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1 The Asia-Europe Meeting: Contributing to a New Global Governance Architecture

Sebastian Bersick and Paul van der Velde

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) held its first summit in 1996 in Thailand's capital Bangkok. ASEM is an inter-regional process of cooperation and dialogue consisting of 48 members, namely the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the 27 European Union (EU) member states, Australia, China, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Russia and South Korea. In addition to these 46 countries, the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat also participate in their own right. The ASEM process, which has so far been loosely organised, addresses political and economic issues as well as security, education and culture.

In general, the parties involved credit the process with developing and strengthening EU-Asia relations. This is deemed necessary in order to increase ASEM's capacity to contribute to regional and inter-regional governance and to complement and even contribute to global governance. In the 15 years of its existence, the ASEM process has successfully facilitated the strengthening of ties between Asia and Europe at all levels of society. At the same time, the increasing economic and political importance of Asia – in particular the emerging economies such as China and India as well as regional organisations like ASEAN – is indicative of the paradigm shift and qualitative change that the end of systemic bipolarity has brought about in the international system.

Especially Asia's quest for regional solutions to indigenous and external threats to development demonstrates the new dynamics in international relations and the ineffectiveness of those global governance institutions and organisations that predate the end of the Cold War. It is evident that, though the cold war is long over and the international political economy has become ever more interdependent, its actors have yet to establish a global governance architecture that allows for common policy choices and their effective implementation. Against this structural deficiency of the international system, European and Asian state and non-state actors have long pointed to the potential of ASEM for enhancing problem-solving capacities in the political, economic, security, social and cultural realms.

Previous volumes on ASEM

This book is a sequel to other books that we have edited in the past: *ASEM The Asia-Europe Meeting. A Window of Opportunity* (London, 1999); *Asian-European Perspectives: Developing the ASEM Process* (London, 2001); *The Eurasian Space: Far More Than Two Continents* (Singapore, 2004) and *Multiregionalism and Multilateralism: Asian-European Relations in a Global Context* (Amsterdam, 2006). In the 1999 volume, we took a look at the politicians' view of ASEM and the possibilities to improve mutual contact between Asia and Europe, addressing the challenges and problem areas in an effort to map out the probable future of ASEM. In the 2001 volume, contributors answered questions of a more practical nature or reflected on the ideas the Asia-Europe Vision Group (AEVG) had developed. How can the ASEM potential be realised? How can we create a usable ASEM vocabulary? How can we create a Eurasian research culture? The 2004 volume examined levels of engagement between Asia and Europe, throwing light on how the ASEM process has been directly or indirectly useful in enhancing ties between various Asian and European countries, and in contributing to the general development of new approaches to international cooperation. The focus of the 2006 volume was on the institutionalisation of intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation in the international system. The chapters analyse the EU's impact on the financial architecture in East Asia, the changing foreign policy between the EU and China in the area of trade and political economy, China's relations with Latin America and India's foreign policy stance on closer regional cooperation with both Asia and Europe.

The contributions to these books are written by Asian, European and American academics, diplomats, politicians, businessmen and journalists. They bear testimony to the fact that there is a growing demand for governance in international relations and to the corresponding importance of comprehensively linking Europe and Asia. The contributions to the present volume represent a selection from the main topics of the ASEM 8 summit in Brussels. The chapters focus on four policy areas that have been identified by ASEM members as pivotal to their task of contributing to the development of a new global governance architecture: the Brussels summit, financial and economic governance, security governance and the enlargement of ASEM.

The Brussels summit

The Brussels summit section contains four articles. Three of them are written by Belgian diplomats who were actively involved in the framing and organisation of the summit. Their contributions and the accompa-

nying annexes of this book provide us with important insiders' perspectives and analysis of ASEM summitry, its inherent logic, limits and comparative advantages. The head of the ASEM unit of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bertrand de Crombrugghe, brings us up to speed on the intricacies of organising an ASEM summit in his chapter on the Negotiation History and the Summit Texts. De Crombrugghe starts from the premise that leaders from Asia and Europe are keen to periodically confront their perceptions of world developments and assess the "state of the art of Asia-Europe relations".

