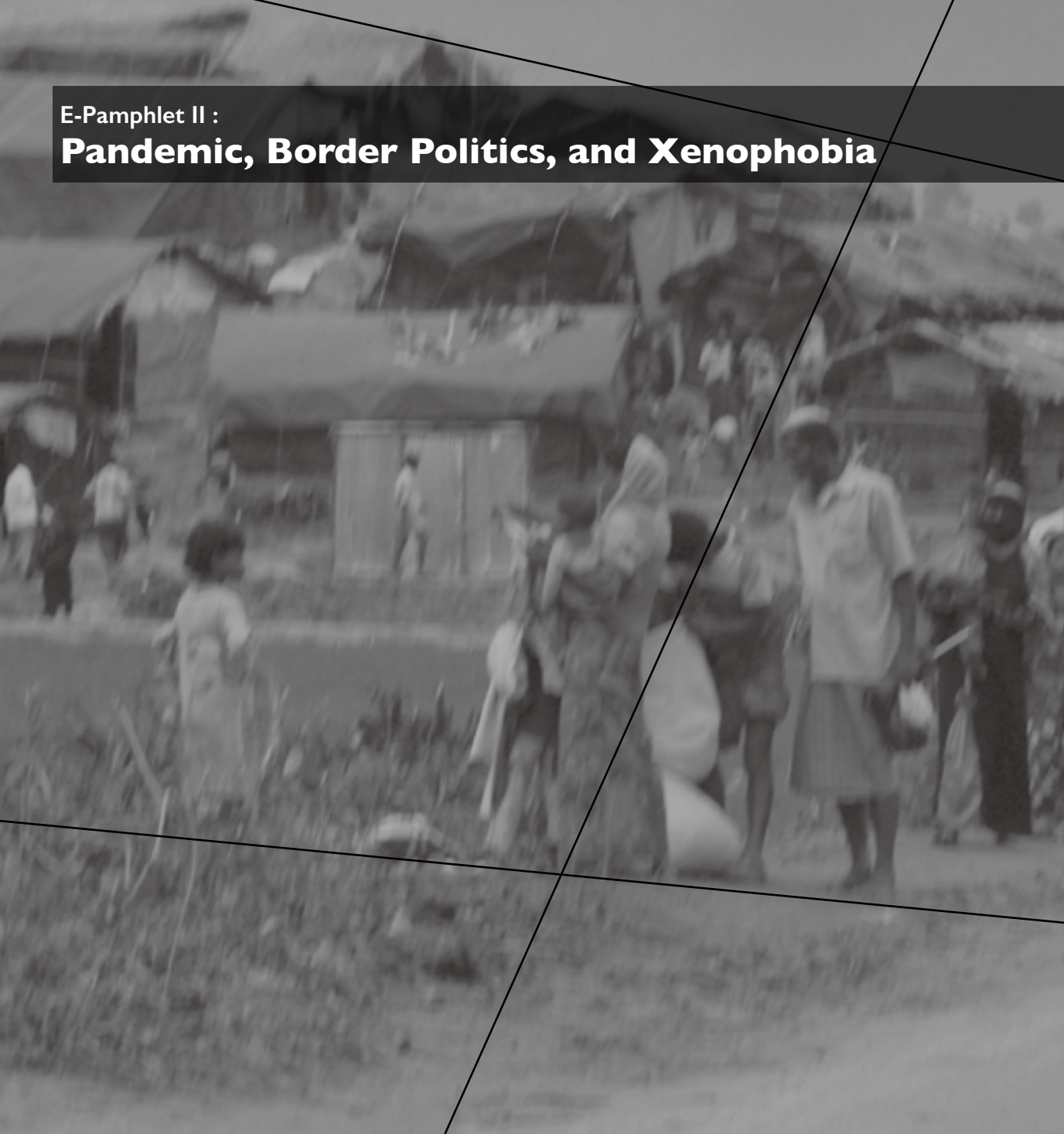


Global Humanities Institutes (GHI) 2019-2022:  
"Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context"

E-Pamphlet II :  
**Pandemic, Border Politics, and Xenophobia**



# INTRODUCTION

“Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context” is the Global Humanities Institutes (GHI) 2019-2022 supported by the Consortium of Humanities Centre and Institutes (CHCI) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Rapidly increasing international migrations have radically changed the outlook of contemporary 21st century societies, producing cases of massive displaced and precarious lives, and bringing various impacts upon local communities. These emerging phenomena have attracted critical scholarship both in the humanities and social sciences in recent years.

