

AUTUMN 2018

MY ASEM WISHLIST

HOW ASIA AND EUROPE SHOULD REALLY BE WORKING TOGETHER

DISCUSSION PAPER



This publication is part of Friends of Europe's Asia Programme. In this discussion paper, we go beyond officialdom and seek out 'unusual suspects' – students, teachers, activists, journalists, think tankers, etc. – who consider where they would like the state of Asia-Europe relations to be by 2030 and what the two continents should do to get there.

*This publication was produced with the contribution
of the EU's Partnership Instrument.*



Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEM12 - BRUSSELS 2018

AUTUMN 2018

MY ASEM WISHLIST

HOW ASIA AND EUROPE SHOULD REALLY BE WORKING TOGETHER

DISCUSSION PAPER



The authors in this discussion paper contribute in their personal capacities, and their views do not necessarily reflect those of the organisations they represent, nor of Friends of Europe and its board of trustees, members or partners.

Reproduction in whole or in part is permitted, provided that full credit is given to Friends of Europe, and that any such reproduction, whether in whole or in part, is not sold unless incorporated in other works.

Publisher: Geert Cami

Director: Shada Islam

Programme Manager: Amanda Rohde

Editor: Iiris André

Design: Miguel Trigo Morán & Elza Lőw

Programme Assistant: Augusta Ramaccioni

© Friends of Europe - September 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	6
ASEM and the power of Asia-Europe cooperation	
RECOMMENDATIONS	10
PILLAR 1: POLITICAL AND SECURITY	12
ASEM has a role to play in improved Asia-Europe cooperation on security	13
Asia and Europe can work together to bring peace to the South China Sea	17
EU, ASEAN and ASEM: “co-regionalism” in action	21
Between growing needs and disparities: Europe and Asia in the Age of Trump	25
PILLAR 2: ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL	28
Connecting the dots: Eurasian transport in 2030	29
ASEM Open and Fair Trade Area – from vision to reality	33
A region-to-region trade deal is possible – if ASEAN and the EU can find common ground	37
If Asia and Europe want to counter rising poverty by 2030, new efforts are needed	41
Asia-Europe cooperation is essential to the success of Agenda 2030	45
Labour mobility is a boon for all: let’s make it easier!	49
PILLAR 3: SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL	52
If we want ASEM to still matter in 2030, we need to connect people	53
Towards the globalisation of tradition	57
To counter extremism, Asia and Europe can empower women and increase their participation	61
ASEM could become a coalition of the willing against ‘fake news’	65
Civil society organisations of Asia and Europe need to be protected	69
LIST OF ACRONYMS	72

FOREWORD



ASEM and the power of Asia-Europe cooperation

Asia and Europe are in the midst of rapid political, economic and societal change. Some of the volatility is worrying and unsettling. But positive developments are also afoot.

Disruptive global transformations – including the resurgence of zero sum games, economic nationalism, the spread of illiberal values, destabilisation provoked by fake news and violations of the rule of law – are in the headlines and are having a negative impact on both regions.

Yet, Asia and Europe are also buzzing with new ideas, constructive initiatives and technological innovations aimed at building a better world. These positive developments are also part of the new reality and need to be shared and discussed jointly.

More than ever before, this is the time for a stronger Asia-Europe conversation on common aspirations and challenges – as well as on differences. Asia and Europe can learn from each other's experiences, successes as well as failures.

As Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, underlined recently, “Europe and Asia have never been so close. Our economies are interconnected; our cultures are interconnected; and our security is connected: we face the same challenges, we confront similar threats, and we share an interest in preserving peace in our regions and international cooperation on a global scale.”

The Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) with its 53 partners across Europe and Asia provides the perfect platform for such a discussion. Since its establishment in 1996, ASEM has evolved into a crucial link between the two regions, with leaders, ministers and policymakers meeting regularly to discuss myriad issues.

The dialogue between business leaders, scientists, academics, faith leaders, human rights activists and other civil society representatives is also deepening and expanding. The ASEM summit held in Ulaanbaatar in 2016 identified an array of questions for further debate.

Still, there is a persistent and justified perception that more could be done and that ASEM is under-performing and under-utilised. Most participants agree on the need for more ambition and courage to take ASEM into new areas, expand existing cooperation and respond to the challenge of living in a turbulent and unpredictable world.

After all, ASEM brings together some of the world's most dynamic and powerful economies. In addition to European Union countries, ASEM participants include members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the G7 industrial club, the G20 and the World Trade Organization. ASEM countries are represented in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as well as in the BRICS and other new clubs.

In a networked and inter-connected world, ASEM is a hyper-connected, super network which – if deployed more strategically – could become a real global game-changer.

After years of working on ASEM and with ASEM partners, we decided it was the moment for a collective rethink, for a new narrative that makes ASEM more relevant and credible for the 21st century. We believe that ASEM has to change from its often too bureaucratic and formalistic style to become a truly ideas-driven laboratory for new initiatives which embraces more stakeholders and more active participants. As such, we turned to non-officials for their views and opinions.

Our publication is not about official ideas and does not reflect governmental reasoning. Asia and Europe are fortunate to have a multitude of people who are actively working on ASEM outside government circles. We turned to some of them for their unvarnished views on how to give ASEM more traction. We asked them to give us their “ASEM wishlist” – and they did not disappoint. So here are their suggestions and recommendations for making ASEM more in tune with the needs of a rapidly-transforming world.

They write about ASEM’s geopolitical relevance as a Eurasian actor and its role in safeguarding and expanding the rules-based international order. There are strong recommendations for deepening the trade and investment relationship, the need for Asia-Europe cooperation to meet the ambitions of Agenda 2030 and the importance of civil society and women’s

movements in combating extremism and radicalisation. Some of these topics are already part of ASEM's official agenda, others are not. In both cases, the authors have explored new dimensions of the Asia-Europe relationship.

We hope this publication is read not only by ASEM leaders at their summit in Brussels in October 2018 and by government officials but also by all those who believe that Asia-Europe cooperation is a compelling necessity in our challenging times.

Happy reading,

Shada Islam

Director for Europe & Geopolitics at Friends of Europe

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations to Asian and European leaders draw on the viewpoints and ideas presented by the authors of the articles in this discussion paper:

- 1.** Emphasise ASEM's increasingly relevant geopolitical utility and dimension by taking a bold joint stance on defending, promoting and expanding the open, rules-based international order; sustaining multilateral cooperation; engaging in preventative diplomacy; and developing security cooperation, including in the sector of non-traditional security.
- 2.** In a world in disarray, give ASEM a central and stabilising role in discussions that aim at improving global governance and cross-border collaboration in areas such as climate change and the Agenda 2030 of sustainable development goals, particularly when it comes to the challenge of finding innovative sources of finance for reducing poverty and promoting education, especially for girls.
- 3.** Make ASEM the hub for an expanding conversation on the different facets of Eurasia, with a special focus on developing sustainable, state-of-the-art Eurasian transport and infrastructure links through various connectivity initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative, Europe's Trans-European Networks and connectivity proposals made by Japan, South Korea, India and other ASEM partners.
- 4.** Given uncertainties surrounding global trade and investment regimes, start exploring the opportunities and challenges involved in negotiating a ground-breaking ASEM Open and Fair Trade Agreement (OFTA), involving Asian and European businesses, as a follow-up to bilateral trade negotiations between the EU and several Asian countries and a potential revival of talks on an EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.

- 5.** Encourage more frequent and smoother travel between Asia and Europe by easing current travel restrictions for business, tourism and students in order to ensure better people-to-people contacts and mutual understanding but also to facilitate business relations, cultural links and academic cooperation.
- 6.** Make ASEM more people-friendly by improving outreach to civil society representatives; recognising and understanding the importance of local traditions; and investing in academic research across Eurasia to uncover and learn from the two regions' connected pasts.
- 7.** Emphasise the role of women in creating stable, peaceful and more tolerant societies, especially through their participation in drafting counter-terrorism strategies and create an ASEM-wide research network to investigate gender implications of extremism and violence.
- 8.** With media freedom at risk in many countries in Asia and Europe, create an ASEM taskforce consisting of education and media professionals to share experiences and develop strategies to build an independent, free and credible press and to fight disinformation and fake news, especially through disseminating information in schools.
- 9.** Given the shrinking space for human rights activists and defenders in many Asian and European countries, encourage like-minded ASEM partners to initiate joint initiatives and strategies to defend and promote civil society and to ensure that national legislation, policies and practices do not undermine or restrict human rights, media freedom and the rule of law.

25TH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM RETREAT SES

4 AUGUST 2018, SINGAPORE



PILLAR 1: POLITICAL AND SECURITY

ASEM has a role to play in improved Asia-Europe cooperation on security

Europe is facing a number of internal and external challenges but is set on playing a more significant role in Asia

Bart Gaens, Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Europe currently has a wide range of security-related debates on the agenda, ranging from migration and defence policies to border control and internal security collaboration; from the security implications of Brexit to cooperation with NATO. At the same time, Europe is faced with an increasingly assertive neighbourhood, marked by new, unprecedented risks such as hybrid threats. Moreover, global power relations are in a state of flux, the transatlantic relationship is weakening, and question marks are being placed on the future of multilateralism, the liberal world order and the rules-based global system.

With increasing internal and external challenges, the European Union is aware of its need to play a larger global role as a security actor in order to defend its values and interests. In Asia in particular, the EU feels compelled to deepen security cooperation with its partners. As emphasized by the European Council in May 2018, cooperation with Asia should focus more on the achievement of “tangible results in addressing shared security challenges”, in particular in the fields of maritime and cyber security, counter-terrorism, hybrid threats, conflict prevention, non-proliferation and the development of regional cooperative orders.

The importance of platforms such as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in achieving these ambitious goals is undeniable. However, ASEM has its limitations: it was never intended to function as a forum for negotiating agreements or crafting joint security policies. Rather, it was established as a political catalyst and a complementary platform to address shared challenges – or promote common interests – in other multilateral fora. Yet, in spite of these in-built restrictions, in the coming years ASEM can play an important role in helping to improve Asia-Europe security cooperation in three particular areas.

