



# EU-ASIA DIALOGUE

*Shaping a Common Future for Europe and Asia –  
Sharing Policy Innovation and Best Practices in Addressing Common Challenges*

# The Future of ASIA- EUROPE COOPERATION



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung

EAI  
EAST ASIAN INSTITUTE  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



EPC  
EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE



EU Centre in Singapore

The Future of  
**Asia-Europe  
Cooperation**



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Design, Layout and Typeset:  
Select Books Pte Ltd  
65A, Jalan Tenteram  
#02-06, St Michael's Industrial Estate  
Singapore 328958  
Website: [www.selectbooks.com.sg](http://www.selectbooks.com.sg)

**Cataloguing-in-Publication Data is available from the National Library Board (Singapore).**

ISBN : 978-981-09-4118-5

Printed in Singapore

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# Preface

Over the past two decades, EU-Asia relations have strengthened considerably. The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was established and has grown significantly. The EU became an active member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, has signed and is negotiating free trade agreements with Asian partners. Europeans have aspirations to join the East Asia Summit and the EU has expressed a strong interest to deepen its political dialogue with Asia. How can this partnership be intensified and structured? What are the mutual benefits from enhanced cooperation? What roles can Europe play with regard to arising challenges in Asia and vice-versa? What are the main areas of concern for closer political dialogue between Europe and Asia? Is it necessary to set up new initiatives or do the existing ones have enough potential to be enhanced?

This booklet concludes a three-year project co-funded by the European Union and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The “EU-Asia Dialogue” established a network of policymakers, academics and non-governmental actors; thus providing a platform for exchange and policy learning. This helped to deepen understanding and share knowledge on seven common sustainable development challenges in Europe and Asia in order to enhance bi-regional cooperation across sectors and disciplines. All activities were implemented by a consortium consisting of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Singapore, East Asian Institute of the National University of Singapore, European Policy Centre in Brussels and European Union Centre in Singapore.

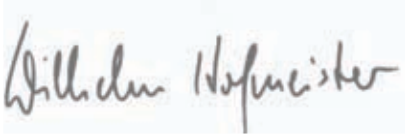
Through more than thirty conferences and dialogue fora, the project laid the foundation for a comprehensive and constructive partnership between the regions. In addition to these discussions, seven publications and seventy studies and reports identified key areas for future cooperation and policy recommendations. All of these material are freely available on the project website: [www.eu-asia.eu](http://www.eu-asia.eu).

This booklet provides a European and Asian review of the latest ASEM Summit and a look at how this forum can evolve in the future to support this crucial partnership. It also includes Asian perspectives on the current bi-regional relations and issues of key interest to several Asian countries. These are short op-ed commentaries by Asian journalists from the leading English-language newspapers of their respective countries. The articles are the result of an exposure trip to European institutions in preparation for the ASEM Summit 2014 in Milan, Italy. The booklet closes with short analyses of the



seven key challenges and ideas for future cooperation efforts between Asia and Europe.

We hope you will find the booklet interesting and appreciate the outlined opportunities for future Europe-Asia cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Wilhelm Hofmeister" in a cursive script.

Dr. Wilhelm Hofmeister  
Director  
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Singapore

A handwritten signature in black ink. The signature reads "P. Rueppel" in a cursive script.

Patrick Rueppel  
Program Manager "EU-Asia Dialogue"  
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Singapore





# The 10th ASEM Summit – Paving the Way Towards an Asia-Europe Marketplace?

Yeo Lay Hwee

Director

*EU Centre*

## Introduction

Just before the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit held in Milan on 16-17 October 2014, the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, and President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, jointly penned an op-ed waxing lyrical about the importance of ASEM. The premise for their optimism is that Asia matters for Europe, and Europe matters for Asia as in economic terms, Asia has surpassed the North American Free Trade Area to become the EU's main trading partner<sup>1</sup>.

The EU, as the chair of this year's ASEM Summit, has spared no effort in trying to make this year's meeting a "success". It has tried to raise the visibility of the event by supporting several events leading to the summit, in particular two high-level conferences in Brussels in July and September. The ASEM Dialogue Facility – a funding instrument established in 2008 to support hosting and participation of ASEM activities and strengthen coordination by ASEM stakeholders to raise the visibility and awareness of the ASEM process – was fully utilized in the lead-up to this year's summit.

A number of events were also held in October in Italy to create buzz. This includes the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Forum held in Rome on 6-7 October; in Milan, just before the Summit, there was Model ASEM to engage youths (8-11 Oct); and Asia-Europe People's Forum (10-12 Oct), a gathering of civil society activists and non-governmental organisations. The Asia-Europe Business Forum (15-16 Oct) was held back to back with the Summit and there

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<sup>1</sup> Herman van Rompuy and Jose Manuel Barroso. "ASEM's 10th Summit Most Important Yet", in *Nikkei Asian Review*, 15 October 2014.

was also the Asia-Europe Labour Forum (16-17 Oct) and a parallel Think Tanks' Workshop and Editors Roundtable on 16 October.

In short, there was no shortage of ASEM-related events. But what really was achieved, and what can we expect from the ASEM process moving forward?

## **Expectations and Delivery**

Having followed the ASEM process for twenty years – from a modest idea that emerged in 1994 in Singapore to bring about an informal meeting between the leaders of East Asia and that of Europe to what ASEM is today, a forum bringing together fifty-one Asian and European countries<sup>2</sup>, and two regional entities, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat – it is fascinating to see where ASEM will be heading next.

ASEM has gone through what I see as typical of many of the multilateral forums that began in the post-Cold war era – an initial period of excitement followed by heightened expectations, and then a sense of disappointment and retrenchment. Much of the excitement and then disappointment is due to official rhetoric and academic discourses that “talked up” the process, raising unrealistic expectations, but is also a reflection of the increasingly challenging and competitive environment for multilateral institutions. There is therefore a need to rethink ASEM to arrest the declining interest as other forums evolve. The leaders in the 10th ASEM Summit realized as much and hence concluded in its Chair's statement with a call for fresh thinking on how to move the ASEM process forward.

ASEM is symptomatic of the changing times – the increasing importance of Asia and the emerging markets, and the general diffusion of power. Van Rompuy and Barroso got it right in acknowledging the importance of Asia and Europe to each other. And it is precisely because of this rising importance that one sees a proliferation of various forums between the EU and its member states with Asia and key Asian countries, and also the rise of intra-Asian and Asia-Pacific frameworks.

As a forum of fifty-three diverse member states covering the Eurasian landmass and stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, it is difficult to see

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<sup>2</sup> Asian members – ten ASEAN countries, China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and Kazakhstan; European members – twenty-eight EU member states, Norway and Switzerland.

how ASEM, which does not even have a functioning Secretariat, can have any real impact on global governance and addressing common challenges. And with no real desire from the majority of the members to transform its current loose framework to anything more formal and institutionalized, ASEM will remain low key and low impact. We should therefore not be expecting any concrete deliverables beyond joint political declarations on potential cooperation and partnership and statements on issues of common concern. ASEM will remain very much a talk-shop and not a platform for action. At best, it can use its convening power to engender robust exchange, strengthen understanding and facilitate concrete actions in other arenas.

The logic of big numbers and great diversities within ASEM will likely preclude any specific or concrete projects that will be of the same priority to all fifty-three members. As van Rompuy himself said in an interview, “not all participants are equally interested in all issues”<sup>3</sup>. Hence, any tangible cooperation must be built on clusters of projects driven by smaller groups of ASEM members.

With this broad understanding, the chair and host of the 10th ASEM Summit had made an effort to raise the visibility but downplay any expectations. The focus is on informality and inclusiveness by facilitating a series of side meetings and dialogue, and providing a platform for different groups, from youths, civil society activists and academics to business leaders and trade union and labour leaders, to come together in Milan.

### **The 10th ASEM Summit – Meetings, Meetings and Media**

The 10th ASEM Summit marked the beginning of a more pragmatic approach towards acknowledging the limits of what ASEM can achieve and at the same time, making the most out of the forum in terms of visibility and political symbolism.

The decision to invite the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, to Milan and have a meeting with Russian President Putin together with key EU leaders to discuss the situation in Ukraine and broker a gas deal for Ukraine for the coming winter can be seen positively as an astute move to show that what happens in Europe also matters for Asia. It is also symbolic of a marketplace where deals can be made.

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<sup>3</sup> Asia and Europe Meet in Milan, DW, 16/10/14 ([www.dw.de/asia-and-europe-meet-in-milan/a-17998633](http://www.dw.de/asia-and-europe-meet-in-milan/a-17998633)).

The Poroshenko-Putin meeting stole the headlines, particularly in many European papers, resulting in ASEM becoming more of a sideshow. But again, one could also see it in a more positive light that the summit garnered much more interest from the press, and for the first time in recent years, the ASEM summit was actually reported on or mentioned (though not elaborated or explained) in media outside those of ASEM members, including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*. All in all, the media coverage of this year's ASEM Summit was quite extensive in terms of the numbers of articles but admittedly, very few of the articles made a genuine effort to explain ASEM.

Another meeting that had unfortunately escaped the press, but is worth mentioning in the context of EU-Asia relations is the informal EU-ASEAN leaders meeting before the ASEM Summit. This meeting was a reflection of the EU's recognition of ASEAN's centrality in the regional architectures in the broader Asia-Pacific region, and paved the way towards an EU-ASEAN strategic partnership. A further indication of the importance of this partnership is that the EU will soon nominate its first ambassador accredited exclusively to ASEAN.

As expected, the national presses of Asian countries primarily reported on the activities of their leaders in Milan, the remarks they made at ASEM and the bilateral meetings they had. However, it was also in the Asian media that there were much more emphasis and mention on the interdependence between Asia and Europe, and the need to have pragmatic cooperation, primarily in the areas of trade and investments, but also in addressing common challenges.

Did all these media coverage really make a difference in making people think differently about Asia-Europe relations? This is hard to tell but if I were to go by an encounter that I had in Milan, much work still needs to be done. I was in Milan on 10-11 October and also during the summit, but did not sense any "excitement". The Milanese pretty much went on with their daily lives quite unaware of what was really going on. One Milanese I met thought it was Obama who was coming to town.

## **Mongolia 2016 – A New Silk Route Towards a Bustling Marketplace?**

Richard Youngs in his blog remarked that the 10th ASEM summit "had a distinctly Eurasian bent" with Kazakhstan becoming its fifty-third member, and members talking of connectivity and "a New Silk Road to bolster relations

between Asia and Europe”<sup>4</sup>. Also of interest is that Turkey and Ukraine have both applied to join ASEM, and it is likely that their applications will be discussed and perhaps even approved in the 2016 summit to be held in Mongolia.

The 11th Summit in 2016 will also mark the 20th anniversary of ASEM since its debut in Bangkok in 1996. What can we hope for and what can we realistically expect?

A bold vision for ASEM is to transform the summit meeting of government leaders to an Asia-Europe marketplace for different exchanges, interactions and transactions, something which I have written about in an earlier commentary<sup>5</sup>. To create a bustling marketplace, instead of having separate forums with their distinctive audiences such as civil society activists in AEPF, business people in AEBF and unionists and labour leaders in AELF, it is better to bring all these peoples together with the senior officials and political leaders into one central arena. Visibility can be enhanced by broadcasting and web-streaming live their exchanges.

For a real transformation from the current Asia-Europe Meeting to the idea of an Asia-Europe marketplace, there is a need to engage the different actors from the very beginning of the planning stage. The chair of the next summit should be prepared to draw in a diverse group of people (from think tanks, the business sector, trade unions and the NGO sector) into the planning committee and not let the process be driven by senior officials alone.

