The novel coronavirus disease named COVID-19 which was alleged to be originated in Wuhan city, China, has caused nearly one million deaths and devastated the global economy, the healthcare system and the people’s life of many nations so badly. Both China and the Southeast Asian countries are the main infected areas of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which the peak of the current outbreak of COVID-19 in China is over in the mid-March\(^1\) while some Southeast Asian states such as the Philippines and Indonesia have faced the worst COVID-19 crisis. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases in China until March 16 is 81,077 and the total deaths are 3,314. It then increased slowly to 91,041 and 4,746 respectively until September 30.\(^2\) Due to the relief of the COVID-19, China advanced resumption of work and production on the premise of effective epidemic containment in an active and orderly manner and normalized the daily life in low-risk areas since April.\(^3\) Nonetheless, there have been four waves of the spread of the COVID-19 since then, mainly including the imported COVID-19 cases from Russia in April in Suifen River along the China-Russia border, the community infection in Beijing in June, the community infection in Dalian and Urumchi in July, and the imported COVID-19 cases from Myanmar in September in Ruili along the China-Myanmar border. Recently, Chinese experts have warned of the risk of a new spike in COVID-19 infections this winter, but it would not have the similar severe effects of the COVID-19 in Wuhan.\(^4\)

\(^{1}\)Xinhua Net (2020).
\(^{2}\)Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Weekly Epidemiological Update (2020), WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard (2020).
\(^{3}\)China Releases Guideline on Advancing Work Resumption amid Epidemic Control (2020).
\(^{4}\)Xie (2020).
In order to cut down the spread of the virus, China put more stringent rules in place than the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003. The first is the lockdown of the main infected areas, the big cities in particular. For instance, the Wuhan city was blocked for nearly three months (76 days), other huge cities like Beijing was also blocked for more than one month. Secondly, China used extremely coercive methods to prohibit the free flow of goods and people except the daily necessities and the epidemic prevention personnels unless the alert is over. For example, the local governments blocked all the roads, schools, and shopping malls in the cities and villages, and all the citizens and villagers are not allowed to go outside home. Thirdly, severe punishment was applied to publish who violates the anti-Covid rules, jacks up price and conveys fake news and information. Additionally, hundreds of government officials have been held accountable for an inadequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Chen Yixin, secretary-general of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, 654 government officials and staffs in Wuhan were held accountable for an inadequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including 10 bureau-level cadres and 144 section-level cadres.\(^5\)

In the meantime, China mobilized all the resources to initiate a “people’s war” against the virus, and eventually won a stunning victory over the COVID-19. First of all, China established a leading group on coronavirus prevention and control led by Premier Li Keqiang at the end of January 2020 to strengthen the unified leadership and guidance of national prevention and control work. Under this leading group, the central government sent groups to Hubei to direct work on the ground, and mobilized national resources to provide medical personnel and supplies, including protective suits and masks urgently needed in the province. In addition, green passages for material transportation were opened to ensure the supply of necessities for local people, the construction of hospitals for centralized treatment was speeded up, and the hotels were renovated as quarantine areas where the patients with fever were given timely treatment.\(^6\) In addition, all the government officials and staffs, community staffs and villagers, workers and volunteers have actively participated in the fight against the virus, which makes the fight a “people’s war”. Owe to the joint efforts of all the Chinese people, the epidemic situation has been controlled in a very short time, and the probability of further spread is little.

Nonetheless, there are still important lessons from the COVID-19 outbreak in China, in which the first one is the ineffectiveness of the early warning mechanism of the major communicable diseases. Actually, China established an early warning mechanism of the major communicable diseases after the SARS outbreak in 2003, while this mechanism failed to function in the COVID-19 pandemic and led to the wide-spread of the COVID-19 in the early days. Given this, the Chinese government initiated the amendment of the law on the prevention and control of communicable diseases in the early October 2020, in order to improve the reporting system for the communicable diseases and reconstruct the system for announcing information on

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\(^5\) Jie Mian (2020).

\(^6\) Premier Li Chairs Leading Group Meeting on Coronavirus Prevention, Control (2020).
epidemic situation of the communicable diseases. Before that, the Beijing and Shenzhen government issued the mergency regulations on the public health emergencies in order to encourage the citizens to report the potential danger in the public health emergencies. These significant changes are perceived as strong protections for the ‘whistleblower’ like Li Wenliang, an ophthalmologist at Wuhan Central Hospital who censured for warning about the initial coronavirus outbreak.

