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CALL FOR PAPERS

East Asia and the European Union: strong Economics, weak Politics?

**Conference of the Centre for East Asian Studies Groningen (CEASG),
 University of Groningen, 8 - 9 May 2014**

When people in East Asia reflect on Europe nowadays, their immediate association is likely to be the Eurozone debt crisis. Asian countries, particularly China, monitor the crisis with fervent interest because the EU is one of their largest export markets. Mutual economic relations seem to be affected by lower demand and expectations. Yet, despite the crisis, the EU can still make its influence felt in Asia, particularly in the area of trade. After all, the countries taking part in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) together represent more than 60 percent of global commerce.

The EU endeavours to extend its network of Free Trade Agreements in Asia. A deal with South Korea was concluded in 2011 and agreements are underway (or concluded) with several ASEAN countries. Japan is next in line (negotiations started in March 2013) and also China has reached out to the EU, especially after reaching a solution to the long-running dispute on solar energy panels. These developments show why and how the EU continues to matter for Asian economies.

Europe's involvement in broader issues, such as East Asian security, has remained an entirely different matter, at least till recently. Europe has been blamed for taking a one-dimensional view of Asia's rise and considering the region primarily as an area for economic opportunities. Indeed, for a long time, the European Union was conspicuously absent if it concerns political or strategic aspects of developments in the East Asian region, like the maritime disputes between China and its neighbours in the South China Sea, nuclear threats posed by North-Korea or regional rivalry on energy resources. To its chagrin and despite its request for observer status, the EU





was not invited to the East Asia Summit (EAS) meetings, not only due to its apparent inability to speak with one voice but also because of lack of political clout. Hence, the fundamental question was posed whether there was still a role reserved for Europe, if the world moved to become an Asia-Pacific world.

Recently, it seems that Europe has taken greater notice of the broader issues. In 2012, High Representative Catherine Ashton visited the region in what she called an 'Asian Semester'. All the EU member countries signed up for new guidelines for European policy in East Asia, including on difficult issues such as the strategic (island) disputes in the South China Sea. Moreover, at the ASEAN Regional Forum of July 2012, Ashton made a joint statement with the US Secretary of State on cooperation in Asia and one year later, in July 2013, she signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, a pact of non-aggression between ASEAN and its partners.

Wider regional implications

ASEAN-EU relations stand at an interesting point, with the two parties striving to enhance mutual cooperation. With disputes about Myanmar largely left behind, the EU's debt crisis offers opportunities to restructure relations with ASEAN on a more equal basis. While the EU looks for ways to participate in Asia's growth, Asia realizes the significant impact of failing European demand on its economies. Discussions are opened on extending the existing Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017) into a Strategic Partnership. Apparently, the two organisations share a common problem: both experience trouble in making their voice heard externally and both tend to allow their unity to be split by outside powers. In this respect, the question can be raised whether and to what extent China, Japan and South Korea are willing to team up with ASEAN in the ASEAN plus three framework.

Topics to be considered for discussion at the East Asia conference in Groningen:

Political and security complex

- Impact of EU financial-economic crisis on mutual political relations
- Developments of regionalism and inter-regionalism (ASEAN plus 3; EAS; SCO; EU-ASEAN; ASEM)
- Comparing intra-regional dynamics
- Energy and security
- EU and East Asia in global political governance (especially UN)
- EU, East Asia and third powers: US, Russia, Australia – competing for the pie or sharing it? (including the US pivot towards Asia; and Russia and SCO)

Trade and investment

- Changing trade and investment patterns between EU and East Asia
- Changing roles in global political economy (EU crisis vs. emerging markets)
- US influence on the development of Eurasian relations and expected impact of EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
- EU and East Asia in global economic governance (especially IMF and World Bank)

Cultural and people-to-people

- Public and cultural diplomacy
- Technology and innovation (incl. Higher Education)

Call for Papers:

Please submit your abstracts (max. 300 words) prior to 1 March 2014 to CEASG.conference@rug.nl.

There is no conference registration fee. For those participants giving a paper at the conference the organization will provide lunch, tea/coffee and conference meals. We do not cover the cost of transportation or accommodation, but we will assist participants in securing accommodation at reasonable rates near the conference venue.

Our intention is to publish (afterwards) a conference volume of selected papers in our CEASG book series.

Practical Information

Dates: Thursday 8 May - Friday 9 May 2014

Venue: Senate Room of the Academy building of Groningen University

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Conference Venue