A more gradual shift in the direction of ASEM is to consider “minilateral” summits within the big summit. After a brief opening session in which all the heads of states/governments and their officials gather for pleasantries and photo-ops, four to five concurrent sessions on different topics can then be planned. The topics for the concurrent sessions will be decided through a two-key system – first, it must be supported by at least three Asian and three European members to maintain an Asia-Europe character, and second, they must receive the most number of votes from the members.

Again the 10th ASEM Summit had seemingly taken a step in this direction by including in the Chair’s statement an indicative list of ASEM members interested in specific cooperation areas. Around seven subjects, including disaster management and mitigation, water and waste management,

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Youngs. “Eurasia and the ASEM Summit” (<http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=57000>).

<sup>5</sup> Yeo Lay Hwee. “Transforming the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to a Swinging, Eclectic Marketplace (Asem)”.



SME cooperation, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and cooperation in higher education and vocational training and skills development, have made the list of having the support of a good number of ASEM members from both the Asian and European sides.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The 10th ASEM Summit welcomed two more countries, Croatia and Kazakhstan, and further expanded ASEM into a forum of fifty-three members. Two other countries, Turkey and Ukraine, have also submitted their applications and will be considered for membership in the 2016 summit. No other inter-governmental organization has that kind of diversities spanning the Eurasian landmass and stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. ASEM countries make up 63% of the world's population, generate more than half of the world's GDP and account for more than 60% of world trade. ASEM could truly become a bustling marketplace. A new silk route – through land and over water – is fast becoming a reality as trade and investments grow between Asia and Europe. ASEM members should build more linkages and connectivity to underpin this growing trade and investments, and ASEM should be the marketplace where Asia and Europe come together for fruitful exchanges not only of goods and services, but ideas and knowledge that can help shape a common future.

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# ASEM in the Wake of the Milan Summit

**Bart Gaens**

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Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, labelled ASEM's most recent summit in Milan as "the most important yet". For Europe and Asia alike, the forum represents the combined weight of Asia and Europe, and underscores the political, economic, and socio-cultural interdependency between both continents. However, after ten biennial summits and eighteen years of existence, the forum is often criticized for remaining a mere talking shop. What does the latest summit tell us about ASEM's condition? What is ASEM currently about and how should it look towards the future?

First, ASEM is about membership and about "being part of the club". Whereas the first summit took place in 1996 with twenty-six participants, the forum has currently grown to a club of fifty-three. Membership expanded to include South Asia in 2006, Russia and Australasia in 2010, and to non-EU European countries in 2012. After the joining of Kazakhstan during the Milan summit, ASEM now also aims to expand into Central Asia. ASEM's inclusive and open approach has arguably turned it into an unwieldy, diffuse and even "bloated" gathering. But at the same time the continuing applications for membership show that there is a demand for the role it can play and the significance it can have.

Second, ASEM is about bilateral meetings. Bilateral contacts between government leaders or between the EU and Asian heads of state constitute an increasingly important element of the summits. ASEM offers economies of scale, allowing states to gain time and save on expenses by setting up a number of bilateral meetings in the sidelines of summits. At the same time it allows small states to meet with larger ones, bridging the gap to the G20 for example, and offers a platform for meetings with states that are normally not on the radar or that are officially seen as "problematic partners". Before, during, and after the Milan summit, the media were mainly focussing on these bilateral meetings. Meetings between European leaders, Russia and (non-ASEM-member) Ukraine caught the spotlight, in addition to the "handshake

and smile” exchanged between Japanese Prime Minister Abe and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang.

Third, ASEM is about people meeting and communicating. At the highest level, the forum allows for an informal exchange of views, experiences, and expertise on any topical and relevant political issue. It is beyond doubt that it can function as a valuable tool to foster closer personal and professional relationships between leaders of states and representatives of regions, promoting dialogue and habits of cooperation. In other words, dialogue itself is the goal of the forum. Importantly, as a process going beyond governments, ASEM can strengthen political legitimacy. One of the positive outcomes of the Milan summit was that it has attempted to draw in parliaments, trade unions, NGOs, the different civil society actors, and youth representatives as closely as possible, so that they are not only complementary to but also actively involved in the process. Summit organizer EU needs to be credited for allowing the different stakeholders to tap into the highest levels, for example by being allowed to feed recommendations into the summit. The AEBF, AEPF, ASEP, and Model ASEM gatherings were all closely tied into the summit.

Fourth, ASEM is about being a “real time observatory” for global power transformations. Here especially the Chair’s Statements offer valuable insights, even if former European External Relations Commissioner Patten once described these documents as pre-cooked and usually over-boiled texts that no-one ever reads. Thus, it is telling that China successfully managed to avoid any mention of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea in the Chair’s Statement of the Milan Summit. Furthermore, no mention was made of the EU’s ambition to participate in the East Asia Summit, nor was there any reference to the EU’s recently published Maritime Security Strategy. This illustrates the limited progress the EU has made in being accepted as a security actor in Asia.

Fifth, ASEM is about intergovernmental contacts. Only some years ago inter-regionalism, as championed by the EU, was hailed as forming a new layer in the system of global governance. Currently however, its importance has dwindled. The EU currently places a much stronger emphasis on bilateral relations, as is obvious in the negotiations for free trade agreements with individual Asian countries. At the institutional level ASEM is still grounded in a region-to-region setup, but it increasingly serves to promote national interests and initiatives.

ASEM's main challenge today is the lack of agreement on the forum's future direction. Is it – enough to be a debating club and a platform for meetings, or should ASEM aim to achieve more tangible outcomes? What is ASEM's main *raison d'être* – dialogue or cooperation? The EU initially saw "Asian-style" informal dialogue as a goal in itself as the most appropriate core principle for ASEM's institutional design, in spite of the self-perception that "Europeans tend to press for tangible results", as a 2001 European Commission document stated. In more recent years however, the idea that ASEM should be more about concrete action programmes in support of the dialogue has been building up momentum, and in Milan the leaders "welcomed more action-oriented cooperation". However, it is less clear how to achieve this.

In 2006 the ASEM summit in Helsinki launched the principle of issue-based leadership, based on "variable geometry" or the idea that different interests and priorities should allow for the shaping of informal functional groups of states that drive forward tangible cooperation through "coalitions". The ensuing summit in Beijing duly compiled a list of groups of countries willing to drive projects in a certain policy area. However, the implementation was flawed, suffering from relatively low commitment, little information-sharing and hardly any follow-up. India, the organizer of the eleventh ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, revived the idea in 2013, renaming it "tangible cooperation". The Milan summit confirmed this list of groups of interested members in sixteen different issue areas. The most promising area is disaster management and mitigation, with the involvement of the EU, India, Russia, China and Japan, amongst others. In general Asian countries seem the most willing to drive forward cooperation, with India involved in eleven out of sixteen projects, and China in six. Major European players are less visible. France expressed interest only in "promotion and protection of human rights", and Germany is altogether absent from the list. Rather surprisingly, the only highly "active" European country is Cyprus, present in ten groups.

It remains to be seen whether this initiative will be more successful in achieving results, but at the very least it reveals that major Asian powers such as China and India are most eager to achieve concrete outcomes. Europe on the other hand seems to be valuing ASEM primarily as a forum for dialogue. In ASEM's early years, the EU had utilized the forum to show its emphasis on dialogue rather than confrontation and sanctions, by adopting an initially German-French strategy of problem-solving behind closed doors. At present the EU is hesitant about taking the forum more towards concrete cooperation.

Overlap with competing institutions, or the fear of countries in the Asian group, including Russia, China and India, “ganging up” on the EU could be behind this hesitation. The fear of institutionalization could be another factor. Unlike Asian countries such as China, the EU is opposed to institutionalization as a means to increase achievement orientation because it would place ASEM closer to other, more formal international organizations, thereby losing its “added-value”. Furthermore, the EU’s emphasis on informal dialogue may not be surprising. First of all, Europe itself is not a unitary actor and is also divided, and we only have to think about the issue of Turkey’s membership in the EU, but also the Turkish application to join ASEM, that reveals very strong dividing lines within Europe. Informality can thus be a way to more easily keep all member states happy, and it could offer the best way to integrate the mixed interests of the different intra-EU levels, namely the European Commission, representing the interests of the Union as a whole, and the Council, embodying the different national interests in Asia.

This different emphasis, with Europe valuing ASEM as a forum for “constructive engagement” and political dialogue to complement its economic agenda, and Asian countries seeking to promote more tangible cooperation, certainly poses a challenge. What is then the way forward for ASEM? First, a better balance needs to be found between high-level informal dialogue and interaction on the one hand, and tangible cooperation leading to visible results on the other. It is beyond doubt that the general perception among policymakers and stakeholders in Asia as well as Europe is that ASEM is a unique forum with a unique format, and that it would have to be created if it did not exist. Because of its emphasis on high-level yet informal dialogue, it fills a niche as a forum in which dialogue is a goal in itself. Dialogue and engagement at different levels, from heads of state to civil society, remain as salient today as they were twenty years ago. The Milan Summit introduced a successful retreat session in order to allow for the discussion of sensitive or contentious regional issues. ASEM as a neutral forum for informal discussion should make more use of formats such as the retreat.

Second, ASEM can contribute to global governance by acting as a political catalyst contributing to other cooperation at other levels. More than ever the challenge is to find added value to other fora (for example the UN), and to outline topics of bi-regional relevance that do not overlap with competing institutions. Here the subsidiarity principle as proposed by Gerald Segal in 1998 to the ASEM context is still valid: “Not all issues are best tackled at an

ASEM level and not all ASEM issues are best tackled by all Asians and all Europeans”. All too often the informal approach has formed a mismatch with lofty proclaimed objectives. Both dialogue and projects should be focused on cooperation areas in which progress can be made. Connectivity is one such area, as it relates economic integration, trade and investment but also has ramifications for sustainable development, think tank and research or educational communities, and political linkages. Issues in the non-traditional security sphere form another field where ASEM can have a comparative advantage.

As a local European policymaker involved in the forum recently phrased it, with the right amount of political will, effort, and resources, ASEM can change from a “nice-to-have” into a “must-have”. Re-focusing the process on both informal dialogue and on working groups for tangible outcomes in selected areas can help achieve that shift.



*Asian Journalists' Perspectives  
on EU-Asia Relations*





# Revitalising ASEM

**Jason Tan**

*Today*

Leaders of the fifty-one member states of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) gathered in the Italian city of Milan for a two-day summit on 16-17 October 2014. It was chaired by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, who said that the summit's theme – “Responsible Partnership for Sustainable Growth and Security” – reflects the growing scope of Asia-Europe ties beyond trade and development. Mr Van Rompuy represented the European Union (EU) alongside European Commission President José Manuel Barroso. In a statement on Oct 10, Mr Barroso stressed the importance of both regions building on their cooperation in different areas.

“As two of the most important stakeholders of the global order we have a shared responsibility to shape a more prosperous, sustainable and fairer world,” he added.

Putting aside the statements by Mr Van Rompuy and Mr Barroso, there is a growing sense that ASEM has become too diverse and that many member countries lack the political will to invest in the process.

How can the leaders and officials revitalise ASEM so that it can better tackle common challenges brought about by new political, economic and social realities?

## **How ASEM Has Grown and Stalled**

ASEM was mooted by former Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1995 as a mechanism to strengthen links and dialogue between Asia and Europe. As Asia-Europe links were relatively weak then, Mr Goh's idea received broad support and ASEM started with twenty-six members at its first summit in Bangkok in 1996. Today, that number has doubled, with Kazakhstan and Croatia becoming the fifty-second and fifty-third member at the Milan Summit. ASEM's expansion, and the fact that there are other countries still pressing for entry, is a mark of the grouping's appeal.

