



< Theme: Afghanistan: Picking up the Pieces

Eight researchers assess what's lost, recovered, and revived of Afghanistan's cultural inheritance.

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NEWSLETTER

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> In this edition Masayuki Sato interviews Peter Chen-main Wang [1], the Fifth European Chair for Chinese Studies, on his views on Christianity and the Marshall Plan in China. p.5 || In the first instalment of her series on "Asia in the Eyes of Arabs" [2], Mona Abaza shows how admiration for Japan was already expressed in reformist Arab writings in the nineteenth century. p.19 || "What do we really know of the historical experience of different communities of Asians living in Britain?" [3] asks Shalina Sharma. p.23 || "As a painter he produced the most, as an opera singer he moved many a heart, as a photographer he earned the most, and as an impresario he provided most with delight." [4] Gerda Theuns-de Boer writes about Isidore van Kinsbergen and his photographs. p. 32 || *The Atlas of Laos* is an overwhelming publication [5], but makes one wonder whether the opening up of Laos is proceeding too quickly, asserts Loes Schenk-Sandberg in her review. p.37 ||

> Asian art & cultures Alisa Eimen discusses a play about women in Iran [6] that shows how cultural and religious stereotyping can be overcome. p.43 || A serendipitous sojourn was in store for Thomas Cooper [7] when he arrived in the Netherlands and had the chance to examine the Van der Tuuk collection first hand. p. 44 || Institutional News: ABIA Chair transferred to Sri Lanka, p. 57 || New students for the TANAP programme arrive, p. 54 || The ESF Asia Committee after 2001, p. 57 || International Conference Agenda, pp 62-63 ||

Enhancing EU's Partnerships with Asia: Never the Twain Shall Meet?

Forum >

Adapting Kipling to a Globalized World

15 October 2001
Leiden,
The Netherlands

More than 100 years ago, in *The Ballad of East and West*, the British poet Kipling wrote a line of verse which would subsequently enter the English language almost as a cliché: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."

Much has changed since then. Empires have crashed to the ground. The horror and upheaval of world wars - two very hot and one ice-cold - have come and gone. With the recent criminal acts in America we have, in a nightmarish way, come full circle: *The Ballad of East and West* is set in the vicious and war-torn Afghanistan of 1892.

But the biggest change of all, the change that has and is touching more lives than even the world wars did, is the phenomenon known as globalization.

Of course, there is nothing new about globalization. What is new about this 'second wave' of globalization is not the ideas which underpin it - belief in free trade, open markets, private ownership, property rights, and capitalism - but its scope, driven in large part by the technological progress that has been made in the intervening 100 years. Not only is globalization now reaching into a vastly greater number of countries, it is also reaching into vastly greater areas of our lives.

Increase in trade, coupled with the revolution that has taken place in transport, means the peoples of the world are coming into greater contact with each other than ever before.

In many cases (although sadly not all) this greater exposure to each other's cultures and societies has led to greater dialogue and understanding. It has even brought some semblance of stability and prosperity to areas where there was none before.

However, it would be naïve to say that globalization has been an unalloyed blessing. I am referring not just to the fact important though it is - that the globalization that has transformed the lives of many, has still left too many marooned in poverty. I am also noting the way that many of the problems governments now face have also globalized, in the sense that they do not respect national frontiers: international drugs trade, environmental degradation, global epidemics, cyber



Commissioner Chris Patten delivering the IIAS Annual Lecture in the Academy Building of Leiden University, 15 October 2001.

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relapse, set back within a period of only four years; they have to straighten out their domestic problems, and ASEAN should, of course, reconsider its "ASEAN way of consensus politics". I must admit, after the first crisis, the economic and political weight shifted to Northeast Asia: Japan and China are the key players. It would be most unfortunate for that matter to downgrade the relation of the Union with the individual Southeast Asian countries of ASEAN. The Commission could consider special programmes for assisting its Southeast Asian counterparts, with whom it has had a constant relationship since the 1970s.