The CHCI-Mellon Global Humanities Institutes (GHI) on “Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context” invites applications from early career researchers and advanced graduate students from the interdisciplinary humanities and social science studies, including but not limited to literature, history, philosophy, film, audio-visual arts, performing arts, law, anthropology, sociology, journalism, social media, digital platform, and other forms of practitioners.

Through the analysis of documentaries, films, literature, interviews, archives, governmental policies, and cooperation with NGOs/CBOs and artist groups, this intensive program foregrounds the subjective experiences and perspectives of migrants, the violation of the migrants’ fundamental human rights, the citizen’s attitude against them, as well as the government malfunctioning in dealing with these migrants.

The issues of migration and unequal citizens highlight the logistical continuum of biopolitics and governmentality from the colonial to the post-colonial state, from the Cold War Era to the post-Cold War Era, as well as the operation of geo-political and geo-economic apparatus and zoning politics. Critical logistics can orient the inquiry by emphasizing how the governance of populations reaches beyond statistical measure to make new connections between life and work, technology and mobility, and politics and economy in and beyond any region. Logistics organises the movement of people and goods and asserts its logic across the entire circuit of production, distribution, and consumption. Logistics has also remade the domain of global space and territory, through the operation of zoning politics, such as corridors, digital networks, extraction enclaves, financial districts, and other areas of transfer and exchange. Examining the nexus of migration and logistics offers ways of rethinking the politics of human mobility and the question of unequal citizens that not only reach beyond the logic of integration and identity but also question the standard analysis of post-war area studies.

# LINES OF RESEARCH

## **Conditions of Migration and Precarious Lives**

Our GHI encourages researchers to study and analyse the reality of the forms of life of the international migrants, refugees, and stateless people in contemporary societies. We welcome analytic inquiries and theoretical engagements of cases of documentaries, films, literature, interviews, archives, governmental policies, NGOs/CBOs, and artist groups, in but not limited to Asia, on the following issues:

The experience and the emotions of migrant workers, refugees or stateless people in their working and living environments in the receiving societies;

The role of social identities such as gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, legal status in conditioning migrant workers' precarious lives;

How states manage labour migration imports and repatriation/deportation as part of the development projects of the state, requiring explicit legal exclusion from residency and citizenship and migrant labour exploitation in the context of different countries, including the national evolution of legal framework concerning this issue:

- The operations of the broker agency, the development of workforce agencies, regimes of brokerage that commodifies migrants into healthy bodies that are labour ready to be supplied abroad;
- The support system offered by trade unions, local NGOs/CBOs, shelters, migrant centres, or resettlement plans at host societies; alliance-making among different groups (e.g. different migrant groups from different countries, women's groups, labour unions, etc.) as well as the internal support system within the migrant communities;
- How the increase in the numbers, relative visibility, and designation as an abject foreigner of migrant workers has led to new forms of Asian racism and xenophobia;
- Ambiguities of migrant entrepreneurship: self-employment as a low-paid activity, forced self-employment ("quasi-self-employment"), and self-employment as an opportunity for professional advancement;
- International student mobility/unpaid labour and its regulation through visa regimes, market mechanisms, university rankings, and labour statuses;
- Transnational human trafficking of women and children for prostitution and forced marriage and labour.

## **Logistics, Geo-economics, Zoning Politics, and Local Infrastructure Initiatives**

Our GHI encourages research projects on politico-economic logistics and the logic of migration. We welcome analytic inquiries and theoretical engagements on the following issues:

- Whether and how the colonial past and the Cold War regime still leave their traces on the countries in and beyond Asia in the 21st century, such as the ASEAN regional policies of trade agreements and economic security control, the US-China trade war, and so on?
- How can we use critical thought on logistics to rethink issues of labour and migration particularly in the Asian region (or in what ways is migration increasingly functioning logistically)?
- How do foreign direct investment, labour, and migration in the Asian region link to logistical initiatives such as zoning, China's Belt and Road Initiative, etc.?
- How do global and local logistical initiatives impact directly or indirectly on local societies, such as governmental corruptions, public xenophobic reactions, extraction by dispossession, and so on?
- How is digitalisation transforming labour and mobility, including questions of virtual migration, platform labour, and the use of digital technologies for migration control and freedom of movement?
- How do logistics and migration in and beyond Asia reorganise relations of reproduction of labour power and society?
- The transformation of the land question, the military-industrial complex, and mobility regime.

