

ACROSS THE GLOBALIZATION HIGHWAYS OF ASIA

Challenges of Co-existence and Co-development

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Abstract:

Asia reflects a role that is indispensable in an increasingly interdependent world. While the expression of national and regional interests is strengthened, there is also a need to attune foreign policies to aim at a joint world domestic policy (Galtung) and shape partnerships that identify strategies and challenges (including civil society outreach) for sustainability, cooperation, co-existence and co-development – a challenge that is important for Asia and the world in this age of globalisation.

Being Asian, and probably one of the few Asians around in this room, it is my privilege and honor to be given a chance to impart something about Asian in the themes of cooperation and globalization.

The fact that I was born and raised in the Philippines, with long generation Spanish ancestry in both sides of my family (grew up within a mix of Filipino-Spanish tradition) makes me a by-by-by product of Asian and European connection. I am also a product of the so-called globalization – living in the modern world and finding meaning in the present advancements of communication technology, suiting myself to international lifestyle and western influence.

With this background, I thought it would be nice to impart something meaningful from my part - that cannot be taken from books, nor read from newspapers nor seen on Spanish television. The perspectives I will share come from my knowledge of some 25 years of looking at Europe from an Asian perspective, and some 8 years of experience in Asia-Europe partnership and cooperation in the fields of peace-building, volunteering, human rights, education and intercultural/religious dialogue. My knowledge is also influenced by my parents, both who are educators, and my father, an economics professor - and work in peace and conflict perspectives, peace negotiations and mediation in the Philippines. When I decided to join them in community work some 8 years ago, it was when I was introduced to substantial European, our organizations having close European partnership with Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Another influence is my almost 3 years as manager of an Philippine wide and international project in Muslim-Christian youth dialogue – again, supported by the Dutch – Europe. From these experiences, I learn more about Europe more than just skin deep.

How is Europe, What is Europe, Who is Europe as seen in Asian eyes?

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For most of us Asians, (and this is not meant to be an exaggeration), Europe is like a dream come true. A world very different from ours – *I remember a friend SKYPEing me from overseas on his first very trip to Europe (Germany) last year at the age of 34 – telling me that he could not believe he finally set foot in Europe and had to actually slap himself many times to make sure that he was not dreaming!*

For many of us, Europe is a heaven of vast opportunity, a melting pot of everything modern, everything new and everything that speaks about progress and development; to those who can afford to travel, it is a tourist destination of pride that is worth stamping on passports even just once in a lifetime; to most developing and lower income families, it is a far-off dream that will probably only remain a dream....forever. In short, for most ordinary people/citizens, Europe is a very good thing. Period.

What Europe is in a nutshell for us may be very different from what Asia is for Europeans. Asian culture from the outset may be very different from that of Europe – just like how different we see each other, but one thing is evident - there is a connection.

Most Asian countries have Europe behind them in history and background - Indonesia by the Dutch, HongKong, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Singapore by the British, Sri Lanka by the Portugese, Dutch, British, Vietnam and Vanuatu by the French, and Philippines by Spain, among others. This inevitable link speaks of how cooperation goes beyond just currencies – beyond political and economic associations – it is a union of people, of ancestry, culture, and way of life.

For a better understanding in my presentation I would like to outline 3 sub-topics.

1. Asia-Europe and the so called globalisation
2. Thematic programs on Asia Europe cooperation. Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)
3. Cooperation, Co-existence and Co-development – Experience from the ground

As a background, I would like to speak about Asia and Europe in terms of the present context, although I would not dwell into defining the somehow cliché' globalization, with a little of the political and economic dimension of conflict and cooperation among Asian countries, and later on, including the social dynamics, which will be the main focus of my presentation.

As economic globalization gains momentum, the future of Asia and Europe has been increasingly tied to the future of the whole world, and cooperation between Asia and Europe is more needed than ever.

Despite the surging economic globalization in the background, many Asian countries have succeeded in accelerating and improving industrial prowess, restructuring their economies, increased the level of science and took the frontlines of technological advancement and development momentum. Within Asia's regional

integration, countries have become increasingly interdependent, thanks to dialogue and cooperation.