With ASEM countries representing half of the world's GDP, more than 60 per cent of the world's population and around 60 per cent of global trade,

it is easy to understand why Asian and European countries want to be part of the process.

In recent years, the economic ties between Asia and Europe have driven, and have themselves been boosted by, a growing number of agreements, said Vítor Constâncio, vice president of the European Central Bank at an ASEM forum in May 2014.

For instance, the first comprehensive EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with an Asian partner (South Korea) has been in force since 2011. The EU and Singapore also concluded a comprehensive FTA in 2012, making this the first EU agreement with an ASEAN country covering trade and services. FTA negotiations with Japan began in April 2013, while talks on a comprehensive investment agreement with China started in January 2014.

“The stronger links between Asia and Europe...have deepened the interdependency of the two areas,” he said.

The figures support this. Total EU trade with Asia reached EUR1.25 trillion in 2013. This was almost double the value a decade ago and represented over one-third of total EU trade. The EU was the top trading partner for Asia, accounting for over 28 per cent of Asian trade last year.

Beyond economic relations, the two regions have used the ASEM framework to engage each other on many common challenges. According to the official EU website on ASEM, dialogue topics include finance, trade, culture, education, human rights, disaster preparedness, transport, immigration, climate change, piracy at sea, information technology, food security, development, employment, energy security and global governance.

One value of ASEM is therefore in facilitating bilateral contacts between the leaders and officials of Asia and Europe.

## **Moving Ahead**

Does this mean that everything in ASEM is fine? Of course not. After eighteen years of existence, ASEM is still often criticised as a talk-shop with no concrete actions. Tellingly, few people in member countries know about ASEM’s work, which is perhaps a reflection of its lack of substance and relevance. Officials acknowledge that ASEM meetings have become more formal and rigid, with leaders, ministers and senior officials reading out prepared statements.

Dr Yeo Lay Hwee, the director of the EU Centre in Singapore, noted in an excellent 2013 paper that although ASEM members have discussed the issues of visibility, working method, and coordination, there was no genuine

desire to address these issues resolutely due to “diversities in membership and the inability to reconcile the diverging interests”.

More critically, she rightly noted that the real reasons for the inertia in ASEM are the lack of political interest and unwillingness to invest in the process. This is due to the belief by some countries that with the proliferation of other multilateral cooperation mechanisms, the need for ASEM is no longer as compulsive as it was in 1996.

Fortunately, from my conversations with some EU and Asian officials, it seems that some EU and Asian leaders understand the importance of ASEM. They want ASEM to thrive but they cannot drive the process alone. All fifty-three members have to play their part.

So how can ASEM renew and rejuvenate itself?

First, focus on a few substantive topics and key concerns that let members that are willing to do more take charge of them and develop their own networks and cluster of member states. ASEM can transform into an overarching architecture with a network of groupings centred on different issues. This could go some way towards addressing ASEM’s low-visibility issue.

Next, change the meeting formats so office-holders and officials can have more interactive dialogue and exchanges. This will add substance to the discussions. The move to hold a leaders’ retreat – without media, without recording and without direct translation – at the Milan summit is a good start, but more can be done.

At a deeper level, ASEM members need to do some soul-searching in charting the grouping’s future. If not, as Dr Yeo noted, ASEM would likely continue in its existing form, “remaining broad, informal and shallow”, co-existing with other different strands of EU-Asia relations, “with overlap and redundancy and no clear value-add in terms of actual problem-solving”.



# Enhancing the ASEAN-EU Partnership

**T Selva**

*The Star*

All eyes are on Southeast Asian nations as they emerge as the future economic engine that will energise the world.

Although the European Union (EU) and Asia share a long history of multilateral and bilateral relations, cooperation between the two regions is still seen as being in an infancy stage.

There is an urgent need to further improve the ties so as to iron out differences and challenges the two continents face.

Issues related to human rights, rule of law, trade agreements and environment are thorny matters to Southeast nations because they have their own historical reasons for not adopting the EU's approach immediately. However, the countries are open to making adjustments to their domestic reforms as they race to become developed nations.

The ten member countries of ASEAN make up a vibrant population of 500 million, making the region the third largest external trading partner of the EU.

China and India appear to be the most appealing partners for the EU owing to their sheer size and their lion's share of the world's population.

## **The Frequently Asked Question is: Can the East blend with the West?**

Some scholars view the effort with optimism while there are several who describe the initiative as being like trying to "mix oil and water", which do not merge. This could be attributed to areas like cultural, geographical and old trading methods that these nations have been practising for decades.

The EU cannot pressure ASEAN to accept its free trade agreement approach; it can only coax the nations slowly to see the win-win benefits for both continents globally.

Some experts feel that the EU has failed to fulfil its potential for cooperation with Southeast Asian nations, highlighting that they should streamline its approach, and not constant wave the democracy card as this puts at risk inter-regional relation.

Cooperation has been hindered whenever the EU tried to play the human rights and democracy card because the ASEAN member states consider this an unacceptable intervention in their domestic affairs.

This is evident in the slow progress in EU-ASEAN free trade agreements negotiations compared to the success that the EU has achieved with other major Asian partners like India and China.

The European Commission trade report revealed that the final negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement between Singapore and the EU were completed in December 2012, with the initialling of the agreements taking place on 20 September 2013.

The EU's negotiations on Free Trade Agreements with Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand are still in progress.

The EU remains open to starting negotiations with other partners in the region and hopes one day to complete these agreements with a region-to-region trade agreement.

## **So Why is the Free Trade Agreement Vital for Future Global Economic Growth?**

ASEAN as a whole represents the EU's third largest trading partner outside Europe (after the US and China) with more than €235 billion of trade in goods and services in 2012.

The EU is ASEAN's third largest trading partner after China and Japan, accounting for around 13% of ASEAN trade. The EU is ASEAN's largest source of foreign direct investment.

The EU is by far the largest investor in ASEAN countries. EU companies have invested an average of €13.6 billion annually in the region (2005-2012).

The EU's main exports to ASEAN are chemical products, machinery and transport equipment. The main imports from ASEAN to the EU are machinery and transport equipment, agricultural products as well as textiles and clothing.

## **Can ASEAN and EU be Natural Partners?**

Yes, because the two major regional integrations share the same goals for their citizens and these are peace, stability and prosperity.

Both are committed to addressing issues with a multilateral approach and the EU and ASEAN believe they share the same DNA.

The most visible result of the ties over the three decades of bonding is bringing peace to the regions despite the difficult trade and economic periods.

For this collaboration to flourish further, more understanding needs to be cultivated via regional forums and dialogues between leaders and policy makers of the two groups.

Beside the numerous diplomatic agreements, regional ties and charters that have been made in the past, there is a need to improve human relations, focusing on the importance of values, norms and culture.

The EU and ASEAN can learn a lot from each other by interconnecting European and ASEAN citizens through travel.

The establishment of air traffic agreements is a positive move towards this direction as air traffic between EU and ASEAN has been growing in recent years and nearly doubled over the last 15 years to reach more than 10 million passengers in 2012.

With a combined population of 1.1 billion, EU-ASEAN air transport is projected to grow 5% annually over the next 20 years.

ASEAN's move to establish a single aviation market in 2015 should be lauded because this will help create a safe, secure and sustainable single aviation market in ASEAN, thus helping the region to become a regional transport hub.

The EU's action to support the harmonization of recognition systems between ASEAN universities is another positive move to bring students closer.

The missing link in the current relationship appears to be the human connection, which requires greater attention and warmth. This is because uniting people together can help expedite EU and ASEAN integration and allow the nations to emerge with one voice in the near future.

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# A Common Future

**Usha Mahadevan**

*The Statesman*

*Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.*

This line from Rudyard Kipling's famous poem published in 1889 is often cited to highlight the so-called irreconcilable differences between the Orient and the Occident. However, the selective use of this line goes against the tenor of what Kipling himself went on to express in the poem: "*But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!*"

Ties between Asia and Europe date back several centuries. The Silk Road referred not only to the trade in silk with China but also to the economic and cultural interaction between West and East as traders, merchants, mendicants and scholars undertook arduous journeys from Europe to explore the undiscovered dimensions of Asia.

The dialogue that began then has continued till now and acquired new depth and meaning as it covers grave issues such as climate change, maritime security, migration, human trafficking and food security, all common challenges for the two continents.

They call this the Asian Century and not without reason. The Asian population is burgeoning; most Asian countries have healthy if not booming economies and they are rich in resources and manpower. That Europe wants to play a part in this potential success story is only natural given the age-old links between the two continents. European engagement in Asia has been long-standing and constructive, albeit accompanied by the bitter pill of a colonial history.

The European and Asian economies are inter-dependent and both regions will only benefit from increased ties. As Herman Von Rompuy, president of the European Council, said at the "Asia and Europe Working Together" conference in September 2014: "I am convinced, more than ever, that the welfare and future of Europe requires the stability and economic dynamism of Asian societies".

Likewise, Asian countries can learn a lot from the EU model of European integration, adapting it to fit their needs. Connectivity is the buzzword in the

EU-Asia partnership and it applies to movements of goods, capital, services and people – the New Silk Road as it were.

The syncretism between the two regions and the common challenges they face were highlighted at a workshop for Asian journalists titled “The European Union and its Relations with Asia” held in Strasbourg, France, and Brussels, Belgium from 14 to 19 September 2014. The workshop was part of the EU-Asia Dialogue project implemented by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in collaboration with East Asian Institute, Singapore, European Policy Centre and EU Centre in Singapore.

The journey from picturesque Strasbourg, seat of the European Parliament and institutions such as the Council of Europe with its European Court of Human Rights, to elegant Brussels, capital of the European Union and host of major political institutions of the EU, took only a few hours. For the participants in the workshop, however, it was a trip of a lifetime, exposed as they were to a plethora of ideas, opinions and challenges. From human rights to human trafficking; maritime security to food security; migration to integration, the common thread running through Asia and Europe was astonishing given the cultural, climatic and geographical differences between the two.

The common future that Asia and Europe envisage through a constructive partnership and exchange of best practices is possible only when several challenges are overcome. These include the omnipresent threat of climate change and global warming; the problem of human trafficking; the menace of maritime piracy and the necessity to ensure food security for all citizens. Added to this is the very real danger of terrorism that is posing such a threat to the entire world.

Europe’s post-war emphasis on human rights and humanitarian values offers many important lessons to Asian nations, themselves the victims of oppression and subjugation. The EU policy on rehabilitation of refugees and immigrants suggests valuable insights to Asia.

The future depends on sustainable growth and after years of profligacy both Europe and Asia have woken up to the need for developing such a model, identifying problems and taking preventive measures when possible.

For Europe the emergence of Asia as a major force is an indisputable reality and harmonising its relations with this dynamic region is one of the major challenges facing the EU. One way of doing this is deepening the trade

engagement. A free trade agreement with South Korea has been inked and negotiations are ongoing with several other Southeast Asian countries.

Asia is a strange mix. It has some of the world's most industrialised nations and booming economies but is also home to some of the poorest countries. In fact, Asia reportedly houses two-thirds of the world's poor. It is also prone to natural and man-made disasters. Regular exchanges on disaster risk reduction have been taking place between representatives of the two regions to mitigate the destruction and loss of life.

The areas of climate change and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set for 2015 also require such a common approach. Development aid from Europe has been a great facilitator for Asian countries.

