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Guest Editor: Gordon Mathews

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## Ten Years After – A Personal Note

Karsten GIESE

When I joined the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies (then the Institute of Asian Affairs) in 2000, I also became involved with the most prestigious and most widely circulated academic journal on contemporary China published in German. At that time, *China aktuell* – as this journal had been known to its nearly 2,000 subscribers and generations of German students and scholars of modern China since its first issue in 1972 – had already been part of my own academic life for 15 years (since my undergraduate years in Modern China Studies). Because the journal had been designed as a monthly in-house publication, all members of staff devoted a considerable chunk of their academic work to the scholarly analysis of developments within Greater China as expert authors.

By the time I joined the institute, however, China had changed fundamentally, having embarked on several all-encompassing reforms. Previously, information on developments in China had been quite difficult to obtain – the journal’s in-depth analysis and lucid presentation of such information was the reason it had been so highly valued for decades, even beyond the German-speaking China Studies community. But by the turn of the millennium, there was, in fact, an overabundance of information and data coming out of China. Due to these challenges and a changing academic environment, the first few years of my professional engagement with the journal were characterised by taking part in an ambitious strategic reform to transform a German-language journal showcasing the capabilities of our in-house research staff into a top-quality academic journal for international scholarship in Modern China Studies under the new title the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*.

Over the last ten years I have devoted much of my work to this project, serving as editor-in-chief of the journal since 2005. From the very beginning, my colleagues Heike Holbig (co-editor 2005–2009) and Flemming Christiansen (co-editor 2009–2013) and I pursued a strategy of internationalisation and were committed to publishing high-quality, original research on current issues in China in a format and style that would be accessible across disciplines. In addition to academic rigour and the highest quality standards, one of our con-

cerns has always been readability, which resulted in the decision to ban footnotes from all published manuscripts – a step that seemed almost unthinkable with regard to German academic tradition and practice.

Having established a systematic and rigorous peer-review process for both research articles and analyses, we continuously raised the quality threshold for the acceptance of manuscripts, and by 2009 the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* was ready for its next major and decisive step forward – going online as one of the very few academic journals to grant “Gold Open Access” (immediate, unrestricted access with no fees for readers or authors). By taking these steps, the journal has steadily expanded its international readership, recruited a large and growing loyal community of international reviewers across the disciplines who are all well-known experts in their respective fields, and attracted authors engaged in innovative research on Greater China.

During these last ten years that I have served as editor, the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* has always striven not only to publish the most highly esteemed and established academics but also to encourage publications by researchers at earlier stages of their careers. It has always been my priority to lend support to the efforts of dedicated young scholars to publish their often very innovative research by providing constructive editorial guidance based on a rigorous yet empathic peer review. Feedback from readers, authors, and reviewers shows that the topical issues, most of which have been developed in close cooperation with guest editors and/or supported by members of the Editorial Advisory Board, have added a high degree of additional value to the international research community. Presenting a concentration of innovative and emerging topics within one issue has facilitated focused, cross-disciplinary discussion, a diversity of perspectives and approaches, and meaningful exchange between seasoned scholars and their up-and-coming colleagues. The following weighted word cloud, based on the titles of all articles published in the journal over the last ten years, illustrates both the wide range of important topics and the thematic priorities of the academic work published by the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*.



shi Preisser, and Errol Bailey, as well as to Halima Chen (Great Britain) and James Morrison (New Zealand), who have all been busy assisting authors and adding the final polish to all manuscripts before they are published: thank you so much for your professional support and your patience with me. And then there is Petra Brandt. Many of you will be familiar with her e-mails, which often come in the form of gentle reminders of deadlines and requests for corrections; she has also been instrumental in attracting the interest of potential reviewers for our manuscripts, helping authors to understand our style guidelines, and making sure everything in a given issue is accurate and formatted correctly – from in-text citations to Chinese transcriptions. Petra and I have been colleagues since I joined the institute. She has always worked for the journal, and without her any editor would be lost and a nervous wreck in no time – she is the heart and soul of the journal. Thank you, Petra, for your professional cooperation, support, patience, and for the nearly daily, delightful conversations (and many a good laugh) that we shared over the last ten years. We have made a strong team.

This current issue is the last that I am responsible for as editor-in-chief. Since the journal is well prepared for the future it is time for a change once again. After ten years of devoting a significant amount of my work to the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* I am convinced that a new editor should take over and introduce new perspectives so that the journal can maintain the dynamism that has always characterised its development. In the future I will dedicate myself more fully to my research activities at the GIGA but will remain devoted to the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board, always ready to lend any possible support to the new editor-in-chief, who will take over starting with issue 1/2016.

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