First, ASEM should function as a venue for both regions to uphold support for a rules-based multilateral system. In fact, the United States' unilateralism has been an issue on the ASEM agenda since the creation of the forum. With the liberal world order now under threat, the need for countries in Europe and Asia to take a united stance in order to persuade the US that the benefits of multilateral co-operation outweigh the costs is today more salient than ever. However, ASEM should serve as a venue to help sustain multilateral cooperation in traditional as well as non-traditional security issues, and not to “gang up” against the US.

Second, ASEM should better exploit its complementary role in globally important security issues. For example, maritime security is a field in which the EU, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and many Asian countries share a core interest. The EU in particular has been increasingly active in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in order

to profile itself as an ‘honest broker’ and a global maritime security provider. Furthermore, exchange of best practises has been taking place at the EU-ASEAN High-Level Dialogue on Maritime Security. Not least importantly, there is the positive experience of EU cooperation with Asian countries in Operation Atalanta, the counter-piracy operation in the Western Indian Ocean. Focusing its agenda more on maritime security and complementing ongoing work in the ARF and EU-ASEAN, ASEM can not only help to exchange best practises but also streamline cooperation between maritime law enforcement agencies, for example. It is clear that tension within ASEM remains on issues such as the South China Sea but as a dialogue forum, ASEM has an important role to play in preventive diplomacy by emphasising international law and by promoting regional maritime multilateralism.

Third, ASEM should further exploit its capacities as a bridge-builder between stakeholder groups and promote a so-called multi-stakeholder approach to security. One of ASEM's greatest strengths is that it has a solid bottom-up dimension, bringing together governments as well as parliaments, the private sector, the academic community and civil society organisations. It therefore has the capacity to stimulate cooperation among self-organising and self-coordinating clusters of countries and regional organisations, but also to include participants from the non-governmental, civil society level. These informal, multi-stakeholder working groups can focus on specific projects in defined, security-related areas such as conflict prevention or the promotion of regional

cooperation on crisis management capabilities. In this respect, the successful Aceh Monitoring Mission that started in 2005 can serve as a positive example that combines the skills, expertise and funding from different countries and regional organisations.

Europe is facing a number of internal and external challenges but is set on playing a more significant role in Asia, where its interests are closely connected to regional security and stability. ASEM offers one venue to promote security cooperation between Asia and Europe. While the forum has its limitations, it has the potential to greatly increase its importance in the coming years, whether on promoting a multi-stakeholder approach on security, sustained support for multilateralism, or complementing existing work on maritime security.



Asia and Europe can work together to bring peace to the South China Sea

The territorial disputes are commonly regarded as intractable because they are mutually contradictory

Bill Hayton, Associate Fellow, Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House

There is a simple solution to the ongoing disputes in the South China Sea, at least on paper: all the competing claimants agree to maintain their current positions on the various rocks and reefs, recognise the other claimants' current occupations and commit to occupying no further features. The claimants would then divide up the resources of the sea according to the rules laid down in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and cooperate to manage them sustainably.

There are two main obstacles to this simple solution: first, it would require governments to compromise on their territorial claims. Second, UNCLOS allocates marine resources

in proportion to the length of the relevant section of a country's coastline. Because of the elongated shape of the South China Sea, this principle – fair and agreed by almost every government in the world – would give the Southeast Asian claimants more than China.

For the Chinese government, such a peace deal would require both a territorial compromise and an acceptance that its incoherent claim for 'historic rights' is not compatible with international law. China would have to be prepared to settle for maritime rights as defined by UNCLOS, which means that for the Chinese the solution appears to be all downside.

The governments in Vietnam and the Philippines would also face domestic political difficulties in compromising on their extensive territorial claims. For Malaysia and Brunei, as well as Indonesia which has maritime claims but no territorial ones, such solution is all upside.

This difficult road is worth taking, however, because it preserves the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the primacy of UNCLOS. It is based upon a European belief that states must settle rival claims on the basis of right rather than might. And Europe could contribute by supporting the resolution of underlying territorial disputes and by defending UNCLOS.

The territorial disputes are commonly regarded as intractable because they are mutually contradictory. China claims every feature within a 'U-shaped line' that it first published on an official map in 1948. Taiwan has the same territorial claims as China. Vietnam and the Philippines have claims over most of the same islands, while Malaysia and Brunei have more modest demands. However, a more rigorous examination of the historical evidence reveals that, with a few exceptions, the occupations we see today are the only occupations that there have ever been: very few islands have changed hands during the past century and there is minimal evidence of effective occupations before then. If the states could be persuaded to make claims to specific features rather than to entire archipelagos the disputes could be resolved relatively easily.

This is where Europe could play a role by

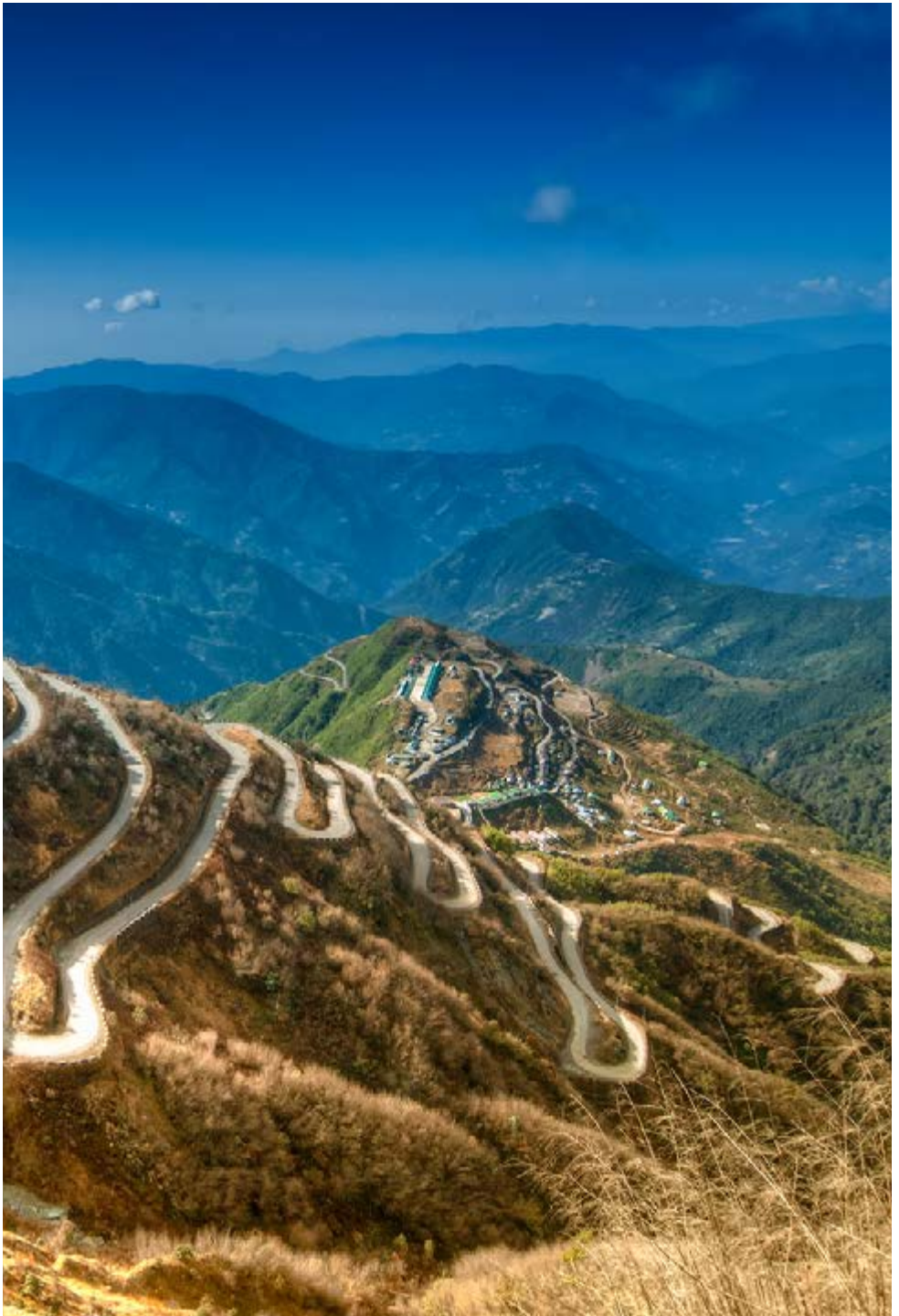
creating a 'European taskforce' consisting of universities and think-tanks that would collate, translate and assess the evidence put forward for the various territorial claims. It could also gather and make available the documents commonly presented in sovereignty cases, as many of them already exist in the archives of European governments. The findings of the taskforce would be disseminated to the claimant governments as well as experts and academics in those countries, together with associated media and communication campaigns in the relevant languages to inform the wider public.

The defence and promotion of UNCLOS requires a different approach. The European Union and its member states need to maintain clear support for the convention in all their public statements on maritime affairs and communicate this frequently to the South China Sea claimants. Those EU states with the capacity to do so should be encouraged to demonstrate their continuing interest in the peaceful international order by deploying naval vessels into the South China Sea to demonstrate that Europe considers a threat to the international order in one part of the world to be a threat to it everywhere.

European states have other levers, too. They could refuse Chinese naval ships permission to make port visits and reduce other forms of military cooperation if China violates the principles of UNCLOS and the peaceful settlement of disputes. They could help Southeast Asian states build up the capacity to monitor and control their legitimate

claims on Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and increase military cooperation with them. They could sanction Chinese companies that are engaged in predatory behaviour within other countries' legitimate EEZs. They could add stipulations about respecting legitimate EEZ claims to all maritime agreements with the claimant states and insist that fish catches, for example, are traceable to domestic EEZs. These, and other relevant and targeted, countermeasures have the potential to deter rule-breaking in the South China Sea.

This is clearly an idealistic strategy. It would demand funding and time, and it carries diplomatic risk. The alternative, however, is worse.



EU, ASEAN and ASEM: “co-regionalism” in action

Cooperative regional structures must always complement rather than confront power dynamics

Philomena Murray, Professor at the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne

Two advanced regional bodies – the European Union and ASEAN – have the opportunity to form the core of a co-regional approach to managing challenges in a crowded Asia Pacific, with many powers seeking to influence and even dominate the region.