The financial and economic crisis sweeping the globe is dealing a heavy blow to the world economy. Asia's emerging economies are bouncing back much more stronger than others (Economist June 25th). Largely due to China, although production in the region's smaller economies still. Consumer spending. Real spending. Other places spending has stumbled squeezed by high unemployment and lower wages. Shift from exports to domestic spending. Asian spending is now considered an important engine for global growth. Even before the crisis, emerging Asia's consumer spending contributed slightly more (in absolute dollar terms) to the growth in global demand than America. But it could be even bigger if Asians enjoyed the fruits of their hard labor rather than subsidizing Western consumers through undervalued currencies.

APEC- the largest most diverse trans-pacific forum of its kind, founded by a dozen countries in 1989, has matured into a forum of 21 countries addressing economic issues in the Asia Pacific region. US Canada China, Taiwan (Chinese Taipei), HK, Japan, Australia, NZ, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Russia and Vietnam.

Together APEC accounts for more than half the global GNP, 40% world's population. Unlike the EU or NAFTA, APEC operates by consensus rather than through binding agreements and type of legalism. The process is concerted unilateralism, where members define broad regional goals but leave the specific aspects of implementation to each nation.

According to a speech by Wen Jiabao during the BOAO FORUM FOR ASIA, the Asia Pacific region surpassed Europe as America's largest regional trading partner both as supplier of US imports and as costumer of its exports. The forum, held in April 2009 brought together high level officials and business leaders were in town to discuss how Asian countries can work together to offset the worst of the global financial crisis.

Asia's economic dynamism can serve as a model for other regions. At the same time, its growing weight in the world economy carries with it broader responsibilities. Along with policy actions and reforms in the U.S., Europe, and elsewhere to foster global growth and deal with economic imbalances, Asian countries must play their part by continued policy reforms, including, in some cases, adoption of more flexible exchange rate systems. Ensuring appropriate voice and participation of all stakeholders should greatly enhance the international dialogue aimed at sustaining growth and reducing vulnerabilities.

With general political stability and vigorous development of various regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, Asia has become one of the world's most dynamic regions in terms of development. Europe has made further progress in integration and external cooperation and is playing a greater role in international

affairs

Asia is a crucial partner for the EU, politically, economically, and culturally. The Asian region accounts for more than half of the world's population, a quarter of the economic wealth created every year, and is home to four of the ten largest economies in the world (Japan, China, India and Korea). Many parts of the region are prone to natural disasters, and several countries are dealing with internal conflict, and a vast growing civil society.

Currently, there are three regional priorities in the EU-Asia regional strategy and cooperation; first is regional integration support done through ASEM, SAARC and ASEAN; knowledge and policy based cooperation in areas such as environment, education, cross border cooperation, support for research, energy and climate change; and reconstruction and rehabilitation support to its human resource.

Through regional and thematic programs, Asia and Europe have partnered in cross-cutting issues, such as the promotion of human rights and democracy, gender equality, good governance, the rights of the child and indigenous peoples' rights, environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS, supporting civil society and promoting dialogue, participation, and institution-building (European Commission).

The European Commission's EuropeAid supports the EU commitment to strengthening regional integration across the world. The EU is extremely active in building co-operative activities in Asia, where it works with a number of dialogue partners.

ASEM

ASEM in particular was seen primarily as an instrument that could provide the opportunity to strengthen the EU's economic presence in Asia. At the same time it was considered as a tool to raise the Union's profile, deepen political relations, confront the much higher interdependence between Europe and Asia, and last but not least offer a way to revive the long-standing region-to-region cooperation with ASEAN while at the same time extending the contacts to include South-Korea, Japan and (perhaps most importantly) China.

The Barcelona Conference: "Connecting Civil Society of Asia and Europe: An Informal Consultation" (2004)

With the aim to consolidate the engagement of civil society actors interested in Asia-Europe relations a platform for dialogue gathered participants to discuss about how to further promote the civil societies of Asia and Europe in the ASEM

process. This conference was open to all civil society actors interested in Asia Europe relations. Participation of broad stakeholders involved NGOs, media and cultural institutions, universities, civil society organizations, foundations and even trade unions and think tanks.

The Barcelona forum in 2004 meant to challenge the leaders to engage the civil society in the process and to create a direct and regular link between civil society and Asian and European governments. The responsibility in fostering civil society capacity building and participation.

