

Editorial Remarks (Vol. 4, No. 1)

C&E had its first webinar in its 3-year history on Dec. 5th, 2020 with participants, discussants, and audiences from the U.S., Europe, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong on a topic of “East Asia in Transition: Democracy, Diaspora, Racism, and the New Cold War.” Webinar has become a common word among web conscious scholars during the pandemic, as they could no longer attend real seminars, conferences, and workshops due to the coronavirus. Web based seminars, thus Webinar, is a new normal within the pandemic culture that demands us to act out in the virtual space as if it were a real physical world. Nonetheless, all of us who participated in the daylong seminar succeeded in performing our roles, albeit busy watching our and their faces endlessly and trying to figure out meticulously the atmosphere of the room in the virtual space.

The current issue (Vol. 4, No. 1) is a special issue that bears the same title as the webinar’s and presents four articles and one book review. The purpose of the webinar and the special issue is twofold: 1) to make sense of the rapid political, economic, and social changes witnessed in East Asia; and 2) to analyze the politics of individual and collective migrations by East Asians within a global racist, sexist, and postcolonial world system. The resulting papers recorded in this issue are more than enlightening than initially expected and provide the readers with the most current and detailed analyses of the two theoretical frameworks specified above.

In “Hong Kong’s Socioeconomic and Political Challenges: The Future of One Country, Two Systems,” Tai-lok Lui, Professor of Sociology at The Education University of Hong Kong, untangles what seems to be the most entwined political issue of the turn of the century – the return of Hong Kong to and its integration with China. Locating the source of complexity in the dichotomous confrontation between two rivalry forces of history, namely, capitalism vs. socialism and authoritarian Beijing vs. liberal Hong Kong, Lui, unlike his contemporary commentators of Hong Kong, emphasizes the One Country, Two Systems as a “political compromise,” which, according to Lui, has always been a balancing force in the political economic history of Hong Kong. Therefore, the return of Hong Kong is not the end of history but a continuing saga of an endless game of the compromise between concerned parties. Albeit difficult to predict the future that is not yet written, the author carefully concludes that the political side of the compromise is fraught with difficulties, whereas its economic side is filled with optimistic signs emanating from the mighty financial sector of the city.

In “Japan-Korea Relations: The Stalemate and the Future,” Kazuhiko Togo, former Ambassador to the Netherlands and Professor of Politics at Kyoto Sangyo University, documents a descriptive history of Japan-Korea relations since the end of the Pacific War in 1945. The core of the problem, unlike Hong Kong-U.K. relations, lies in the fact that “Japan-Korea relations are haunted by Japan’s annexation of Korea from 1910 to 1945.” Even though Korea became not only

independent from Japan but also achieved to be one of the most successful cases of economic development during the postwar years, the former Japanese colony never wants to make compromise with the former empire. The dramatic incident occurred in 2018, for example, when the Korean government nullified the Normalization Treaty of 1965 by ordering two Japanese corporations to pay reparations to their former employees during the Pacific War. The decades of compromise and learning between Koreans and the Japanese were all but vaporized into thin air by the Supreme Court decision. For the solution of the problem between the two countries, Togo suggests another compromise that would set up a new fund to redress the conscripted workers; a genuine agreement between the surviving comfort women and the Japanese government; and making friendly and constructive relations between the two countries as national interests for each.

In “Korean-Black Relationships in Greater New York,” Pyong Gap Min, Professor of Sociology at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, provides a fresh outlook on the recent black-Korean relations in the metropolitan areas. The Korean migration into the urban center of major U.S. cities, including LA and NYC, started from the 1970s without expecting to develop a new type of racial conflicts with African Americans. Koreans had taught to be racists from the ancient times by the Chinese world view of “zhonghua” (i.e., China is the center of the world, and the rest are second or third races). During the Korean War and later, Koreans had also run to discriminate against black people by calling them “geomdungi” [black people]. It was therefore an unlucky combination of Korean racism and cohabitating with African Americans in the same business district leading to deeply permeated hatred between the two racial groups and the violence during the 1992 LA riot. Worse, as Min finds it, Koreans are tenacious about their racial bigotry against African Americans more than white people who are now progressive enough to ameliorate their past racist tendencies. Therefore, the Korean-black conflict in mega cities in the U.S. seems more problematic than the conventional white-black tensions. To resolve racial proxy wars between Korean immigrants and African Americans within a larger institution of racism in the world system, Min suggests that cultural exchanges between the two racial subgroups can be a solution, such as Korean language education for black kids, while Koreans concomitantly accept the affirmative action for other disadvantaged minority groups.

In “The Ethnic is Still Political: Collective Action in the Age of the Diminishing Zainichi Korean Population in Contemporary Japan,” Youngmi Lim, Professor of Sociology at Musashi University, delivers her fresh interpretation of the racial and political situation the *zainich* Koreans face amid the rapid decline of its population in Japan. Unlike their visible presence in the U.S. mega cities, the *zainichi* Koreans are mostly invisible in Japanese society making it difficult to define the physical boundaries of their communities. However, just like the institution of racism in the world system that has moved toward more racial equality than previous decades, Japanese racism against the *zainichi* Koreans has also waned greatly. Accordingly, the *zainichi* is now divided into adamant anti-Japanese racism and pro-assimilation groups, a new development Lim

tries to analyze in the context of collective action theories. Given the deteriorating members and resources of the zainichi community, visible contenders who are members of the zainichi subethnic group that still adamantly and outspokenly oppose racism now rely on the conscientious elements of Japanese society who care more about the universal concept of racism in the form of hate speech than the particularistic ethnic strife between the zainichi Koreans and the Japanese.

The sole book review featured in this special issue deals with radical empathy. Ingyu Oh reviews Terri E. Givens' new book, *Radical Empathy: Finding a Path to Bridging Radical Divides* (2021, Polity). The concept "radical empathy" was originally popularized in European philosophy, psychology, and literature. However, by distancing from the theoretical tradition of the concept, Givens proposes a practical program of changing oneself from a depressed and illness-stricken existence as a racial minority in the U.S. to an empowered and proactive participation in the changing of the world that is depressed and illness-stricken by racism.

We hope Vol. 4, No. 1 will help scholars and students of East Asian international relations and racial/ethnic politics gain new insights from the articles freshly written by some of the most advanced experts in the field. *C & E* will continue to strive to provide ambitious and meaningful contributions for each fresh issue amid the pandemic.

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