SPECIAL FEATURE

5 Rather Than COVID-19, is the US-China Trade War the Real Threat to Global Supply Chains? by Troy STANGARONE

The resiliency and robustness of global supply chains has come under question during the COVID-19 outbreak. Although firms have much to learn from the pandemic as they did from prior disasters to improve their supply chains, COVID-19 is more likely to speed up existing trends in international trade and the US-China trade war than to reshape global supply chains. ASEAN is likely to continue to benefit from these trends.

19 Impact of COVID-19 on ASEAN-China Cooperation and Its Prospects by YANG Yue and LI Fujian

Despite the damaging effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, China-ASEAN relations have much in common to further build bilateral relations. The people-centred, mutual-assistance cultural commonality, the resilience of economic and trade relations, and the determination to adhere to multilateralism held by people in China and ASEAN countries are valuable assets for the future development of bilateral relations. ASEAN-China relations urgently need to be optimised, particularly in terms of combing through what is important under such a new circumstance.

33 The Evolving Role of the Military in China’s COVID-19 Response by LI Nan

The People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) involvement in the containing of COVID-19 had been deliberately limited and technically specialised. A reason for the low deployment of the PLA is the fear of political vulnerability stemming from an over-reliance on the military; the timings of this support were also carefully planned. The concern about COVID-19 causing significant infections among PLA ranks that may hamper PLA response to the perceived external security challenges also proved unwarranted.

49 South Korea’s 2020 Election Amid COVID-19 by KIM Sung Chull

South Korea held its general election on 15 April 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis which had unexpectedly lent support to the ruling party. The ruling party won an overwhelming majority in the election. The election was a kind of “critical election” in which swing voters in particular took a safe, risk-aversive option of supporting the ruling party which responded successfully to the pandemic.
Hong Kong’s COVID-19 Politics Amid Deteriorating China-US Relations by Victor TEO

Hong Kong has in place mechanisms that readied it for the COVID-19 outbreak after being hit by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003. The epidemic provided the Hong Kong government with a respite from the political protests and an opportunity to return to governing. This respite does not spell the end of Hong Kong’s political troubles though. With the passage of the National Security Law, Hong Kong might be able to endear itself once more to the Mainland and position itself for greater integration and development.

ESSAYS

Time to Forgive and Learn: A Better Future for South Korea and Japan by YANG Chun Hee and PARK Hahnkyu

South Korea-Japan relations are now at their worst since 1965. Although most experts are not optimistic about a reversal in the downward spiral of bilateral relations, this paper explores the possibility of South Korea forgiving Japan and of Japan following in the footsteps of Germany. A key roadblock lies in the lack of a deep understanding of the past, an issue which politicians, media and scholars could do much to enhance that understanding.

Japan and Korea: A Fragile Relationship by Haruko SATOH

While Japan-South Korea relations are vital to the maintenance of the liberal order in Asia, they are also plagued by bitter contest over past history of Japanese colonisation of the Korean Peninsula. The relations have been hit by mutual suspicion that has deepened in recent years, putting into question the US hub-and-spokes system. There needs to be a shared sense of urgency between the two to improve relations for regional and global security amidst intensifying China-US rivalry.

Strange Bedfellows: Beijing and Taipei’s South China Sea Policies by John F COPPER

While Beijing and Taipei may seem to be at two opposing ends of a political spectrum, it may surprise even long-time observers that the two espouse virtually identical policies vis-à-vis the South China Sea. There are good reasons for this: Taipei’s claims bolster Beijing’s and they arguably support one-China. Taiwan’s military leaders see their position alone as unenforceable. Taiwan’s government and residents resent the UN’s demeaning attitude and exclusion of Taiwan from involvement.