Regarding the historical processes, ruptures and continuities in the organisation and practice of migration in and beyond Asia, do logistics offer a means of understanding historical migration, or is it specific to the present moment? How do layered histories of migration continue to shape present movements?

The nexus of logistics, displacement, and violence. The discourse of who is "native" and who is "migrant" is prevalent in many countries; at the extreme, this discourse can lead to communal fissures and even violence. Can a logistical approach help us productively think through ideas of "indigeneity/native" VS "migrants/foreigner" and unpack this socially constructed dichotomy?

## Questions of Unequal Citizens

The upsurge of migrant workers, refugees, and human trafficking have changed the composition of the social space and worsen the inequality among the people who live and work in the same social space but do not share equal access to the cities nor exercise political subjectivities they spent in their daily life. While Giorgio Agamben's concept of the 'bare life' has been much cited in Refugee Studies in recent years, there has also been a call by scholars to focus on the agency and political life of the refugees grounded in their lived realities. Our GHI also wants to draw researchers' attention to the newly emerging forms of neo-racism, neo-slavery, and new colonialism. We welcome analytic inquiries and theoretical engagements on the following issues:

- How do new forms of exclusion through citizenship and residency rights facilitate in today's formation of uneven late capitalism?
- How do traditional colonialism and ongoing forms of new colonialism or internal colonialism shape citizenship regimes in diverse local contexts in Asia and beyond? How did the colonial histories, the process of the post-colonial independent nation through Citizenship Acts, and the current immigrant/migrant worker regulations co-figure the politics of inclusive exclusion and trigger the reality of unequal citizens in contemporary societies?
- How do we analyse the structural violence of the statist division between citizen and non-citizen, or differentiated citizens, that causes the violation of fundamental human rights against a particular population?
- How do we problematise the concept of the "illegal migrant workers"? How is the illegal social space of the precarious bodies produced legally by governmental sectors and other transnational agencies?
- How do we further understand the fear of the transient—the homeless, migrants, refugees? What is the nature of the local xenophobic reactions toward the migrant labour and refugees?
- How do theoretical and empirical investigations of citizenship influence understandings of migration in ways different to analytical approaches that stress other kinds of political subjectivity—e.g. social class, the lived experiences or agency of the refugees and stateless people?
- To what extent do patterns of migration in the Asian region disarticulate the figure of the citizen from the figure of the worker? What are new and emerging ways of theorising citizenship and migration that are relevant in various contexts?

In what ways can we theorise the 'indentured' as a poetics of relation, for example, through Mauritian poet Khal Torabully's notion of the 'coolitude,' or Martinique philosopher Edouard Glissant's concept of opacity, or alliance-building against what Laura Ann Stoler characterises as the persisting imperial durabilities of our time?

What forms of agency and belonging do migrant possess despite legal exclusions, including political participation, economic belonging, trade unionism and migrant/refugee organisations? What forms of differentiated citizenship, exclusion, and belonging shape contemporary migration experiences e.g. indenture, statelessness, residential registration, denizenship, plural citizenships, war and violence?

How do migrants resist exclusionary citizenship regimes and enact new claims—locally and nationally, and transnationally?

### **New Forms of Knowledge Production**

Our GHI encourages colleagues and students to conduct various forms of knowledge production to explore the issues of migration, logistics, and unequal citizens through academic papers, artistic works, and digital approaches, to bridge universities and societies, and to link scholars with migrant workers, refugee communities, trans-local NGOs/CBOs, artist groups, filmmakers and journalists. We will create occasions for trans-local advocates and artists groups working for migrants, refugees, and stateless communities to meet and exchange ideas on common concerns and share the tactics from different groups. We will create space to reflect on the various strategies and create new conversations. We hope to facilitate productive discussions and foster knowledge sharing across disciplines and modalities. Also, we will establish a shared transnational online resource documenting innovative approaches in addressing migrant and refugee issues. Some suggested area of focus, but not limited to, are as the following:

- Storytelling can be a powerful tool humanising "the other." What are the existing innovative projects working with migrants and refugees, using storytelling in different forms—such as theatre, poetry recitals, music festival, writing workshops, photography, and film making? What is the impact of these initiatives for the migrant communities and the audience/readers?
- Artists have pushed the envelope of artistic forms that paralleled their commitment to discussing the experiences of this global movement of people and the power dynamics engendered by this large-scale mobility. In what ways were modern and contemporary arts a vital avenue for new forms of knowledge production to address issues of unequal citizens and cross-boundary imaginations?

