

**LETTER**

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**FROM THE EDITORS**

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The world is facing an unprecedented situation, and a clear answer or ending to it is yet to be seen. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the present is a given priority; what we should do *right now* to respond to or even mitigate our circumstances is always at the forefront of our consciousness, and it is natural to focus on what *is*. However, this moment in time is exactly that — a moment in our history, both as individuals and as a global community. There is no intention to diminish the state of the world today; rather, the goal of this letter and, on a larger scale, this journal, is to remind ourselves that who we are today and how the world currently operates is a result of the past as well as a foundation for the future. Thus, it is imperative to analyze our lives as a part of a history that we shape, to reflect on truths from the past, and to envision a future that we will create as a result of our ongoing battle against various adversities.

This is the ultimate goal of this issue: to understand the regional past, present, and future of East Asia. This does not only mean looking at the political or economic aspects of East Asian society but also gaining a better understanding of the *people* — the subcultures, even the *individuals* — that move and shape this region over time. The first paper in this issue is entitled “The US-Japan-ROK Relationship in the Making: A Trilateral Alignment” by Kim Sanghoon, which details the workings of the alignment that constitutes these three countries in the face of the ongoing North Korean nuclear crisis. In this text, Kim delineates the definitions of an “alliance” and an “alignment” to better understand why the former cannot be cleanly achieved by the United States, South Korea, and Japan. The paper assesses the shortcomings of the alignment and underscores that the tensions between the ROK and Japan are what hinder the maturity of the trilateral alignment into a stable alliance. The author makes recommendations to strengthen the US-Japan-ROK relationship to maintain and, perhaps, even develop the security of the East Asian region against the growing threat of a more intense nuclear crisis.

Sigit and Aurelia V.T. Ngambut also look at the relationships the United States has with other countries, this time with Taiwan and China in their paper, “The US-Taiwan-China Relations: Maintaining Peace through the Taiwan Relations Act.” It focuses on the role that the TRA plays in setting the tone of discourse and interaction between these three nations and describes how the controversy of autonomy and sovereignty is what creates further tension within the region. The authors assess the various strings that tie these three nations together, concluding with a policy recommendation that focuses on the revision of the TRA to ensure better relations between these countries.

The final paper by Dr. Yuko Takahashi, entitled “Drifting between Korea and Japan: 1.5-generation zainichi Koreans under Japanese colonial rule,” offers a perspective into how the past and the present coalesce. It offers insight into the life and struggles of 1.5 generation Koreans who lived in Japan during the time the Korean peninsula was under Japanese colonial rule. Not only does it assess the community aspect of this case, but it also looks deeper into the formation of identity and ethnic consciousness through their unique experience. The author defines three classes in which these immigrants were implicitly sorted, and she analyzes the complexity of a situation in which one’s ethnic identity and geopolitical circumstances are in constant conflict and negotiation.

Although they are shorter in length, the essays are more focused in scope and provide the reader with unique insights and perspectives about East Asia. The first essay is written by Sooyun (Clara) Hong, and it examines the dichotomy of the public person and the private self constructed by the K-pop industry and K-pop fan fiction. “What’s in a (Stage) Name? Public Personas, Private Selves, and the Transgression of Authenticity” uses fan fiction websites to discern how affect is transgressed by both the performers and audience, and ultimately explores the contentious negotiations made between the so-called public and private.

The second essay written by Joel Petersson Ivre, titled “Mayling and May Fourth--Understanding the Internationalism of Madame Chiang Kai-shek’s Speech to the US Congress in 1943” is a historical piece that analyzes the writings of one of the most famous Chinese political figures during and after WWII. Beginning with Madame Chiang’s writings from her teenage years and ending with her speech to the United States Congress, this essay traces her “internationalistic” upbringing and later experiences to argue that the motivations behind them were fundamentally nationalist. The author adds to existing scholarship by providing a detailed and insightful historiography of her writings that portray Madame Chiang’s hopeful efforts in championing her own visions for China. As such, Ivre compliments the pieces in this journal by examining the significance and roles played by historical figures in US-China relations.

The book review written by Samuel Gardner on *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order* (2018) is timely and encompasses issues of the past, present, and future in East Asia. The argument that technological developments, especially artificial intelligence, will bring about great changes to the world, which makes understanding the AI industry, business culture, and technology in China all the more critical. Douglas provides insights on thorough reading of the book and analyses made by Kai Fu Lee, an AI researcher-turned venture capitalist and former president of Google China. He explains the advantages, such as Chinese AI firms with their large banks of data and incentives placed by regulations, and drawbacks, such as potential job losses and domestic income inequality in China, that will play significant roles in China’s technological development. Douglas is left curious from this fascinating book, and is left with questions and thoughts surrounding the sustainability of China’s AI industry and feasibility regarding the suggestions made by Lee.

Finally, this issue closes with timely and relevant discussion between our interviewer and Professor Cho Byung-Jae from the Yonsei GSIS Faculty. Dr. Cho is an expert in international politics within Northeast Asia with special interests in North Korean foreign relations and foreign policy. He gives a detailed analysis and opinion on the COVID-19 situation on the Korean Peninsula and around the world, providing insight into what the short- and long-term impacts of this pandemic might be. He discusses what can be observed from the North Korean responses to COVID-19, and how it can affect the internal balance within the Korean Peninsula, foreign relations, and inter-Korean relations. The interview closes with a morale-boosting commentary on the need for solidarity around the world and the opportunity that such a crisis can propel.

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2020 has been an unsettling year for all with the pandemic impacting lives across the world, strained relations and hegemonic rivalry between states, closing of borders, and violence against human lives. In times like today, it seems more important than ever to stay resilient and to remain cognizant of the fact that all lives matter. We cannot risk isolating ourselves in times of need and adversity, and staying connected seems incumbent. East Asia with its dynamic histories and cultures has conventionally been viewed as different, but this journal through diverse papers, essays, book review, and interview, present that while variances exist, so do similarities in its past, present, and future.

We are extremely grateful to our editors who have dedicated time and contributed to the success of this edition. Without their careful and observant selections, readings, and edits, the completion of this issue would not have been possible, especially during these unimaginable times. Thank you to Danielle French, Theophile Begin, Simone Liew, Grecia Dominique Paniagua Garcia for your tireless work and support. And to our readers, we are grateful for your continued interest in our journal. We wish you safety and good health. Thank you.

Aimee Beatriz Lee and Soo Yeon (Sue) Jeong  
Co-Editors-in-Chief