Weller describes Islamic principles being taught alongside science and other modern subjects in Central Asian schools and the lingering influence of Confucianism on Korean modernist reformers. Like Davidann, Weller demonstrates the global impact of the Great Game’s imperial competition and the responses of colonized peoples to it. Weller’s descriptions of the similarities and shared sources for Central Asian and Korean modernization movements rest on a firm evidentiary base. He describes, for example, the shared tactics and techniques, such as the expansion of education and modern literary publications to educate and mobilize the populaces, which were employed in both regions and modeled on the Japanese example.

⁴ R. Charles Weller, “Modernist Reform and Independence Movements: Central Asian Muslims and Koreans in Comparative Historical Perspective, 1850-1940,” *JAEAR*, 343-372.

Weller also attempts to demonstrate that reformers in Central Asia and Korea were aware of, and even sympathetic toward, one another's situations. Although he is able to demonstrate that members of both movements were in the same areas, most notably Japan, at the same times and that they followed similar, though not identical, approaches to modernization, ultimately, Weller is unable to substantiate such claims with concrete evidence. Aside from a single Turkic-Tatar reformer, Abdurreshid Ibrahim, who expressed concern for Korea's colonial subjugation under the Japanese, Weller does not provide any further connections that reveal such knowledge or sympathy. Similarly, Weller's attempts to uncover actual physical encounters between representatives of the Central Asian and Korean movements are, as the author admits, based largely on circumstantial evidence. Pointing to the circumstantial nature of Weller's evidence is not to criticize his research or methodology, as he admits these shortcomings and repeatedly calls for further research into these connections. Nonetheless, his attempts to uncover such encounters remain unfruitful and this section of his work holds less appeal and, ultimately, less significance than his demonstration of the similarities between and shared sources of Central Asian and Korean modernization and independence movements.

Like Weller and Davidann, Gadkar-Wilcox discusses the impact of modern, mostly western, ideas on Asian intellectuals and reformers.⁵ In "French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Exams, 1862-1919," the author focuses on Vietnamese scholars' changing comprehension of their guiding philosophy, Confucianism, and of the concept of civilization in response to the expansion of French imperial control in Vietnam. Gadkar-Wilcox examines widely overlooked sources, reviewing the questions posed in the Palace Civil Service Examinations between 1862 and 1919 and the answers submitted by the exams' participants. Through these prompts and responses, the author traces the evolution of Vietnamese intellectuals' reactions to the specific challenges posed by and the wider epistemological shifts in their worldviews caused by French imperial encroachments. When the existing literary canon of Confucian and other texts did not provide solutions or even analogies to the problems presented by French imperial militarism, Vietnamese intellectuals were forced to recognize that these "Western barbarians" were, as Gadkar-Wilcox states, "outside of this purportedly universalistic worldview" (379). This realization caused a seismic shift in Vietnamese perceptions, forcing a reexamination of their understanding of the world and of civilization. As Gadkar-Wilcox states, "Confucianism' could no longer be universalistic" (374).

With the spread of French military and political control over Vietnam, Vietnamese intellectuals sought further information about western history, concepts, and technologies, hoping to employ this knowledge to strengthen their own nation and to resist further imperialist encroachment. As a result of this recognition of European military power and, therefore, the seeming superiority of western civilization, the emphasis on Confucian teachings and doctrines waned considerably. These were increasingly viewed as particularistic rather than universally applicable and ceased to be the central or guiding philosophy for Vietnamese intellectuals seeking to modernize or reform their society. Their previously universalistic ideology was, according to the author, instead "relegated to historical tradition" (380). Some scholars came to view the perceived legacy of the French Revolution, including secularism, human rights, and equality, as a new universalistic ideology, supplanting Confucian doctrine as the defining feature of civilization. These western ideals played an influential role in Vietnam's twentieth-century revolutionary movements. Nonetheless, Confucianism, which was ingrained in Vietnamese society for centuries, maintained a significant, though diminished, part in reformist and revolutionary thought in Vietnam. Gadkar-Wilcox demonstrates how

⁵ Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox, "French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Examinations, 1862-1919," *JAEAR*, 373-393

Vietnam's history and culture impacted its encounters with peoples and ideas from Europe. Using innovative and previously neglected source material from the Vietnamese Civil Service Exams, the author is able to trace the significant paradigm shift from viewing civilization based on Confucian doctrine as universal to the realization that it was, in fact, particularistic and nationalist in scope. By detailing this epistemological revision to Vietnamese intellectuals' worldview, Gadkar-Wilcox provides the most specific analysis of the influence of foreign concepts and ideas on indigenous ideologies in this collection of articles; and, like Davidann and Weller, she demonstrates that modernity varied in different locales due to specific historical and cultural conditions.

