

AFTERWORD

China: Pandemic and Repression, Biopower and Governmentality

As Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal marches into its seventh year, the present issue of the journal is put forward as a more voluminous issue, comprising eighteen articles covering various themes representative of the journal's usual approach. These articles are placed under three separate headings: *Diplomacy and International Relations*, *Geopolitics and Biopolitics*, and *Trade and Investment*.

During this testing time of a devastating pandemic, since the great plague of the 2019 novel coronavirus pneumonia spread from the world's first explosive outbreak in Wuhan, China (mainland China, officially "People's Republic of China"), across the world, the global tragedy has fast turned into an arena of influence contest between the world's great powers, witnessing a ferocious, relentless effort by the Chinese Communist Party's non-electoral one-party ruling regime to spin a potential image disaster for its free speech-stifling, free press-proscribing political governance model that is widely seen standing as the key contributor to the world calamity into a diplomatic triumph with a combination of huge blame-shifting propaganda and foreign relation carrots through its earlier "mask diplomacy" and later "vaccine

diplomacy”. Interestingly, across the Taiwan Strait, the vibrantly liberal democratic island state of Taiwan (officially still the “Republic of China” on Taiwan since her political separation from the Chinese Communist Party-conquered mainland China in 1949 at the end of the Chinese Civil War) has also been engaging in an important international publicity campaign emphasising the country’s role as the earliest whistle-blower who could have saved the world from this disaster if not being contemptuously sidelined and ignored by a World Health Organization (WHO) under Beijing’s sway, as well as, as the second largest face-mask-producing country in the world, a “mask diplomacy” of her own. It is thus opportune that China’s “mask diplomacy” and the PRC-Taiwan diplomatic tussle in general form the targets of investigation of the first two papers of this journal issue, and further to the focus on the cross-Strait relations in this issue’s beginning section on *diplomacy* and *international relations* is a commentary proposing a Taiwan response to political repression in Hong Kong – a central CCP one-party State action through an oppressive national security law for the special administrative region being enforced in earnest by a subservient SAR Chief Executive and her government after the recent pro-democracy *fansongzhong* (反送中, “anti-extradition-to-China”) protests that rocked the territory, a tumultuous and momentous event covered in detail by the last special focus issue of this journal, *For rights and liberty: The anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (anti-ELAB) protest movement and Hong Kong’s struggle for democracy*¹.

The two issues that respectively begins and ends this first section, namely the pandemic and the Hong Kong protests and subsequent State repression, do bear a connection that has been rarely mentioned. The global mass killing by the novel coronavirus (nCoV) pneumonia spreading from China’s Wuhan across the world and the large-scale violent clashes between the Hong Kong people and the government

police suppression forces triggered by the anti-extradition bill protests and the subsequent White Terror instituted under the Beijing-imposed national security law for Hong Kong, however, are actually inextricably linked to the Chinese Communist Party's totalitarian rule, and this seven-decade iron-fist rule of the CCP has indeed come under these two consecutive unusual severe tests from 2019 to 2020 and beyond that have in turn served to reveal the nature and global implications of the CCP's mode of governance in general and the current Xi Jinping administration in particular.²

Beyond the first two papers and the commentary article that focus on the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the contexts of cross-Strait diplomatic tussle, the pandemic and State repression, completing this first section on IR and diplomacy are three other papers respectively on India-China relations, Pakistan-China relations and the PRC's Digital Silk Road project in the context of the United States-China power rivalry in the international system.

The next section, covering *geopolitics*, i.e. issues of power relationships linked to geographic space, and *biopolitics*, here referring to the Foucauldian concept of governmentality that regulates populations through "biopower" – regarding the application and impact of political power on all aspects of human life³ – or Arvanitis's conceptual and operative framework for societal development⁴, consists of six papers covering the Arctic ambitions of the non-Polar PRC, a self-designated "near-Arctic" state though actually located 3,000 km from the Arctic Circle, India's unease regarding China's influence outreach into Myanmar, the PRC's economic expansion into Africa and Latin America and its impacts on the local society and economy, Taiwan (ROC)'s socio-cultural relations with Southeast Asia with particular reference to the country's promotion of halal tourism, and the PRC's economic reforms and private sector. The journal issue then closes with a last

section focusing on the *trade* and *investment* aspects with another six papers covering the PRC's direct investments in Eastern Europe (the case of Hungary) and African countries, the "Made in China 2025" strategic plan and the US AI (artificial intelligence) response strategy, Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative, PRC's ambitions in global economic governance, and the US-China trade war.

As the present issue of the journal brings it into its seventh year of contribution to academic research, it is heart-warming to review that for over six years this journal has been humbly carrying out its mission of studying the political economy of contemporary China, both domestic and international, through a critical lens, leaving no space for self-censorship, remembering those encouraging words of the late Professor Arif Dirlik, who had been with us as an advisory board member of our predecessor journal since 2012 and of this journal since its launching in 2015, that Rebecca E. Karl cited in her essay "In Memoriam: Arif Dirlik (1940-2017)"⁵ – *to be fearlessly radical and radically fearless* – that have motivated us to continue staying true to the principles and holding dear the ideals forming the cornerstone of the journal since its founding in 2015 and over 2010-2014 of its predecessor that this editor had previously managed. Both included, over eleven years of journal editorship have witnessed the maturing of academic efforts that doubtlessly began as being foolhardy or even brash, and a sense of mission that has driven us to pull no punches, mince no words – *J'Accuse...!* – as Émile Zola said⁶, as reflected by the range of research papers published and special focus issues whether on more general international and domestic political economy and governance aspects related to the contemporary rise of China, or on more specific areas such as the evolving properties of an enduring dictatorship, human rights, pro-democracy movements, political freedom and civil liberties, creeping authoritarianism, resurrection of totalitarianism, or ethnoregional self-