The second of my observations concerns ASEM. The Asia-Europe Meeting has been designed as an informal process of dialogue and cooperation between the EU member-states, the EC, and ten Asian countries. ASEM's activities support the three main "pillars" of its approach, namely, (1.) economic cooperation, (2.) political dialogue and (3.) the rest, i.e. cultural and intellectual cooperation. It will not surprise you to hear that most progress is made in the first "pillar". As for the political dialogue, it is a slow and sensitive process; but the third pillar, cooperation in social, cultural and civil domains, is the most underdeveloped of the ASEM process.

In fact, few European countries show real interest in ASEM. Even after September 11, this has not really changed. However, as I see it, ASEM is a unique vehicle for rapprochement between Europe and Asia. It allows for a wide range of initiatives – also in the cultural, intellectual and civil domains. ASEM should now, more than ever, become an instrument for better mutual understanding. Fortunately, the Commission is the motor behind the European side of ASEM and it should be praised for its endeavours; however, the Union should do more with regard to the third "pillar." It should not underestimate the importance of cooperation in the cultural and civil domains and especially the long-term impact of joint interregional research on topics of common interest such as environmental degradation, global epidemics, terrorism, migration, social welfare, poverty reduction, etc. The sixth framework programme could, for instance, support and embrace joint Asia-Europe research initiatives for the benefit of all aspects of a sustainable Asia-Europe partnership. ◀

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The Six General Objectives and Priorities

1 Further strengthen our mutual trade and investment flows with the region;

Action Points:

- Work to strengthen our bilateral economic relations, reducing non-tariff barriers to trade and facilitating investment, and helping build a pro-development policy climate;
- support cooperation between economic operators in our two regions;
- strengthen our policy dialogue on economic and financial issues, and promote the use of the Euro internationally;
- continue to ensure favourable market access for the poorest developing countries;
- recognize the role of transport and energy in our trade relations as well as the impact of both sectors on the environment.

2 Strengthen our engagement with Asia in the political and security fields;

Action Points:

- strengthen our engagement on regional and global security issues;
- strengthen our dialogue and cooperation on conflict prevention issues;
- and enhance our cooperation on justice and home affairs issues.

3 Demonstrate our effectiveness as a partner in reducing poverty in Asia;

Action Points:

- strengthen our dialogue on social policy issues;
- while completing the reform of our own aid management.

4 Contribute to the protection of human rights and to the spreading of democracy, good governance, and the rule of law throughout the region; In contributing to democratization, good governance and the rule of law, and respect for human rights we should strengthen our bilateral and multilateral dialogue with our Asian partners, encourage civil society dialogue, and ensure that human rights and governance issues are mainstreamed in our cooperation activities.

5 Build global partnerships with key Asian partners, working together to address the global opportunities and challenges which face us all and to strengthen our joint efforts on global environment and security issues;

Action Points:

- Strengthen the work of the United Nations and its different agencies;
- strengthen the open international trading system embodied in the WTO;
- safeguard the global environment.

6 Strengthen further the mutual awareness between our two regions.

Action Points:

- Strengthen and expand the network of EC Delegations across the region;
- work to strengthen educational and cultural exchanges between our two regions, and to promote enhanced civil society contacts and intellectual exchanges. ◀

Chris Patten with Professor Rikki Kersten(l) and Dr Paul Lim (m). On the left in the background: Professor Joris Voorhoeve, President of the Netherlands Association for International Affairs (NGIZ).



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crime and, of course, terrorism. The shocking events in New York, which led to the deaths of thousands of people from more than sixty countries, from Australia to Yemen, are perhaps the ultimate, grim expression of what I have previously called the dark side of globalization.

In this context, is it really credible to claim we are forever condemned to glower at each other from the turrets of our inviolate cultural fortresses? To continue insisting that East and West shall never meet? That they will remain totally alien to each other, separated by a gulf of misunderstanding, destined for some sort of clash of civilizations?