The final article in this special edition is Heather Streets-Salter's "The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period," which examines the relationships and competition between colonial powers and communist movements in Asia during the 1920s and 1930s.⁶ In particular, Streets-Salter focuses on the discovery by European colonial officials of a large cache of documents and communications between local communist movements and the Communist International (Comintern), an event known as the Noulens Affair. Describing the response of British, French, and Dutch colonial administrations to the documents and networks uncovered, the author reveals the "almost paranoid preoccupation with communism" evident in colonial archives; but she argues that the discovered communications actually reveal a disconnect between Moscow and the Comintern, on one hand, and the local communist parties in Asia, on the other (403). Despite evidence of tensions between Moscow and Asian communist leaders and of the absence of direct Soviet leadership, Streets-Salter claims that colonial officials interpreted these documents as proof of the pervasive and monolithic threat posed to their authority in East and Southeast Asia by international communism. Colonial officials' racist and Orientalist views toward Asian peoples, according to the author, prevented them from believing local leaders were capable of acting independently of European direction. They therefore misread the documents discovered through the Noulens Affair as confirming the existence of a single, powerful, organized, international communist movement, controlled from Moscow, operating within their colonial holdings. Perceptions of such a strong, monolithic communist presence led the colonial powers to work together to weaken this movement, sharing gathered intelligence and cooperating to capture local communist leaders.

As the author states, such relations between imperial powers and communist movements "prefigured the global rivalries of the later Cold War" (395). Indeed, she emphasizes this period for its origins of the Cold War more than she discusses the resistance or modernization by those colonized. This article, therefore, represents a significant departure from the other works included in this special edition of *JAEAR*. While the indigenous communist movements discussed and the networks that connected them reveal intellectual developments and actions similar to those discussed by Davidann, Weller, and Gadkar-Wilcox, unlike these authors, Streets-Salter is more concerned with the views and statements of the colonial authorities than with those of the colonized reformers. Although the author had access to the uncovered documents revealing local views and considerations, her focus is instead on the European imperial administrations' responses to and interpretations of these communications. This article, then, is less concerned than the other articles included in this collection with colonized intellectuals' responses to imperialism, which is seemingly one of the defining themes of the new Great Game. Nonetheless, Streets-Salter's analysis reveals how the competition for influence between colonial and communist powers in Asia impacted both the colonizers and the colonized,

⁶ Heather Streets-Salter, "The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period," *JAEAR*, 394-414

demonstrating the effects of the competition of this new Great Game on world history, particularly as a precursor to the Cold War.

“The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia” offers an interesting and valuable examination of the relationships between imperialist powers in Asia and between colonial authority and those colonized. The contributing authors shed light on the aggregate international impact of colonial competition on modernization and reform movements in Asia. Yet their articles also show that while these local movements shared similar attributes and sources, they were distinct and particular to the regions and nations in which they arose. In short, this collection of articles provides analysis both macrocosmic, revealing the similarities and general trends created by the Great Game, and microcosmic, detailing the distinct historical and cultural influences and the specific effects of imperialist presences in the various locales. The contributing authors refocus the term ‘Great Game’ away from imperial competition to the more complex interplay between colonial administrations and local movements. The new Great Game is essentially an intellectual concept, examining how the changing global structure created by western imperial expansion influenced the thinking of local intellectuals and how western ideas were incorporated and combined with local concepts and ideologies to create similar but distinct reformist and modernist movements, designed to either maintain or achieve independence from western colonialism. These articles represent a valuable revisionist contribution to the historiography on colonialism in Asia. By focusing on the resistance of local peoples to imperial expansion, authors demonstrate the agency exercised by the colonized peoples and the new conceptions of modernity that were created by these amalgamations of eastern and western ideas, of traditional and modern concepts. As Davidann states, the articles in “The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia” “help us understand Asia’s modern foundations” that arose through intellectual resistance against imperial control and authority (312).