The Belgian Prime Minister, Yves Leterme, suggested that the real added value of gatherings like the ASEM 8 Summit is in the influence they could exert on future multilateral meetings such as the G20. It was the stated ambition of the Belgian government as host of ASEM 8 to reach for higher levels of cooperation and to ensure the relevance of the ASEM process for the daily life of citizens. De Crombrugghe concludes with informed and detailed comments and reflections on the agreed summit texts, which make a welcome contribution to the development of a common ASEM vocabulary. The latter is seen by one of the founders of ASEM, former Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, as a precondition for the flowering of a Eurasian frame of mind.

Paul Lambert, deputy head of the above-mentioned ASEM unit, provides us in his chapter with a factual overview of both the Brussels summit and the events organised concomitantly. This does not preclude an insider's view regarding the substance and practical arrangements at the summit, of which the main event was of course the gathering of the heads of state and government at Brussels' Royal Palace. In parallel, an ASEM Parliamentary Forum, an ASEM People's Forum and an ASEM Business Forum were held, as has become the usual format of ASEM summits.

In addition to these quasi-institutionalised ASEM events, a Connecting Civil Societies Conference was held just before the beginning of the summit in Brussels. The conference was organised by the Europe-Asia Policy Forum (EUforAsia) which is subsidised by the European Commission. EUforAsia is a collaborative effort of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden and Amsterdam), the European Policy Centre (EPC, Brussels), the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF, Singapore), and the Singapore Institute for International Affairs (SIIA, Singapore).

Tom Vandenkendelaere, who also works at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focuses in his chapter, 'ASEM Working Methods Reform: An Identity Issue', not only on the working methods of ASEM but also on the discussions that took place in the run-up to and during the Brussels ASEM summit. Important stakes were at play. The issues focused on how to better organise ASEM and make practical use of the wide array of initiatives; how to ensure progress and concrete results

over time; how to address the long-standing perception that ASEM needs some kind of secretarial support; and how to ensure the improvement of the global visibility of ASEM.

This section of the book concludes with a chapter by Sebastian Bersick and Tanja Bauer entitled 'Perception and ASEM Visibility in the European Media'. The chapter presents the first results of a still ongoing international research project (named Asia in the Eyes of Europe) on the perceptions that Europeans hold of Asia and of ASEM affairs. It measures Europe's cognitive outlook in eight EU member states by using, *inter alia*, a media analysis of major print and TV media outlets in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Romania and the United Kingdom (UK). The research project is the European part of the broader Asia-Europe Perception Project and complements the work that is being done in the framework of the 'EU in the Eyes of Asia' research project. A conclusion drawn from the research is that ASEM is mainly perceived as a political actor. Its visibility varies considerably between the sample set of countries and the European level, which was also analysed. Hardly any attention is given to ASEM affairs as such. If the ASEM 8 summit had not taken place, ASEM would have been largely invisible to the European public.

Financial and economic governance

In his chapter 'IMF: The Road from Rescue to Reform', J. Thomas Lindblad sketches the historical background of the present search for reform at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He stresses the lessons the IMF drew from the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s. From it, the IMF learned that it had to account for its actions and mend its shortcomings. In the past decade a wide range of reform measures, accompanied by a great deal of soul-searching at the IMF headquarters, has been put into place. These measures, alongside new constructive IMF initiatives, were endorsed by the Asian and European leaders at ASEM 8 in Brussels.

Jörn-Carsten Gottwald focuses in his chapter 'In Search of a New Global Financial Architecture: China, the G20 and ASEM' on the role of China in reforming the global governance architecture. According to Gottwald, relations between Asia and Europe have matured enough for them to address the crucial issue of reforming the global financial architecture. Due to the emergence of China as one of the key actors in the policymaking framework, the playing field has changed considerably at the same time that China's involvement in ASEM has gained the support of its members. China is aware that the rule-making that is now going on will define the future global financial system. There are

still no comprehensive proposals on the table, but according to Gottwald it is safe to infer that, with China embedded in an inter-regional and global governance architecture, Beijing will have a strong influence on the development of the new global financial architecture.