Regular and wide-ranging dialogue takes place between Europe and Asia and one important process of this cooperation is the Asia- Europe meeting (ASEM) that came into being in 1996. It brings together twenty-eight European Union member states, two other European countries, and the European Union with twenty-one Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. Political, economic and cultural issues are discussed to strengthen the relationship between the two regions in a spirit of true partnership and mutual respect.

Detractors accuse ASEM of being too amorphous a grouping with no fixed agenda. But democracy by definition means a variety of divergent views and voices. It is a synonym for pluralism, equity and justice. And this is the common agenda that binds Europe and Asia, leading them ahead on a path of progress and prosperity in the years to come.



# Making Europe's Presence in Asia and Thailand More Visible

**Thepchai Yong**

*The Nation*

When the European Union (EU) announced it was downgrading its relations with Thailand to show its opposition to the military coup d'état in late-May 2014, reactions from many Thais were swift and harsh. The social media were swamped with nationalistic opprobrium, with some calling for a tit for tat response while others went as far as saying Thailand should shrug off any diplomatic pressure as it could easily live in isolation. A noted academic even urged the military junta not to kowtow to the EU, which he said was itself already becoming irrelevant because of the persistent financial crisis it was in.

If anything, this particular episode illustrates one thing. That is: despite years of engagement between Thailand and the EU, Thais in general still have little understanding of the partnership that exists between them. The same is probably true with most other Asian countries where the role of the EU is often under-publicized and only makes headlines when there are disputes.

For Thailand, it is unfortunate that the sudden turn in its relations with EU has come at a time when the EU is making vigorous attempts to enhance its ties with Asia. There are several reasons why pursuing stronger engagement with Asia is high on the agenda of the Europeans. Despite distractions brought about by its financial mess, the crisis in Ukraine, the civil war in Syria and the escalating threat of the Muslim extremist group ISIS, European officials insist that the EU has not departed from its endeavours to forge closer ties in a wide range of areas with the Asian region.

In his recent speech, President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy said European and Asian economies are as interdependent as ever and that their interdependency goes beyond economic ties. While critics continue to call for a clearer and more coherent strategic direction in its engagement with Asia, there seems to be a general agreement among many analysts that much progress has been made since 2012, which EU policy-makers described as a "pivotal" year. It saw an unprecedented series of high-level meetings and visits that culminated in the 9th Asia-Europe summit in Vientiane, Laos.

European officials have emphasized that European engagement with Asia spans beyond traditional security and economic dimensions. ASEAN is now EU's third largest trading partner and the action plan the two groupings adopted in 2012 has paved the way for more comprehensive cooperation that incorporates people-to-people dimensions to cover areas like food security, human rights, disaster prevention, energy security, human and drug trafficking and urbanization.

The EU has also engaged in a number of mediation activities in the Asian region. It played an important role in the Aceh peace mediation process, which eventually led to the signing of the peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, ending years of bloodshed that had caused the loss of thousands of lives. The EU's sanctions against the Myanmar military government, though at times a source of conflict with ASEAN, are also credited with forcing its military leaders to embark on the democratization process.

At the height of the recent political crisis in Thailand, some of the EU member countries are known to have tried to initiate a dialogue between the conflicting parties, though the efforts in the end did not produce a breakthrough. It took a military intervention to put a stop to the escalating political strife.

These interactions between the EU and its Asian partners, while reflecting the comprehensive nature of Asian-European engagement, are mostly of a low-profile nature and do not always get publicized. "We do a lot but may not be good at doing publicity," one EU official in Brussels said and suggested that the EU may need to improve on its public diplomacy. That could partly help explain why the role of Europe in this region is often publicly underestimated.

The US "pivot" to Asia could be one of the reasons that prompted European policy-makers to strengthen its presence in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years. Many Asian nations see the EU as a "balancing element" in the face of rising tensions stemming from territorial disputes between China and its neighbours. Without a military presence in this region and with no perceived geo-political ambitions, the EU is seen as being in a position to play the role of an honest broker.

While admitting that there are limits to what the Europeans can do given China's strong opposition to what it sees as outside interference, EU officials maintained that the EU seeks to have a comprehensive relationship with China, which is on its way to becoming its biggest trading partner. The EU

shares ASEAN's desire to see China becoming a strong and responsible "soft power".

The EU's decision to appoint a special ambassador accredited to ASEAN just a few weeks before the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting in Milan, Italy in mid-October 2014 is seen as another strong signal of its growing engagement with ASEAN and recognition of its centrality. It comes amidst efforts by both sides to upgrade their existing partnership to a strategic one. The EU is already an active participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum and has been supporting ASEAN integration.

For Thailand, under the present political circumstances, this may not be the ideal time to make the best use of this partnership. But this does not mean that all doors are closed. Though the EU has downgraded its partnership with Thailand and put all cooperation under review, its diplomats in Bangkok made it clear that their engagement with the Prayut government would continue.

"We will continue to engage with Thailand. We are friends of Thailand and we want to see Thailand return to democracy so that we can resume our full partnership," said one diplomat recently.

It is understandable why many Thais were so agitated by the EU's strong stand against the military power seizure. They see the military intervention as something necessary to get the country out of the political deadlock. But they also need to understand that given the long history of the EU's relationship with Thailand its condemnation of the military intervention should not be seen as an act of hostility.

As EU diplomats and officials both in Bangkok and Brussels have pointed out, the European grouping highly values its relationship with Thailand and has no intention to isolate or penalize the country as many had feared. While high-level contacts have been suspended, engagements between Thailand and individual EU countries at working levels still continue.

Nationalistic emotions aside, a closer look at the EU's statement issued in the aftermath of the coup should well reveal whether Thais should see the grouping as a friend or foe. It essentially called on the Thai military to restore "as a matter of urgency, the legitimate democratic process and the constitution, through credible and inclusive elections". After all, isn't this what most democratic-minded Thais want to see happen?





# Greater Space for China-EU Partnership in Changing Regional and World Situations

**Wu Yixue**

*China Daily*

The China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, which was set up in 2003 and has laid a solid foundation for the prospering development of bilateral ties in the past decade, will usher in a brighter decade if both sides continue to view each other as a key partner on international and regional affairs and the EU refrains from offending China on issues related to the latter's core interests.

During a trip to Europe in March 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping and European leaders agreed to upgrade bilateral relations, fully implement the "China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation" and build the partnership for peace, growth, reform and civilization, charting the course for the future development of China-EU ties.

Compared with other major world players like the United States and Japan, the EU has no or less direct historical feuds or territorial disputes with China. Such a fact determines that China has no reason not to cherish its ties with the twenty-eight-member bloc, which has the world's largest aggregate economy and enjoys strong scientific and technological strength. Despite its struggling efforts to break away from the aftermath of the global financial crisis and its sovereign debt crisis, the EU that is committed to accelerating structural reforms and pressing ahead with its economic, fiscal, financial and political integration is still an important global strategic player and a key factor to catalyze the change of the international system.

The EU also cannot afford to ignore or underestimate the role of China, a fast-growing economy that has experienced a continuous rise in its comprehensive national strength and international influences. The EU has remained China's largest trading partner for ten consecutive years while China is the EU's second largest trading partner, only behind the US. Both sides cannot afford to have their bilateral ties soured. Instead, they have to work harder for closer ties if they want to pursue better self-development. China's enormous

market and the EU's strong technologies and management expertise offer a broad space for bilateral economic complementariness and cooperation.

The profound changes the world, China and the EU are now undergoing have brought increased uncertainties and challenges to the peace and development of the world, and China and the EU themselves. As a key representative of emerging nations and a bloc of developed countries respectively, closer policy cooperation and coordination between China and the EU on a series of global issues and threats such as the international financial crisis, the reform of the established global governance mechanism as well as the escalating regional contradictions and conflicts will contribute more to world and regional peace, development and cooperation.

In contrast with ties with other major players, the relationship between China and the EU is not plagued by fundamental interest conflicts and both sides are now in their crucial stages of reform and development. This means that China and the EU should and also can accumulate mutual trust and strengthen cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit and try to resolve emerging disputes through dialogue and consultation, such as disputes on trade, human rights and minor issues irrelevant to their core national interests, so as to further advance their comprehensive strategic partnership.

China regards the EU as a key partner in its efforts to pursue a peaceful development path and promote the world's multi-polarization and thus, to develop a stable and long-term healthy relationship with the EU remains one of its top policy priorities. To pursue a good relationship with China is also viewed by the EU as one of the cores of its diplomatic relations, but whether or not both sides can enjoy a smooth relationship in the future is most of the time decided by the EU rather than China. In other words, it is the EU's future policies, not China's, that will decide whether the path to closer bilateral ties is even or uneven.

Besides trade disputes and frictions that have occasionally occurred in recent years, human rights and Tibet issues have proven to be the ones that could possibly deviate the China-EU relations from the normal development track.

For better dealings with China, the EU should remove its prejudiced ideological mindset against China and realize that there is no unified and innate political and social system in the world that is suitable for all countries. The EU should accept the fact that it is a country's own people, not a

self-proclaimed judge from the outside, that possess the largest voice in deciding whether the country's political and social establishments are good or not.

Western countries, including the EU and its members, should also realize that they have to make greater efforts to repair the damaged ties with China caused by their improper policies and stances toward the Dalai Lama. The Tibet independence-minded Dalai Lama is not a pure religious figure as he trumpets, and thus the Chinese government remains particularly sensitive to any of his so-called religious activities in foreign countries. The West, including the EU, should fully realize the sensitivity of this issue, given that it is an issue relevant to China's determination to prevent Tibet's separation from its territory. The EU holds no any stake on the Dalai Lama issue, and thus should try to prevent itself from being utilized by some with "ulterior purposes" and dragged into the "muddy water".

The ASEM has proven to be an effective platform for leaders of Asian and European countries to hold talks and consultations on significant world and regional issues and promote better Asia-Europe ties. However, given the continuous territorial disputes between China and some neighbouring countries, all countries should work hard to prevent this platform from being turned into a venue dominated by certain countries' attempts to resolve their disputes with China.

Calls are now mounting among some Asian countries for a broader EU presence in Asian affairs, especially on security issues. China welcomes the more extensive involvement of the EU in closer cooperation with Asian countries on economic, social and cultural fronts, but it is China's stance that any outside players should refrain from any redundant or unnecessary involvement in the complicated and tangled security disputes among Asian nations themselves.



# Too Inclined to China? – A View of a Japanese Journalist

**Norihide Miyoshi**

*The Yomiuri Shimbun*

A senior official of the European External Action Service (EEAS) stressed the growing significance of Asia for Europe, saying, “What we have to assume is that the history of the 21st century is in Asia”. And he added, “These developments come in the context of strong economic growth: 80% of global growth since 2000 was in Asia.” In the “The European Union and Its Relations with Asia” workshop, it was frequently stressed by lecturers how important relations with Asian countries are for Europe today.

Actually, the growing interest in Asia is attributable to the close, mainly economic, relations, particularly the expanding trade and investment with the People’s Republic of China. China is already the second largest trading partner for the EU next to the United States, accounting for 12.5% of the EU’s total trade. Therefore it is quite natural that the interest of the EU nowadays is almost exclusively focused on China.

Although China’s economic prosperity is beneficial to its neighbouring countries, including Japan, most Asian nations regard the situation to a large extent differently from the European nations. This is due to the fact that the economic development of China has proceeded in parallel with its military build-up. Unofficial estimates show that China’s total military spending has grown eight times bigger over the past twenty years, with China’s military budget the second largest in the world behind the US. Under the circumstances, it is also natural that Japan’s security concerns over China’s military expansion, especially the maritime expansion in the East and South China Seas, have been growing.

