

Media Release

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As regionalism becomes the new 'world order', project explores roles of Europe and Asia

A two year research project looking at the new 'region-based' world order and comparing developments in Europe and Asia has concluded that while both regions are currently in a high state of flux, their influence and importance will only increase in the years ahead.

Project leader Associate Professor Philomena Murray, Director of the Contemporary Europe Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Melbourne says that as far as culture, values, development levels, and economic and political systems are concerned, the two regions could not be more different.

"However, they do have one important factor in common that renders the Europe-Asia relationship a fascinating and important subject of research," she explains. "Both continents are currently undergoing processes of economic and political integration, and are increasingly interacting with each other, and the rest of the world, as *regions*."

Then CERC project, 'Europe and Asia: Regions in Flux' brought together leading researchers from the University of Melbourne, the University of Limerick, Keio University in Tokyo and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, in Belgium.

Over the life of the project, processes of regionalism in Europe and Asia were explored, along with the extent to which the EU can be considered a model for Asia, as well as perceptions of Europe and Asia as international players. The growing dialogue and linkages, both formal and informal, between these two dynamic regions was given particular attention in regard to trade, human rights, civil society and democratic development.

The project included a major international conference, an edited book, and no fewer than 57 journal articles and book chapters, 18 public seminars, and 62 conference papers.

Associate Professor Murray said: "We are so pleased that this project resulted in a dynamic exchange of ideas, with significant sharing of research results and scholarship in each of the countries involved, as well as engaging the broader

community through free public seminars, conferences, and a major publication. It was a case of active knowledge creation and transfer.”

According to Associate Professor Murray, ‘Europe and Asia: Regions in Flux’ not only dispelled common misconceptions about regionalism in East Asia and Europe, but also generated enthusiasm for and spread understanding of this growing feature of contemporary international relations.

The two-year, international study, was funded by a competitive Jean Monnet award from the European Union. Research was based upon interviews and surveys with leading EU diplomats, Asian politicians and international scholars, comprehensive economic data, media analysis and in-country investigation.

The edited book, ‘*Europe and Asia: Regions in Flux*’, edited by Associate Professor Murray and containing chapters by all project participants, will be published by Palgrave Macmillan, and available in bookstores in early 2008.

Links to other documents emanating from the project will be published shortly on the website of the Contemporary Europe Research Centre www.cerc.unimelb.edu.au.

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