Review by John E. Van Sant, University of Alabama-Birmingham

In late 2014 the *Journal of American-East Asia Relations* published four articles, plus an introduction, on the general themes of imperialist powers in Asia and internal reforms designed to strengthen Asian nations politically and socially during this stage of modernity. Taking its moniker from the ‘Great Game’ of Central Asia with Russia and Britain as the primary imperial powers attempting to lay claim to the vast region between Europe and East Asia, the ‘Great Game’ under consideration here includes Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Central Asia, and includes the imperial powers of France, the United States, Britain, and Russia. Moreover, Japan itself became a rising imperial power and in some ways a model for other Asian countries through its hybrid of adopting some methods of Western industrialization while maintaining, even promoting, some of its traditions during this age of modernity. As Jon Thares Davidann discusses in his introduction to this set of articles, this ‘Great Game’ was as much about the relationship between the subject peoples and the imperial power as it was about the political-power relationships among the great powers themselves. Furthermore, these articles emphasize emergent nationalisms, reform ideologies, cross-cultural relations, and the fight against the imperial powers. In other words, the agency of the people themselves is a welcome focus of this set of studies.

Davidann’s “An Intellectual Great Game: The Origins of American and East Asia Concepts of Modernity,” offers an excellent overview of Japan’s intellectual modernity, focusing on the educator and philosopher Yukichi Fukuzawa, Japan’s impact on Chinese intellectuals, and the rise of concepts of modernity in America, especially that of philosopher John Dewey and his pragmatic approach to the rapid changes in society after the American Civil War.¹ Dewey and others in the United States had an easier time advocating the adoption of pragmatic and experimental methods to areas such as education because the United States was not locked into the grips of an officially overbearing ideology such as Confucianism. Along with his emphasis on the growth of civic activism, Davidann’s emphasis on Fukuzawa and his belief in the relativity of civilizations, and scholar Kang Yu Wei’s role in the attempted reforms in late Qing-Era China are welcome inclusions into this discussion of modernity in East Asia. Fukuzawa is too often dismissed by some scholars as little more than a popularizer of Western methods, while Kang Yu Wei is often mentioned only in connection to his famous protégé, the scholar and philosopher Liang Qichao. Davidann includes so many concepts and ideas that were bursting forth in Meiji Japan, late Qing Era China, along with the contemporaneous pragmatic ideologies in the United States that the reader can easily lose track of this East Asian and American spectrum of new belief patterns. Nevertheless, this article demonstrates there were many levels to the debate across the dialogic spectrum of tradition and modernity.

R. Charles Weller’s article, “Modernist Reform and Independence Movements: Central Asian Muslims and Koreans in Comparative Historical Perspective,” is perhaps the most unique attempt at comparison among this set of articles.² The author’s use of newly translated Kazakh and Turkish sources from the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries adds both depth and nuance to the subject of Central Asian reformers. His discussion of reform movements in Central Asia, especially in the area of education, occurs within the context

¹ Jon Thares Davidann, “An Intellectual ‘Great Game’: The Origins of American and East Asian Concepts of Modernity, 1860-1920”, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 317-342.

² R. Charles Weller, “Modernist Reform and Independence Movements: Central Asian Muslims and Koreans in Comparative Historical Perspective, 1850-1940,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 343-372.

of the spread of basic education and literacy movements throughout the world in the nineteenth century. Though lagging behind their Russian overlords, Central Asian Muslims sought to extend reforms to their brethren through Jadid newspapers and eventually their own modernist oriented schools. Educator and publisher Ismail Bey Gaspirali was perhaps the most significant in this regard, also promoting the pan-Islamic modernist cause across Central Asia. Such reforms, Weller argues, coincided and were connected to Korean reformers such as Pak Kyu-su through common sources by journeys to China and Japan where both Central Asian reformers and Korean progressives gathered information on the West and from Meiji Japan's path toward modernity. While the Kapsin Coup of December 1884 is, accurately I believe, discussed as a failed attempt at modernist or progressive reforms in Korea (with the connivance of the Japanese military), Weller does not place the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, the Boxer Rebellion, or the Russo-Japan War—all of which significantly involved Korea—in the ideological context of modernist reforms and independence movements. And, while there are a few direct connections between Central Asian Muslim reformers and their counterparts in Korea, a comparison of these reformers and reform attempts has more to do with the commonality of their sources, which were comprised of Western information gathered from China and from Meiji Japan, than any direct connections.

Thanks to a former graduate student of mine who studies the changing nature Confucianism and Confucian-based civil service exams in China, I am especially interested in Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox's article on "French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Examinations."³ In the increasing hegemonic grip of French imperialism, Confucianism and the imperial civil service exams gradually changed from being based on a set of supposedly universal values of civilized, ethical behavior to an ideology of how particular Confucian values could be applied to the values of Western modernity. Moreover, Gadkar-Wilcox argues that the common perception of Confucian civil service exams, especially the Palace Examination, as being increasing antiquated in the face of Western industrialism and imperialism, is a misleading generalization based on the perception of the Civil Service Exams in China during the same era. Despite an unnecessary swipe at The College Board's Advanced Placement World History curriculum, Gadkar-Wilcox is, I believe, correct to point out that such civil service exams did change and reform, however gradually, in an attempt to ideologically defend East Asian traditions against Western hegemony. Moreover, an increasing sense of nationalism was also incorporated into the exams. This nationalism, or "nativist particularity" (389), was a significant change from the universalism of the Confucian-based civil service exams of a few decades earlier. While it is not surprising that nationalism crept into the civil service exams by the early twentieth century, this demonstrates the continually evolving nature of Confucianism and its uses by the political and scholarly elite in Asia—a process that continues today.

"The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period," by Heather Streets-Salter, is the most dramatic story in this set of articles; but also the one that does not quite fit the intertwined themes of imperialism, internal reforms, and modernity as do the other articles.⁴ The story of the arrest of Joseph Ducroux, (a Frenchman using the alias Serge LeFranc), who attracted official attention by being in the company of Malayan Communists, by British police in Singapore, and the subsequent

³ Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox, "French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Examinations, 1862-1919," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 373-393.

⁴ Heather Streets-Salter, "The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 394-414.

unraveling of a Soviet backed Comintern network of operatives in East and Southeast Asia, is reminiscent of Cold War spy stories. Except this one happened long before the Cold War began. Utilizing British, French, and Dutch archival sources, Streets-Salter uses the relatively forgotten Noulens Affair to demonstrate that the British, French, Dutch, and Americans were combatting communism long before the beginning of the Cold War and that “Communists and anti-Communists struggled to win the hearts and minds of colonial and semi-colonial subjects from China to the Philippines, and from Indochina to the East Indies” during the interwar period (414). While perhaps connected to the thematic nature of this set of articles with the Soviet Union (as Russia) and Britain as the main imperial protagonists who were also the main imperial protagonists in the original ‘Great Game’ in Central Asia, and the belief in and search for modernity through communism among some Asians during the 1930s, this stimulating and well-researched article does not directly connect to the other articles under review.

Each of the above articles are substantive, well-researched, and contain both new information and thoughtful analyses that all scholars of Asia will find stimulating. While each of these excellent articles is connected, more or less, to the themes imperialism, internal reforms, and modernity, each can also be read independently on its own merits for a study of its specific topic. This reviewer would have liked to have seen more discussion of the political context of the era, such as Meiji Japan’s ‘rich nation, strong army’ policy, and the ‘self strengthening’ movement in Qing China. Phan Boi Chau, Vietnam’s most prominent reformer of the early twentieth century, gets hardly a mention. And, while women’s rights were part of the discussion of modernity in Asia, there are no female reformers or revolutionaries discussed in this set of articles which can be read as a harbinger of things to come. As Davidann points out, the reformers and revolutionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not often successful in their battles against the imperial powers. Yet, after the end of World War Two, many of their earlier ideas of modernity impacted East and Southeast Asia as Western powers receded from the region.

Review by Cyrus Veaser, Bentley University

The four essays in this special issue of the *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* together expand the concept of the ‘Great Game,’ which was originally coined for the maneuvering of Russia and Britain for hegemony in Central Asia, to cover the geopolitics of all East Asia. The broad unity of the four essays lies in their analysis of indigenous opposition to European hegemony. The works cover a period from the 1860s through the 1930s and a region stretching from Central Asia to Japan. In this new iteration, the Great Game thus becomes a house with many rooms, or to respect the original metaphor, a casino with many tables and a great deal at stake.