In 'Banking Regulations at a Crossroads', Bram de Roos puts into perspective the statement in the ASEM 8 declaration about the resolve to strengthen the resilience and transparency of the global financial system and to reform the financial sector. He points to what went well during financial crises and draws lessons from them. De Roos specifically points to the Asian crisis of 1997, which spurred a wave of regulatory reform aimed at protecting the affected countries against future external shocks. These new regulations contributed to the most recent crisis having a less severe impact on Asian countries than other parts of the world. While European countries needed unprecedented bailouts to prop up their financial systems and are still coping with the fallout, many Asian countries were only affected by the crisis because of a decline in international trade. Using datasets on government intervention, economic growth, financial regulations and the stability of banks, De Roos explores new directions in the search for an improved regulatory framework. According to his analysis, ASEM is well positioned to facilitate an exchange of knowledge based on the experiences of its members in order to help develop guidelines that can contribute to a more stable financial system.

Security governance

In 'Asia and Europe: Meeting Future Energy Security Challenges', Christopher M. Dent zooms in on one of the major global challenges of the 21st century: namely energy security, which is directly linked to other key challenges such as global poverty and climate change. Dent examines how these relationships have developed on the inter-regional scale, paying particular attention to the ASEM process. There is much to be gained from this cooperation. While Europe is the birthplace of both the Industrial Revolution and many important developments in energy infrastructure and technologies, it has also played a key role in shaping the world's energy systems and practices. Asia is having an increasingly profound impact on global energy security with its energy consumption levels having risen fivefold over the period 1970 to 2009.

It is estimated that Asia's share in the global energy consumption will rise to 40 percent by 2030. While competition over access to fuels is expected to intensify, there will be a concurrent realisation that more international cooperation is required due to the interdependent nature of many energy security predicaments. Energy security is also inextric-

ably linked to climate change and global environmental security. Dent refers to this as the energy-environment-security nexus. This all lends greater imperative to ASEM members to collaboratively foster ways to mitigate their structural dependences on carbon fuel-based energy systems.

Susanne Kamerling and Frans-Paul van der Putten reflect on the ASEM 8 chair statement, listing piracy at sea as one of the global focus issues of ASEM, in their contribution 'Enhancing Maritime Security Governance: European and Asian Naval Missions against Somali Piracy'. The statement specifically mentions piracy off the coast of Somalia as a current threat to the freedom and security of the seas. The Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean – the waters where Somali pirates roam – are major thoroughfares of maritime trade between Europe and Asia. Since 2008, a large number of countries have contributed to naval missions against Somali piracy. The great majority of these countries is either European or Asian. The fact that so many nations are involved in addressing Somali piracy constitutes an important opportunity to strengthen security governance on maritime piracy. However, even when facing a common threat, it is not easy for such a large number of countries to work together when there is little experience in doing so. This is particularly true when the military assets of competing great powers are involved in a maritime region that is of major strategic importance.

Kamerling and Van der Putten address the question of how Asian and European countries that are active in naval operations against Somali piracy can contribute to more effective maritime security governance. They argue that the European Union, especially when supported by Asian governments, is in a strategic position to help overcome geopolitical impediments to greater international cooperation. In this, ASEM has an important role to play.

The enlargement of ASEM

David Capie explores how Australia and New Zealand came to join ASEM in his chapter entitled 'Bridging Asia and Europe? Australia and New Zealand Membership in ASEM'. Since the 1970s, Australia has come to realise that its economic destiny lies more in the Asia-Pacific region and less in the Atlantic world. It has become a member of practically every regional and multilateral organisation in the Asian and Pacific theatre. When Kevin Rudd became prime minister, relations with Asia were further deepened while ties with Europe were rejuvenated. Rudd also pushed for Australian membership of the reinvented G20, the first meeting of which was discussed in detail at ASEM 7 (2008) in

Beijing. In order to play a key role in the international response to the global financial crisis, it was clear that Australia would have to become an ASEM member.