While the United States has withdrawn its support for multilateral rules and order, it remains a key player in the Asia Pacific. China is increasingly proving that it is as much of a norms-promoter as is the EU, with its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road/One Belt One Road Initiative. Russia is also seeking to increase its military and Internet presence in the region.

Despite these obvious signs of interest from several parties, there are opportunities for regional bodies to play a role in managing the challenges in this crowded space. The EU and ASEAN could take a strong co-regional approach. In this shared neighbourhood, they could progress from asymmetric regionalism to co-regionalism.

The EU remains an insider-outsider in the region. It is a key economic player and provider of development aid and humanitarian assistance, and it seeks to be involved in security issues, as the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini has made clear since her 2015 Shangri La speech to an Asian audience in Singapore.

But although the EU is the most important player in its own region, in the Asia Pacific, ASEAN-led arenas of interaction are the most important security fora – and it is here that great powers can be found. Nowhere is this more evidently demonstrated than at the East Asia Summit (EAS) which includes the US and Russia and excludes the EU.

Instead of being disappointed at this exclusion, however, the EU and ASEAN could develop a niche approach to non-traditional security that is co-regional. Neither of the two blocs is a leader in the Asia Pacific: the EU is not recognised as a key actor, and ASEAN's capacity to influence the behaviour of, and manage, great powers within the frameworks of the ASEAN Regional Forum and EAS has been questioned in recent years. Yet the EU and ASEAN could act together in a space that has competing multilateral institutions and trade patterns.

The EU could strengthen its niche role by strengthening its presence in a number of ways. First is the deepening of economic ties and free trade agreement negotiations. The second includes the accompanying agreements that range from strategic partnerships to Framework Agreements. The third is the carving out of its political role including norms-promotion with ASEAN. The fourth is security, taking up a great deal of energy and effort at the European External Action Service (EEAS). The EU is highly regarded as an effective non-traditional security actor, but it needs to reflect on the areas it should focus on and evaluate where it can do its niche work.

Cooperative regional structures must always complement rather than confront power dynamics, and these co-regional structures may be difficult to build in a region where dynamics are leaning towards rivalry and competition. Nevertheless, the EU and ASEAN have managed to build up an engagement based on trust.

ASEAN is seen as a driver for regionalism, including security regionalism, in its region. But it is neither a leader nor a dominant force in security – in fact, it is often referred to as being in the driver's seat in Asian regionalism. And this is where the EU could play its part.

Although the EU and ASEAN cannot play a pivotal role in regional leadership, a co-regional approach is needed to deal with many non-traditional security problems: the two blocs have now an opportunity to demonstrate that they could co-lead a regional order on non-traditional security. Both could work more within, and alongside, the ASEM framework to promote sharing of resources, capacity and expertise for these issues. By pooling their efforts, the EU and ASEAN could overcome limits to resources, capabilities and capacity. They could work together on an enhanced regional consensus on leadership, membership, mandate and sustainability of emerging and current structures to deal with pressing problems of non-traditional security issues. Both the EU and ASEAN can be credible regional co-actors precisely because they are not hard powers.

So there is scope for a fresh co-regional framework that is firmly based on non-traditional security and consolidates existing engagement. This includes natural disasters; food security; water security; pandemics; humanitarian assistance; energy supply; environmental pollution and cyber security. The EU and ASEAN already work together on many of these issues – now they could establish a framework for the region that does not require membership of the EAS but that could be a nucleus within ASEM.

Such an approach might well be useful if ASEAN and the EU choose to focus on non-traditional security, on joint regional leadership and on the use of summitry for clear declarations of joint positions rather than being bypassed by regional power rivalry.



Between **growing needs** **and disparities: Europe and Asia** **in the Age of Trump**

For a long time, the conventional truth has been that Europe and Asia are essential partners when it comes to globalisation

Richard Q. Turcsanyi, Deputy Director at the Institute of Asian Studies

While the most recent ASEM Summit took place less than two years ago, to many it may seem like a lifetime ago. Unlike in autumn 2016, we have now witnessed President Trump's United States question the very foundation of the international order it has constructed and led for over seven decades. In the process, some of the greatest global challenges we face are left for others to cope with. Not only that, the US is taking steps that seem to be leading towards a trade war and a wave of protectionism – perhaps the most serious one since the 1930s. In the meantime, we are observing a continual retreat from liberal democratic standards in most parts of the world.

In this troublesome global context, the two sides of Eurasia are discussing how they can contribute. For a long time, the conventional truth has been that Europe and Asia are essential partners when it comes to globalisation and addressing many of the global challenges. Yet the cooperation has been halted by their differing perspectives. The biennial Asia-Europe Meeting demonstrates this duality well: on the one hand, it contributes greatly to bridging the gaps in mutual understanding and providing a convenient venue for exchange and policy cooperation. On the other, however, the sometimes cumbersome and non-institutionalised nature of the process

underscores the lack of common denominators between the partners.

Politically speaking, Europe and Asia are on a divergent trajectory. Despite recent dynamics in Europe – such as Hungary and Poland with their ‘authoritarian’ drifts or Europe-wide increase in right-wing populism – the old continent remains by and large a global trend-setter when it comes to political and civic liberties. As for Asia, while never exactly a bedrock of these ideals, most of the countries in the region have seen further decreases in both.

China is tightening its political system further; Thailand is not moving persuasively towards reinstalling democratic rule; and the Philippines is experiencing a growing number of extrajudicial killings sanctioned by its president. Myanmar, seen by some as major hope for democracy, is now ‘officially’ consumed by domestic turmoil and in the process shatters the idea of inclusive democratic multi-ethnic society.

Under ‘normal’ circumstances, these political processes would constitute divides which would be hard to bridge. In today’s reality, however, the needs are so strong that the two sides will have to attempt to move closer to each other despite their political preferences setting them apart. And with the US retreating from the world stage, Europe and Asia hardly have other options.

Economic and global governance issues will need to remain top priority. While the two regions have achieved hugely different levels when it comes to development, ASEM still strongly

prefers the current open global trading system, although not excluding reforms which are called for. At the same time, member countries will want to address issues stemming not only from the current trend of anti-globalisation, but also from the globalisation itself, including the impacts of accelerating technological progress on (un)employment, pay gap, poverty reduction, and so on.

As one of the most daunting tasks when it comes to global governance, the member countries will want to move on cooperation on climate policies. There now seems to be a political will and a sense of urgency to act, although the details of the response will be a major question. Security issues might be an even harder nut to crack, but it is likely that at least on some of the issues a near-consensus can be reached – notably on North Korea and the Iran nuclear deal.

However, the diverging political climate might undermine one of the areas in which ASEM has invested much of its effort: the unofficial contacts between Europeans and Asians. It is going to be increasingly difficult to discuss issues of media standards or the role of civil society, for example, in the current setting. From this perspective, it should be a goal that the links fostered and encouraged by ASEM will remain truly people-to-people, instead of standing as forerunners for the official government positions. The heterogeneity of opinions should also be applauded and not prevented, as they have the potential to influence mutual understanding in the most efficient ways.

When it comes to the questions of political values in particular, Europe and Asia must find a way to express their positions without undermining much-needed cooperation. Perhaps an 'agree to disagree' model will have to be applied, but in any case Europe should stick to its position and communicate it consistently. Asia, for its part, should try to understand the European position. It should also understand that a deepening political divide between the two would further problematise this critically needed partnership.



PILLAR 2: ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL

Connecting the dots:

Eurasian transport in 2030

Developing and upgrading a Eurasian transport network by 2030 would only be the reflection of a crucial geopolitical shift

Ramon Pacheco Pardo, Senior Lecturer in International Relations in the Department of European & International Studies at King's College and KF-VUB Korea Chair at Vrije Universiteit Brussel's Institute for European Studies

Can you imagine travelling by rail, road or ship from Lisbon to Busan? From Glasgow to Sapporo? Or perhaps from Palermo to Chennai? Then you are not alone, as a growing number of governments, development banks and businesses are working on fundamentally transforming transport networks all the way from Western Europe to East and South Asia. The 21st century Eurasia could see terrestrial networks join maritime routes as a realistic and relatively cheap means to connect this huge landmass.

The idea of building and upgrading the necessary infrastructure to link Eurasia is of course not new. The ancient Silk Road served

to transport clothes, gold and countless other goods for centuries. Only in recent years, however, have megaprojects such as China's Belt and Road Initiative, the European Union's Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and South Korea's New Northern Policy started to converge and bring new life to the possibility of vast transport networks connecting the different parts of Eurasia. What is positive is that today's Eurasian leaders see opportunities where others see obstacles.

Building infrastructure is, above everything else, costly. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimates that developing Asia alone

will need \$26tn in infrastructure over 15 years between 2016 and 2030 simply to fill its existing infrastructure gap. Thankfully, several governments are willing to put their money where their mouth is. The €315bn Investment Plan for Europe – also known as the Juncker Plan – has infrastructure at its core. Beijing has committed \$40bn to its Silk Road Fund, mainly to upgrade transport networks across different parts of Asia. The Chinese, Japanese and South Korean governments are providing support to their domestic companies, as they upgrade railroads and ports across Southeast and South Asia. Funding is flowing across Eurasia on a scale probably never seen before.

Add to this the role that development banks are playing in building or upgrading transport networks across Eurasia. The launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2016 sparked fears of full-blown competition and a race to the bottom among development banks. This has not happened – in fact, the opposite is true. The AIIB follows the standards of pre-existing development banks such as the ADB and World Bank. If anything, the AIIB has spearheaded a degree of ‘healthy’ competition, whereby borrowers have a growing range of options at their disposal and can build infrastructure more cheaply than they have ever been able to.