Over this long span of time and vast territory, the logic of EastAsian opposition to the West moved broadly from denial and incomprehension of the European challenge, through a phase of accelerated learning about the West (through books and journals but also visits to the United States, Europe, and most importantly Japan, the precocious non-Western convert to modernity), combined with frank admiration of Western technology and efforts to accommodate traditional thinking to the new, non-Confucian challengers, and, finally, after 1900, with greater Western depredations in China, Japan’s violent takeover of Korea, and forced Russification of Central Asia, a new disenchantment with the West (and Japan) well expressed by Vietnam’s emperor in 1919: “Surely it cannot be said to be civilized to become an Empire, to have a policy of taking possessions and capturing people like fish in a tank” (389).

Three of the four essays give accounts of attempts at defensive modernization in Central Asia, Korea, China, Japan, and Vietnam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fourth, Heather Streets-Salter’s article on the Comintern’s interwar collaboration with anticolonial activists in East and Southeast Asia, traces the later, socialist path toward independence and national development.¹ Taken together, the essays give the lie to Western stereotypes of an inert and unchanging East, famously expressed by the English journalist Thomas Fowler in Graham Greene’s 1955 novel *The Quiet American*, about Vietnam’s war for independence from France: “In five hundred years there may be no New York or London, but they’ll be growing paddy in these fields, they’ll be carrying their produce to market on long poles wearing their pointed hats. The small boys will be sitting on the buffaloes.”² In these essays, East Asia is effervescent with cross-pollenating reform movements, many inspired by the apparent success of Meiji Japan in keeping the West at bay.

The essays by Jon Davidann, Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox and Charles Weller make clear that nineteenth-century defensive modernizers did not simply and passively imitate the West.³ In China and Japan, Central Asia and Korea, and Vietnam, reformers within the indigenous elite studied the West and sought to come to terms with the foreign menace without abandoning their own culture. This is a point upon which the three authors

¹ Heather Streets-Salter, “The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 21:4 (2014): 394-414 (hereafter cited as JAEAR).

² Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (London: Heinemann, 1955), 119.

³ Jon Thares Davidann, “An Intellectual ‘Great Game’: The Origins of American and East Asian Concepts of Modernity, 1860-1920,” JAEAR, 317-342; Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox, “French Imperialism and the Vietnamese Civil Service Examinations, 1862-1919,” *ibid.*, 373-393; R. Charles Weller, “Modernist Reform and Independence Movements: Central Asian Muslims and Koreans in Comparative Historical Perspective, 1850-1940,” *ibid.*, 343-372.

agree. Weller, for example, documents the Central Asian modernizer Abdurreshid Ibrahim, who traveled to Korea and on to Tokyo, marveling that “the entire Eastern world longs to achieve the progress and elevation of Japan” (356). Yet Ibrahim did not see the victory of secularism in Japan’s ascent, observing that “for many reasons I have come to the conclusion that the Japanese will receive the honor of knowing Islam” (369-370). Nevertheless, the authors also make clear that in the end the Western conception of modernity did win out. One measure of how Western hegemony penetrated less-developed societies from Argentina to Central Asia, from Cuba to Korea in the late 1800s is that modernizers in all these societies, and many others, chose the word ‘civilization’ to name their ultimate objective, tacitly relegating their own pre-modern societies to barbarism (321, 356).

The ideological victory of the West was not immediate, and Davidann, Gadkar-Wilcox and Weller trace out the permutations of Asian thought in dealing with Western power. In her essay Gaskar-Wilcox rescues Vietnam’s civil service exam system from the standard characterization as retrograde and backward-looking, arguing that scholar-officials used the Confucian canon to contextualize current events, much like a lawyer using precedents to understand a contemporary case. The scholars first operated within a world view rooted in the universality of Confucianism in the 1860s, then came to embrace a relativism in which Eastern and Western ‘civilizations’ competed, arriving by the time the last exam was administered in 1919 at an acceptance of Western republican modernity not simply as a cultural rival but as the new “a new, singular universalistic ideology” (393).

