Foreword

We did not know how the world would be changing when we started to work on this special issue. Nor did we know that this issue would be a timely contribution to addressing new aspects of post-coronavirus East Asia. China was the first country affected by Covid-19, but also the first large nation to overcome the crisis. Although initially the economic costs appeared severe, as soon as the rest of the world was involved in the pandemic, Beijing actually increased its international standing and also—according to some observers—its assertiveness. China continued to flex its muscles in the South China Sea, where it is involved in territorial disputes with several Southeast Asian countries. Even more importantly in the light of this special issue, Beijing continued to put pressure on Hong Kong to suppress a pro-democracy movement that had challenged China's sovereignty over the special administrative region. On 30 June 2020, the PRC National Assembly Standing Committee approved a new Hong Kong national security law that will allow Beijing to discipline any act perceived as subversive against Chinese sovereignty. This law leaves no doubts on how Xi Jinping's China interprets the principle of 'one country, two systems', which was devised to manage the decolonisation of Hong Kong in 1997 but also offered a model for a possible reunification with Taiwan.

This special issue focuses on Taiwan's complex interaction with the People's Republic of China and more broadly with Chinese culture. In post Covid-19 Chinese regional activism the topic becomes particularly relevant. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the issue looks at the evolution of Taiwanese identity and the Taiwanese agency in dealing with a larger and more powerful neighbour. The relationship between China and Taiwan implies that the two sides must negotiate with the past and continuously readjust policies for the future. Furthermore, beyond the political dialogue the relationship is constantly being transformed by the interaction among individuals, groups, firms and other actors, thus requiring a multifaceted analysis like the one promoted by this issue.

Covid-19 has not only influenced our research field, but has also had a direct impact on our personal and family lives. All our community has been challenged in one way or another. As usual, our journal depends on the essential work done by anonymous peer reviewers—but many potential reviewers were locked in at home and too busy readjusting their life and work in a completely

new environment. The same applied to our Editorial Board both in Asia and in Europe. As the editor-in-chief of the journal happens to be based in Italy—the first European country to be severely hit by the virus—a slowdown in the creation of this issue was also unavoidable. We all had to deal with different work obligations, often adjusting to teaching online, while at the same time managing kids home from school or supporting vulnerable relatives.

Covid-19 notwithstanding, these have not been idle months for our journal. As the *EJEAS* is approaching its 20th anniversary, a number of changes have been decided and will become operative in 2021. We have agreed with the publisher to increase the number of pages for our issues so as to be able to host more articles. This decision reflects the increased number of high-quality articles and special issues proposals we receive. We will add a new section dedicated to book reviews (and we welcome onboard our new Book Review Editor, Dr Giuseppe Gabusi: giuseppe.gabusi@unito.it). Alongside the review of individual books, we also welcome broader review essays of important themes. Finally, we have approved renewed and improved guidelines—Instructions for Authors—to guide the submission of new manuscripts. This document is now uploaded on the journal website.

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Editor-in-Chief