

# Preface

|| Markus Ferber

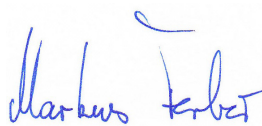
Asia is the world's largest and most populous continent. Its geostrategic importance for the European Union can be seen by the fact that the EU has entered into four bilateral strategic partnerships within the region, namely with China, Japan, India, and South Korea. It signed an additional partnership with ASEAN in December 2020 and published a new Indo-Pacific Strategy in September 2021. Asia not only plays a vital role in our economic future, but it is also and must be a strong partner, if we want to achieve successful outcomes in terms of the important challenges of our time.

With climate change, terrorism, and cyber-attacks, we all face great threats which do not stop at country borders and which cannot be overcome by closing such borders and focusing exclusively on narrow national interests. The current pandemic has once more proven the interconnectedness of our world. In 2020, the new coronavirus spread rapidly around the globe, with almost every country quickly reporting cases.

However, although the virus caused the same disease in each country, there were vast differences between countries in terms of how they reacted, which counter-measures were taken, how the virus spread through society, and in all likelihood, what the long-term consequences of the pandemic will be. Therefore, we decided to take an in-depth look at the situation of eight different countries in Asia and examine how they reacted when they were hit by the first wave of the virus, and sometimes a second wave.

We asked experts, who have followed the spread and the consequences of COVID-19, to analyse the success and failure of different strategies and to point out potential short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of the virus in the respective country and region. Each country report is a snapshot of the unfolding situation when the article was written. As we all know, the fight against COVID-19 is not over yet and even when numbers are dropping sustainably and continuously, new challenges will arise. The countries featured in this publication are China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, and Vietnam, and a final chapter will point out the likely consequences of the pandemic for Asia–Europe relations.

I hope this provides you with new insights and an interesting read as you follow the COVID-19 waves in Asia.



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