determination in the face of central State political oppression. *La vérité est en marche et rien ne l'arrêtera* – “truth is on the march, and nothing will stop it”, as Zola said in *J'Accuse...!* – that is the march that the journal has been upholding, whether within an environment of political oppression, a perilous atmosphere wherein freedom of expression is under mortal threat, or a warped reality wherein “truth” for gullible minds is increasingly framed as what the State propaganda machine defines it to be. Marching into its seventh year, the journal is set to continue upholding the noble principles of academic honesty and integrity in its contribution to global academia within the research field of contemporary Chinese political economy and strategic relations as reflected in its title.

Before ending this afterword, we would like to thank all the contributing authors of the articles in the various sections of this issue, and the anonymous reviewers of these articles, for their invaluable efforts in making the publication of this Volume 7, Issue 1 (April 2021) of *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* possible. We are also grateful to Miss Wu Chien-yi (吳千宜) for the journal's website construction and maintenance. The responsibility for any errors and inadequacies that remain is of course fully mine.

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Notes

1. *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, December 2020 (*Focus – For rights and liberty: The anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (anti-ELAB) protest movement and Hong Kong’s struggle for democracy*), pp. 819-1455 (637 pp. + xiv). <<https://www.dropbox.com/s/w0j14jogdv3eqk0/CCPS-V6N3-full-issue.pdf>>
2. Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh. “From the Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests to China’s Wuhan novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak: Implications of two crises for the Chinese Communist Party’s governance model” (Postscript). *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*, Vol. 6(3), December 2020, pp. 1231-1442. <<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ue73c5u6iioj4u2/CCPS-V6N3-yeoh-postscript.pdf>>
3. Michel Foucault. *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. London: Picador (2010).
4. Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis. *Biopolitics: The bio-environment*. (Vol. 1: Proceedings of the first international conference on biopolitics, Athens, Greece, 6-10 May 1987. Vol. 2: Proceedings of the second international conference on biopolitics, Athens, Greece, 6-10 October 1988. Vol. 3: Proceedings of the fourth international conference on biopolitics, Athens, Greece, 10-14 January 1991.) Athens, Greece: Biopolitics International Organisation (BIO) (1988-1991).
5. Rebecca E. Karl. “In Memoriam: Arif Dirlik (1940-2017)”. *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*, Vol. 3(3), December 2017, pp. 1001-1004. <[https://rpb115.nsysu.edu.tw/var/file/131/1131/img/2374/CCPS3\(3\)-Karl.pdf](https://rpb115.nsysu.edu.tw/var/file/131/1131/img/2374/CCPS3(3)-Karl.pdf)>
6. Émile Zola’s open letter published on 13th January 1898 on the front page of Georges Clemenceau’s liberal Paris daily *L’Aurore*, which formed a

major turning point in the Dreyfus Affair.

- * Dr Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh (楊國慶) is the editor of the Scopus-indexed triannual academic journal *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal (C.C. Pol ec S.R.)* jointly published by the Institute of China and Asia-Pacific Studies of Taiwan's National Sun Yat-sen University and the Department of Administrative Studies and Politics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, and on the Comité de Arbitraje Internacional, *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico (MyCP)* (registro en Emerging Sources Citation Index - WoS, SciELO Citation Index - WoS, Redalyc, SciELO México, Índice de CONACYT, CLASE, Lat-Am-Studies, LATINDEX, LatinREV, REDIB, Biblat, Catálogo de la Biblioteca Nacional de España, publicación del Departamento de Estudios del Pacífico, Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, Universidad de Guadalajara, México). He holds a Ph.D. on ethnopolitics in socioeconomic development from the University of Bradford, West Yorkshire, England (1998), was an associate professor at the University of Malaya, department head of the Department of Administrative Studies and Politics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, from 1st August 2016 to 31st July 2018, director of the Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, from 13th March 2008 to 1st January 2014, and the founder and editor of the institute's then SJR top-tier Scopus-indexed triannual academic journal, *International Journal of China Studies* (Vol. 1, 2010 – Vol. 5, 2014). His latest publications include “Between Scylla and Charybdis? – Emerging *New Malaysia* and its enigmatic relations with China” (journal article, *Bandung: Journal of the Global South*, 2020), “Malaysia: Perception of contemporary China and its economic, political and societal determinants” (journal article, *The Pacific Review*, 2019), “China-Malaysia trade, investment, and cooperation in the contexts of China-ASEAN integration and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road construction” (journal article,

The Chinese Economy, 2018), “Environmental policy in Malaysia with reference to Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy” (book chapter, Wenzao University Press, 2018), “マレーシア — 親中心理を支える構造” [Malaysia: the fundamental structure of pro-China sentiment]” (book chapter, University of Tokyo Press, 2018), “Malaysia-Taiwan relations and Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy” (journal article, *Malaysian Journal of International Relations*, 2018). <Email: emileyeo@gmail.com, yeohkk@um.edu.my / Website: <http://emileyeo5.wix.com/emileyeoh>>



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