Nevertheless, the Barcelona conference expressed a clear message from the wider civil society to increase public access to the policy-making level. The three key premises of the discussion were 1) identifying youth and education as priority targets, 2) understanding that dialogue of cultures and civilizations and religions concerns all and is not merely the responsibility of the states and 3) identifying Asia Europe Foundation as the key actor to achieve these goals.

One of the key priorities is the need to establish a social pillar within Asian and European partnerships.

Young people have also been a priority for Asia and Europe. As the leaders of the future (and present), they are considered as an important target group for building better mutual understanding between Asia and Europe. To deepen understanding of current international issues, particularly in areas which affect Europe and Asia or where Europe and Asia can cooperate, to create a forum where they can exchange views and perspectives and to establish personal contacts and networks between at the people-to-people level.

Young politicians and parliamentarians are also being brought together in 'youth exchange programmes' online forum and leader's symposiums with the aim of strengthening cultural links and mutual understanding.

Over the years ASEF has strived to engage a wide-range of actors from different sectors of society, outside the business community, in the Asia-Europe dialogue by bringing together students, intellectuals, parliamentarians, NGO-representatives, youth leaders, entrepreneurs, artists and journalist from Asia and Europe. In addition ASEF has contributed to the networking of non-governmental institutions by co-organizing international conferences and by facilitating civil society actors' participation in ASEM related meetings and events.

Discussions on the effects of globalizations and the proclamation of the year 2001 as the "United Nations year of Dialogue among Civilizations" contributed to the higher priority given to the issue of inter-civilizational dialogue between Asia and Europe.

AEPF has succeeded to increase horizontal networking between non-governmental organizations in Asia and Europe. Civil society actors have been able to form and coordinate common objectives, as the "People's Vision: Towards

a more just, equal and sustainable world” (2000).

Philippines

In the Philippines, most aid extended to the country are directed towards Mindanao, a majority Muslim region in the south. These financial and humanitarian aids come from partnerships in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States.

Just recently, the European Commission has allocated €3 million in humanitarian aid to assist the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict between the Philippines' armed forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on the island of Mindanao. More than 240,000 people are internally displaced in Mindanao, most of them living in very difficult conditions in evacuation centres, at relocation sites or with host families.

Through the European Commission's relief assistance – food aid is being extended to the Philippine people, including feeding programs for children – as well as basic health care, water and sanitation, shelter, protection and psycho-social activities for displaced children who rarely attend school. These funds are channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid department. Relief projects are implemented by non-governmental organisations, specialised UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.

While the internal conflict in Mindanao does not get much attention in the international media. The European Commission's attention on the needs are present. The Commission's humanitarian aid is entirely needs-based and complements the aid efforts by the government of the Philippines (as well as some contributions from other international donors).

In addition to its support in Mindanao, the Commission's humanitarian aid department is also running a disaster preparedness programme (DIPECHO) in the Philippines to improve the capacities of communities prone to natural disasters, so that they are able to better prepare and protect themselves. Around €2 million of the €10 million DIPECHO action plan for South East Asia, adopted in 2008, is for projects in the Philippines.

More particularly, a vast number of European volunteers are doing humanitarian work in the Philippines and have seen great movement in the last 5 years.

Conclusions

Globalization has made economies closely inter-connected and countries will rise or fall together. This calls for stronger cooperation among major economies to discuss economic responses, advance policy coordination, guide market behavior and help the world economy out of this crisis as soon as possible.

Given the wide diversity existing not only between Asia and Europe, but also within each region, the dialogue on cultures and civilizations was regarded as a highly important element of Asia and European cooperation. A more meaningful dialogue and intercultural communication could certainly contribute to a better understanding of Asian cultures, and indirectly lead to better results in political debate as well as negotiations on business and investment.

Asia and Europe aims to counter the Huntington scenario and promote “unity in diversity”, drawing on the dialogue and confidence-building character, specifically addressing the role of education, access to information and the involvement of civil society at all levels.

The world keeps moving. Soon the crisis will be behind us and it is slowly teaching us that both developed and developing countries should learn lessons from the past as we tackle the crisis and must not pursue shortcut solutions. Global problems call for global solutions, but it is also true that one size does not fit all.

Facing both opportunities and challenges, we should build a harmonious Asia – Europe where countries coexist politically, conduct equal footed and mutually beneficial cooperation economically, trust one another with close coordination on security matters and complement each other culturally. Both Asia and Europe (and the rest of the world) should endeavor to maintain peace, security and stability, promote common development, push forward comprehensive cooperation and respect diversity.

