



Journal of Current Chinese Affairs

China aktuell

Brown, Kerry, and Georg Strüver (2017),
Editorial, in: *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 46, 2, 3–6.

URN: <http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-4-10658>

ISSN: 1868-4874 (online), ISSN: 1868-1026 (print)

The online version of this editorial and the other articles can be found at:
<www.CurrentChineseAffairs.org>

Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies, in
co-operation with the Lau China Institute at King's College London, and Hamburg
University Press.

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Editorial

Kerry Brown and Georg Strüver

It is a great privilege to be a part of this collaboration between the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies in Hamburg and King's College in London. As joint editors we felt it an opportune moment to mark the formal start of this arrangement by briefly mapping out our editorial aspirations for the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*.

Knowledge and good analysis about China is in increasingly high demand. This is testified to by the number of articles, books, and other material being produced across languages and disciplines, both inside and outside the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Policymakers, government officials, businesses, non-government organisations, universities, and other communities, including the general public, are increasingly engaged with China and in the business of working out how the region's development, economic impact, and future trajectory will unfold and the ways in which this will impact their own interests.

A very tangible example of this is that the People's Republic is now the largest trading partner of 120 other countries. On the back of this, its current political leadership have outlined since 2012 a set of areas where their country is not just a regional actor, but a global one. Promoting free trade, combating climate change, addressing security issues (China is the largest provider of peacekeeping forces to the United Nations) – these are all areas where China is active in ways that would have been hard to imagine even a decade ago.

Because of this larger context, Sinology in its broadest sense – as a multi-disciplinary engagement with China-related issues, often with China-based partners – has never enjoyed a higher profile. University-based expertise on China (usually focusing on Chinese language, culture, and art) used to be a carefully delineated, and often small, specialist area. These days, most universities across the world will have scholars whose work, in whatever discipline, will relate directly or indirectly to China. This is partly because an understanding and appreciation of China now flows into disciplines such as economics, political science, anthropology, and other study areas – but also because engagement with Chinese colleagues as part of a global intellec-

tual community has never been more extensive. In areas of science, public health, and general analytic research, study with China, as opposed to of China, has increased exponentially. It seems that after years of maturation, Sinology is now fast approaching its golden era.

There are a number of good journals out there. Our mission is to create something increasingly distinctive. The advantage this journal immediately offers is its policy of free access. By granting “Gold Open Access” we provide immediate and unrestricted access with no fees for readers and authors. As long as we are striving towards both a wider understanding of China and the dissemination of good-quality research to and from as broad a community as possible, ensuring free access is essential.

The second strength of the JCCA is that it is a genuinely global collaboration, including voices from Europe, Asia, the Americas, and elsewhere across the world. In the era of a global China, where no place remains untouched by China’s reach and influence, ensuring a diversity of voices is increasingly necessary. In this endeavour, we seek not only to publish work by renowned and established scholars but also to encourage publications by scholars at earlier stages of their careers.

It is also important that despite this diversity of opinion and perspective, there is an organising logic to the editions we put out, which will be provided for by, first, continued guest editorships and, second, themed editions. Regarding the latter, examples of such themes include respective issues on Indian–Chinese security relations and Chinese internal labour migration. In the future, other issues will merge along regional, economic, or disciplinary lines. It would be counter-productive for each issue to overwhelm our readership with too much divergence. We strongly believe in the ability of topical issues to provide a platform for the focused discussion of emerging and innovative topics, allowing for interdisciplinary approaches, different perspectives, and collaboration between established and emerging scholars. Yet, in order to facilitate the coverage of a diversity of topics and voices, we also plan to run issues that bring together individual articles on currently pertinent topics. We hope that over the next few years, our joint editorship will be able to shape a distinctive voice, but not at the expense of providing ample space for diverse views and approaches.

The most important thing of all is that we continue to maintain the same high standards of peer reviewing and scrutiny that have been a hallmark of the journal throughout its existence. For this we are grateful to a global community of peer reviewers whom we are able to rely on to give good-quality feedback. We are also keen to ensure that the journal gets greater recognition and coverage, and that it continues to be seen as amongst the best in this field.

In the coming few years, particular events will occur that are certain to shape both the content and general direction of the journal. We can spare a little time for thought about this now. With the 19th Party Congress of the Communist Party in Beijing in October 2017, the domestic priority within the People's Republic will be the delivery of the first of the centennial goals – the creation of what is called in internal discourse a “moderately well-off country” by 2021. There are a whole range of reasons why this is significant. For instance, it will mark the moment at which the first stage of modernity with Chinese characteristics will be seen by the elite leaders in Beijing to have been delivered. That moment carries huge symbolic and political importance, and will therefore demand careful analysis. What will the next steps be? How can we properly understand the Chinese experience in developing a major, complex economy and creating prosperity over the last four decades as reform and opening up has proceeded? Is the great Chinese experiment sustainable? In what ways does it conform to experiences of modernisation in other places, and where is it truly *sui generis* – if at all?

Part of the great challenge as China proceeds along this path will be to find theoretical frameworks and conceptual approaches that help us work out this crucial issue of the places where the country calls for us to adapt and change our pre-existing theories of modernisation, and others where the country can be accommodated. Plenty of discourse within China about China's development is insistent on the country's exceptionalism. In five years' time we will be much more capable of working out just how credible that concept is. Is the Chinese process of modernisation and political development, within a structure where one-party rule remains a key issue, truly sustainable? That is clearly the core ambition of the leadership centred around Xi Jinping since 2012. If and when China does achieve this goal, what sort of impact will that have on general thinking about political sci-

ence, the relationship between economics and power, social structures, and a range of other intellectual fields?

Because of the current lack of clarity about whether a model such as China's truly does have an enduring future, and because of the profound impact the realisation of this – if it ever happens – might have on our extant theoretical models, study and research on China has been imbued with a significance that lies beyond the boundaries of traditional area studies. In grappling with this question, this journal demonstrates a relevance that reaches beyond what are usually regarded as the borders of China studies. A wide readership should, and will, be engaged with this issue. We hope this journal can make a major contribution to understanding these developments.

We are excited to be engaged at this particular moment with this particular journal and on this particular subject. Above all, we hope to continue to produce a journal whose articles are lucid, enjoyable, and illuminating. While deeply respectful of the need for specialist vocabularies and the integrity of good-quality scholarship, we are also on a mission to ensure that the articles are well written and accessible and offer a model of how China and China-related issues can be talked about. We hope that our readers derive as much pleasure in reading this journal as we do in editing it and putting it together. We look forward to placing the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* at the centre of the global debate about China in the crucial coming years.

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