How are Europeans going to respond not only to the build-up of China’s economy but also its military? Some Japanese are now worried that Europe is too conciliatory toward the expansionist policies of China and would eventually yield to the hegemony of China in Asia.

In the workshop, I asked the deputy director of a Brussels-based think tank directly about this point. To my question, he replied that Europeans are not indifferent to the security situation in Asia. However, the Europe of

today has two conditions that differ from those of the United States'. First, Europeans have no aspiration for global power in the classical sense. And second, Europeans rely on soft power, which refers to a global order, to business and to values, such as the rule of law and democracy.

Europeans do not see their role in countering Chinese hegemony through military means. The hard power should be provided by the US and its allies, including Japan, in the region. The EU, the US, Japan and other worried neighbours of China do not have to all act alike in responding to Chinese hegemony. What is needed is a smart division of labour.

I understand and agree with his idea. Still, I am worried that Europeans would be inclined to give in to China in the event there are contingencies among Asian nations in the East or South China Seas. So far, the EU has been maintaining a neutral position concerning the territorial disputes while stressing the importance for each party to abide by international law. It is difficult to predict what the EU will do should any conflicts actually occur.

I know that there is a view among Europeans that nationalism in Japan is one of the main causes of the unstable situation in Northeast Asia. But to my understanding, this is a somewhat biased view. There is a great difference between nationalism in Japan and militarism or chauvinism. Democracy and freedom in Japan are sufficiently robust to prevail against some extreme tendencies in Japan. The Japanese government has kept a low-profile foreign policy and today, it is willing to play a more constructive role in the international arena. I hope that Europeans consider the opinions of each party and attain a balanced view about the situation in Asia.

# Prospects Dim for Multilateral Security Cooperation in Asia

**Song Sang-ho**

*The Korea Herald*

European peace through dialogue, confidence-building and multilateral institutions has long been a source of envy for East Asia, which suffers from territorial and historical feuds that have escalated with a rise in nationalism.

After two devastating wars, European nations shared a need to reconcile and pursue durable peace. Its drive for stability was so strong that Europe was able to build a series of cooperative mechanisms, including the Helsinki process, which helped build multilateral trust and eventually end the Cold War.

East Asian countries have also explored the possibility of fostering multilateralism for regional security, while searching for lessons from European integration and cooperation in the security and political realms.

But there are doubts as to whether Europe's formula for peace can be applied to Asia. Instead *realpolitik* appears to be taking hold amid growing uncertainties in the security landscape, which is being reshaped by the rise of China and a relative decline of US power.

Can East Asia create a multilateral security platform that is modelled after what Europe has achieved? Is it possible to bring all countries in the region together for the common goal of peace when the dynamics of power are shifting?

It is quite difficult to positively respond to these questions, as there does not seem to be enough enthusiasm for regional multilateralism: Historical antagonism between South Korea and Japan has deepened, while China has engaged in a risky territorial quarrel with Japan and a series of maritime disputes with Southeast Asian states. What's worse, growing nationalism in each country is limiting options for practical-minded policymakers.

To ease regional tensions and steer Asia in the direction of reconciliation and cooperation, South Korean President Park Geun-hye has pushed for the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation initiative—an Asian version of the Helsinki process that forged critical momentum to entrench peace in a divided Europe during the Cold War.



Park's initiative seeks to build trust first in soft, non-political areas such as climate change, anti-terrorism measures and nuclear energy, and then through tougher "high-politics" issues such as security, and ultimately to forge multilateral confidence for peace.

She has promoted the initiative as a means to address what she calls the "Asia paradox", an escalation in territorial and historical disputes in contrast to the region's deepening economic cooperation. Her initiative, however, has made little progress as regional tensions have continued with no signs of abating.

One of the region's major challenges to security and political cooperation is the intensifying competition between the US and China for regional dominance.

Based on its increasing economic and military might, China has been increasingly assertive in regional and global affairs. Amid its continuing rise as a global power, it has been more aggressive in securing its interests beyond its shores and begun more intense maritime rows with its neighbours in the South China Sea.

The US sees China's aggressive behaviour as a dangerous move to challenge the "rule-based" regional order, which has been fostered since the end of World War II. The US appears particularly concerned about the possibility of China attempting to break the status quo and block what it bills as the global commons, such as freedom of maritime navigation.

China has already revealed its determination to alter the regional security and financial order. Beijing has recently sought to build a new regional security architecture and set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, both of which are expected to exclude the participation of the US and other Western powers. These moves appear aimed at laying the foundation for China's regional dominance, some observers say.

To counter these moves, the US has been pushing for a "rebalancing policy" to strengthen its diplomatic and military engagement in the Asia-Pacific. Through the policy, the US seeks to strengthen its network of bilateral alliances with South Korea, Japan and Australia, and security partnerships with other countries. China sees the policy as an attempt to militarily encircle it—or contain it—and counter its rise.

It may be too pessimistic to assume that East Asia can only be a region of intense security rivalries and territorial conflicts. Deepening economic inter-

dependence, tourism, and cultural and academic exchanges have engendered much optimism about the future of cooperation in the region.

A set of multilateral forums and institutions such as the East Asia Summit, the South Korea-China-Japan cooperation secretariat and the ASEAN Regional Forum could serve as a basis for regional confidence-building and cooperation on an array of transnational issues.

But given that the US has strengthened its bilateral alliances with South Korea and Japan over more than six decades, and the deep-seated distrust among many nations in the region, achieving deeper-level security cooperation appears a Herculean task.

As John Mearsheimer, a leading international relations theorist, wrote in the new edition of *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, there is also scepticism over the liberalist argument that economic interdependence will play a crucial role in promoting peace.

“At the most basic level, political calculations often trump economic ones when they come into conflict. This is certainly true regarding matters of national security because concerns about survival are invariably at stake in the security realm,” he said. He added that politics also tends to win out over concerns about prosperity when nationalism affects the issue at stake.

Despite all these negative security projections for both the short- and long-terms, Europe could play a role in helping form a robust basis for multilateral cooperation as it is seen as being relatively impartial in Asian affairs, having no territorial ambitions and posing no security threat given its geographical distance.

Europe could share its long-accumulated know-how to enhance trust and address conflicting interests among East Asian nations, even though there might be limits to trust-building as long as territorial and historical disputes continue unabated.

Europe’s evolving approach for regional cooperation might not work wonders in resolving tensions in Asia considering the increasing presence of realpolitik and nationalism in East Asian politics. But the region could consider adopting some features of the European peace-promotion endeavours to help improve the overall security environment.



# EU Role in Asia Amid the Roiling Sea Disputes

**TJ Burgonio**

*Philippine Daily Inquirer*

When Asian journalists met with some members of the European Parliament (MEPs) one nippy evening in Strasbourg, France in mid-September 2014 as part of a workshop on the EU-Asia Dialogue, talk inevitably led to the question: How does the European Union engage an increasingly assertive China in Asia? The MEPs were stumped, admitting it was a tough question. But then they suggested that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations would play a crucial role in bringing China into multilateral negotiations to defuse the tension in the region.

It is quite understandable if they were not prepared to answer the question that night. They had far more pressing issues in mind, not least the Ukrainian crisis. The next day, they voted to approve the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine, strengthening political and economic ties between them.

On several occasions, over the last few years, the EU has been criticized of being too engrossed in its own domestic problems to notice the territorial disputes roiling the South China and East China Seas, with emerging economic and military power China at the centre of it, disputes that threaten global maritime stability and prompted the United States' pivot to Asia-Pacific.

The criticism may be too harsh.

The EU could not afford to steer clear of the maritime row. Brussels has a stake in maritime security in the South China Sea, an international waterway where a majority of its trade transits. Besides, its trade with Southeast Asia or East Asia (EU is negotiating free trade and investment agreements with some countries), as well as with China has been growing over the years. Asia is the EU's biggest trading partner. China is one of the EU's strategic partners in Asia. Both continents are economically interdependent.

And in trading with China, the EU has been forthcoming about the principles it values most: rule of law, respect for human rights, democracy and good governance.

“So when we enter into investment agreements with China, this needs implementation on the ground,” a senior official of the European External

Action Service (EEAS), told the journalists. A case of the EU exercising its soft power, he said.

Of course, application of the international law of the sea in the South China and East China Seas is a given, he agreed.

Even before the tension in the South China Sea boiled over this year, with China's deployment of an oil rig in waters within Vietnam's exclusive economic zone, the EU has been pressing ASEAN and other states such as China to find peaceful solutions to the maritime row, including agreeing on a Code of Conduct (COC). It is a call that resonates well with small states that have always tried to play by the rules to deal with their increasingly aggressive neighbour. (The Philippines, for instance, has filed a memorandum with the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea to question China's claim on 90 percent of the 1.35-million square mile sea.) The trouble is, China has always balked at this, arguing that the time was not ripe yet.

In a speech in September 2014, a month ahead of the Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM) in Milan, Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, echoed the call: while EU has no views on the sovereignty issues, it maintains that international law, the UN Charter, and the Treaty of Amity in Southeast Asia should be the basis for finding a peaceful solution.

Beyond rhetoric, the EU has waded into the increasingly turbulent waters by engaging Asia and the other players in the dispute in political and economic dialogues such as ASEM, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), among a plethora of forums.

To dispel criticism that it is a mere "talk shop", 2014's ASEM summit, adopting the theme of security, sought to foster no-holds barred discussions between stakeholders in the dispute during the "informal" retreat session, away from the glare of TV cameras. "Can you really criticize a dialogue process for providing a platform for meetings, for discussions?" Van Rompuy asked.

The bloc works quietly, and has not been the type to trumpet its gains. But playing a more active role in such dialogues is reassuring to Asia, which has been increasingly looking toward Europe to help calm the waters, given that the US-centred security architecture in the region risks being altered by an emerging power like China.

We must stress, though, that the EU should make its presence felt more in the region, and consistently push the envelope on the resolution of the disputes. Criticism of EU's low attendance at ASEM summits and EU-ASEAN

ministerial meetings, especially if they are held in Asia, has been common. We agree with international analysts that the European bloc has to be more politically engaged in Asia if it wants to play the role of a unifier, and effectively deliver the message of multilateralism.

But as the MEPs and maritime security experts pointed out, ASEAN plays a central role in peacefully ending the maritime row. And given its internal cracks, it should muster solidarity among all members to craft the CoC, and provide the multilateral platform for talks with China.

“The finalization of this Code of Conduct will be extremely helpful in defusing tension, and in addressing this issue in a multilateral, rules-based system. ASEAN has a role to play. We’re happy to record our position on that. International law is the way ahead,” said another senior official of the EEAS.

Unless ASEAN can fix the cracks, China would keep its tack of negotiating with individual claimant country, as it is doing now, weakening the regional bloc itself.

The EU is keeping tabs on developments in the region.

Brussels, for instance, is watching with keen interest how the US proposal to turn the East Asia Summit into a security forum among heads of states to defuse tension in the region will play out. “We’re ready to participate,” said an EU official.



# Tackling Human Trafficking is a Vital Step for ASEAN

**Nilanjana Sengupta**

*The Straits Times*

The ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is drafting a legally binding convention to combat human trafficking. The move, which is expected to conclude by the end of 2014 and adopted in 2015, will be a landmark one, according to the regional grouping.

As it will include a recommended plan of action – the Regional Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons – the convention is most likely to be put into force immediately after adoption.

“So we don’t have to go back to the drawing board to discuss how to implement the convention. Implementation activities have already been thought of and planned,” an ASEAN official said at a question-and-answer session that followed an EU-Asia panel discussion on human trafficking last month in Brussels.