Second, the weak public health system in China, the third-tier cities in particular, has contributed to the spread of the virus. In Wuhan, community clinics are not equipped to treat COVID-19 patients, and stories of patients waiting for days for a hospital bed have been commonplace in the past two months. For a long time, the Chinese government has been blamed for the insufficient investments in medical services and the failure of the health care reform, which resulted in the high difficulty and high cost of getting medical treatment (‘Kan Bing Nan’ and ‘Kan Bing Gui’) and the rising tensions between doctors and patients in China. In this context, the Chinese government has to mobilize national medical resources including the military medical resource to cope with the fast-growing infected cases in Hubei since the outbreak.

Third, the comparatively low level of urban governance in Chinese cities, including the metropolitan cities like Wuhan, once called ‘Chicago of East’, is another big problem during the pandemic. In the early days of the outbreak, both Wuhan and other small and medium-sized cities in Hubei were faced with a desperate shortage of medical resource, relief supplies and daily necessities. Meanwhile, all public transport systems were shut down and the rumors and fake news diffused in the whole city, causing great panic in the society and people’s serious resentment towards the government officials. In that case, Chinese central government replaced both the Party Secretaries of Hubei province and Wuhan on 13 February for under-reporting and incompetence in the early stage of the pandemic. The new municipal and provincial leaders immediately introduced a new governance system, deploying many officials to the neighbourhood level to monitor and enforce the lockdown. Under this strong local leadership, the pandemic in Wuhan and Hubei was under speedy control.

Finally, the growing concerns over the abuse of public power was raised in Chinese society after the lockdown of cities, communities and villages during the pandemic. Wuhan writer Fang Fang and her ‘Quarantine Diary’ revealed some doubts about government authority of concealing the truth and restricting personal freedom. Even the non-government officials and government staffs such as the security guard in the residential communities got the right to collect individual information and use forces to enforce the law.

In spite of the slow development of the COVID-19 pandemic in Southeast Asia in the early days of the outbreak, some ASEAN states such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar have been experienced the most serious COVID-19 crisis. According to the statistics of WHO, the cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases in Southeast

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7Jiang (2020).
8Gao (2020).
9China Daily (2020).
10Chen and Wu (2020).
Asia until September 30 is 678,287, in which the Philippines ranked No.1 with 309,303 and Indonesia ranked No.2 with 282,724.\footnote{WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard (2020).} The wide-spread epidemic in Southeast Asia and its complex impacts on China-Southeast Asia relations have attracted rising attentions from China.\footnote{See: Li (2020), Wang (2020), Lu and Wang (2020), Zhang (2020), Zhong (2020).} In the early stage of the outbreak of the COVID-19, the Chinese scholars worried that the epidemic in some Southeast Asian countries might be out of control and thus increasing the risk of imported cases due to their weaker public health care systems, poor crisis management capability, as well as the high demand for economic growth. Since the implementation of the strict anti-Covid measures in Southeast Asia such as the border restrictions and the travel ban on Chinese citizens, the economic cooperation and social contacts between China and the Southeast Asian states have been adversely affected. As Chinese scholars analyzed, the smooth flow of people and goods between China and Southeast Asian states was disrupted, the supply chain and industrial chain in the region was adversely affected, the market demands and foreign investments in Southeast Asian states were decreased, the implementation of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was delayed and the potential security risk of the BRI projects was increased, and the people to people exchanges were suspended.\footnote{Zhang and Tang (2020), Luo and Ma (2020).}

However, Chinese scholars have begun to realize the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the China-Southeast Asia relations since the major achievements of China’s anti-Covid measures and the resumption of work in China at the end of March, as well as the joint actions taken by China and Southeast Asian countries to maintain the trade and investment cooperation and the stability of the supply chain in the early June. They, therefore, concluded that the trade, investment and public health cooperation between China and the Southeast Asian states has been facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.\footnote{Zhang (2020), Zhong (2020).} They also believed that the mutual trust between China and the Southeast Asian nations has been deepened during their joint efforts of fighting against the virus, which is beneficial to the construction of the community of a shared future between China and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).\footnote{Luo and Ma 2020.} In general, China has recognized the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the China-Southeast Asia relations in the early days of the outbreak, but it has become optimistic about the relationship since the joint anti-Covid efforts and the special measures of promoting the economic cooperation between China and Southeast Asian states.

Due to the geographical proximity, close economic cooperation and people to people exchanges between China and the Southeast Asian states, the rising risk of imported cases from China has become a main concern for many Southeast Asian states since the reported cases of infection from or having made a recent stop-over in Wuhan in Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia by the end of January. Given this, all the Southeast Asian states except Cambodia have imposed strict border and
travel restrictions on Chinese citizens since the early February, which undermined the bilateral economic cooperation and tourism industry severely. The Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia which relies heavily on Chinese tourists in particular, therefore have been faced with the dilemma between epidemic prevention and economic growth. Some neighboring countries of China, mainly including Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos, have taken provisional measures to normalize the border trade with China and establish fast track for essential personnel exchanges with the aim to continue the infrastructure projects financed by Chinese companies.

