

FOREWORD

Facing China's Rise: Geopolitical and Economic Imperatives

Events have been moving apace frenetically over the months since the publication of the last issue of the journal (Vol. 6, No. 1, April/May). Unprecedented over the past century, the world is again in the grip of a horrifically deadly pandemic that by September 2020 has massacred almost a million people worldwide and damaged the health of the other about 32 million people. It destroys lives; it destroys families. It destroys social fabric; it destroys values. But its deep impacts are not only medical and social, but also economic and political. From the first Wuhan outbreak at the turn of the year to today's macabre global menace, and it has indeed been pointing to a full year of living dangerously.

Nevertheless, while the pandemic might have locked down cities and paralysed societies, it has served nothing to allay the storms and calm the seas. The debilitating US-China trade war rages on, while another one between China and Australia is looming after China began to retaliate, as usual with its market power-backed coercive economic pressure, against Australian government's calls for an independent inquiry into China's handling of the Wuhan outbreak that had led to the global disaster and strong policy measures against China's political infiltration in Australia.

Meanwhile, the US-led pressure against China's tech giants based on espionage and human rights-abuse allegations has set wildfire raging in the global arena, and escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait with increasing frequency of provocative incursions on Taiwan's air defense identification zone by mainland China's warplanes, and in the South China Sea, including the standoff between a Malaysian-hired Panamanian-flagged drillship *West Capella* and China's government-owned research vessel *Haiyang Dizhi 8* with armed coast guard and maritime militia vessels after the incident of a Chinese vessel ramming and sinking Vietnamese fishermen's boat a month earlier as well as continued surging fishing boats from China into the waters adjacent to Indonesia's Natuna Islands as well as survey vessels deployed into the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines, has been unnerving.

Nevertheless, despite these ominous clouds of conflict, there are positive signs of advancing regional economic cooperation, with the ten member states of the association of Southeast Asian Nations, along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, expected to conclude on the eight-year-long negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and to sign the mega trade pact – set to be the world's largest free-trade agreement encompassing will account for 30 percent of the world's economy and population (thanks to China's size) – in the coming months. India that initially participated in the RCEP negotiations had, however, opted out in 2019. Amidst all there, the world's only remaining superpower, the United States of America, is heading for an unprecedentedly savage presidential election that is set to have deep repercussions for the next four years of global stability, as well as raising the possibility of the U.S. to rejoin the massive trade deal known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) originally negotiated by the Barack Obama administration and

signed in February 2016 by twelve countries, accounting for 40 percent of global gross domestic product, that included the U.S. that was later pulled out by the Donald Trump administration in January 2017 leaving the remaining eleven countries to renegotiate and sign the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in March 2018. With the China-backed RCEP not including the U.S. and the originally U.S.-backed TPP not including China, such mega trade deals are set to have far-reaching global geopolitical implications.

It is against the background of these alarming international uncertainties that the present journal issue (Vol. 6, No. 2, August/September 2020) has moved from the mixed Chinese foreign and domestic policies foci of this year's earlier issue to China's international strategic relations exclusively as the centre of attention, under three headings: *China and World Power Rivalry*, *China's Global Geopolitics* and *Trading with China*, followed by a commentary on the U.S. Freedom of Navigation Program as relating to the East and South China Seas. It is our hope that the ten articles included in this issue including the commentary would serve to provide our readers insightful understandings of where China's relations with the wider world is heading to during these particularly trying times.

This journal issue is structured as follows. The three papers in the first section *China and World Power Rivalry* deal with the geopolitics of global and regional power rivalry, with Seung-won Suh and Nam-eun Kim writing in their paper "Facing China Differently and Equally: A Comparison between South Korean and Japanese Policy Behaviors" on the Northeast Asian regional powers South Korea's and Japan's respective responses to the contemporary rise of China, whether hedging or balancing, Diosdado B. Lopega investigates the individual ASEAN member states' varied reactions towards China's claims to about eighty

percent of the South China Sea in his paper “Taming the Tiger: A Transgovernmental Approach for ASEAN to Engage China Regarding the Spratlys” and outlines an arrangement that could be workable for easing tensions in the South China Sea, while Hanna Samir Kassab’s article “Soft Power and Struggles for Leadership: The United States, Russia and China” focuses on American, Chinese and Russian soft power as part of a wider systemic hegemonic power transition. In the *China’s Global Geopolitics* section, three papers move beyond the China’s immediate neighbourhood of the Asia-Pacific region through the continental giant’s Wild West into Central Asia in Roy Anthony Rogers’s “New Great Game in Central Asia: The Return of China” that explores the resurgence of China’s influence in Central Asia within the context that involves power play among the major powers such Russia and the United States, prospects and challenges facing the Belt and Road Initiative as well as the role of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in enhancing China’s interest in that region, Reinhard Biedermann’s “The Polar Silk Road: China’s Multilevel Arctic Strategy to Globalize the Far North” that looks at the geopolitical implications of China as an important Arctic actor in recent years and the role of the Nordic states in China’s ambition through its announced “Polar Silk Road”, and Levente Horváth’s “The Geopolitical Role of China in the CEE Region” that makes a comparison of China cooperation with Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and other multilateral networks in terms of Chinese FDI, foreign trade and Chinese foreign policy, and assesses the real concerns regarding China’s presence in the CEE region and how important the China-CEE cooperation is for China. Our focus subsequently shifts to international trade and commerce with the section *Trading with China* presenting three articles beginning with “China-U.S. Trade Friction under Trade Unilateralism and China’s Legal Responses” by Xinglong Yang and

Shuang Qu provides an analytical framework for China's legal responses to recent years' of U.S. trade policy in the current environment of China-U.S. trade friction, "When Dragon Meets Garuda in *Hutan Belantara Energy*" by Yuli Isnadi and Chin-Fu Hung investigates how and to what extent Indonesia responds to China's strategic energy actions a careful examination of archipelagic nation's regulations, liberalization, and social protection in its energy sector, and "Impact of Structural Change on China's Exports Post-WTO Accession" by Weysyee Goh and Wee-Yeap Lau investigates the structural change in China's export following its accession into the World Trade Organization in December 2001, finding a positive impact on China's export in the long term including change in export composition. This journal issue ends with a commentary by Ching Chang on the U.S. Freedom of Navigation Program in the context of the East and South China Seas.

Before ending this foreword, 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 6, Issue 2 (August/September 2020) 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.

Dr Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh

Chief Editor

*Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and
Strategic Relations: An International Journal*

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: yeohkk@um.edu.my, emileyeo@gmail.com / Website: <http://emileyeo5.wix.com/emileyeoh>>

China and World Power Rivalry