Crucially, the private sector is involved in this boom in infrastructure lending. This brings credibility, expertise and a welcome attention to the bottom-line – as well as some extra funding. European construction firms, Japanese keiretsus and South Korean chaebols

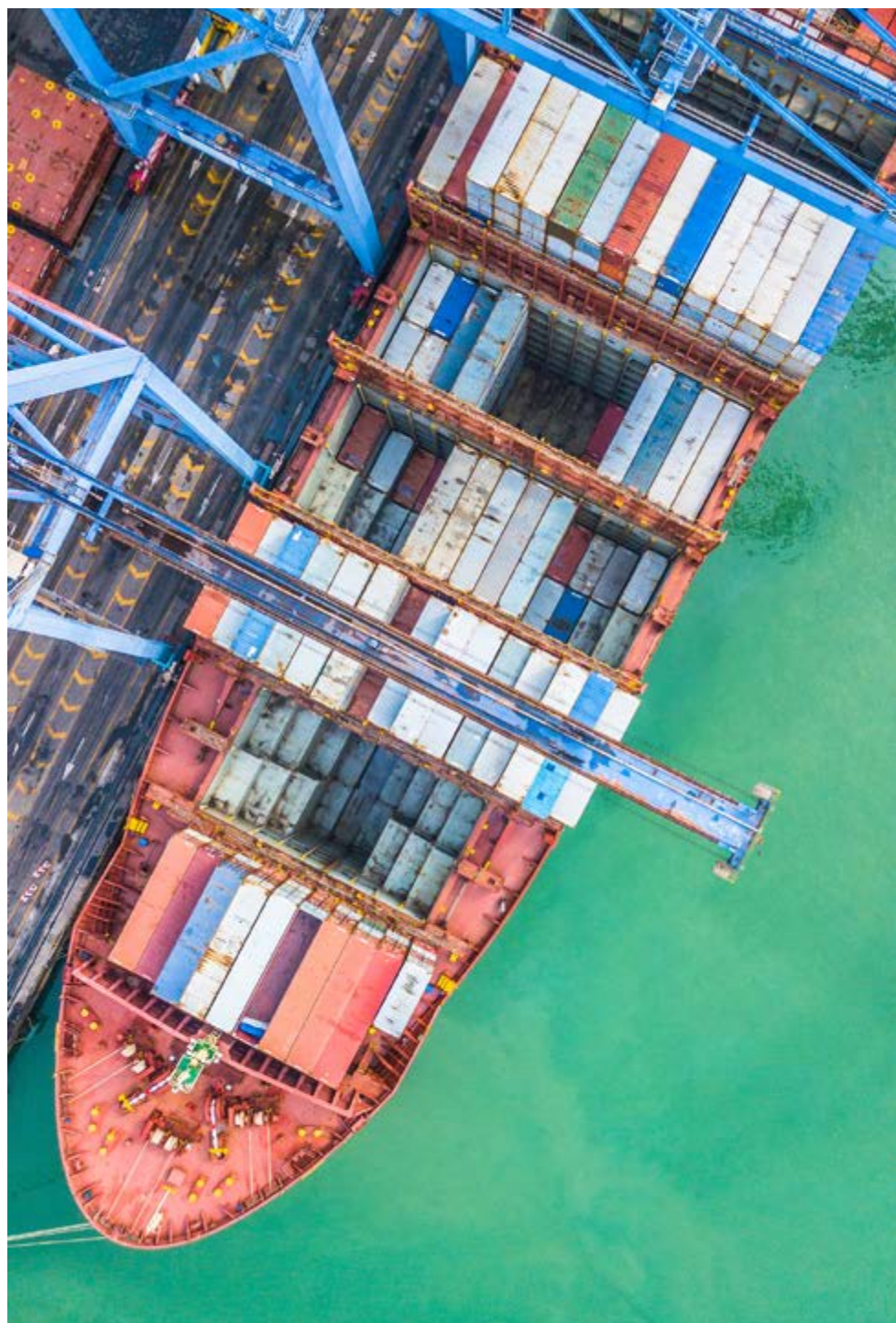
have to make a profit. Their shareholders or owners demand as much. They thus have to pay attention to maintaining standards while reducing costs in a way that state-owned enterprises or publicly-funded development banks, for example, might not have to.

What do governments need to do to maintain momentum and develop a state-of-the-art transportation network by 2030? To begin with, governments and development banks need to work together. Despite initial hesitations, it seems that many in Brussels now accept that Chinese investments in European railroads or ports can be beneficial to member states as well. Beijing, meanwhile, has been more than willing to allow global standards to be the de facto starting point for the AIIB and much of Silk Road Fund lending. India has become the largest recipient of AIIB funding, despite alleged mistrust between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is looking for Chinese, Russian and European investment to be part of its New Northern Policy – particularly as it pertains to rebuilding North Korea’s infrastructure. These positive developments need to be maintained into the future.

ASEM should become the focal point of these and other projects and establish an effective and permanent infrastructure working group that could serve as an unintrusive contact point to discuss ongoing and planned projects, funding needs and other important issues related to the transport networks being built across Eurasia. Development banks, key governments and even big construction

firms could send staff to this working group. This would allow for institutional memory not to be lost as governments inevitably change and development bank and private sector staff move jobs or institutions. The EU should seriously work towards this end in the light of the 12th ASEM Summit.

Ultimately, developing and upgrading a Eurasian transport network by 2030 would only be the reflection of a crucial geopolitical shift taking place across this landmass. People across Eastern Europe, Central Asia, China, Southeast Asia and parts of South Asia have become richer and less willing to fight against their neighbours. The real possibility of building bridges, railroads, roads and ports connecting the whole of Eurasia attests to this shift for the better.



ASEM Open and Fair Trade Area – from vision to reality

Asia and Europe must look beyond platitudes and start to engage meaningfully with each other

Yeo Lay Hwee, Director of the European Union Centre in Singapore

The Asia-Europe Meeting launched in 1996 was born in an atmosphere of enthusiasm over the benefits of globalisation and openness to trade and investments; in an era of hopes and optimism that dialogue and cooperation were the sensible way forward in pursuit of one's national interest in the international arena.

Fast forward to today, and we are facing an increasingly volatile and uncertain world with the rise of populist, xenophobic politicians; rising discontent over free trade and globalisation; and President Trump's United States that seeks to undermine every multilateral institution and up-ends the foundations of a rule-based global order.

But what can Asia and Europe do within the ASEM framework to counter these negative trends and forces? How can the two regions deliver on a progressive agenda for economic growth and development that brings tangible benefits to the peoples of these two vast continents?

ASEM brings together a very diverse group of players with diverging interests: the European Union and its member states are at odds with Russia over Ukraine and Syria; China's increasing assertiveness and its actions in the South China Sea are causing discomfort amongst some ASEAN members; and India is not entirely enthusiastic about China's Belt and Road initiative.

Yet, it is not far-fetched to assume that the need for co-existence underpins all platforms for dialogue and cooperation, and ASEM has so far served as a useful platform, acknowledging and accommodating these different interests. It has been able to survive thanks to its informal ‘talk shop’ nature that does not result in any binding decisions or agreements but only establishes a common understanding of the pluralism inherent in an inter-connected world.

To counter the current tirades against free trade and the impulse to pull up the drawbridge, ASEM should use its upcoming 12th Summit in Brussels in October 2018 to issue a simple political declaration – instead of a Chair statement – that signals the aspirations to pioneer the first ever ASEM Open and Fair Trade Agreement (ASEM OFTA) by 2030. Such declaration, even if it were only aspirational, issued by ASEM that has 53 partners, representing 62% of the global population, 57% of global GDP and 66% of world trade, would send a strong political signal that Asia and Europe stand ready to defend openness and refrain from the protectionist antics of the US.

This type of ASEM OFTA should be an ambitious document that promotes an open, rule-based trading system. While recognising that globalisation has both winners and losers, the document would need to encourage governments to step in to ensure a more equitable distribution of costs and benefits. Undoubtedly, an open and rules-based

system is still the best way to deliver on fair trade and development, with a focus on overarching principles such as commitment to openness; focus on people instead of profits; focus on sustainable growth and jobs; and upholding the rule of law to avoid the law of the jungle. Additionally, the importance of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in arbitrating differences and settling disputes would need to be reaffirmed.

An ASEM OFTA would prevent us from creating a fortress Europe or the Great Wall of Asia – it would emphasise not just physical connectivity but place importance on institutional and people-to-people connectivity as well.

For ASEM to put together an OFTA by 2030, it should first map out existing free trade agreements or comprehensive economic partnership agreements that exist amongst the 53 ASEM partners.

Second, ASEM should revive the Trade Facilitation and Investment Promotion Working Groups and revisit the issues on how measures to improve the trade and investment environment can create jobs.

Third, ASEM should identify priority sectors that would reap the most benefits for the people such as transport, logistics, healthcare, education and vocational training.

Fourth, economic ministers of ASEM should coordinate more on WTO matters

and make sure that the ASEM OFTA would not undermine the WTO and its dispute settlement mechanism.

Last, ASEM leaders should step up engagement with business leaders and groups that represent labour/employee interests to be able to host a Tripartite Summit on what constitutes open and fair trade.

By working together through the ASEM framework, Asia and Europe stand a better chance to help move the world towards sharing of power and respect for a rule-based multilateral world order. With the US either retrenching or seeking to reassert its primacy through tactics that resemble bullying more than politics, Asia and Europe must look beyond platitudes and start to engage meaningfully with each other, if they wish to make a difference. An ASEM OFTA would be a good starting point.



A region-to-region trade deal is possible – if ASEAN and the EU can find common ground

There is no reason why a region-to-region deal could not be reached by 2030, or even earlier

Chris Humphrey, Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council

In a world where the multi-lateral, rules-based trading order is being challenged, two trading blocs stand out as beacons of free trade – the European Union and ASEAN.

ASEAN – which will soon be the world's fourth largest economy – already has several Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) of varying depth and breadth in place and is presently finalising the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a multi-lateral trade deal that would link all of ASEAN's existing FTAs. Additionally, four ASEAN member states are also part of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, arguably one of the

most ambitious multi-lateral trade deals ever concluded. The EU is not falling short either, as it has numerous FTAs in place already, including FTAs concluded – though not yet ratified – with Singapore and Vietnam.

To a large degree ASEAN and the EU are natural bedfellows. In recent years, the EU has consistently been ASEAN's second largest trading partner and the largest source of foreign direct investment. In 2017, trade in goods between the two reached a record of €227.3bn. ASEAN has also consistently been the EU's third largest trading partner outside of continental Europe, and this trade and

investment relationship has been growing with over 11,000 European businesses operating in Southeast Asia. Both blocs believe in trade and want to conclude more trade deals.