- What are new institutional forms created by the interface of migration knowledge practices with formal gallery spaces and museums?
- What is the role of digitalisation in generating knowledge and strategies to address issues of migration and unequal citizenship?
- How are civil conversations and alliance building facilitated across communities? What are some new conversations and narratives that are being shaped in these processes?

# Pandemic, Border Politics, and Xenophobia

These talks aim to open a forum where all GHI participants, speakers, and researchers from partner institutions can exchange their experiences, points of view and research results with a critical perspective on aspects of border politics, identity, and inequalities from a global and current perspective.

## About the Speakers

**Prof. Allain Brossat:** Alain Brossat is an Emeritus Professor at the department of philosophy of Paris 8 University as well as a Professor at National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. He is also co-sponsor of the International Summer Universities network that has set on foot seven Summer Universities from 2005 on – the ICCS being one of the main supporters of this network. His research focuses on eurocentrism, hegemony, the construction of narratives, decoloniality, the crisis of the West. He is the author of over 20 books.

**Prof. Yuan-Horng Chu:** Yuan-Horng Chu is a professor and the former director (2004-2008) of the Graduate Institute for Social Research and Cultural Studies, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. He obtained his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1990. He served as former president of the Cultural Studies Association in Taiwan, 2003-2004. In 2005 he founded an international Chinese journal, *Router: a Journal of Cultural Studies* and remains the editor in chief. His research areas include History of Social Thoughts, Social Theory, and Urban Ethnography. His publications include *In Different World We Live: Sociological Notes on Framing*, and *Thomas Kuhn: a Critical Reader* (co-edited with D. Fu).

**Prof. Rafal Smoczynski:** Rafal Smoczynski is an Associate Professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences. His research focus is on social control, migration, sociology of religion, social theory, and sociology of markets.

**Juan Alberto Ruiz Casado:** Juan Casado is a Post-doctoral Fellow in Department of History), National Cheng Kung University. His research interests include populism, nationalism, discourse theory, independence movements, and social media and politics.



# Summary of the Talks

Katarzyna Szpargala (PhD Student, SRCS, NYCU)

During the talks, the speakers presented their critical point of view on current issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the drastic turn in biopolitics during the pandemic, the uncertain situation of Chinese internal migrant workers after the crisis caused by COVID-19, the 'moral panic' of migrants in the post-Brexit era in the UK and the effect of anti-China narrative on Taiwan and the Taiwanese identity construction.

Professor Brossat, in his presentation titled "The « late age » of Biopolitics", explained how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the states' politics towards their own people. Professor Brossat analyzed how much the states are willing to sacrifice to protect themselves and how ordinary people suffer under unequal treatment. During the pandemic, people are divided into two categories: those who can get proper treatment and those who are "on their own." By showing the example of the US and Western Europe, Professor explained how the pandemic revealed how some people have to be taken care of, thus are protected by states, and some have to be abandoned, thus their lives "don't matter."

His presentation perspicaciously examined how the COVID-19 changed the biopolitics and how some people are even more vulnerable in times of crisis.

After the first presentation, Professor Chu started his presentation with a brief explanation of the process of proletarianisation. Then he went on to talk about the situation of mingong, Chinese internal migrant workers, and their struggles. Professor described the socio-economic struggles of the workers and how the pandemic affected their security. According to Professor Chu, China's supply chain is breaking as many countries and companies will leave China in order to diversify their supply chain. This will have a profound impact on Chinese migrant workers.

At the end of the presentation, Professor Chu speculated on China's migrant workers' future and how their uncertain future can impact the Party-State regime and the possible consequences on the world economy and political scene.

