

Eurasian Security Cooperation: Issue Areas and Outcomes

May-Britt U. Stumbaum

INTRODUCTION

Eurasian security cooperation today differs from the often rather theoretical undertakings of previous years: Challenges ranging from international terrorism to cyber security and maritime security are faced in the same way by European and Asian states in a world where information and goods flow globally for better or for worse. Yet, deviating from traditional European Union (EU) policies towards Asia that were often driven by an allegedly altruistic stance of “what can we do for you”, Eurasian security cooperation from an EU point of view is increasingly interest-driven. This results from the realization that security challenges affect both sides significantly and similarly and it is important to find ways to address them together.

The 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) sets out five key priorities: Security of the Union, State and Societal Resilience, an Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises, Cooperative Regional Orders, and Global Governance for the 21st Century (Union, 2016c).

These guiding key priorities resonate with the EU’s strategic partners when broken down to the tactical level of Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR), the upholding of global common goods (such as keeping maritime routes open for everybody), and finding ways to deal with foreign fighters returning home who need to be de-radicalised and to manage them. The focus here is to exchange lessons learned and best practices, as well as to identify areas where the EU can work with its Asian partners at a global and continent-to-continent level, also on troubling areas in between, such as the Middle East.

The EU developed an array of new tools and papers to add new momentum to the existing frameworks of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy and its Development Cooperation (DevCo). The year 2016 saw the publication of several country papers, including a new China strategy and one on Myanmar, with more under preparation in 2017. The European Commission’s new Foreign Policy

* This paper was submitted on 19 September 2017.

Instruments provide the European External Action Service (EEAS) with flexible new instruments such as the Asia-Pacific Research and Advice Network (#APRAN) and ASIAFORA to advance the EU's role in multilateral fora. Asia is being discussed at all levels, from the usual Council's Working Group on Asia (COASI) to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the Council of the European Union.

The impact of the Trump Administration, with its hardly predictable policy on Asia and towards the US' traditional allies, has further spurred the interest of East Asian partners to work with the European Union. These partners include Japan and Korea, but also India and China – with the issues of interest ranging from trade to climate change and cooperative security.

This paper will examine the EU Global Strategy and the new tools, followed by a discussion on the common challenges, ranging from maritime security, over mass migration of disaster- and conflict-displaced persons, to counterterrorism and dealing with foreign fighters. It will then outline avenues for cooperation before concluding with the main findings on Eurasian security cooperation.

THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY AND NEW TOOLS

Based on its most recent strategy papers, the EU's foreign policy concerning Eurasian security cooperation aims to work with the EU's Asia-Pacific partners in the region *and beyond* on common challenges. The 2016 EU Global Strategy addresses the EU's role, aims, and ambitions in a “more connected, contested and complex world” (Union, 2016c) and outlines five “key priorities”, i.e., Security of the Union, State and Societal Resilience, an Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises, Cooperative Regional Orders, and Global Governance for the 21st Century. The EUGS further acknowledges:

There is a direct connection between European prosperity and Asian security. In light of the economic weight that Asia represents for the EU – and vice versa – peace and stability in Asia are a prerequisite for our prosperity. We will deepen economic diplomacy and scale up our security role in Asia.

(Union, 2016c)

Beyond cooperating with Asian partners in Asia, the European Union is increasingly looking into possibilities to cooperate with its Asian partners – through bilateral Strategic Partnerships (the EU's strategic partner countries are India, China, Japan, and South Korea), inter-institutional cooperation (such as with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]), and within multilateral fora such as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) – on global challenges that concern both sides and that are not necessarily geographically bound to the Asia-Pacific region.

Those global challenges affect both the European Union and its partners in the Asia-Pacific alike: Natural catastrophes, internal turmoil, and violent conflicts in the near neighbourhoods force an ever-increasing number of people to leave their livelihoods and homes and result in refugee flows at ever higher levels, thereby demanding governmental responses in regulations, integration, and, first and foremost, assistance with coping with basic needs. New challenges such as cyber security as well as international terrorism – with foreign fighters returning from Syria to their home countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific alike – are testing governments everywhere. Responding to global challenges by regional integrations to form more effective associations remains a task for the EU, ASEAN, and other multilateral entities.

On the perception aspect, the EU is better perceived, as often assumed. A 2015 major public diplomacy baseline study on the EU’s Strategic Partners’ perception of the EU and its policies abroad (EU” et al., 2016) conducted by the author and her NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU”¹ showed a surprising majority of respondents in favour of a strong leadership role for the EU in world affairs as well as the likelihood of this role for the EU:

Table 1:

Question: How desirable is it that the European Union takes a strong leadership role in world affairs?

Responses from:	Very desirable	Somewhat desirable	Neither/nor	Somewhat undesirable	Very undesirable	n/a	Total (N)
All 10 SP	18.9%	34.9%	27.2%	7.1%	4.1%	7.8%	11621
USA	23.9%	28.8%	24.3%	4.0%	2.9%	16.2%	1007
Japan	5.9%	31.4%	37.9%	6.7%	2.8%	15.2%	1024
China	9.6%	46.1%	35.6%	5.0%	0.6%	3.0%	1410
S. Korea	9.8%	38.8%	37.5%	6.3%	1.5%	6.1%	1238
India	29.5%	37.5%	23.0%	2.6%	1.7%	5.7%	1056

(EU” et al., 2016)

¹ Based at the Freie Universität Berlin, the international and interdisciplinary NFG Research Group analyses diffusion processes of norms and best practices between European and Asian actors. The NFG aims to identify, analyse and assess factors and mechanisms that affect the differences in perception of the EU (as the “sender”) and Asian foreign-policy elites (as the targeted “recipients”) of EU foreign policy).

Table 2:

Question: How likely is it that the EU will take a strong leadership role in world affairs in 5 years?

Responses from:	Very likely	Rather likely	Neither/nor	Rather unlikely	Very unlikely	n/a	Total (N)
All 10 SP	22.7%	36.7%	24.2%	6.2%	2.2%	8.0%	11621
USA	20.8%	29.4%	24.5%	4.6%	3.6%	17.2%	1007
Japan	8.4%	30.9%	35.3%	7.7%	3.4%	14.2%	1024
China	17.2%	50.8%	25.9%	3.1%	0.3%	2.6%	1410
S. Korea	12.7%	40.8%	34.8%	5.9%	0.7%	5.1%	1238
India	31.2%	37.8%	21.5%	3.1%	0.9%	5.6%	1056

(EU” et al., 2016)

Under the 2009 Lisbon Treaty and the EU Global Strategy, the EU has in recent years received new tools with which it can pursue its foreign policy goals to promote Eurasian security cooperation.

On the framework aspect, the EU has put out several new country papers, including an EU Strategy on China (Commission, 2016b; Union, 2016a) and one on Myanmar (Mogherini, 2016; Union, 2016b), with several more under preparation. The EU has also concluded several agreements with its Strategic Partners: South Korea signed the “Framework for Participation of the Republic of Korea in EU Crisis Management Operations” agreement in 2014 (Union & Korea, 2014), becoming the first Asian EU Partner country, and thereby establishing the scope of cooperation and participation of South Korea in EU crisis management operations, both civilian and military. After years of discussion, EU President Tusk, EC President Juncker and Japan’s Prime Minister Abe agreed on the eve of the G20 summit held in Hamburg in July 2017, on the principles of a Japan-EU Free Trade Agreement (JEFTA; negotiations finalised in December 2017, ratification pending) as well as on the political aspect of the strategic partnership. The impact of a US administration under President Trump, under which the strategic alliances with the United States and the US’ Asia policy appear to be much less predictable and reliable, has added huge momentum to discussions on interests, cooperation and the consolidation of these cooperation initiatives by the signing of a framework agreement.

Discussions on how to collaborate with the Asia-Pacific now take place frequently at all levels and not just at the Council’s Asia-Pacific Working Group (COASI). These include the Political and Security Committee and others. The crisis with North Korea has added extra momentum to deliberations on having the Asia-Pacific region on the EU agenda despite huge competition from challenges in the near neighbourhood, including the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

In addition, the European External Action Service also has more tools on hand now: The newly established Partnership Instrument of the European Commission's Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) has been set up to strategically support the EEAS by enabling it to work in the most flexible way with external resources. Under this framework, the Asia-Pacific Research and Advice Network (#APRAN) was set up to support the Asia-Pacific Department and the respective EU Delegations in the region internally, while the MULTIFORA project aims at actively “[a]dvancing the EU's role in multilateral fora in Asia” (title of the programme) such as the ARF, ASEM and ASEAN.