This had a direct impact on New Zealand which, similar to Australia, experienced an economic shift away from Europe and towards Asia as its main trading partner. This was also reflected in the development of closer political ties with Asia. New Zealand also began participating in many regional institutions, whether organised on an East Asian or Asia-Pacific basis. Membership or affiliation in all these organisations was already stretching the country's diplomatic resources, which was one of the reasons why New Zealand never actively lobbied for ASEM membership. Once Australia applied for membership, however, New Zealand was quick to follow because it would otherwise have become the only non-ASEM member of the East Asia Summit (EAS). This could have undermined Auckland's position as an active participant in the developing East Asian regional architecture.

It is clear that both countries perceive ASEM first and foremost as a forum for dialogue with Asian and European leaders. Nevertheless, Australia's interest in ASEM seems to be much greater than that of New Zealand, which is primarily focused on the political interactions around summits and ministerial meetings.

The accession of Australia, New Zealand and the Russian Federation eventually triggered the creation of a so-called temporary third category within ASEM alongside the Asian and European ASEM groups. In the closing chapter of this book 'ASEM's Future Enlargement: The Way Forward', Bertrand De Crombrughe analyses the history of enlargement and its future. He recounts how the accession of the three new ASEM members was brought about with cautious diplomatic manoeuvring. He also argues for the use of the term 'middle members' rather than 'third category' members. According to De Crombrughe, all new members should be given the opportunity to partake fully and on an equal basis with the other ASEM members, because this would give new potential to the ASEM agenda. The ASEM coordinators are tasked with stimulating and coordinating the ASEM agenda, but they do so with few means. A technical support team or an ASEM secretariat would be more effective in ensuring neutral and objective service to all ASEM members.

Conclusion

The practical importance of international institutions that can contribute to regional, inter-regional and global governance is increasing. It comes as no surprise, then, that ASEM's agenda has continuously been

enlarged since the first summit in 1996 took place. The chapters on security, economic and financial governance as well as the insiders' views on the advantages and limitations of contemporary ASEM affairs clearly demonstrate the contribution of the ASEM process, and of ASEM 8 in particular, to the development of a new global governance architecture.

ASEM affairs are, however, not only driven by issues but also by the need to reform. The question of ASEM membership and enlargement played an important role during the ASEM 8 summit in Brussels and continues to do so. More than anything else, the accession of Russia poses a challenge to ASEM's inter-regional institutional and ideational structure. The accession of India and Pakistan in 2008 and possibly Bangladesh in 2012, as well as the continued deepening of European integration (via the Lisbon Treaty), has furthermore contributed to an inter-regional asymmetry. As a result, ASEM-Europe has increased its unity while ASEM-Asia has increased its diversity. How Asians and Europeans react to and manage these changes as well as the challenges for governance they pose in their respective regions and inter-regionally will largely determine the problem-solving capacity of ASEM and the further impact that ASEM has on the development of a new global governance architecture.

We would argue that it is important for ASEM to enhance its inclusive and open style. There is a risk that the needed bidirectional and reflexive approach will be undermined by a potential inability of ASEM to integrate all its participants as full and equal members on either the European or the Asian side. The recent ASEM enlargement demonstrates how ASEM affairs and the development of a regional architecture in Asia also impact on Europe's regional architecture. Decisions taken among ASEM members highlight the issue of who is Europe and who belongs to Europe and to what extent the EU represents Europe. ASEM clearly adds to the dynamics of regional architectures not only with respect to Asia but also in relation to Europe. This is a new development, as the accession of Russia to ASEM requires a decision on whether Russia belongs to the European or the Asian region of ASEM. Whether the creation of a temporary third category will help to mitigate the identity crisis that ASEM is in remains to be seen. Apart from Bangladesh, European countries such as Norway and Switzerland are also keen to join the ASEM process. Its enlargement is indicative of ASEM's increasing role as a constituent of the developing new global governance architecture.