

**The Contemporary Europe Research Centre (CERC),
The University of Melbourne
and
The European Institute of Asian Studies (EIAS),
Brussels**

Workshop

EU-Asia Relations: A Policy Review

Thursday 10 July 2008

European Institute of Asian Studies
67 Rue de la Loi
1040 Brussels

WORKSHOP PACK

Workshop Summary

Building on the International Conference which was held in Melbourne in March 2008 (*EU-Asia Relations: A Critical Review*) a Policy Workshop was held in Brussels on 10 July 2008. The workshop, hosted by the Contemporary Europe Research Centre, The University of Melbourne and The European Institute of Asian Studies, Brussels, was attended by over 60 people from the European Commission, the diplomatic community of Asian representatives to the European Commission and the academic community. It provided an opportunity for the key outcomes resulting from the March conference and research conducted as part of the EU-funded project, to be discussed with relevant European Commission officials, national diplomatic representatives, and researchers working in the area of EU-Asia relation.

A summary of the two sessions of the Workshop is provided below.

Session 1: EU-Asia Relations: a Critical Overview

This session provided a critical overview of EU-Asia relations since the adoption of the EU's Asia Strategy in 2001. In the first presentation of the session, Dr Fraser Cameron provided a scorecard of EU-Asia relations since 2001. In assessing to the EU's achievements against the six objectives listed in the 2001 Strategy, Dr Cameron (Senior Advisor, European Institute of Asian Studies) gave the EU a scorecard of 6 out of 10. He identified key obstacles to the EU achieving its objectives: inability of the EU to speak with one voice on the international stage; the EU preoccupation with internal issues (i.e. defeat of the Constitutional Treaty, enlargement and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty); disillusionment of third countries in their dealings with the EU, especially in trying to understand what the EU stands for (i.e. differing positions with the region on issues of human rights and democracy). The paper concluded by arguing that the EU needs to have more modest aspirations about what wants to do.

The second paper (Philomena Murray, Adam Berryman and Margherita Matera, University of Melbourne), built on the outcomes from the March 2008 international conference and research currently being undertaken at the Contemporary Europe Research Centre in Melbourne. The paper examined the challenges facing the EU with regard to its engagement with East Asia, focusing on the key issues of coherence, recognition and effectiveness. It explored both how the EU acts and how it is perceived in the region, suggesting that there is dissonance, firstly, among various EU actors, and secondly, in perceptions of EU-Asia relation from European and Asian perspectives. Perceived in East Asia as having many voices, the EU has been a challenging interlocutor for East Asia in terms of: norms and interests; policy variance; national interests; coherence problems in the EU's regional approach. The paper acknowledged that there are both considerable challenges and opportunities in EU-East Asia relations, relating to: visibility and recognition; the exercise of smart power; and the management of mutual perceptions. Meeting these challenges and making the most of these opportunities requires the effective promotion of greater mutual understanding between the EU and East Asia at both regional and state level.

The paper made a series of recommendations for improving/strengthening EU-East Asia relations:

Establishment of new instruments to facilitate a more **coherent** and comprehensive policy development:

- Redress the limited **awareness** of East Asia among some member states by developing greater European expertise on Asia, to promote **understanding** and strengthen the relationship;
- Establish more realistic objective regarding Asian **regionalism**, with limited functional aims pertaining to a common market.
- Develop concrete steps to manage expectations and deliver on realistic objectives within **ASEM**.
- Consider the possibility of establishing a secretariat and an Asia-Europe adaptation and familiarization process;
- Exploit available opportunities to build on European expertise on Asia and promote increased **educational exchanges** and **research collaboration**

The Roundtable discussion commenced with comments made by Mr Michito Tsuruoka (Special Adviser, Embassy of Japan in Belgium) and Mr. Zhang Jiming (Counsellor , Chinese Mission in Belgium).

Key issues discussed during the Roundtable and open discussions were:

- The need for the EU to be more modest, more precise and concrete as to what it wishes to achieve in its dealings with East Asia.
- While it was acknowledged that the EU needs to be more coherent, EU coherence can also prove problematic for third countries. For example in the WTO, the EU has often been criticised for acting as a block, leaving little room for compromise on positions that member states have agreed on.
- As EU-Asia relations increase, so too will the complexity of the relationship increase, invariably leading to conflict of interests in some areas.
- Perceptions of power in Asia tend to be equated with the power of the US – the US is seen as the security power in the region. While the EU is increasingly playing a security role in the region through soft power capabilities, this perception in East Asia needs to be and understood and addressed by the EU before the EU can be seen as a significant security power in the region.
- The need for an assessment of the implications of the lack of an updated and coherent EU policy towards East Asia.

Session 2: Areas for Future Focus and Policy Development

This session involved presentations from key European Commission officials and scholars regarding the current state of EU-Asia relations and the areas that need to be addressed. They included Mr Jim Moran (Director of Asia, European Commission) on ‘Towards a more coherent Asia Strategy’; Mr Geoffrey Barrett (Adviser, European Commission) on ‘ASEM – Role and opportunities’; Prof Douglas Webber (Professor of Political Science, INSEAD) on ‘Asian political regional integration’; Mr Mauro Petriccione (Services and Investment, Bilateral Trade Relations, European Commission) on ‘Trade’ and Mr David Fouquet (Director Asia Europe Project) on ‘Security’. The Round Table Discussion commenced with comments from Dr Gudrun Wacker (Asia, Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin) and Dr Paul Lim (European Institute of Asian Studies).