In sum, the EU's foreign and security policy towards Eurasian security cooperation is now much more focused on finding joint interests that drives cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, addressing common challenges jointly; the EU can thereby draw on new strategies and additional tools. The “Trump factor” has provided additional momentum to cooperation with the EU's partners in the region as their alliances with the US appear less reliable and predictable.

COMMON CHALLENGES: FROM MARITIME SECURITY TO FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Going beyond traditional EU policy views on the Asia-Pacific in terms of “what can we do for you”, which often came across as hypocritical in their displayed altruism, the EU's foreign and security policy towards the Asia-Pacific region as outlined in the EU Global Strategy and associated documents focuses on tackling global challenges together – in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The following section examines three challenges that both Asian and European countries face – maritime security, mass migration flows due to conflict- and disaster-displaced persons, and dealing with foreign fighters in Syria and elsewhere returning to their home countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

Maritime Security

Even if still not acknowledged by many EU member states' governments due to the geographical distance, maritime security in the Asia-Pacific will have a widespread impact on Europe. It impacts major sea lanes of communication (SLOC) and thereby disrupts trade and energy sea routes that are crucial for Europe. Trade and increasingly foreign direct investment (FDI) are the backbone of relations between the EU and the Asia-Pacific. The Asia-Pacific region is the biggest trading partner for the EU, with trade totalling almost €1.4 trillion in 2016, exceeding trade with North America substantially. The 2014 FDI numbers saw outward foreign direct investment in China totalling €144.2 billion – the 6th largest destination for the EU. Hong

Kong was the 9th largest FDI recipient, with €106.3 billion in FDI (Commission, 2016a).

Ninety per cent of European trade is sea-borne, making free passage through maritime routes essential for European trade and, in the long run, European wealth. Accordingly, the EU is keen to ensure freedom of navigation and the safety of trade as well as energy sea lanes. Maritime security developments in the Asia-Pacific region have the potential to disrupt the current global rules-based order and the general provision of international public goods. In particular the different perceptions and interpretations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – Asian partners, first and foremost China, define Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ) as quasi territorial borders, while Western countries, first and foremost the United States, see EEZ as a right for the concerned country to exploit the resources, for instance through fishing, and yet regard the high seas as international waters that are open for passage by everybody – demand closer exchange and cooperation between EU and its partners to work towards a common understanding and upholding of the global common goods.

So far, however, the general impression among the EU's Strategic Partners is that the EU is not playing a very important role outside of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. While EU member states and traditional maritime powers like the United Kingdom (UK) and France are heavily involved in maritime security arrangements, the EU is not so visible in comparison.

Mass Migration and Refugee Flows

Most visible on the agenda in 2015, managing irregular and unprecedented migration flows has remained a demanding issue for the EU and its Strategic Partners alike, whilst also concurrently presenting opportunities for closer exchange and cooperation. The Asia-Pacific region is hit most by natural disasters, while Europe receives the most people fleeing from conflicts in the neighbourhood. 85 per cent of people displaced by natural disasters in 2015 were in Asia – 8.4 million in East Asia and 7.9 million in South Asia. Disaster-displaced persons in China increased to 3.6 million in 2015; 2.7 million in earthquake-ridden Nepal and 2.2 million in typhoon-struck Philippines (IDMC, 2016). Additionally, countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar are sources of the largest number of refugees in the Asia-Pacific. In 2017, the Rohingya refugee crisis reached an unprecedented level, negatively impacting the ASEAN community and putting its principles of consensus and non-interference once more to test – not only among ASEAN member states, but also between ASEAN members and EU members in the ASEM context. Borders between states remain porous, making migration and border management, including undocumented workers, a core issue for ASEAN. In addition, countries like China are also concerned about refugee flows, particularly from North Korea.