Professor Smoczyński was the third presenter of the day. Professor Smoczyński's presentation wasn't directly related to the COVID-19; however, it provided an interpretative framework that can help understand other

social reactions towards migrants and current social control techniques. Professor Smoczyński presented his research about the situation of migrant workers, particularly Polish migrant workers, in the UK after the 2016 EU membership referendum. His presentation focused on anti-Polish sentiments and moral panic. He thoroughly explained the sociology of moral studies and the revision of the moral panic theory. Moreover, as Professor mentioned, together with social changes and new social movements concerned with progressive social programs, such as gender and race equality or environmental crisis, some moral panics can be called 'good' (Cohen, 2002).

Juan Alberto Ruiz Casado was the last presenter. His presentation was titled "The 'Chine Virus': Sinophobia during COVID-19 and its Repercussions on Taiwan and Taiwanese Identity." Juan started his talk by sharing his own experience in India, where his Taiwanese companion was discriminated against. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there was a rise of discrimination against Chinese people as some people were blaming China for the pandemic. Juan examined how the anti-China narrative going around the world can affect Taiwan. According to Juan, the tension caused by the pandemic and complicated relations between China and Taiwan might quicken the identity construction of the Taiwanese and support the independence of Taiwan from China. As one of the examples of the changes, he showed the new Taiwanese passport design – the redesign was made to stop the confusion between Taiwanese and Chinese citizens (shrinking the words "Republic of China" and making the word "Taiwan" bigger).

All the presentations introduced different problems that our societies are currently dealing with. Moreover, after the presentations, speakers and attendees had a chance to discuss and share their opinions and thoughts on the COVID-19 pandemic and the world's response to it. Attendees shared their experiences and observations. Additionally, thanks to the participants' diverse backgrounds, more examples and issues were introduced, which contributed to the discussion.

## **References:**

Cohen, S. (2002). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the Mods and Rockers*. London: Routledge.

# The « late age » of biopolitics

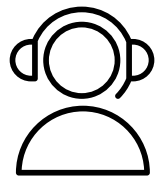
## Alain Brossat

In many countries of the global North, notably in Western Europe and in the US, ordinary people have been taught a harsh lesson by the COVID 19 pandemic: they have suffered from a drastic turn in the horizon of biopolitics, they have learned at their own expense that the basic and original « gesture » biopolitics is supposed to rely on (taking care of a population) now has a sinister doppelgänger – selection, sorting.

In the heat of the contagion (February, March, April, May 2020), the persons infected or showing the symptoms of COVID 19 have been very commonly divided by those who were supposed to take care of them into two categories – those who would benefit of proper treatment, including tests, intensive care at the hospital, and those who would be asked to stay at home, take Aspirin and call their doctor in case their condition worsens. This approach, consisting in dividing a given human common entity into those who have to be taken care of (made live) and those who have to be abandoned (let die, for many of them) is borrowed from war medicine. Its implementation in time of peace in countries like Italy, France, Spain, Belgium, etc. is a disastrous novum whose human cost was exorbitant – more than 100 000 human losses, as a whole, in these four countries.

The appearance in such a context of such a brutal divide between those whose life has to be protected and those whose survival actually « doesn't matter » is a very brutal mutation in the history of the welfare state, in Western Europe and other regions of the world. Foucault's fifth chapter of *The Will to Knowledge* will be our guide for our investigation of this turn.

**Listen to a podcast of Alain Brossat's talk here.**

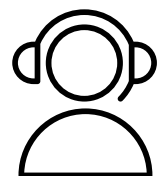


# COVID-19 and the Uncertain Situation of *Mingong* (民工) in Mainland China

Yuan-Horng Chu

This presentation will briefly review the term “Proletariat,” its etymology in Latin and its meaning in Roman history. It will also review the Black Death in Europe (1347-1353) and, as its consequences, the decline of European feudalism and the rise of Capitalism, as well as the Western Marxist interpretations on the transition from peasant-serfdom to the proletarianization of labor in Europe. It then turns to the phenomenal *Mingong* in Mainland China since 1978, arguably the world largest process of proletarianization (nearly three hundred millions in 2007). It will discuss related issues, including *Mingong* and the Hukou (戶口) system of household registration in Mainland China, Chunyun (春運) a period of migration in China with extremely high traffic load around the time of the Chinese Lunar New Year, the problems of Left-behind children (留守兒童), the local organizing of labor market and the possible evolvment of criminal gangs, *Mingong* exploited and abused by the collaboration of political cronies (權貴), factory owners (業主), local security force (城管 / 公安), and gangsters (黑幫), and the 2017 November incident of the 40-day cleansing action that thrown out tens of thousands Beijing’s “low-end population” (清理北京「低端人口」) in freezing Winter. From the above-described background, the presentation will finally come to the 2020 situations under the COVID-19 that *Mingong* confronts, the massive close-down of factories and disappearance of jobs. It’s a drastic situation of uncertainty not only to the massively unemployed *Mingong* whose family relies on their wages but also to the grave recession of national economy from which no one can assure whether the regime that enjoyed 40 years of non-stop high-speed growth could survive THIS crisis.