ASEAN comprises Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Brunei, Laos and the Philippines.

As seen in the case of human trafficking agreements developed by other regional groupings such as the European Union anti-trafficking directive and the Council of Europe (COE) Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, such coming together of countries adds to much-needed research and global action plan to combat human trafficking, a crime that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) says has made victims of at least 20.9 million people worldwide as of 2012.

Of these, Asia Pacific accounted for the largest share – more than half or 11.9 million people, the 2012 figures say.

Putting legal instruments in place at regional level also reinforces action at world level, the COE’s explanatory report says of its convention, which came into force in 2008.

“Even though there are already other international instruments in this field, the Convention benefits from the more limited and uniform context of the Council of Europe, contains more precise provisions and may go beyond



minimum standards agreed upon in other international instruments,” the report says.

The ASEAN Convention on Trafficking In Persons, or ACTIP, will also bring into sharper focus the problem in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, which covers ASEAN member states Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, as well as parts of China.

The region is where “some of the most extensive flows of migration and human trafficking” take place, according to the United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT).

Adopting the convention would therefore be both a breakthrough and a vital step for ASEAN, especially given the wide range of political structures within the bloc and member states’ various positions as origin, transit or destination countries for trafficking.

But how ACTIP will be implemented matters a lot, observers say.

“Judgment of ASEAN’s effort will come from what is in the convention, what commitments are made to ensure that it is binding, and how it is actually implemented,” said Mr Phil Robertson, the deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch.

At the panel discussion in Brussels, a member of the audience wanted to know how ASEAN member states would carry out the plan of action. This was because, he said, “implementation” was a catchword for ASEAN, which has so far had instruments on human rights but no legally binding convention on the trafficking of human beings.

The ASEAN official acknowledged that there were challenges, due to differences in legal systems and national laws on trafficking in persons (TIP), especially in the interpretation of TIP by member states. But she added that ASEAN hopes these will be addressed by the adoption of the convention, which requires the harmonisation of national laws.

The convention, she said, would be the first-ever legally binding regional instrument for ASEAN and signified the strong will of the member states to bring about a regional framework to provide assistance to victims, strengthen cross border investigation and prosecution, and bring perpetrators to justice.

Dr Alistair Cook, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies’ Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, said the convention would help ASEAN to further define what constitutes a human trafficking crime and make the legal framework more specific. “Many

ASEAN member states have already brought into force anti-human trafficking legislation at the national level but there has been limited effect.”

These laws drew on the United Nation’s Palermo Protocol, which was adopted in 2000 to address human trafficking, he explained. “However, many states across the world, and not just in this region, have failed to adequately define, beyond a general definition, in law what a particular country believes is human trafficking and as a result it is difficult to enforce and prosecute human traffickers under that law.”

“ASEAN member states through drafting a convention on human trafficking can further define what constitutes a human trafficking crime and also outline how member states can cooperate effectively when trafficking cases stretch across different jurisdictions,” he said. There can be greater cooperation between police forces, judiciaries, health and employment ministries and non-governmental organisations, he added.

Partnership and collaboration among countries and regional groups is also important for eradicating this scourge that spans borders and nationalities.

The European Union and ASEAN have been looking at and consulting on human trafficking issues through partnership instruments such as the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017) and the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI).

But, along with the existing legislations and actions by states, active involvement and participation by non-governmental organisations, and partnership among regional blocs, there is also a need to generate more publicity about the fight against human trafficking.

EU countries have been marking October 18 as Anti-Trafficking Day since 2007 to create awareness about human trafficking and to encourage the public to join the fight by reporting crimes and being responsible consumers by not purchasing goods made by forced labour.

Perhaps, along with a successful conclusion of the ACTIP, ASEAN could also announce its own anti-trafficking day, which will surely go far in raising and widening public awareness of the global problem in this part of the world.



# A Fate Worse Than Death

**Do Thi Mai Hien**

*Viet Nam News*

Vang Thi D, a 17-year-old schoolgirl, fell in love with a man named Tu that she had met on Facebook.

He was handsome, dressed well and had a big motorbike.

Tu invited D and her friend T (16 years old) to go on a trip to Lao Cai Province in Viet Nam's northern highlands. There, the two girls were raped and later sold across the border to China, where men assigned to guard them and look for buyers also raped them repeatedly.

With the help of a sim card hidden in her belly, D managed to inform her family that she had been trafficked to China. Her family informed the local police. Five days later, both girls were rescued after they jumped off the third floor of the building in which they were held captive.

Among the news stories that haunt me long after I read them are those involving human trafficking, because I know that for every person saved there are many more that are not, and are condemned to a life of bonded labour and slavery.

Even after being rescued, the victims' struggles continue, because of the physical and psychological trauma they have suffered, and because re-integration is never easy into a society ridden with all kinds of prejudices and beliefs.

In Viet Nam, news reports about human trafficking are far too frequent and upsetting.

In 2008, a grandmother in Dong Thap Province sold her three-month-old grandnephew to a broker for VND9 million (US\$423). She needed the money to pay off gambling debts. Later, both the broker and the grandmother were sentenced to four years in prison.

A girl in Quang Nam Province who had conceived out of wedlock without planning to, agreed to let a woman who said she was barren adopt her baby for an unspecified sum. The woman faked papers so as to send the child to an orphanage that also allows adoption by foreign nationals. Luckily, the real mother discovered the plan in time and informed the police.

The Vietnamese government has initiated many measures to tackle the human trafficking menace.

It has implemented two five-year (2006-2010; 2011-2015) national plans against human trafficking.

The National Assembly, Viet Nam's parliament, passed the Law on Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking that took effect on January 1, 2012.

Among other things, the law covers internal and cross-border trafficking, labour trafficking and other forms of trafficking including the removal of organs and surrogacy.

Viet Nam has ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Human Trafficking, and strictly complies with obligation under these conventions. It has signed bilateral agreements and undertaken co-operation activities with all neighbouring and regional countries to prevent and fight human trafficking.

Vietnam is also an active member in regional forums such as the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), which brings together the six Greater Mekong Sub-region countries in the fight against human trafficking; the AIPO Forum on Legal Cooperation to Combat Human Trafficking; and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, notes the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP).

These efforts have been recognized by international agencies.

"Vietnam has one of the highest conviction rates for traffickers in the world, thanks in large part to training by UNODC (United Nation Office on Drug and Crime)," says a statement on the UNODC website.

In 2012 alone, authorities arrested 719 traffickers, prosecuted 453 and convicted 400, with sentences ranging from 3 to 20 years' imprisonment.

## **Still Rising**

However, it is clear that human trafficking has many different forms and is on the rise in Viet Nam despite all the efforts to control and prevent it.

According to the Ministry of Public Security, 507 human trafficking cases with 697 traffickers and 982 victims were uncovered in 2013, a year-on-year increase of four per cent.

As many as 301 trafficking cases were detected in the first six months of this year, a 16 per cent increase over the same period last year.

It is estimated that 400-500 human trafficking cases involving almost 1,000 victims are detected in Viet Nam each year.

## **Too Gullible?**

Nguyen Van Trang, deputy head of the anti-human trafficking division under the Ministry of Public Security's Criminal Police Department, says that poverty, low education and naivety are the main reasons for the high number of people – both male and female – being trafficked in Viet Nam.

Although women and children are traffickers' main target, men from some northern provinces have also been trafficked and forced to work.

Some experts have blamed the gender imbalance in China for the surge in trafficking of women to that country.

Between 2008 and June 2014, nearly 3,000 human trafficking cases were recorded in Viet Nam, involving 4,700 offences and 5,800 victims. About 90 per cent of the people were victims of external trafficking, mainly to China.

Trafficked persons are mostly poor and can be enticed to go abroad with promises of improved living conditions. In some cases, women wanting to leave their families after a conflict have fallen prey to the traffickers.

Experts say that traffickers often act in groups, luring those desperate to improve their living conditions through arranged marriages and recruitment agencies.

## **Hidden Crime**

Despite all the figures compiled by different agencies in Viet Nam, experts warn that human trafficking is often a hidden crime that makes the gathering of statistics difficult.

“Most Vietnamese women marrying foreigners do so expecting it to be a life-changing opportunity, so they will not co-operate with the police,” Phan Anh Minh, deputy director of the HCM City Police Department, said at a recent conference that focused on illegal brokering of marriages as a means of human trafficking. “They even consider (broker) suspects their saviours,” he added.

Statistics from local authorities show that over 25,000 women and children nationwide have been reported missing. A significant percentage of these are suspected to have been trafficked.

While human trafficking is mostly dealt with as a serious crime, it is far too lucrative a trade, especially for organised crime. It is said that human trafficking is the most “rewarding” illegal trade after drugs and arms.

The International Labour Organisation says that forced labour in the private economy alone generates US\$150 billion in illegal profits a year. Two-thirds of this figure (\$99 billion) comes from commercial sexual exploitation, while a further \$51 billion is the result of forced economic exploitation, including domestic work and agriculture.

ILO's 2012 report says that 20.9 million people are victims of forced labour across the world, including 5.5 million children.

The Asia-Pacific region accounts for the largest number of forced labourers in the world – 11.7 million or 56 per cent of the global total, followed by Africa at 3.7 million (18 per cent) and Latin America with 1.8 million victims (9 per cent).

The UNIAP also contends that the Asia-Pacific region “records by far the highest rates of human trafficking in the world, with GMS (Greater Mekong Subregion, comprising Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Yunnan Province in China) regarded as containing different tracking hotspots.”

## **Way Ahead**

Experts have pointed out several deficiencies that dog Viet Nam's efforts, including a lack of conformity between national and international definitions of human trafficking, weak focus on behavioural changes needed, insufficient data, and lack of mechanisms to implement bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Trang said one important step is to improve the living standards for people in remote areas by creating jobs as well as conditions for reducing drop-outs from school. Border management should be strengthened to prevent illegal immigration, he added.

He also called for awareness-raising campaigns in schools where students can learn about the impacts of human trafficking as well as tricks used by traffickers in luring victims.

The stakes are high, every victim who has spoken out has stressed.

D, one of the two girls who jumped from the third floor of their “prison” at midnight to make their escape from China, said they were scared, adding, “But considering the shame we had to endure...we were determined because we thought if we were not able to return home, we would rather die.”

*Policy Recommendations for  
Future Cooperation*



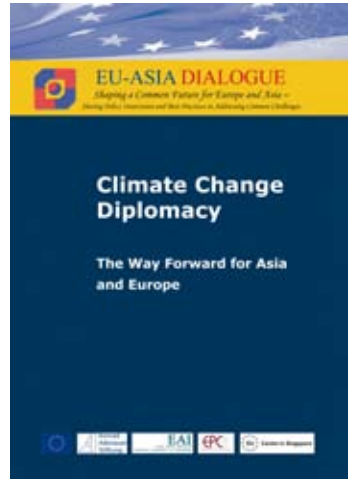


# Climate Change Diplomacy

## Background

Climate change and its consequences are one of the biggest challenges for international politics and cooperation. Although there is no doubt about the devastating effects of climate change for many countries, international negotiations are characterized by strategies which are still primarily driven by national interests. While many Asian countries suffer from the negative impacts of climate change, their economic development is often accompanied by increasing emissions of greenhouse gases – a typical dilemma for many emerging markets and developing countries that requires a clear de-coupling strategy.