Europe saw the highest number of people displaced due to conflicts in the immediate neighbourhood: in 2015, 4.8 million were displaced in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region (56 per cent of the world's total), with Syria being the main origin of refugees, and 942,000 in Europe and Central Asia (11 per cent of the world's total). European and Asian countries also saw new levels of refugee inflows from abroad due to conflicts – Eurostat measured a record number of over 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers registered in the EU in 2015, triggering new policies, but particularly putting national and local governments to the test. As these mass migration flows are characteristic of a world in transition rather than a one-time event, and given the forecasts that due to climate change these mass migration flows may increase up to 200 million, handling people on the move will remain a challenge. Yet, it also provides another opportunity for cooperation between Europe and Asia.

Counterterrorism and Foreign Fighters

Counterterrorism is high on the agenda in European and Asian states and addressing the shared perception of international terrorism as a core security threat of the current strategic environment is vital. International terrorists, returning foreign fighters from Syria – with European citizenships – and those who were radicalised while living in European countries pose a major threat to the security of Europe. Interestingly, although the Asia-Pacific's Muslim population is 23 times that of Europe, many more fighters, e.g., in Syria, originate from Europe and might return to their homelands. Counterterrorism hence provides some striking examples of lessons that may be learned from the Asia-Pacific side: India's relatively successful de-radicalisation programmes involving community participation is underpinned by the fact that despite a Muslim population of 177 million, only 25-50 foreign fighters went to Syria from India, compared to some 4000-plus fighters from Europe, with more than 1700 from France alone between 2010 and 2015 (Group, 2015). The EU and its Strategic Partners face a joint challenge, for which exchanges on intelligence and Asian experiences with de-radicalisation programmes are a promising area for cooperation.

AVENUES FOR COOPERATION

In the context of the EU's aim to promote a rules-based international order, its focus is on shaping rules together, sharing lessons learned, and connecting EU security interests with those of its Asian partners.

The EU's involvement in the Asia-Pacific addresses therefore a broad portfolio. It ranges from high-level dialogues with Strategic Partners, to participation in regional fora to cooperation on the ground in Asia and with Asian partners in

international missions elsewhere, such as the Gulf of Aden or peacekeeping operations in the Middle East and on the African continent.

Within the respective strategic partnerships, regular summits entail security dialogues that focus on a broad range of issues, from cyber security to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). These EU-Strategic Partner state summits and their dialogues complement defence-related dialogues between individual EU member states and Asia-Pacific countries, such as Japan, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand and their dialogues with France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and others.

In the area of military policy as pursued by the European Military Staff and within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and its Common Security and Defence Policy, these summits are underpinned by high-level visits, such as those of the Chairman of the EU Military Committee (CEUMC) to the region. For example, visits were made to South Korea in 2015, and to China and Japan in 2014. There have also been exchanges in Brussels, for instance with the South Korean Vice Chief of Defence (CHOD) in January 2017.

The EU participates in the ASEAN Regional Forum's Defence Officials Dialogue twice a year and is an active member of the ASEAN Regional Forum. In 2017, EU President Tusk was invited to the East Asia Summit as an observer by Philippine President Duterte, host of the 2017 summit; yet the EU is still striving to become a full member of the East Asian Summit² due to reservations on the part of countries such as Singapore and Australia.

The EU has also rediscovered the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) – albeit still not with the same verve in action as in words. ASEM is the biggest exclusively Europe-Asia forum, encompassing 53 partners (51 countries and two regional organisations), but not the United States. For example, the efforts of the EU to work towards joint global norms, such as the ASEM Pathfinder Group on Connectivity, which was bought together during the ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in June 2017, is a good example of the activities by the European External Action Service, which is aiming to use these multilateral fora to push for internationally accepted norms, including in new fields like connectivity (while *connectivity* is the overall term used for large infrastructure initiatives connecting states in the Eurasian region, with the most prominent initiative being the Chinese Belt and Road initiative, its definition goes well beyond purely infrastructural aspects).