Earlier talks on a region-to-region trade deal were abandoned for a variety of reasons, with the EU opting to pursue bilateral deals. More recently, however, there have been talks on a framework agreement which could lead to full negotiations on a region-to-region deal. According to the 2017 EU-ASEAN Business Sentiment Survey, European businesses certainly want to see such a deal; in other words, European businesses want the Commission to show more urgency. As for ASEAN, the bloc feels that now there is a window of opportunity for Europe: ASEAN wants to have a counterweight to China, and with the United States' somewhat unpredictable trade policies, Europe would be a natural choice for a trade partner.

But things are being held back for a variety of reasons. First, the Commission still prioritises bilateral deals: an agreement with Indonesia is being negotiated; one with the Philippines has started though seems to be on hold; re-engagement with Malaysia and post-election Thailand are also distinct possibilities. There is certainly some merit in trying to secure three or four bilateral deals first to gain momentum in the region but securing more deals to go alongside those with Singapore and Vietnam is proving difficult.

Second, there is probably some doubt about the willingness and ability of ASEAN to act as a collective, as opposed to effectively running 10

sets of parallel negotiations. However, ASEAN has acted as one during rounds of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations – there is no reason why this could not work with the EU as well.

Third, there are political concerns: uncertainty over the priorities of the new government in Malaysia; a desire to wait for a return to democracy in Thailand; concerns about certain policies in the Philippines; worries about democracy in Cambodia; and, of course, concerns over the Rakhine State in Myanmar. However, moving ahead with a region-to-region deal might help to avoid such issues holding up progress.

Fourth, disparity in economic development in ASEAN is also seen as a potential stumbling block. And true, ASEAN is a region that ranges from the highly service-oriented economy of Singapore with a GDP per capita of US\$52,963 to the developing economy of Cambodia with a GDP per capita of US\$1,266. But ASEAN has great potential: it has the world's third largest working population, a rising middle class and astonishing rates of urbanisation.

Finally, there is the question of ambition. The EU uses a standard template for FTAs, including elements that some might argue go beyond the usual scope of FTAs. The EU wants the deepest and most comprehensive deal it can muster and, out of internal political necessity, wants to include things like labour rights, human rights and environmental protection alongside more traditional elements. That might be too much for ASEAN to swallow all at once. But raising ambitions on the ASEAN side and lowering

ambitions on the EU side should not be beyond the wit of man given the potentially positive outcome – an outcome that cannot, and should not, be measured in euros and dollars alone, but also in the potential geopolitical benefits.

There is no reason why a region-to-region deal could not be reached by 2030, or even earlier. It just requires key people on both sides to invest some political capital in the concept. But with the upcoming European elections, we may have to wait a little bit longer to get started.



If Asia and Europe want to counter rising poverty by 2030, **new efforts are needed**

Reducing poverty is a daunting task for both Asia and Europe

Braema Mathi, President of the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (MARUAH)

It is a global challenge that no one could have missed: rising income inequalities and people living in poverty.

Today, poverty is seen through a multi-dimensional lens. It is no longer considered to have just economic impact on a person's life, but poverty is acknowledged to also have social, political, cultural, environmental and even religious dimensions. The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even contextualised poverty in human rights terms. Hence, the United Nations Agenda 2030 is the clarion call and an alignment opportunity for all countries to focus on reducing poverty through policies and action plans to meet the SDGs by 2030.

Income gap and rising poverty are a result of several factors, such as political forces that fail to manage the distribution of national incomes or weakly enforced financial policies; the adverse effects of globalisation resulting in job loss in one country and increase in another; the past global and regional financial crises that still have a carry-over effect; and even climate change, resulting in more hardship as people are subjected to emerging natural disasters and difficult weather conditions. Some 400 million people, or around 10.3% of the Asia-Pacific region's population, were living in extreme income poverty between 2010 and 2013. The region's extremely poor populations accounted

for some 52% of the world's extremely poor people during 2010–2013, down from 65% of the total during 2000–2004. In the European Union, the average poverty line was at 9.8%.

Measures that both Europe and Asia are taking on to tackle the issue are similar in approach, yet they are adapted to the political, social, cultural and environmental needs of the respective regions. Policies to increase taxation in the form of progressive taxes have been one attempt to narrow inequality, but there must be more targeting of the wealthy, more governance and more accountability of finances so that Asia and Europe do not follow the example of the United States and have the rich pay considerably little income tax.

Beyond taxation, Asia and Europe also have more plans to invest in rural livelihoods. They are also investing in re-equipping people with new skills to meet the newly-emerging needs of digitised societies and economy. Both regions have multi- and bi-lateral trade agreements as well as investments in countries to build up the economy for both wealth creation and sustainable living standards. Asia in particular is investing in building infrastructure and social services and protection, while the European Union has set a clear target in its Europe 2020 Strategy to have 20 million people fewer than today living below the poverty threshold. The EU has also mapped future economic growth over the coming three years by asking each country to put together a National Action Plan to reduce poverty with clear targets and identified key industries

for innovation, digitisation and education. Asia does not yet have a similar concerted regional plan as Europe, but individual countries and regional blocs such as ASEAN have set goals in their official documentation and action plans to eradicate poverty through social protection, micro-entrepreneurships and capacity-building.

Both regions as well as the individual countries face challenges of effective coordination and outreach at local, national, regional and international levels to meet the targets of poverty reduction and to enable people's livelihoods to reach a sustainable level as described in the SDGs. Understandably, in both regions, developing countries need more aid, whether through initiatives such as Overseas Development Aid in Asia or through blocs, such as the EU in Europe. The countries in need of support also need technical assistance, policy formulation, impact assessment schemes, promotion of labour intensive manufacturing activities, upscaling the informal sector and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises. Despite potential difficulties in achieving these ambitious targets, such provisions mean that the countries and their people will see a rise in labour productivity and mobility as well as in the number of business ventures. All countries need to also do more in terms of social protection. Perhaps surprisingly, the current social protection schemes meet the needs of too few poor people, as they often target and reach the lowest quantile only, while many others are living in poverty across other quantiles.

Reducing poverty is a daunting task for both Asia and Europe, and especially challenging for those countries that have high levels of poverty and that are locked in their own internal and domestic turmoil. But a focused approach on the issue means that in another decade, more people have had the opportunity to have the basic necessities, to work, to become independent, and to have their dignity and confidence restored. The road there might be difficult, but reducing poverty is our shared responsibility with far-reaching benefits to us all.



Asia-Europe cooperation is essential to the success of Agenda 2030

*An Asia-Europe partnership for sustainable development
presents a bright future for all of humanity*

Giulia Tercovich, Research Fellow in the Peace and Security Section of the Global Governance Institute

Francis Acevedo, Research Assistant in the Peace and Security Section of the Global Governance Institute

Adopted in September 2015, the United Nations resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals contains 17 agreed-upon objectives to ensure that humanity's actions today do not endanger the lives of future generations. The SDGs acknowledge that sustainable development requires a focus on many categories, and thus cover anything from eradicating hunger to establishing strong and inclusive institutions.

Understandably, all countries are not the same and are at different levels of development: an economically developed country has a different set of priorities than an emerging one.

The difference in sustainability priorities also applies to Asia and Europe, and understanding these differing views is important so that the full benefits of the upcoming Asia-Europe Meeting can be properly leveraged for the benefit of all.

As one of the most industrialised regions in the world, Europe holds an important role in realising the SDGs. Yet, in 2015, the 28 member states of the European Union, home to a little less than 7% of what the global population was at the time, emitted 3.5 billion tonnes of CO₂, shadowed only by the United States and China. And, while the EU is making progress on most of the SDGs, income inequality and

consumption patterns remain of paramount concern. In November 2016, the European Commission released a document outlining the EU's approach to promote sustainable development in Europe, adopting a two-stream method that integrates the SDGs into current EU policy and establishes an imperative for an SDG-focused long-term vision beyond 2020. Much work remains to be done, however, to reverse worrying trends.

Meanwhile, in Asia, most countries are experiencing impressive economic growth at 5.9% per year on average. But issues, such as poverty, inequality and carbon emissions, still persist. With the demonstrable effects of climate change, many of the emerging economies in Asia have to balance industrialisation and development to meet the needs of their peoples while also meeting the requirements to reduce emissions, both of which are objectives included in the SDGs. Indeed, this dilemma has been highlighted by many influential individuals, from Indian environmentalist Dr Sunita Narain to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

But Duterte and other Asian leaders have other pressing matters to address, too. Progress in a number of Asian countries on SDGs related to hunger, employment, inequality, urban sustainability and life on land has actually regressed, and progress on SDGs related to health, sanitation, infrastructure, responsible consumption and institutional strength is not moving forward fast enough. If Asian countries are to continue growing at the current pace, then it is absolutely necessary to ensure that this growth does not occur unsustainably.

Differences aside, Asia and Europe are indispensable to achieving the SDGs. The 53 partners of ASEM represent 60% of the world's GDP, population and trade activity. Therefore, strong cooperation between the two regions is imperative, and it should focus on a set of specific issues.

ASEM provides a platform for cooperative dialogue that should be pursued by Asian and European countries. Indeed, the wide range of fora and participants at ASEM provide an unrivalled opportunity to create a multi-faceted approach to common sustainable development issues.

Regional politics should also be used to coordinate efforts to fulfil the SDGs. Regional organisations in both Europe and Asia can help delegate official development assistance to countries that need it most. Together, they should work to strengthen and focus the political frameworks, dialogues and development assistance that flow between the two regions, especially the EU and ASEAN which coordinate development aid through different programmes for many areas from poverty reduction to scientific cooperation. Partnerships like this, and other modes of cooperation similar to the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument, should be strengthened. ASEM provides the perfect venue for member states of various regional organisations to make such commitments.

Trade leveraging can also help Asia and Europe make progress on the SDGs. Trade between the two regions is a force that can

be used to drive sustainable production and consumption and an economic link valued at more than one trillion euros. If traded goods were to be manufactured with sustainability in mind both in Asia and in Europe, essentially tackling the source of the issue, the power of global trading connections could lead to the proliferation of sustainable goods on a large scale. This solution would require engagement not only from the governments of export-oriented countries but also from corporations through platforms like the Asia-Europe Business Forum. ASEM can prove useful in providing the venue for creating a consolidated economic global approach.