With just barely 6 months of stay here in Europe, I have already seen many things Asia can learn from Europe, especially in the fields of active citizenship and participation, volunteering service, etc. Things like EVS, structured youth in action program, European platforms in different issues, strong collaboration between government and civil society institution are great examples that I am sure Asia will benefit from.

5 years from now I will go back, for sure, with a bagful of experience to share from Europe, and hopefully in my own little ways, shape a generation and bridge Asia and Europe and the world.

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ANNEX

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

- **Key Points**
- APEC is the largest, most diverse trans-Pacific forum of its kind.

- APEC envisions elimination of all trade and investment barriers by 2010 for the wealthiest countries and by 2020 for the poorest ones.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), founded by a dozen countries in 1989, has matured into a forum of twenty-one countries that addresses economic issues in the Asia-Pacific region. This diverse group includes the U.S., Canada, China, Taiwan (officially Chinese Taipei), Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Russia, and Vietnam.

Together, the APEC countries account for nearly half of the world's merchandise trade, half the global GNP, and approximately forty percent of the world's population. Operating from a modest secretariat in Singapore, APEC sponsors regular meetings and annual summits of senior government officials and heads of state. APEC operates by consensus rather than through binding agreements and the type of legalism evident in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the European Union (EU). Through a process of "concerted unilateralism," APEC members define broad regional goals but leave the specific aspects of implementation to each nation.

APEC consists of three occasionally overlapping processes. The first is *economic and technical cooperation promoting economic and human resource development*, or "eco-tech." These activities have become more central to APEC's activities over time.

The second is *trade and investment liberalization*, an agenda that emerged at its 1993 meeting when President Clinton invited the (then) 18 APEC leaders to Blake Island, Washington, for the first-ever APEC Economic Leaders Meeting. The Bogor Declaration, adopted in 1994, proclaimed the elimination of all trade and investment barriers by 2010 for APEC's wealthiest countries and by 2020 for its poorest ones. Subsequent meetings led to a refinement of these goals in terms of individual and collective action plans with the actual liberalization commitments.

Subsequent efforts at pursuing liberalization floundered primarily due to opposition from Japan, and since 1998, liberalization has been on a back burner.

APEC is also being used for political advantage, such as the dominant issue once confronting the for the heads of state regarding a declaration supporting the anti-terrorism campaign led by the Bush administration. APEC, in this case, was an important forum for such a declaration because of three of its members--Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei--are Muslim-majority countries. While APEC's objectives fall within the economic scope, it is a very strong force for political motives.

The third--and weakest--process is the *sustainable development agenda*. In 2000, it was said to have been characterized by a flurry of small-scale capacity building projects and little else beyond statements of principle. According to *John Gershman, codirector of the Global Affairs program at the Interhemispheric*

Resource Center and the Asia/Pacific editor for Foreign Policy In Focus, the weakness of the sustainable development agenda stems from five major causes: poor leadership by the wealthier countries, most prominently the U.S.; popular opposition to APEC's free trade agenda; failure to connect the trade, investment, and environmental tracks; the weakness of pro-sustainable development forces within negotiating governments (most of which are dominated by commercial interests); and the inability of pro-sustainable development forces from civil society to penetrate the national and regional processes of policy formulation.

The challenge of working with diverse economies and varying perspectives on trade and investment regulation gives APEC a certain informality and lack of cohesiveness. Although the APEC forum has declared its support for free trade, many members oppose mandatory implementation schedules for comprehensive reduction of tariff and nontariff barriers. Indeed, some countries--principally Malaysia and Japan--have insisted that the liberalization goals be nonbinding and have opposed the U.S. demand that all economic sectors be opened to foreign trade and investment. Countries that oppose the U.S. in its drive to convert APEC into another free trade area would prefer that APEC remain a consultative organization that facilitates technical cooperation on economic matters.

APEC failed to respond effectively to the Asian financial crisis. In the face of APEC's paralysis and a stalemate in trade negotiations at the global level, countries in the region are pursuing a range of bilateral and regional initiatives outside the APEC framework, including bilateral free trade agreements and a mechanism to protect countries during currency crises.

Notes taken from John Gershman, co-director of the Global Affairs program at the Interhemispheric Resource Center and the Asia/Pacific editor for Foreign Policy In Focus.