Listen to a podcast of Yuan-Horng Chu’s talk here.

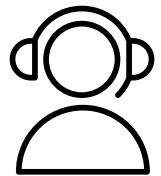


# A 'good' panic and moral regulation: migrant workers in the UK after the 2016 EU membership referendum

Rafal Smoczynski

The 2016 EU membership referendum has introduced a period of uncertainty for the indigenous population and non-British citizens in the UK. Following the recent revisions in the sociology of moral panics this paper provides an analysis of interviews with migrant workers revealing two main discursive framing logics. The first type of articulations refers to a self-reported anti-migrant moral panic discourses that—according to respondents—was exploited by British anti-migrant campaigners. The second type of articulations illustrates the 'good' panic logic, namely, a panicking discourse appearing among respondents about the vulnerability of their community in post-Referendum Britain. This paper problematizes the 'good' panic logic by eliciting competitive narratives found in the interview data. The latter did not aim merely at stimulating caring attitudes but referred also to moral regulation techniques in order to manage Brexit-oriented risks and avoid the trap of becoming a vulnerable migrant.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Rafal Smoczynski's talk [here](#).



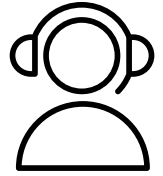
# The “Chinese Virus”: Sinophobia during Covid-19 and its repercussions on Taiwan and Taiwanese identity

Juan Alberto Ruiz Casado

An unpleasant personal experience during the Covid-19 pandemic in India, where my Taiwanese companion was repeatedly mistaken and discriminated as Chinese, made me reflect on how the stigmatisation towards China and the Chinese ethnic community could indirectly affect Taiwan and its citizens. During the coronavirus crisis there have been numerous cases worldwide of racism against citizens of Chinese ethnicity and even others with “similar” ethnic traits (Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese). The global contempt for the Chinese, with its origins rooted in a well established cultural supremacism depicting Chinese as inferiors, was those days amplified by a fear of China’s hegemonic challenge of the Western neoliberal order, a generalised bias of the media concerning “the Chinese virus”, and by the attacks of some Western governments blaming the Chinese “other” for the pandemic instead of accepting responsibility for their ineptitude facing it. But Taiwan can also be unexpectedly affected by this increasing construction of China and the Chinese as the global enemy. If the current anti-China narrative were to continue its escalation, Taiwan could be caught in a tight spot: not only because its citizens share the same ethnic profile with Chinese nationals, but also because of the word “China” in the official name of the island and the lack of knowledge of the majority of the world’s citizens about the specific context of Taiwan. These tensions might accelerate both the identity construction of the Taiwanese as a separate subjectivity vis-à-vis an evil China and the support for independence as a radically different sovereign entity, pushing parties into a race for independence initiatives to win popular support. The recent decision to shrink the words “Republic of China” from the cover of the national passport (admittedly a consequence of Taiwanese being confused as Chinese during the pandemic), is a clear sign of the tendency of the changes ahead. Equally serious is the adoption by certain interest groups in Taiwan of a dehumanizing and discriminatory discourse against both the Chinese and the Taiwanese “traitors” who support compromise or de-escalation, risking a dangerous polarisation within society. Taiwan (and the Taiwanese identity) faces the difficult task of separating itself from the campaign of hatred towards the Chinese that indirectly undermines their own interests, while defending its own sovereignty, idiosyncrasy and its democratic and peacemaking role in Asia, avoiding either falling into the

arms of China or to serve as a pawn of the American short-term anti-China strategy.

**Listen to a podcast of Juan Alberto Ruiz Casado's talk [here](#).**



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