An Asia-Europe partnership for sustainable development presents a bright future for all of humanity. But a gap in progress prevents countries from realising this vision – a gap that can only be bridged through global discussion, understanding and cooperation.

D E P A R T U R E S

CHECK-IN		REMARKS	BOARDING	TIME	TO	FLIGHT	CHECK-IN		REMARKS	BOARDING	TIME	TO
ROWS	ROWS						ROWS	ROWS				
10	11	GATE CLOSED		07:00	CHENNAI	M1436 NZ3504	04				07:40	PHNO
06		GATE CLOSED		07:00		SQ5336 VA5706	04				07:40	JAKA
06		GATE CLOSING		07:00	CHONGQING	M1972 SQ5172	04				07:40	JAKA
10	11	GATE CLOSING		07:00		VA5821	04				07:40	SURA
02		GATE CLOSING		07:00	BANGKOK-BKK	TR600	10-11				07:40	SURA
02	04			07:05	SHENZHEN	M1962 SQ5162	04				07:50	SURA
04		LAST CALL		07:10		VA5729	04				07:55	PENA
04	11	GATE CLOSING		07:15	KUALA LUMPUR	M1322 MH5722	04				07:55	YANG
10	11	GATE CLOSING		07:15	FUZHOU	M1992 SQ5162	04				07:55	YANG
07	07	GATE OPEN		07:15	BANGKOK-BKK	SQ870 LX4174	03				08:00	YOGY
03				07:15	BALI	NZ3448 VA5570	03				08:00	HANOI
03				07:15	BALI	TR280	10-11				08:00	HANOI
04				07:15	TIRUCHIRAPALI	TR562	10-11				08:00	PENANG
04				07:30	MEDAN	M1234 GA8010	04				08:05	XIA
04				07:35	HO CHI MINH	SQ5234 VA5707	04				08:20	NEW
10	11			07:40	LOMBOK	TR304	10-11				08:20	BAL
04						M1124 GA8040	04				08:20	BAL
04						SQ5210 VA5775	04				08:20	BAL

* PLEASE CHECK THE BOARDING PASS BEFORE BOARDING * * PLEASE CHECK THE BOARDING PASS BEFORE BOARDING *



Labour mobility is a boon for all: let's make it easier!

A starting point could be to loosen general travel restrictions, including through the provision of visas-on-arrival

Amanda Rohde, Programme Manager at Friends of Europe

More people are leaving their homes in search of opportunities abroad than ever before – indeed, the number of international migrants in the world has increased by nearly 50% since 2000. And Asia and Europe are the top regions of both origin and destination. Freedom of movement is by no means always easy, however, as visa restrictions as well as bureaucratic and administrative obstacles often stand in the way. In addition, with populists and illiberals espousing nativist, anti-immigrant sentiment shouting more loudly than ever, migration is often portrayed as unwelcome.

But given the sheer numbers of people on the move, why isn't it easier for Europeans

and Asians to move between their countries? After all, the advantages of labour mobility should be clear enough: as populations age and shrink, newcomers fill gaps in the labour market; they bring their business acumen and new ideas to aid innovation; and they improve intercultural understanding.

As such, it should be easier for Asians and Europeans to reap these benefits. We could open the door to easier cross-continent movement by starting small, for example, by easing travel restrictions for tourists, standardising and reducing administrative requirements for work permits and widening

regional free movement regimes. Such changes would benefit millions of people globally and are already in force in some regions.

As of 2017, 61 million Europeans were living outside their country of origin, while in Asia, approximately 2.5 million people leave their countries for contractual work abroad every year. An estimated 41% of international migrants worldwide originate in Asia. Given global trends, these numbers are likely to increase in the coming years.

The European Union's Treaty of Rome makes intra-European mobility of workers and citizens a key feature of European integration. The signing of the Schengen Agreement in 1985 took this freedom of movement further by abolishing border controls between EU countries.

In Asia, members of ASEAN are working towards improving and increasing labour mobility, with the organisation's 2025 Vision document calling for "more seamless movement of investment, skilled labour, business persons, and capital" by 2025. The ASEAN Economic Community, launched at the end of 2015, aims to further this goal. The ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption, meanwhile, should lead to visa-free travel in the region for citizens of its member states, albeit only for touristic purposes. Other Asian countries have signed bilateral agreements with each other – as well as with the EU – making it easier to travel widely.

Labour mobility is often discussed at the global level. Regular meetings take place via the Ministerial Consultation on Overseas

Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin in Asia (the Colombo Process), established by 10 Asian states in 2003 to protect citizens who migrate abroad for employment. Today a handful of destination countries participate as well, which has expanded the scope of the discussions. The Asia-EU Dialogue on Labour Migration established by EU and Colombo Process members in 2008 offers an additional forum for dialogue on inter-continental migration.

As Europe and Asia expand their cooperation, easing mobility would be a welcome boon to all. A starting point could be to loosen general travel restrictions, including through the provision of visas-on-arrival. Indeed, in early 2018, the Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations called on the EU to provide visa-free travel to citizens of ASEAN countries, reciprocating the rights already granted to most European citizens travelling in ASEAN.

But more is needed. In many countries, the right to work is only awarded when an employment contract is already available, after concluding a university degree, or by gaining status through a spousal relationship or sufficient years of residence. These requirements could be scrapped, with work permits provided on arrival after basic administrative requirements – such as background checks and proof of sufficient financial resources – have been fulfilled. This would decrease illegal work, boost the number of tax-paying citizens and allow newcomers to integrate more quickly. States should additionally move towards more consistent standards, including by having

clear information about administrative requirements readily available on immigration services' webpages.

Through the Colombo Process and Asia-EU Dialogue, states could then discuss the merits of easing restrictions on labour mobility at the wider level, learning from the EU and ASEAN examples. Once such agreements have been concluded at regional levels, ASEM could take over as a forum for broader discussions aimed at concluding an ASEM-wide labour mobility regime.

Regardless of obstacles, people around the world will continue to move in the pursuit of economic, professional and personal fulfilment. Why should we not make it easier and create win-win opportunities for everyone?



**PILLAR 3:
SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND
EDUCATIONAL**

If we want ASEM to still matter in 2030, **we need to connect people**

If ASEM partners are ready to boost cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two regions, there is potential for more

Lai Suet Yi, Lecturer and Researcher at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

The ASEM process established in 1996 was founded on three pillars: political, economic as well as social, cultural and educational. In its first two decades, political dialogue between ASEM partners increased rapidly, both in number and in depth, and trade and investment flows between Asia and Europe were continuously rising. However, public awareness and people-to-people exchange – core elements of ASEM's third pillar – have remained low, making ASEM a seemingly elitist forum.

According to empirical research, over 75% of the general public in Asia and Europe did not have any personal or professional connection with the other

region. Paradoxically, the only physical institution in the whole ASEM process, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), is mandated to improve the mutual awareness and understanding between the people in Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

The task of linking up more than four billion people in the 53 ASEM countries is enormous for an organisation such as ASEF, which has only some 40 staff members and an annual average budget of S\$6.5m. While the biennial summit and five ministerial meetings take place regularly, engagement with the public has not followed suit, lacking both in regularity and

capacity. Given the present institutional design of ASEM, even together with ASEF activities, it can only reach a tiny part of the billions of citizens in its partner countries. Combined with the international arena full of various multilateral organisations, meetings and fora, along with the era of information explosion we are living in, the general public perhaps understandably lack interest and access to information on how to get involved in the ASEM process.

The sheer size of the population and difficulty in building awareness have always been used to explain the shortcoming of ASEM's third pillar. However, the process is already 22 years old: to significantly foster awareness and connectivity among the public, ASEM partners have to take concrete steps to change the situation and demonstrate why ASEM is worth additional resources. As suggested by the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministerial Meeting, the first concrete action ASEM partners could take to this direction would be linking the ASEM InfoBoard website, information and news of the process to the websites of their foreign ministries.

There is potential for more, however, if ASEM partners are ready to boost cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two regions.

First, ASEM partner states need to forgo some degree of their national identity and embrace the identity of being 'Asian' and 'European'. ASEM partners should acknowledge their unique role in managing inter-regional exchange

between Asia and Europe and put particular emphasis on promoting 'Asian culture' in Europe and vice versa.

Second, instead of adopting new initiatives after every summit or ministerial meeting, ASEM partners should make better use of the existing institutions, notably ASEF and the ASEM Education Secretariat. The majority of ASEM initiatives are ad-hoc activities, one-off seminars or conferences aimed at exchanging views and information. While important, their scale and scope are always moderate. To gain additional reach, ASEF and the ASEM Education Secretariat can carry out projects targeted at people who are new to or have limited knowledge of ASEM; however, more resources are needed from ASEM partners to make this a reality. ASEM partners should bear in mind that promoting cultural and people-to-people exchange are their goals and avoid any inter-state politics to disturb the real work.

Third, ASEM partners should work on quantity, i.e. enlarging the number of people who get involved directly in ASEM activities. Currently, the approach has been qualitative, and those gaining access to ASEM have been mostly members of the 'elite' – senior business executives, academics and university students, think tanks, senior media professionals and leaders of NGOs. While the initiative from ASEM11 to celebrate 1 March as ASEM day has been a nice start, ASEM governments should set up accessible public events, such as an ASEM Food Fair or ASEM Singing

Contest, instead of hosting small banquets for government officials. Big public events cost more money, of course, and require motivation from ASEM partners to invest accordingly.

Last, while one key function of ASEM has been helping partners to share best practices and governance experience, this could be extended to include the process of enhancing connectivity between people in Asia and Europe. For instance, the European Capital of Culture of the European Union and the ASEAN University Network are initiatives that could be also applied to ASEM.

The enlargement of ASEM from 26 to 53 partners means that the diversity of cultures gets richer while the population size gets bigger. To ensure that we continue to boost connections between people in Asia and Europe under the ASEM framework, we need to recognise the uniqueness of the process and foster joint determination to contribute to meaningful cultural and people-to-people exchanges.