Some seem to think so. This time last year, Professor Deepak Lal stood before this very institute and offered an astonishing worldview which airily dismissed liberty as a Western value, rejected the argument that ideas like democracy, human rights and environmental standards are universal, and warned that if the West tied what he called its 'moral crusade' too closely to the processes of globalization, there could be a backlash. I reject this attitude firmly, and not just because of my well-known views on the universality of principles like democracy. In light of the terrible events in America, the time has come to dispense with the emollient words which one would normally use to relativize and excuse such nonsense. I will be blunt about this: those who espouse the idea that civilizations should never mix, that concepts like human rights, democracy and environmental protection are alien tools of Western neo-imperialism are not only wrong, but dangerous. They play into the hands of demagogues who would like nothing better than to see waves of violence and destruction engulf all those countries, East and West, which hold such values dear, since they stand as constant reminders of the falseness and aridity of their own miserable worldview. Those who doubt that this is the true intention of such demagogues need only look at the video recording released by Osama bin Laden last week (7-8/10), where he makes it clear he is trying to provoke a clash of civilizations - or, as Professor Lal breathlessly described it in his lecture, an 'emerging confrontation between Asia and the West'.

But let us set aside for a moment the events of the last month, and imagine I am addressing these thoughts to you in the balmy and more innocent days of August. Would Professor Lal's comments be any more acceptable?

More than once during my days in Hong Kong I had to listen to some distinguished person or another holding forth on the uniqueness of Asian values. For such speakers, Asian values almost invariably seemed to exclude democracy, human rights, civil liberties and other such noxious ideas identified with the degenerate West. What sustained this nonsense was not a new historical, cultural or sociological analysis, but the ringing tills of the Asian boom, the so-called miracle, which was soon to come crashing down on their heads. Had these speakers never heard of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma, I wondered, a very Asian inspiration to freedom lovers across the whole world? Had they forgotten the words of Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, who - and maybe there is an example of what some leaders regard as 'Asian values'? - is now languishing in a prison cell? In 1994 he said: 'to say that freedom is Western or un-Asian is to offend our own traditions as well as our forefathers who gave their lives in the struggle against tyrannies and injustices.'

And what about the meeting of more than one hundred Asian non-governmental organizations in Bangkok the year before, which concluded that: 'universal human rights standards are rooted in many cultures', which hammered the point home by adding: 'While advocating cultural pluralism, those

cultural practices which derogate from universally accepted human rights... must not be tolerated'?

Europe, which has a relatively better record in recent years in the field of human rights compared to some Asian countries, has no right to feel smug or morally superior about this. Not very long ago at all, democracy, civil liberties and human rights were a rare commodity here too. But that is the whole point. Until recently, so-called 'Western values' were almost unheard of across whole swathes of Europe, from Portugal to Poland, and from Estonia to Macedonia. So just how 'Western' can they be? As the great Indian economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has pointed out, when European nations still believed in the divine right of kings, Indian emperors such as the Moghul Emperor, Akbar, were already practising tolerance and defending diversity in India.

Of course, Kipling himself was a talented writer with a more subtle and complex view of the world and humanity than he is often given credit for. I am sure if he were here with us today he would also reject the notion of East and West as impermeable cultural blocs. After all, his ballad depicts the differences between East and West simply in order to emphasize later the universality of human values. The lines I quoted to you at the start of this lecture are well known. But how many know the lines which follow?:

"But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!"

Unfortunately, the two strong men in question, the Colonel's son and Kamal, were forced to commit daring acts of almost suicidal bravery before they were able to overcome their cultural differences and respect each other, and I admit that this is not an altogether practical proposition in the modern world. If it were, I would not be quite so keen to attend summits and meetings of international organizations.

In a globalized world, we simply must accept that equal and closer partnerships are the best, perhaps the only, way to ensure wealth, health, security, and better mutual understanding for all our peoples. We need to work together to tackle the new types of problem that the dark side of globalization throws up.

That is why, in 1994, the Commission published a substantial policy document on EU-Asia relations, *Towards a New Asia Strategy*, which underlined Asia's importance for Europe and called for a more balanced and comprehensive approach to the whole region. There is no doubt that the 1994 Asia Strategy served us well. Since that date, our political dialogue with the region has expanded enormously, with new Summit dialogues with Asian partners in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and with China, India, Japan, and (soon) Korea. There is also our Ministerial dialogue with ASEAN, which now includes EU participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum. In addition, the EU has continued to make an active contribution to peace and security in the region, for example in our efforts to help establish democratic government in Cambodia and East Timor and our contribution to KEDO. We have also given considerable support for refugees in and from Afghanistan - a topic I wish to return to later.