How did the West’s confident superiority penetrate less-developed societies across the planet? Anyone who has read the late nineteenth century press in Latin America knows that transoceanic cables filled even the smallest local newspapers with a daily dose of European and American achievements—technological, scientific, military, literary—that must have constantly whetted the appetite of colonial and neocolonial elites for progress. So too did the indisputable asymmetry of power between ‘the West and the rest.’ The essays concern themselves with intellectual combat rather than the martial variety, but it is clear that physical power is what both validated and undermined the West’s claim to have created a superior civilization. As early as 1905, a Japanese diplomat could joke about what it took to join the West’s exclusive club of the civilized. Before the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, the diplomat noted, Japan had sent the West examples of superb artistry in silk, ceramics, lacquerware, painting, and sculpture. Nevertheless, at the dawn of the twentieth century the Japanese were still excluded from the ranks of civilized nations. “But . . . within the past year we have managed to slay some 70,000 Europeans, and behold! you accept us as ‘civilized’.”⁴

To a historian of American power in the Caribbean, there is much to consider here in the relationship of Central Asia to Russia, Korea to Japan. In each case, it is the proximate but second-tier hegemon that became the objects of emulation by the weaker states, rather than first-rank Britain and France. In each case, pro-colonization parties developed in the weaker states, overawed by the organizational ability and material power of their industrializing neighbors. In Charles Weller’s fascinating article on the weaker states bordering Russia’s southern and far eastern frontiers, a Korean official admits (to his Central Asian visitor) that Japanese occupation after 1910 had improved sanitation and infrastructure, just as some Haitians and Dominicans would applaud the roads, bridges and hospitals built by American occupiers only a few years later. Yet in the Caribbean as in Korea, the allure of the occupation quickly wore off: material progress could not make up for the racism and violence of the occupiers. And there is another unexpected parallel between Central Asia and

⁴ “The Test of Civilization,” *New York Times*, 8 March 1905, 8.

the Caribbean: both the Dominicans and the Tatars, to no avail, sent delegations to the Paris Peace Conference, taking to heart Woodrow Wilson's commitment to self-determination for all peoples (355). Striving after 'civilization' created a love-hate relationship between the Great Powers and the modernizing elites in the colonial and neocolonial states they dominated.

In his Introduction to this special issue of the *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Jon Thares Davidann notes that East Asia has "emerged as the most dynamic region in the world in the 21st Century" and wonders what the future holds for these nations.⁵ Perhaps one lesson from this useful set of articles is that there are no impossible ideological hybrids. What might seem to be the most conservative and change-resistant of ideologies prove to be permeable, susceptible to hybridization with currents of change from the West and Japan. One insight from these essays is thus that all enduring belief systems persist through tacit cooptation and absorption of the new, though Westerners may have trouble seeing it that way. As Gaskar-Wilcox puts it, Vietnamese scholars embraced "an epistemology that sees change as a dialectical process in which continuity is perpetually embedded" (382).

In that sense, today's enthusiastic and successful blending of authoritarian communism with dynamic capitalism in China and Vietnam has many antecedents, as these articles show, from Pan-Islamic movements that promoted scientific education in *madrasas* and Confucian-inflected empires that embraced state-directed modernization, to fervent Asian nationalists who unabashedly admired more advanced societies, to mention just a few. Mere logical contradiction is not enough to cause the implosion of these *mestizo* ideologies. These interesting essays suggest that seemingly impossible ideological hybrids may be with us for a long time to come.

⁵ Jon Thares Davidann, "The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia, 1850-1950," *JAEAR*, 312.

Response by Jon Davidann, editor of the *JAEAR* "The Great Game and Great Reforms of Asia, 1850-1950" Special Issue.

I recently returned from a fascinating World War II conference in Beijing, China. It showcased both new and old in Chinese historical scholarship. It started with two younger but quite prominent Chinese scholars presenting their work and ended with several older scholars who have been leaders in historical studies there for decades. The younger scholars, representing the new right in historical studies, passionately endorsed American democracy and global leadership and the postwar liberal internationalist vision of the United States. They argued that China must acknowledge and live within an American system of international relations. Meanwhile the old guard historians--they are hardliners from the old left--consistently denounced the United States for its hegemonic role in the postwar world and its support of China's main antagonist, Japan. Apparently, the Americans, the great hegemon, did not exert enough influence upon Japan during the occupation from 1945-1952 to straighten its international approach or make it more honest, a big bone of contention in China. According to Chinese scholars, the divisions between old left and new right are quite severe. I was told that the Chinese communist system did not unite them and wondered if they agreed on anything. According to my sources, the only thing they shared was their loyalty and commitment to the Chinese nation. This is the intellectual China of today and I would argue, the China of the twentieth century, a China where in the midst of diverse and contentious ideological conflict and eventual hegemony, national salvation and renovation commitments are what holds it together. Communism is no longer the guiding light; nationalism is still the key to understanding China.

