

Foreword

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Foreword

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The title of this book, *Social Protests and Nation-Building in the Middle East and Central Asia*, may in a sense seem provocative given the situation we are facing today, with the escalation of violence in the Middle East. It has not been my intention, however, to portray the subjects that we deal with in an overly political fashion.

I had three major points in mind when compiling this edition.

The first concerns the definition of the terms. We have defined various types of social and political movements against the invasion of Western powers on the one hand, and against state control on the other, as protests against the political systems and environments of the time. This means that we have analysed social and political movements in Muslim societies not from religious or cultural, but from social and political aspects, especially in relation to nation building.

The second point regards the comparison between two ages—the age of imperialism (the modern age from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century), and the age of globalisation (the contemporary age since the end of Cold War). In my understanding, one of the most important criteria for distinguishing between pre-modern and modern social and political movements is the engagement of masses of people. In modern history, social and political movements in the Muslim societies arose during an age when people in the Middle East or Central Asia felt that their communities were being threatened by foreign powers. I fully anticipate that we will gain greater understanding of today's age by analysing the differences and similarities between the age of imperialism and that of globalisation.

The third and last point regards another type of comparison, a regional one between the Middle East and Central Asia. The two regions were both parts of the "Islamic World" in pre-modern times—as far as what we have learned from textbooks on Islamic history. However, the two regions experienced different political histories in modern times, especially after the Russian Revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. At present, though, they face the same social, political and cultural difficulties. We may say that they share the same environment as the "Islamic World." What we have tried to do is to compare the process of change of the two regions, and clarify their differences and similarities.

This book is an anthology of both types of studies; those from a historical perspective as well as from a contemporary perspective. In the second part of this book, we collected case studies of social protests and national integrities in the Middle East and Central Asia in the age of imperialism in the past and in the current age of globalization. Before analyzing each case study, discussions in the first part will give you a general view on the environment which breeds people's movements in the above areas. Needless to say, the contents of each article are naturally connected.