Towards the globalisation of tradition

It is slowly becoming clear that the Atlantic Era was a historical exception, an anomaly during which one region provided the model for the entire world

Haroon Sheikh, Lecturer of Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

We have arrived at a critical juncture in time: the Atlantic Era – a period that lasted five hundred years – is coming to an end. During this era, the dominance of leading Western nations had a profound impact on the way societies across the globe viewed themselves: societies with long-standing histories and traditions suddenly found themselves under the shadow of Western economic and technological superiority.

As a result, the Western world view became the dominant one: Western principles and values were believed to be universal and became the standard for societies everywhere. In the 20th

Century, in the aftermath of the competition between socialism and capitalism, the belief spread that all societies would, in due course, transition from tradition to modernity, implying secularisation, democratisation and growing free markets. Francis Fukuyama's theory of the end of history epitomised this way of thinking.

Today, however, instead of further convergence, there is an increasing resistance to the universality of a single model. This resistance does not arise from ideological differences, but from an embrace of different local traditions. Think for example of the rift between Anglo-Saxon and continental approaches since the global financial

crisis of 2008. In China, the Communist Party is recovering the country's Confucian heritage; India's current regime blends globalisation with Hinduism; and in the world of Islam, while radicalism still catches most attention, religion is being blended with modernity, driven by a generation of Muslim Millennials.

The traditions of different civilizations are flourishing, developing within modernity instead of against it. This creates so-called "multiple modernities" and "varieties of capitalism".

It is slowly becoming clear that the Atlantic Era was a historical exception, an anomaly during which one region provided the model for the entire world. In a sense, patterns of pre-Atlantic Era are re-emerging. This was a time when the Eurasian plain was the central artery of the world, crossed by conquerors like Alexander the Great and merchants like Marco Polo. Diverse societies existed next to each other – sometimes in cooperation, sometimes in conflict with each other – but none of them ever had the ability to dominate all others.

This more horizontal world is again coming into being. Instead of history ending, it is actually returning, and this will allow for more diversity to flourish. But this transition requires a different view on societies and how they relate to each other and in addressing this, academic exchanges between Europe and Asia can play a key role. As two regions that have housed venerable traditions and civilizations, collaborative research can help us navigate the new global order that is emerging in three important ways.

First, such interregional research could help us recognise and understand the diversity of local traditions. Instead of imposing a single development model, academics in Asia and Europe should cooperate to uncover and compare the different pathways that societies have taken and how they have blended modernity with their own traditions. This will create a non-linear view of history that recognises the diverse contributions of societies, demonstrating interconnectedness between different communities, regions and continents.

Second, more and more research shows that globalisation is not a phenomenon of the last few centuries alone. The Egyptian obelisk, for instance, became a Roman symbol of imperial authority and can still be admired in Paris at the Place de la Concorde. Ancient China interacted with the Roman Empire while Indian culture travelled to Southeast Asia much earlier than we previously thought. By developing academic links across Eurasia in fields like archaeology, history, philosophy, economics and political science, we can uncover – and learn from – our connected past.

Third, European and Asian academics can be the force we need to imagine our connected future. As an exceptional period in human history is coming to an end, old pathways and connections that existed for many centuries are being rediscovered. China's Belt and Road Initiative that recreates the old Silk Road of caravans between Asia and Europe with modern railways and optical fibre is just one example: an open and entrepreneurial spirit

along the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula is reviving the maritime Islam of Arab traders that sailed from East Africa to Southeast Asia; India is reinvigorating the ancient 'Monsoon trade' around the ocean that carries its name; Southeast Asia is returning to its maritime legacy as a crossroads of civilizations; around the Mediterranean, flows of people and goods across borders recreate a common world that brings together Southern Europe, North Africa and the Levant while stronger ties between the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltics revive the old world of the Hanse.

A new global order is emerging. Traditions, long thought to be a thing of the past, are re-emerging and infusing the process of globalisation. As the cradle of ancient traditions, Europe and Asia now have the opportunity to help us all understand our connected past – which in turn will help us imagine our connected future.



To counter extremism, Asia and Europe can empower women and **increase their participation**

Asia-Europe cooperation on issues affecting women can provide a promising opportunity for expanding current platforms and establishing new ones

Sabariah Hussin, Member at the Religious Rehabilitation Group Singapore

NurulHuda Yussof, Graduate of Public Policy and Global Affairs at Nanyang Technological University

Women's role within families and societies is critical in curbing - but also escalating - radicalisation and the spread of violent extremism. Discussions on women's participation in countering violent extremism need to address two key issues: first, in which area is women's participation needed or lacking? And second, in which domain can women's participation bring added value to measures which counter radicalisation and violent extremism?

A striking example of the role of women in escalating terrorism is the case of the Maute Brothers from the Philippines. Their mother, known as Farhana Maute, was key in funding,

recruiting and providing logistical support and care for wounded soldiers. A military officer observing the Maute Group realised that the finances of most terrorists are handled by their wives. To continue the financial connections and keep them active even after their husbands were killed in combat, these wives would remarry other fighters. This demonstrates the great capability of women in honing leadership and coordination skills to benefit the cause of terrorists and extremists.

Yet it is women who are also most at risk. According to Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Gholam Ali Khoshroo, women and girls

are the primary victims of large-scale, often systematic, sexual violence. Sexual violence has been a weapon of war since before the Second World War, and it continues to be a tactic employed by terrorist groups to advance their military, economic and ideological goals. The purpose of this strategy is to humiliate, ethnically ‘cleanse’ or silence the targeted community. For example, in the refugee camps sheltering Rohingya refugees, Myanmar forces are reported to have unleashed “a frenzy of sexual violence” against women and girls from the Muslim minority. Poverty-stricken victims of violence are also often forced into prostitution to survive.

Given that terrorism has a huge impact on women and that women can be influential within the ranks of terrorist organisations, it is important to focus on the role of women when drafting counter-terrorism strategies. Dealing with the issue of sexual crimes committed against women must be part of long-term efforts to enable social reconstruction, including transitional justice which includes judicial and non-judicial measures that provide redress for the legacies of massive human rights abuses. Amnesties, trials or purges, the establishment of truth commissions, financial compensations and symbolic gestures are some examples of transitional justice measures.

It is in these areas – women’s empowerment and participation – that Asia and Europe have the potential to collaborate. To counter violent extremism, for example, Asia and Europe can engage and cooperate in developing research on the gender implications of extremism

and violence, which can then be used as a reference to develop counter-terrorism policies and strategies that are informed by women’s experiences. Furthermore, collaboration to strengthen women’s economic resilience and increase women’s leadership and participation in preventing the spread of extremism will be vital in the stage of social reconstruction in post-conflict states and communities.

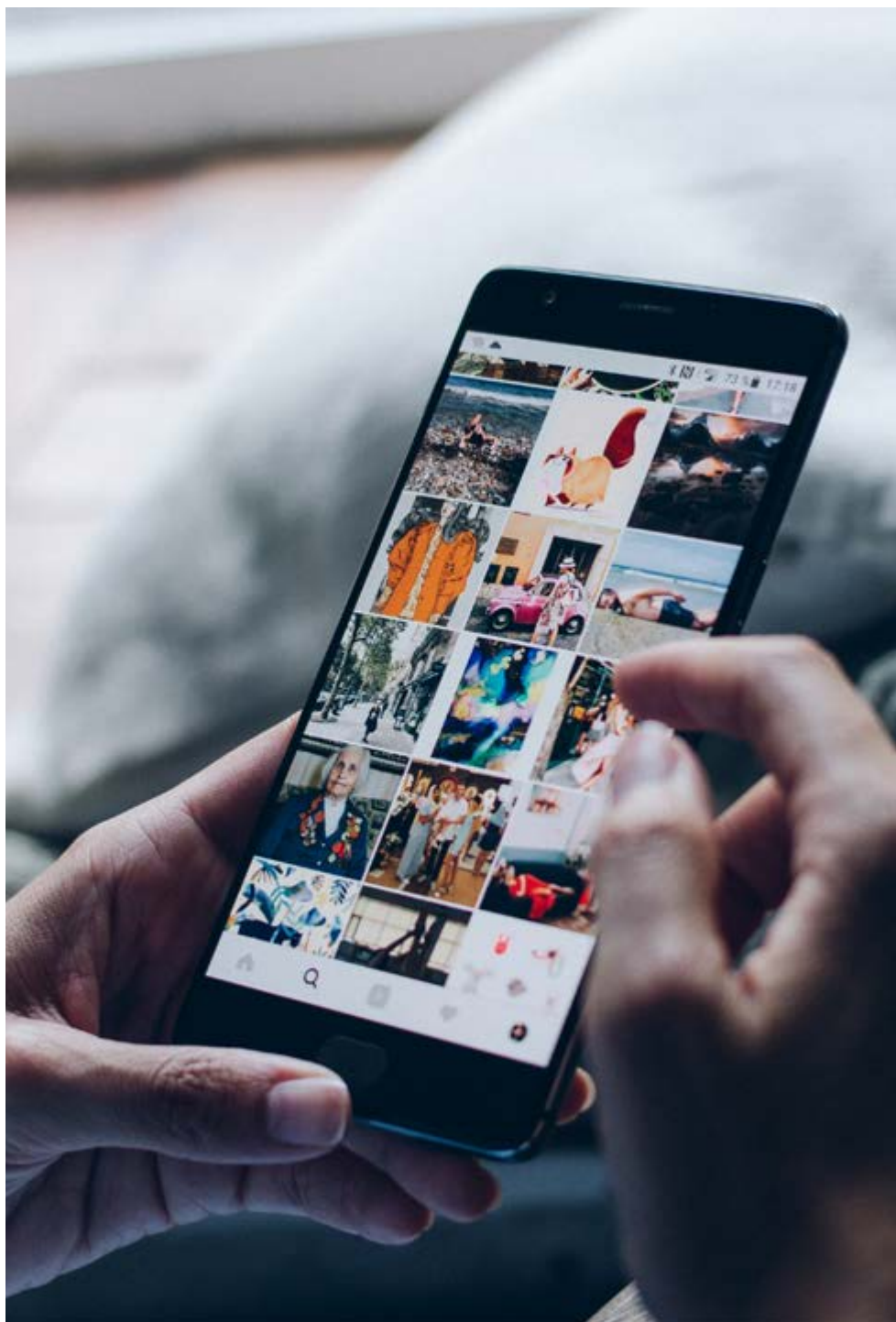
The programmes run by UN Women entitled ‘Women for Peace and Social Cohesion’ in Bangladesh and ‘Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities’ in Indonesia are prime examples of initiatives that can be elevated by Asia-Europe collaboration. The Bangladesh programme involves facilitating linkages with the Women’s Development Forum to mobilise women through community action groups, leadership training and financial inclusion in business development. This programme has thus far been implemented in six districts in Bangladesh and has had 1,200 beneficiaries. In the Indonesian programme, a women’s empowerment curriculum is being developed and will be delivered to women’s cooperative groups through 24 weekly sessions that address issues such as financial literacy, economic empowerment, women’s leadership and gender equality.