All of this is to suggest that like the Chinese, other Asians, growing to nationhood under the influence of western imperialism, have been deeply shaped by their own-nation-building projects that are still on-going today. Because of this, Asia is an exciting place to visit and observe. Both the powerful globalizing economies and the nationalist rivalries make for great intrigue. This twentieth-century legacy was the departure point for framing the themed issue of the *Journal of American East Asian Relations*.

My thanks to the reviewers of the new "Great Game" for their keen and insightful reviews. As American scholars develop new ways of seeing Asia, the reviewers' comments will be quite useful. All the reviewers acknowledged the significance of this reformulated framework in helping to identify the foundations of Asia in the modern world. I have envisioned these articles and my own work in recent years as chipping away at the edifice of theories of westernization and exaggerated notions of western influence in Asia. Having arisen in the twentieth century, it is possible these ideas will disappear in the twenty-first century. Once destroyed, new histories of Asian agency and more limited western influence will emerge. The reviewers seem to agree that this chipping away and building of new foundations is the main contribution of the issue.

However, the older ingrained way of seeing Asia will be difficult to dispel, for its foundations are strong and deep. Even in one of the reviews, one can find the language of this traditional way of seeing Asia. Cyrus Veese's use of the term "defensive modernization" in his otherwise very insightful review invokes this view. 'Defensive modernization' has long been one of the terms used to explain Asian responses to western imperialism, but one of the points of the new Great Game articles is that Asians did not simply respond to western power and innovations but, more importantly, worked out their own destinies in innovative ways. They combined traditional ideas with newer western ideas, created new institutions, adjusted their lens so they could see western innovations properly and better know what they needed to do to strengthen their nations, and, finally, they exchanged ideas either in person through travel, by receiving visitors, or by reading the writings of other Asians for insights. Later in his review, Veese is more amenable to a strong, innovative

East. He suggests there are “no impossible ideological hybrids,” a powerful conclusion fully consonant with the thinking behind the themed issue. His intriguing comparison of Asian innovations and the Caribbean gives great food for thought. These transnational comparisons hold great promise of future insights. But there are also many challenges ahead.

One of the great challenges is to see influential historical figures who have been consistently framed as westernizers as more than this. John Van Sant’s interesting review points to Fukuzawa Yukichi an early Meiji intellectual, as one such figure who, under my telling, emerges as more than an invention of the West. Hopefully the themed issue can encourage other scholars to uncover new roots of intellectual currents that do not simply rely on westernization as the main narrative frame.

Another challenge is to do the same for American intellectual history which has been dominated until recent years by triumphalist recitations of the rise of American power and influence. But we have been slower to acknowledge the borrowing that American intellectuals did. Only recently has Daniel T. Rodgers work uncovered borrowing from Europe.¹ This borrowing produced hybrid modernity in the United States, like in Asia, and this is one among many transnational connections between Americans and Asians. Both borrowed freely and recombined foreign ideas with their own. For even the Americans, who have been portrayed as the inventors of modernity, especially in the postwar period, borrowed ideas in constructing modernity. And all framed these innovations within the nation. This is an area that needs more research, as David Johnson’s perceptive review correctly points out.

This revision to the way we see Asia also involves politics, not only ideas. All the reviewers critiqued Heather Streets-Salter’s article for its lack of fit with the other articles. However, this article turns not only on great political intrigue (which in and of itself is fascinating) and demonstrations of western influence but also brings out the interaction of Southeast Asians and Europeans and reveals the ways in which the western lens prevents Europeans from fully understanding their Asian antagonists. This is lesson enough in itself for why we should pursue a different approach in our studies of Asian interaction with the rest of the world. Western governments underestimated the capacity of the indigenous communist leadership in Southeast Asia to withstand the blows of western suppression. To the surprise and consternation of the westerners, the communists came back even stronger, eventually creating a government in Vietnam and fomenting decades of unrest and rebellions elsewhere. The move to communism was a response distinct from that of the nationalists and modernists who supported capitalism, but it still has its foundations in a creative attempt to deal with western imperialism and to meet the goals of national renovation.

Hopefully, this themed *JAEAR* issue stimulated scholars’ imaginations. If this is the outcome, I think we can feel satisfied with the results.

¹ Daniel T Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).