Despite a number of remaining challenges such as the question of responsibility, finances and fear of slower economic growth, significant progress has been made in the multilateral meetings. The Green Climate Fund and Durban Platform are cases in point. Most notably, domestic measures can impact the local situation and ultimately shape a country's position in the negotiations if it sees the positive effects of climate protection. Such actions include the diversification of energy resources, establishment of local carbon markets, limits for big emitters and adaptation measures. The third level is bilateral initiatives which can be horizontal between governments or countries, or vertical between national and local governments and focus on a variety of topics. Thus, looking only at the multilateral negotiations does not do justice to the efforts that have been put in place. All three levels have to complement each other and domestic actions can help to establish confidence and trust.



## **Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation**

### *1. Establish a functioning two-track diplomacy*

The fight against climate change will not be won in the international negotiations alone, but through multi-level initiatives. As environmental issues do not stop at national borders, the solution has to combine local and international measures. Two-track diplomacy means a combination of multi- and bilateral initiatives. The international negotiations have to result in a common agreement to increase credibility and legitimacy. At the same time bilateral negotiations and concrete cooperation projects have to be maintained as well as enhanced. Such bilateral efforts can be put in place by the European Union with Asian partner states, as is the case with the People's Republic of China, for instance. However, individual European countries can implement projects with Asian countries as well. The United Kingdom and Germany have developed a number of such initiatives.

### *2. Enhance EU-ASEAN cooperation*

The European Union and ASEAN have a long history of cooperation on environmental issues. This tradition should be reinvented and revived. It should include aspects of capacity-building, eco-friendly technology transfer and raising of public awareness. With the recently established ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA) and the Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Centre (RHCC), climate-related disaster management cooperation can be fostered as part of the loss and damage pillar.

### *3. Support for domestic developments*

Many Asian and European countries have developed domestic actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change that have to be supported by regional institutions and other more advanced states. National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) are a tool for this kind of support measures. More developed countries should support initiatives for sustainable green growth that promotes de-coupled economic development from an early stage. Such bilateral efforts can also take place between a national government and a local government unit or civil society actors. Cooperation

between the two regions on concrete implementation efforts will be essential for making any international agreement work.

#### 4. *Sectorial approaches*

In order to initiate concrete actions, European and Asian countries should enhance sectorial approaches. These will help to create strategic climate partnerships and nurture confidence. Sectorial approaches may focus on water protection, land degradation, desertification, indigenous population and traditional methods, loss of farmland, climate-initiated migration and conflicts, urban areas and resource management.

#### 5. *Energy*

Being one of the biggest causes of pollution and expected to grow significantly in Asia, energy supply will be one of the decisive factors in fighting climate change. Asia will need to meet the demand generated by increased energy consumption through enhanced energy efficiency and an evolved energy mix. This has to see a higher share of renewable energies and a decentralized, small-scale energy production model. European countries should provide assistance for this approach through knowledge transfer, technology and capacity-building. In particular, urban areas should include local energy production into their planning scenarios.



# Eco Cities

## Background

With more than half of today's human population living in urban areas, many cities have developed into economic and political powerhouses. Cities provide a high standard of living and enormous opportunities to people. At the same time, those who live in cities now face huge socio-economic disparities. The growth of urban areas also comes with severe environmental consequences.

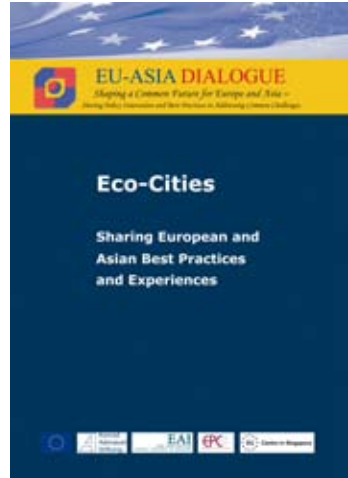
While cities are among the biggest polluters, they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Major challenges for urban areas include traffic congestion, growing energy demand, increased demand for waste management, limited housing space and budgetary constraints.

In order for cities to continue to function as engines of economic growth, there is a need to move beyond risk reduction, towards achieving resilience. It is necessary to promote an understanding of effective ways in which citizens, civil society, and local and national governments can work in collaboration to enhance resilience and ensure cities' livability. This requires permanent linkages between actions taken at the city, national and global levels.

## Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation

### 1. *Learn from each other's experiences and mistakes*

European and Asian cities have developed various approaches to achieve sustainable urban development. European countries can share how existing cities can be re-invented and adapted to environmental concerns. Asian countries, on the other hand, can show how eco-friendly measures can be incorporated in the development of new cities from the planning period. Both regions would benefit from knowledge of best and worst practices. This can help to prevent repetition of the same mistakes and avoid unintended consequences. The establishment of exchange trips



should be fostered. In particular, medium-sized cities which are expected to grow fast but show a lack of capacity can benefit from such partnerships.

## 2. *Creation of city networks*

A way to create partnerships and constant exchange is city networks. An example is the Covenant of Mayors, which fosters inter-city collaboration. Although this initiative has started to reach out to Asia recently, it would be desirable for this process to be faster and for such partnerships programmes to also be established for Asian cities themselves.

## 3. *Involvement of citizens*

In making cities sustainable, people play the key role. They have to support the changes. They have to be willing to change their lifestyles and mindset. This is best achieved through active people's participation so as to inform and listen to them. People often have concrete ideas for the development for their cities and should be allowed to voice these suggestions.

## 4. *Involvement of the business sector*

In regards to financial constraints, the involvement of the business sector can create the necessary funds. Public-Private-Partnerships should be further explored and can also take place between European cities and Asian companies and vice-versa. In order to attract investments from the business sector, city governments have to ensure planning security. Europe and Asia can also sign agreements on investment frameworks in cities for small and medium-sized enterprises to create incentives for public-private cooperation.

## 5. *Enhance cities' global voice*

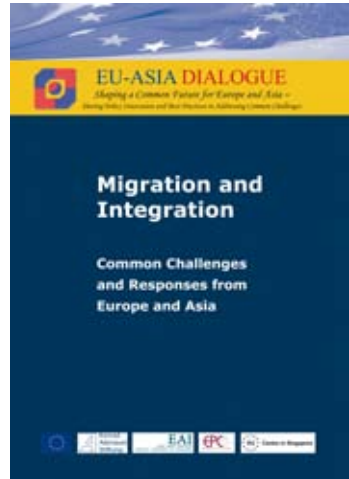
Europe and Asia should emphasize the key role urban areas will play in meeting future challenges – climate change, migration, social cohesion and political participation. Urban areas will be confronted with these challenges, but can at the same time be the solution to them. In order to create awareness for this and establish linkages between city governments and national as well as international authorities, cities have to be included in global discussions. For instance, their participation in the climate negotiations or regional migration fora can be improved.

# Migration and Integration

## Background

Migration has always played a crucial role in the history of mankind. The current intensity and frequency of cross-border mobility are, however, much higher than in previous centuries. This large-scale movement changes the composition of the societies in both the sending and receiving countries and results in some of today's key challenges.

Many European and Asian countries are characterized by ageing and shrinking populations. They face common problems in terms of demographic change, smaller workforce and resentments against foreigners among the locals. In order to ensure economic growth and to maintain existing welfare systems, many countries open legal migration channels. As these countries try to attract the same group of people, mainly high-skilled professionals and low-skilled workers, increasing competition between the two regions can be observed. This makes legal migration both a battleground for the best and brightest, but also an opportunity to go beyond continental solutions to migration and foster genuine cooperation so that both continents can reap the rewards. High-skilled professionals are encouraged to stay for longer periods or even enticed to settle down permanently. This is achieved by providing them with rights and benefits, facilitating their stay, and making them the target of integration policies. At the same time, sending countries benefit from the process as they do not have enough jobs for their growing populations and receive remittances as another form of revenue.



## Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation

### 1. *Bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries*

In order to ensure a mutually beneficial process and avoid violation of migrant rights, respective countries may sign agreements on migration and



integration programmes. These should include recognition of education certificates, practical training for migrants as well as pre- and post-migration courses. Since a large number of migrations are not permanent in nature, countries should also cooperate on the re-integration of returning migrants and how they can be prepared for this in host countries.

## 2. *Set up bi-regional forum on migration and integration*

While several programmes exist to facilitate the migration process, a permanent forum on migration between Europe and Asia is still lacking. Such a forum should involve all key stakeholders and serve as a place to discuss concerns from both countries. Ultimately, this forum can raise questions on migrants' rights protection and build awareness for the new arriving migrants. Migrant communities, embassies in the destination countries, grassroots and civil-society organizations should also be involved to shape the integration of migrants.

## 3. *Develop common migration and integration policy standards*

The European Union has developed common standards for admission policies and such key criteria should also be developed among the Asian countries and between the regions. Common standards will strengthen legal migration channels, and help to make the process more transparent and understandable. The same is true for integration. If similar criteria for integration are in place, migrants can start preparing in their home countries and the developments might be more predictable. Integration policies should not target only the high-skilled migrants, but should also make the integration of low-skilled migrants into the labour market and society easier.

## 4. *More exchange programmes for students and easier facilitation of visa process*

Mobility between Asia and Europe of students is very high. Enhancing Europe-Asia exchange programmes might increase the migrant flows between the two regions and they can profit from each other's specific skill set. A problem is that many of the student visas expire with graduation and often, these highly educated people do not get a staying allowance.

5. *EU can provide legal frameworks on managing irregular migration*

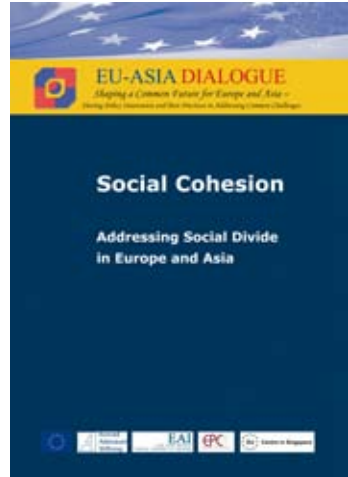
A massive problem in Asia is the increase in irregular migration. Due to high costs for legal migration, lack of border management, corruption and ineffective governance, this phenomenon has been increasing. The European Union was successful in developing legal frameworks for intra-European migration and can provide assistance to Asian countries.



# Social Cohesion

## Background

The world has never been as wealthy, and yet as divided, as today. This has resulted in discussions in Europe and Asia on how to overcome these inequalities and maintain cohesive societies. Inequality, injustice, income disparities, intolerance, discrimination and exclusion can be observed in many Asian developing countries and European welfare states alike and indicate a lack of social cohesion. While social cohesion has a strong economic component, the discussion should also not neglect the social and political aspects of communities. Several other aspects influence social relations in a society. Such topics include political and civic participation, rights of minorities, integration of new arriving immigrants, access to social services, a feeling of belonging, social mobility and social capital.



## Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation

### 1. *Exchange of lessons learnt and policy coherence*

Social cohesion touches upon various policy areas and some countries in Europe and Asia have extensive experiences in addressing this challenge in a comprehensive manner. Thus, it would be useful for both regions to establish regular dialogues on lessons learnt. Although policies and programmes will have to meet the local conditions, exchange of experience can reduce the duplication of mistakes made. In particular, policy coherence needs to be ensured to tackle the different areas at stake.

### 2. *Building of institutional capacities*

Countries often lack critical institutional infrastructure to ensure full implementation of social cohesion programmes. This includes agencies to implement initiatives, and to coordinate the policies in the various

areas and between target groups. For instance, education is one of the key factors influencing social mobility and it requires investments in early childhood development to counter-balance disadvantages due to differences in social backgrounds.