In spite of various restrictions, the Southeast Asian states have avoided displeasing or bothering China, notably when it is facing a critical period. Conversely, leaders of Southeast Asian nations, including Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, gave strong diplomatic support and necessary medical assistance to China in the early days of the outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan. Even after the US criticized Beijing for concealing the severity of Coronavirus danger, they continued to praise the joint efforts of fighting against the virus by ASEAN and China. Moreover, the Southeast Asian states have received a large number of Chinese medical supplies and agreed to strengthen cooperation with China on public health and economic cooperation.

Nonetheless, China’s missteps at the beginning of the pandemic, its lack of transparency, and its acute sensitivity to criticism would not improve trust levels in Southeast Asia. In fact, the anti-Chinese sentiments in Southeast Asian states have prevailed in the early days of the outbreak due to the misinformation and misunderstanding about the virus which is believed to originate from China in the region. At the meantime, the rising tensions between China and the claimant states such as Vietnam and Malaysia in the South China Sea (SCS) as well as China’s construction of dams in the Mekong River have disrupted the trust between China and ASEAN. All in all, Southeast Asian states views on their relations with China in the context of the outbreak of the COVID-19 are complicated and mixed, which would impact the China-Southeast Asia relations in the long run.

Given this, this book aims to examine the multiple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on China-Southeast Asia relations from both Chinese and Southeast Asian perspectives. It tries to reveal how has China-Southeast Asia relations been reshaping in light of the COVID-19 and discuss what kind of measures could be taken to push forward China-Southeast Asia relations and thus ensuring the peace and prosperity in the region.

The main content of the book is divided into ten parts. In the first parts, Nian Peng briefly introduced the Chinese and Southeast Asian perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on China-Southeast Asia relations, and the main objective of this book. He also examined the dual influence of the pandemic on the construction of China-ASEAN community of a shared future, and gave some useful policy recommendations on improving China-ASEAN relations in Chap. 2.

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16 du Rocher (2020).
17 Schwarz (2020).
Aaron Jed Rabena examined the Philippines’ response to the pandemic and the problems in government’s response, analyzed the net impact of the pandemic on the Philippines, and the economic and political influence of the pandemic on Philippines-China relations in Chap. 3. Chandarith Neak and Sothearak Sok investigated the COVID-19 situation as well as its impact on Cambodia, and government’s anti-Covid measures, depicted Cambodia-China cooperation in fighting against the virus and Cambodian people’s perception on it, analyzed Cambodia’s response to the rising US-China strategic competition during the pandemic, and predicted the future directions of Cambodia-China Relations in Post-COVID era in Chap. 4.

Chee Leong Lee and Md Nasrudin Md Akhir examined Malaysia’s responses to the COVID-19 during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period, discussed the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on Malaysia-China relations, and predicted the prospect of the bilateral ties in the post-MCO period in Chap. 5.

Myint San focused on Myanmar’s response and emergency measures on dealing with the COVID-19, examined the economic impacts of the COVID-19 on Myanmar and Myanmar-China Relations in Chap. 6.

Tuan Khanh Nguyen and Nam Tiến Trần carefully examined Vietnam’s anti-Covid measures, investigated Vietnam-China cooperation on fighting against the COVID-19, and reviewed Vietnam-China relations during the pandemic, especially Vietnam’s response to the fierce US-China power rivalry in Chap. 7.

Nisit Panthamit looked back the trade, investment and tourism cooperation between Thailand and China, introduced Thailand’s response to the COVID-19, discussed about the China-Thailand Cooperation during the coronavirus pandemic, and analyzed how Thailand has managed their relations with the US and China under a sharply increasing US-China rivalry in Chap. 8.

Putri Rakhmadhani Nur Rimbawati introduced the COVID-19 situation in Indonesia and government regulations, examined the special role of social media during the pandemic in Indonesia, and analyzed Indonesia-China bilateral relationship amidst the pandemic in Chap. 9.

Xianbai Ji documented the on-going development of the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore and government anti-Covid measures, analyzed the economic toll of the COVID-19 on Singapore and Singapore’s fiscal injection to stabilize the economy, provided a general background of the political and economic relations between Singapore and China, and elaborated on Sino-Singaporean cooperation and mutual assistance in combating the COVID-19 in Chap. 10.

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