

Reporter: Prof. Anoush Ehteshami and Dr Yukiko Miyagi  
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**REPORT: CASAW Workshop**  
***‘China in the Arab World and Emerging East Asia-Middle East Nexus’***  
29-31 September 2009  
CASAW Durham University

This two-day workshop was organised by CASAW at Durham University, which invited speakers who shared an interest in the field of relations between China and the Arab world in particular, and between East Asia and the Middle East in general. It brought together expertise from Chinese studies and Arab studies coming from the Gulf as well as within the UK. This included the concentration of expertise at the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University which has a Middle East political studies cluster and the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies. The workshop provided an arena for an exchange of knowledge and insight from expertise from both fields.

The workshop had the following panels: Firstly, it started with a discussion of how to frame this topic, in **Panel I: *Conceptualizing the New Nexus*** (Chair: Prof. Rodney Wilson, School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University; Speakers: Dr Nayayanappa Janardhan, UAE; Prof. Tim Niblock, University of Exeter; Prof. Anoush Ehteshami, CASAW Durham University). It was followed by the panel which discussed the main conduit of relations, economic ties, in **Panel II: *The Economic Nexus*** (Chair: Dr Raja Albqami, Saudi Institute of Diplomatic Studies; Speakers: Dr Rafael Leal-Arcas, University of London; Prof. Emma Murphy, School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University; Dr Gordon Cheung, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, Durham University). The workshop proceeded to discuss the second dimension of concern, security relations to see the effect of economic ties on these and vice versa, in **Panel III: *The Security Nexus*** (Chair: Prof. Emma Murphy; Dr Yukiko Miyagi, CASAW, Durham University; Dr Marc Lanteigne, University of St Andrews; Dr David Kerr, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, Durham University). The second day started with a particular, but significant case of Sino–Saudi relations in **Panel IV: *China-Saudi Relations*** (Chair: Dr Gordon Cheung; Speakers: Ms Norafidah Ismail, University of Exeter; Dr Raja Albqami, Riyadh; Discussant: Prof. Tim Niblock), and was followed by the final panel covering other dimensions of the relations and a geographically wider scope in **Panel V: *Other Dimensions of the Emerging Nexus*** (Chair: Dr Narayanappa Janardhan, UAE; Speakers: Dr Janet Liao, University of Dundee; Ms Samerjit Limlikit, Durham University). The workshop was closed with a roundtable discussion by all the participants in the **Panel VI: *Roundtable Assessing the East Asia- Middle East Nexus*** (Chair: Prof. Rodney Wilson), which featured a very stimulating exchange of ideas among speakers as well as informed audience.

The participation of the speakers who were invited from the Gulf, namely Dr Narayanappa Janardhan from UAE, who is knowledgeable of overall Middle East-East Asia relations, and Dr Raja Albqami from Saudi Arabia, who is particularly knowledgeable of Saudi’s economic interest in China, were of particular importance, as it added to the quality of discussion to a great extent, given the scarcity of experts within UK and Europe in this particular field. It also internationalised the CASAW network.

The broad scope of the speakers' backgrounds and expertise attracted the interest of non-speaker participants. Worthy of particular note is the range of participation from other walks of life, most notably from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, energy consultants, journalists, former oil company employees based in the Middle East, members of the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, and UK postgraduate and undergraduate students who had a particular interest in this topic for their research. Altogether, the workshop had more than 50 good-quality participants. The workshop stimulated many participants' questions and discussions of wide range of issues free-flowing. Considerable interest was shown in the broad question of the extent and the nature of cross regional relations. This workshop should help to grow a network of interested communities and nurture further research and study co-operation between the many groups of scholars working on different aspects of Asian studies.

It is expected that the papers from the workshop will be published in a volume to be edited by Prof. Anoush Ehteshami and Dr Yukiko Miyagi, both members of CASAW at Durham University.