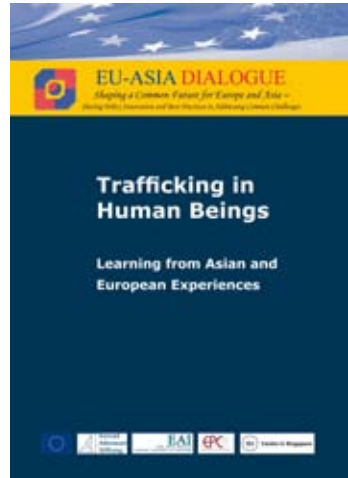
### 3. *Establish national dialogue fora*

It is essential to establish national dialogue fora that include stakeholders, coordinate between them and take their concerns into account. Trade unions and business federations represent the employees and employers respectively, who are key partners in terms of social policies. Companies influence these programmes through corporate social responsibility activities. Civil society organizations promote civic engagement, which plays an important role at the ground level and enhance social capital. They can take over tasks that the government cannot fulfil due to budgetary cuts or lack of enforcement power. Such initiatives by the business sector or citizens cannot replace programmes by the government, but can complement them. Dialogue fora can reduce duplication of efforts and ensure that all voices are being heard and incorporated.

# Human Trafficking

## Background

Trafficking in human beings is a strong violation of basic rights and a severe transnational organized crime. It entails the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring and receipt of a person by threat or use of force for the purpose of sexual, labour exploitation or organ smuggling. At the same, the victims are granted hardly any rights in the destination countries and cooperation with the police is limited due to fear or the police's involvement in the crime. The two key challenges in combating human trafficking are victim identification and prosecution of traffickers. The reasons for the current lack of success are: low law enforcement rates, corruption among enforcement units, and lack of capacities and capabilities of prosecutors. Another reason for the current situation is the lack of victim protection; some victims are even being prosecuted as criminals for acts committed under duress. While most trafficking takes place on a national or regional scale, long-distance trafficking occurs as well, including from Asia to Europe. In order to stop this crime, it is essential to address the underlying reasons that make people vulnerable or drive them into the arms of traffickers. These reasons include poverty, disadvantages, lack of access to the labour market, debts and over-population. Such a widespread and cross-domain challenge to human security therefore requires comprehensive policies at home and increased cooperation at the international level.



## Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation?

### 1. *Enhanced cross-border cooperation*

There are various possibilities to foster closer cooperation between different states. A key criterion for cooperation and joint enforcement is access to information. Sharing of both open-source and intelligence data needs

to be improved. This can be information on trafficking routes between Europe and Asia, legal grey zone areas, traffickers and victims. In order to ensure efficient information sharing, trust has to be established between the parties. For instance, workshops and joint training measures can be put in place as these will guarantee smooth prosecution and cross-border enforcement of laws where border guard forces from both sides coordinate their work. Authorities in the destination country have to cooperate with people from the country of origin since victims might have higher trust in them. This includes non-governmental organizations and also embassies.

## 2. *Improve domestic coordination on various policy areas*

A pre-condition for successful international cooperation is a well-functioning domestic network. Governments have to establish an agency that coordinates the various authorities involved in combating human trafficking and ensures policy coherence. This includes policy areas that cause demand for the services of trafficked people and hinder prevention, identification, protection as well as prosecution. Domestic aspects creating vulnerable people and enabling trafficking have to be addressed. Such issue areas include inequality, injustice, corruption among law enforcement units, border control officers and caretakers of victims, lack of labour protection, soft sentences for crimes and ineffective border management. Trafficking in human beings has to be seen in this greater context and in its inter-connection with other crimes. As long as legislations are not in place that tackle the various areas being affected by human trafficking and the demand is not reduced, the crime will persist.

## 3. *Victim identification and protection*

There are two reasons for victims of human trafficking suffering significantly – problems in victim identification and protection. Programmes have to be introduced to build up the capacity of police forces, border management units and customs officers to identify victims. They need to be aware of the usual criteria and indicators. They also need to cooperate with NGOs and people from the country of origin in the identification process. Laws have to be in place to ensure that victims are not prosecuted for crimes committed under duress and protection programmes for victims need to be established. For instance, visa extension and integration measures for victims should be made easily accessible. Identification and

protection are also hindered by corruption. Thus, officers on duty need to be changed regularly and controlled.

#### 4. *Cooperation between different stakeholders*

The above-mentioned authority should also coordinate the cooperation between the various stakeholders domestically. These include police forces, prosecutors, customs officers, assistance from the countries of origin, recruitment agencies and civil-society organizations, among others. In order to fulfil their respective tasks, these groups require capacity-building and training.

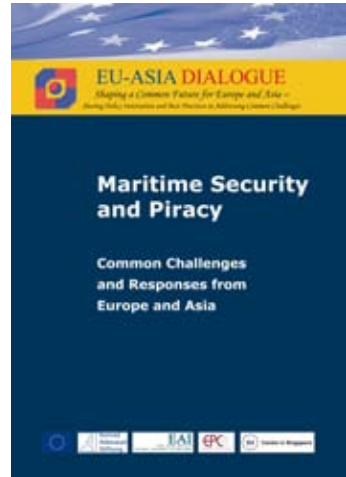




# Maritime Security and Piracy

## Background

Over the past decade, security of the oceans has evolved into one of the key challenges to international security. In today's interconnected world, the global maritime environment represents a vital asset for trade and development, transport, energy flows, tourism and environmental sustainability. Seas have historically provided a major source of growth and prosperity for a significant proportion of the world's population. Yet, the global sea domain is affected by a wide range of diverse, but often interrelated, security challenges and threats, including piracy, territorial disputes, human and drug trafficking, terrorism, overexploitation of marine ecosystems and disasters at sea. The absence of regional organizations that can function as intermediators and confidence-builders is a key challenge. In particular, Europe and Asia's bi-regional economic development is highly dependent on the security of the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). If the safety and security of the SLOCs cannot be guaranteed, it will affect intra- and inter-regional trade and provide pirates as well as terrorists with additional financial resources. Remaining constraints include inefficient "silo approaches" in the maritime domain, political mistrust, opening of the northern passage and potential naval armament. These challenges can, however, be overcome through stronger inter-regional cooperation between Europe and Asia. Both Europe and Asia offer encouraging examples of national, sub-regional and regional policy measures and mechanisms to counter the risks of a less open and secure maritime environment.



## **Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation**

### *1. Enhance interregional engagement*

Cooperation between Europe and Asia in the maritime domain has been rather limited. Closer cooperation between the EU and ReCAAP, as the leading regional organization for fighting piracy, could certainly be a pillar of enhanced bi-regional cooperation. The EU can also assist ASEAN in terms of confidence-building and coordination as its member states were able to set their national interests aside and cooperate. Finally, the EU and European countries can function as mediators between the various powers in Asia on aspects such as resource-sharing, fishery and environmental pollution.

### *2. Bilateral cooperation*

Besides the regional level, direct bilateral cooperation with Asian partners is essential. Key countries in this regard are China, Japan, South Korea and India. Such bilateral initiatives can include joint patrols, military training and sharing of information on dispute settlement and reconciliation.

### *3. Address emerging issues of the Arctic*

With the opening of the Arctic route, new cooperation opportunities will be created and this new trading route will directly impact Europe-Asia maritime relations. The possibilities for cooperation range from environmental protection over research and rescue to discussions on shipping permits. The challenges of operating in the Arctic are manifold and thus, it is of importance that European and Asian countries cooperate from the start.

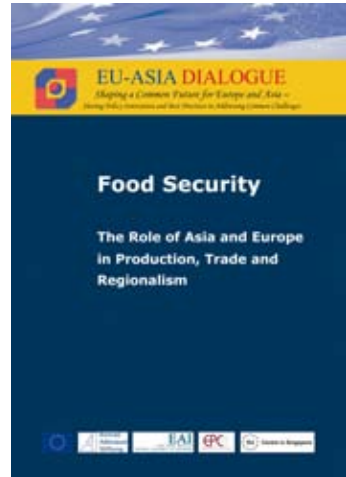
### *4. Cooperate on non-conflictual issue areas*

Given the current tensions in Asian waters, it will be good if Europe-Asia cooperation is not impacted by them. On military cooperation and disputes, the EU would be only one among many stakeholders. A soft power approach would be much welcome and can address less conflicting areas where cooperation is desired. This could then function as a vehicle for trust and confidence building. These issue areas include disaster management, search and rescue, human trafficking in the maritime domain, terrorism and environmental protection.

# Food Security

## Background

Although the fight against hunger is a key priority area of international cooperation and improvements can be seen, millions of people are still suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Domestic factors which influence food production are governance structures and distribution of food. In this context, corruption and land grabbing have significant consequences. Lack of infrastructure makes transport and access to markets more difficult. This also results in a high percentage of subsistence agriculture, which is more vulnerable to endogenous and exogenous shocks. Food security cannot be seen only as the secured availability of food, as other dimensions such as physical, economic, social and ecological factors impact the distribution and vulnerability. Thus, fighting against hunger must be seen in close connection to other policy areas. Environmental disasters can affect agriculture as they destroy much of the agricultural land and products. The growing global population and changes in climate are creating enormous pressures on natural resources across the world. The current over-exploitation of natural resources, which supply us with water, energy and food, is not sustainable and practices must change. Another strong influence on food production is the growing urbanization, which reduces the availability of farmland and makes more transportation from the rural areas into cities necessary.



## Possible Roles for Europe-Asia Cooperation

### 1. *Learn from Europe's experience*

Despite having problems in the past, the majority of European countries are able to provide their citizens with sufficient food. This can be a useful experience to share with Asian partners on improving policy approaches.

Post-harvesting losses due to inappropriate storage or packing account for a huge part of food shortage in Asia. Europe and Asia should cooperate on technology transfer and capacity building to decrease this impact.

Many European countries have long-standing experience in the promotion of sustainable agriculture and have developed comprehensive initiatives to enhance it. While these initiatives cannot be transferred to Asian countries directly and need to take into account the local conditions, European countries can provide some guidance on the policies, governance and social structures that are needed to achieve this goal.

## *2. Address new challenges besides food supply and production*

Europe-Asia cooperation on food security should focus on new upcoming problems. Competition for the use of land for energy production creates conflicts with food supply. Cases in point are huge dam projects and the usage of water for non-agricultural usage. Thus, the energy-food-water nexus should be addressed in detail to discuss unintended side-effects, long-term impacts and possibilities to combine all three aspects in a beneficial manner. In particular, in the context of climate change, such a comprehensive approach would ensure effective adaptation.

An increasing problem is food safety. With a number of countries experiencing growth economically and in their standards of living, the quality of food and food safety are of growing concern. As an increasing amount of food products are imported from Asia, food safety should be treated bi-regionally. This will ensure that new products meet the high standards of the European Union.

Another challenge is food wastage. While several regions in Asia still suffer from under-nutrition and food insecurity, other countries have too much food and throw them away. This is mainly due to society's demand for a variety of choice, lack of knowledge on putridness and overproduction. Better coordination among Asian countries is necessary.

## *3. Address trade and the role of the business sector*

With the increasing number of trade agreements between the European Union and Asian countries, food security should be an essential part of these negotiations. Protectionist policies and trade hurdles can severely impact the food supply in Asian countries. In this context the role of pure food aid should also be elaborated on as direct food supply and easy

market access for subsidized agricultural products will affect the local food market in Asia's less developed countries.

Finally, businesses play a key role in agriculture. They can be at the forefront of new developments and improved food production, but they can also hinder progress if they apply cost-efficient but unsustainable measures or use farmland for other purposes. The involvement of a mediator or tripartite talks might help to ensure a balanced outcome.









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This project is supported by the European Union



A project implemented by the contractor

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ISBN 978-981-09-4118-5



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