The EU is furthermore the main development partner of the Indian Ocean Commission. Individual EU member states also participate in organisations such as

² Since 2005, the East Asia Summit (EAS) has been held annually at the level of heads of government of 18 countries (ASEAN member states, China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, United States, and India) and is currently seen as the central forum to discuss security issues in the Asia-Pacific region at a governmental level. EAS meetings are scheduled back-to-back with annual ASEAN leaders' meetings.

the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and ReCAPP³. Last but not least, the EU is an observer to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

In addition to these dialogues and trainings, the EU actively takes part in multi-lateral military exercises. It participated in the US-China Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief exercise, while EU member states participated in Thailand's Cobra Gold exercise, India's International Fleet Review, Australia's Pitch Black, and the US' RIMPAC. In 2016, the EU was invited for the first time to observe the Indonesian Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo (MNEK). Along the same line, Asian countries have already cooperated and are still engaging with the EU in missions such as the EU anti-piracy mission ATALANTA; and as outlined above, South Korea became the first Strategic Partner in Asia to agree to participate with the EU in CSDP missions and has also supported the EU in its counter-piracy activities.

Multiple EU member states have been engaging in training activities on peace-keeping with Asian partners. Complementarily, the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) conducts activities with Asian Strategic Partners, including annual courses with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and seminars alternating between Brussels and Beijing for high- and mid-career level officials (with the seminars themselves alternating with the EU-China high level defence and security dialogue). The ESDC regularly organises orientation seminars with diplomats and military officers from ASEAN countries. The focus of the 2017 course was on maritime security, including illegal migration and port security, law enforcement at sea, and the EU CRIMARIO programme⁴ to enhance maritime awareness in the Indian Ocean; the findings were further discussed at the following SOM. As of 2017, the EU-ASEAN High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Maritime Cooperation has offered a platform for exchanges of views, best practices, and lessons learnt on maritime issues thrice (Jakarta in 2013, Kuala Lumpur in 2015, and Bangkok in 2016). New editions of the HLD will be hosted by ASEAN member states as a sign that they have been assessed as being useful. Examples of the EU engaging in training and education programmes include cooperation with the Indonesian Peace and Security Centre (Sentul) through lectures, and exchange of curricula and sub-contracting

³ ReCAPP – the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia – represents Asia's first regional government-to-government agreement to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships. The Agreement entered into force on 4 September 2006, and in 2017, features 20 states (14 Asian countries, 4 European countries [UK, Netherlands, Denmark, and the non-EU member state Norway], Australia, and the US) as Contracting Parties to ReCAAP.

⁴ Under the Critical Maritime Routes (CMR) programme, EU CRIMARIO aims to strengthen maritime safety and security in the wider IO region by supporting coastal countries in enhancing maritime situational awareness (MSA). MSA is the sharing and fusion of data from various sources to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the maritime domain, whilst an effective and sustainable MSA enables maritime stakeholders to improve security, safety and environment of this domain. For more information, please visit <https://www.crimario.eu/en/the-project/rationale-objectives/>.

courses on Hostile Environment Awareness Trainings (HEAT) for personnel assigned to the region.

CONCLUSION

Following the framework set out in the EU Global Strategy, the European Union pursues a strategy of promoting its security interests by aiming for cooperation on those challenges identified as being held in common with its Asian partners through bilateral and multilateral fora. The five key priorities of the EU Global Strategy resonate well with the challenges – such as mass migration of disaster- and conflict-induced displacement of people, maritime security, cyber security, and counterterrorism – that Asian partners, including the EU’s Strategic Partners, Korea, Japan, India, and China, have identified. Concerns about a US policy seen as unpredictable and hot-headed have spurred further interest in Eurasian cooperation on security challenges. Based on the 2009 Lisbon Treaty and the 2016 EU Global Strategy, the EU possesses increasingly comprehensive frameworks for interaction as well as more tools provided by the European Commission’s Foreign Policy Instruments to support the European External Action Service with flexible and timely resources.

However, the EU is still perceived primarily as a potential, rather than a de facto, security actor in the Asia-Pacific region. Core challenges to the EU’s credibility and relevance as a security actor in Asia and with Asian countries are the still underdeveloped, existing security partnerships and the EU’s perceived absence from crucial hot-spots in the region, with North Korea being the most striking example, but the South China Sea another case in point. To what extent the EU will be able to respond to the new interest emerging from its Asian partners and to put the ambitious priorities of the EUGS into practice will impact its credibility and capability in the realm of Eurasian security cooperation.

Dr. May-Britt U. Stumbaum is Director of the NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU” at the Graduate School of East Asian Studies (GEAS) of the Freie Universität Berlin and Team Leader of the EU’s Asia-Pacific Research and Advice Network (#APRAN). All views are her own in her private capacity.

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