The key point discussed in this session included:

- The level of interdependence between Europe and Asia is increasing.
- The EU has often been criticised for spending too much time on China, but does the EU have any other option considering the important role that China plays in the region and globally? Further, the EU has a massive trade deficit with China. It is considered that China is both a challenge and opportunity and this can be developed in part through WTO mechanisms

- ASEM - While the EU has developed deep relationship with every part of the region, ASEM still has an important role to play in the relationship. The challenge however is to raise ASEM's profile by increasing its visibility and relevance and to reassess the contemporary value of ASEM. The fact that it is still called a 'meeting' may limit its potential. It can be viewed as topic-based cooperation, although it requires increased participation of civil society. Is there commitment to ASEM at the highest level?
- The EU has a tendency to focus on processes and documents rather than outcomes and results. There needs to be substance behind the documents that the EU produces, rather the EU and Member States hiding behind its documents and not putting the necessary weight and resources into supporting them.
- The EU needs a more coherent policy towards East Asia. The fact that the member states pursue their own interests with regard to Asia is a major problem.
- Asia needs to become a priority for EU member states in order that ensure that they are more willing that they are at present to put their weight behind EU activities in the region.
- While it was argued that the EU strategy can emerge from its trade relationship with Asia, this does not deal adequately with the fact that the EU is promoting itself as a type of 'soft power' in the region. A more coherent approach is required.
- The role of the EU in hard security is minimal in the region, but there is some scope to develop a convergence of view in this area. The experience of the Aceh Monitoring Mission is regarded as having established the EU's credentials on security in the region, for some. The EU is present in the region in terms of non-traditional security such as human security and immigration. Asians may not welcome EU hard security in the region.
- The centrality of ASEAN to the development of regional cooperation in East Asia; the varieties of the use of regionalism, bilateralism and multilateralism and the pace set by China and ASEAN are all factors that require attention.
- The trade relationship with East Asia is a broad one and the EU is keen to achieve more cooperation and openness from East Asia on investment, services, government procurement, sustainable development and intellectual property protection. This is in keeping with its *Global Europe* strategy.
- Priority needs to be given Human Rights in EU-Asia relations.
- There is a need for the development of dialogue among officials and scholars



The Contemporary Europe Research Centre (CERC),
The University of Melbourne
and
The European Institute of Asian Studies (EIAS),
Brussels

Programme

Workshop

EU-Asia Relations: A Policy Review

Thursday 10 July 2008

European Institute of Asian Studies
67 Rue de la Loi
1040 Brussels

14.00 – 14.15 **Workshop Registration**

14.15 – 14.25 **Welcome**

Mr. Dick Gupwell (Secretary General and Acting Director, European Institute of Asian Studies) *and*
A/Prof. Philomena Murray (Director, Contemporary Europe Research Centre, The University of
Melbourne)

14.25 – 16.00 **Session 1: EU-Asia Relations: a Critical Overview**

Session Chair: *Mr Dick Gupwell* (Secretary General and Acting Director, European Institute of Asian
Studies)

- *Dr Fraser Cameron* (Senior Advisor, European Institute of Asian Studies): ‘Policy scorecard of EU-Asia Relations since 2001’
- *A/Prof Philomena Murray* (Director, Contemporary Europe Research Centre, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne), *Mr Adam Berryman* (Contemporary Europe Research Centre, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne) and *Ms Margherita Matera* (Contemporary Europe Research Centre, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne): ‘Coherence, Effectiveness and Recognition in EU-East Asia Relations:’
- Roundtable Discussion with *Mr Michito Tsuruoka* (Special Adviser, Embassy of Japan in Belgium), *Dr Francois Godemont* (Centre Asie, IFRI, Paris) and *Mr. Zhang Jiming* (Counsellor , Chinese Mission in Belgium)
- Open Discussion

16.00 – 16.15 Break

16.15 – 18.30 Session 2: Areas for Future Focus and Policy Development

Session Chair: *A/Prof. Philomena Murray* (Director, Contemporary Europe Research Centre, The University of Melbourne)

- *Mr Jim Moran* (Director of Asia, European Commission): ‘Towards a more coherent Asia Strategy’
- *Mr Geoffrey Barrett* (Adviser, European Commission): ‘ASEM – Role and opportunities’
- *Prof Douglas Webber* (Professor of Political Science, INSEAD): ‘Asian political regional integration’
- *Mr Mauro Petriccione* (Services and Investment, Bilateral Trade Relations, European Commission): ‘Trade’
- ‘Human Rights’ – Speaker TBC
- *Mr David Fouquet* (Director Asia Europe Project): ‘Security’
- Round Table Discussion with *Dr Gudrun Wacker* (Asia, Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin) and *Dr Paul Lim* (European Institute of Asian Studies)
- Open Discussion
- Summing Up - *Dr Fraser Cameron* (Senior Advisor, European Institute of Asian Studies)



This Workshop is funded by a grant from the European Commission (*Agreement number 2007 – 1747/001 - 001*), with additional support from *The University of Melbourne*.



Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence

