What is to be done?
Burning Questions of Our Asian Studies

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Everyone knows Asia is in the midst of dynamic developments. This in itself obliges us to keep up and develop our studies on Asia. However, it is increasingly clear that this is a daunting task, since the changes are not only fast but also happening across geographical and disciplinary borders and often in mutually contradictory ways.

No less significant than the Western Impact and industrialisation is the impact of what is known as globalisation, which has interacted with the rise of Asia and China in particular after the end of the Cold War. The development in communications technologies has connected societies and people in ways that had never happened before, facilitating the growth of networks through which goods, money, people, information, drugs, viruses, etc., flow with ease beyond national borders. The Asian Financial Crisis in 1997–98 shed light on the negative aspect of this development, and provided an opportunity for the Asian nations to promote the formation of functional, regional frameworks to facilitate the flow of “good things” and check the flow of “bad things” through the networks.

Studies on regional integration and order in Asia, which have not really caught up with developments in reality, must involve a dialogue between international relations theory, area studies, and history. In area studies, further research is needed to understand how the rise of new communication technologies and the development of networks between firms, experts, NGOs and people are changing society and the relationship between state and society. This often requires researchers to look beyond borders and link domestic politics with international relations, since nationalism is on the rise globally as if it is a corollary of globalisation. More research should be conducted on the manipulation of people’s emotions, often done through evoking and reproducing historical memories, and on the role of emotions in international as well as domestic politics and economics. That is, we should know further about the complex dynamic of a bilateral relationship that involves internal politics, economic interests, international environment and people’s emotions. Here, comparative studies should be useful and effective. Studies and insights into these issues in Asia should contribute greatly to understanding the rise of nationalism in the age of globalisation in other areas.

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