Asia-Europe collaboration can help elevate these initiatives by expanding the academic partners and rendering operational and financial support to strengthen the initiatives’ frameworks that currently are in the development and implementation stage. These initiatives also have the potential to

be replicated across different post-conflict and social reconstruction zones, which can also benefit post-conflict and terror zones in Europe.

To address gendered violence, cross-cultural understanding of women's experiences in facing violent extremism should be facilitated. Medical care and rehabilitative assistance could be rendered through Asia-Europe collaboration. This collaboration could also focus on developing policies and leveraging on judicial means to ensure that tactics of terror – such as the use of rape as a weapon – are resolutely disabled.

Asia-Europe cooperation on these important issues affecting women can provide a promising opportunity for expanding current platforms and establishing new platforms for women's empowerment and participation. This in turn could help foster hope and resilience in countering radicalisation and violent extremism among communities on both continents.



ASEM could become a coalition of the willing against 'fake news'

The common ground on fake news could be enough to explore opportunities for a shared 'anti fake news' platform

Richard Werly, European Affairs and France Correspondent at Le Temps

The issue of 'fake news' is top of the European agenda as populist political leaders and movements, adopting US President Donald Trump's policy playbook, also start painting the media as biased and too politically correct. Asian media outlets, meanwhile, are struggling to survive and are engaged in a painful struggle to ensure the most basic freedom of expression. For them – for the moment – combating the scourge of fake news is not a priority.

In order to discuss the concept of fake news in the Asian and European contexts, an effort must be made to establish an acceptable definition of the phenomenon. Accusing an individual, an

organisation or a media outlet of disseminating fake news supposes, firstly, that the news report in question can be easily identified as a lie or a fraud and secondly, that this piece of news has been disseminated with the purpose of harming the other party's credibility. Establishing this difference is essential in order to avoid confusion and enable a distinction between legitimate electoral, political or business discourse and messages that are merely dressed as news and presented to the public as more truthful than articles or stories emanating from 'mainstream' media.

A key question is whether the problem of fake news is relevant for an informal

intergovernmental forum like the Asia-Europe Meeting. Given the differences in the situation of European and Asian media, we should not expect a common attitude or a common answer to the issue of fake news. Nevertheless, what remains highly relevant for all parties involved in ASEM is the inherent dangers posed by fake news. These include – but are not limited to – efforts to discredit traditional media; undermine political trust; and fuel antagonisms and tensions.

Perhaps this common ground would be enough to explore opportunities for a shared ‘anti-fake news’ platform and both European and Asian stakeholders could agree on such an initiative? Three ways for ASEM members to cooperate can be identified.

First, exchanges between European and Asian media professionals could be strengthened. While the reality of fake news differs from one continent to another, establishing a platform for discussion and debate can only have positive impact. Bringing together journalists and publishers as well as private and public media from varying backgrounds could help overcome differences and sidestep some inevitable ‘political correctness’ on all sides.

Second, ASEM member states could create a fake news task force. This is especially relevant from the perspective of ASEM’s mission to educate youth on media. Born in the Information Age, younger generations have a completely different approach to news and information, both in Europe and Asia. Their reading habits, their viewing habits and

their appetite for information are radically different, and this poses a challenge to all institutions. An urgent effort for better education on media is therefore essential. This does not mean that an ASEM charter needs to be written but rather that media and education professionals can meet and share their experiences and knowledge. The objective of this task force should be to make recommendations to the 2020 ASEM summit under a single, simple working title Fighting Fake News at School.

Third, the question of fake news needs to provoke a vigorous editorial and academic debate. ASEM could reap great political benefit by fostering discussion on this topic among academics and journalists but also Internet wizards. Some countries, like France, are considering the adoption of a law to prohibit the spread of fake news during electoral campaigns. Others, like Russia, are often accused by Western European countries for using Soviet-style propaganda tactics to destabilise opponents and political enemies.

We need to know the exact nature of fake news, where it starts and just how we can measure its impact on public opinion. We also need to know how people react to fake news and whether the reports worry them or not. ASEM members could join forces and contribute to the funding of a comprehensive study on the perception of fake news which would bring together political scientists, journalists and communications experts.

Too often, the “fake news” label is used to discredit opponents and adversaries. The reality is different, however: the spread of fake news, both in Europe and in Asia, is first and foremost proof of profound changes in public opinion and mindsets.

To continue working together, and combat false and misleading information and accusations, ASEM member countries should step up their efforts and lead an original ‘anti-fake news’ coalition of the willing.



Civil society organisations of Asia and Europe need to be protected

ASEM can take the lead on promoting a safe, enabling environment in which civil society organisations can operate freely and securely

Yuyun Wahyuningrum, PhD Researcher on Governance, Law and Social Justice at Erasmus University Rotterdam's International Institute of Social Studies and Senior Advisor on ASEAN and Human Rights at the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG)

In the last ten years, both in Asia and in Europe, attacks against civil society actors defending human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as uncovering environmental issues, corruption cases and trafficking in persons have become more systematic. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are stigmatised, often portrayed as non-nationalist, elitist, spies or 'foreign agents' used by foreign countries to meddle in domestic affairs. They are sometimes even denounced as terrorist organisations.

It has been well documented that governments have used legal restrictions which have hindered CSOs from receiving foreign funding. CSOs

have also been subjected to repeated audits, investigations, intimidation, harassment and surveillance, and their staff members have been imprisoned, tortured or even executed. They also face obstructions to travel and difficulties in obtaining visas.

Even in supposedly stable democracies, media freedom is increasingly inhibited, primarily due to the spread of 'fake news' and the populist anti-media backlash. While the Internet and new media can help support civic engagement and mobilisation, they also provide a platform for governments to control public opinion and monitor civil society actions. Creating

government-organised civil society organisations is another tactic to legitimise government policy, attract foreign funding and confuse the public about the work the CSOs are doing.

In the meantime, 'uncivil' groups – anti-democratic forces bringing together organised citizens that emerge as a result of economic and political shift and frustration – are also on the rise in Asia and Europe. This frustration is largely due to people's increasing disappointment in the way development policies have been shaped and implemented. People see these policies as reasons for the ever-widening inequalities. They therefore seek an alternative way for fair and just development.

A careful, comprehensive and innovative approach is needed to deal with these issues. But first, there is a need for a more explicit and more popular messaging on why civil society matters, why civil society space is essential, and what can be done to defend it. This requires cooperation and collaboration from all involved stakeholders: CSOs, states and businesses.

The 5th Asia-Europe Editors' Roundtable in 2010 suggested that Asia and Europe need to learn from each other, as challenges and risks are increasingly inter-connected across borders as well as across sectors. The Europe-Asia cooperation could focus on institutional processes that enable Asia and Europe to ensure secured civic space. This, however, comes up against the limitations, distrust and prejudices that exist between Asia and Europe.

Of all actors, the state remains a vital player in setting the conditions for CSOs to operate or participate in the public sphere through the legal and institutional capacities at its disposal. And it is in this area that ASEM can play a key role as a platform for inter-regional cooperation to push back against restrictions and establish an inter-regional early warning system.

ASEM can also take the lead on promoting a safe, enabling environment in which CSOs can operate freely and securely. The importance of civil society space for empowering people belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups – as well as those who have dissenting views or beliefs – needs to be emphasised, and in that ASEM could call on states to ensure that legislation, policies and practices do not undermine or restrict human rights or civil society activities defending these rights.

However, we should also recognise that ASEM has been criticised for lacking established links with civil society groups in the last two decades. This is an issue that has created conflicts not just between civil society actors and ASEM governments but also among ASEM partners themselves.

It is regrettable that people-to-people forums such as the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) are still not part of the formal ASEM process.

Perhaps central to all debates related to global governance, democracy and human rights requires bringing back the real meaning of the term 'civil society'. Nowadays, civil society is taken to mean organisations or actors.

But in fact, we should look at civil society as a space where people can relate to each other openly, respectfully, non-violently and with tolerance and mutual trust. This will allow us to see civil society as a vehicle for political process and engagement, enabling citizens to contribute to society and exercise rational discourse relating to the public interest.

Civil society groups play crucial roles when it comes to promoting and enriching the dialogue between Asia and Europe beyond official channels. At the same time they enhance engagement with a wider audience in creating a legitimate space for expressing their alternative voice. Regardless of all the impediments and difficulties they face, civil society organisations are here to resist and stay - and rightly so.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEPF	Asia-Europe People's Forum
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEM OFTA	ASEM Open and Fair Trade Agreement
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CSOs	Civil society organisations
EAS	East Asia Summit
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone
FTAs	Free trade agreements
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WTO	World Trade Organization

Image credits:

Cover: World Image / Bigstock

p.12: C C/Flickr - State Department Photo / Public Domain

p.16: palinchak / Bigstock

p.20: Rudra Narayan Mitra / Bigstock

p.24: palinchak / BigStock

p.28: denbelitsky / BigStock

p.32: AvigatorPhotoGrapher / BigStock

p.36: Travel mania / BigStock

p.40: wjarek / BigStock

p.44: C C/Flickr - United Nations Regional Information Centre

p.48: nawadoln / BigStock

p.52: pzAxe / BigStock

p.56: bluebeat76 / BigStock

p.60: Oscarstock / BigStock

p.64: ulyanaandreeva / BigStock

p.68: paul prescott / BigStock



This report is printed on responsibly-produced paper



Square de Meeûs 5-6,
1000 Brussels, Belgium
+32 2 893 98 11
info@friendsofeurope.org
friendsofeurope.org