Trade with Asia has also expanded substantially in recent years, despite the major impact of the Asian financial crisis. In 2000, Asia accounted for 21.2 per cent of EU exports, making the region our third largest regional trading partner - ahead of the Mediterranean, South and Central America, the Gulf, and ACP countries combined (17.1 per cent).

Even more remarkable is the increase in importance of Europe's market for Asia. After the financial crisis of 1997, we promised we would keep our markets open to Asian

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(also see p. 51 in this issue – "A Giant's Step to Sri Lanka")

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exports and resist domestic calls for protectionism. We kept our word, and one result has been a ballooning of the EU's trade deficit with Asia from € 13.3 billion in 1996 to more than € 121 billion in 2000.

Finally EC cooperation programmes with the developing countries of Asia have also grown moderately in recent years, averaging some € 410 million per year in the period 1996-2000. Overall, the EU and its Member States account for some 30 per cent of global overseas development aid going to Asia - after Japan (50 per cent) but well ahead of the USA (9 per cent).

But if a week is a long time in politics, as British Prime Minister Harold Wilson famously said, seven years is an eternity. Against this background of ever increasing political and economic bonds between our two regions, the world stage on which these developments have played themselves out has also changed enormously. In Europe, preparations for the single currency, enlargement and the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Rapid Reaction Force have all increased the EU's importance as a global actor. In Asia, the financial crisis in 1997 has had a major economic, social and even political impact. Our growing interdependence itself calls for stronger partnerships to address both the challenges and opportunities that we both face.

That is why last month (September 2001), seven years after the original Asia Strategy document, the Commission adopted a Communication setting out a new strategic framework for EU relations with Asia during the coming decade.

The Communication sets out six overarching objectives which give overall EU-Asia relations a more coherent framework. It then provides specific action points to focus EU initiatives in Asia's sub-regions and regional fora. These action points also aim at improving relations with individual countries in each region by addressing bilateral issues. I am confident that this will allow the EU to develop a forward-looking agenda which will strengthen and raise its profile across Asia to a level commensurate with the growing global weight of an enlarged Union.

So what are these six key objectives? First, we have to develop our trade and investment relationship, not least by getting Asian countries to agree on the need for another multi-lateral trade round.

The second objective is to promote the development of less prosperous countries in the region. The EU can be proud of its record here, with the bold trade initiatives and 30 per cent share of all foreign development assistance in Asia already mentioned. But more could be done to address the root causes of poverty. For example, at the EU-India Summit in Delhi next month (Nov), we will be signing an agreement to contribute € 200 million to Indian efforts to make elementary education available for every Indian child by the end of the decade. This raises to more than € 0.5 billion the sums committed by the EU to the social sector generally in India since 1995.

A third objective is for the EU to contribute more to peace and security in Asia by broadening our engagement with the area. More could be done to support conflict prevention efforts, strengthen our cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, and play a more proactive role in regional cooperation fora such as the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Peace and security are more likely to flourish in regions where free and fair elections are the norm, where administrations are not blighted by corruption and where laws are not subordinated to the day-to-day whims of those in power. So spreading democracy, good governance, and the rule of law is our fourth objective. Yes, this includes upholding the universality and indivisibility of human rights. It also includes encouraging the development of civil society and promoting a broader civil society dialogue between our two regions.

All this can only make our societies stronger, providing a firmer base for our fifth objective, which is to build global partnerships and alliances with Asian countries so we can shape global agendas and better tackle the new types of problems which beset us all. This should include improving our cooperation in the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, but also working together to tackle environmental and health challenges, and to fight international crime and terrorism. We should also exploit the opportunities offered by new technologies, help to diminish the digital divide, and reinforce scientific and technological cooperation.

Finally, and this has taken on a sudden, grave importance in an atmosphere where madmen are straining to provoke some apocalyptic clash of civilizations, we should strengthen awareness of Europe in Asia, and vice versa. This is not an optional extra. This is about promoting genuine educational, scientific, cultural - and yes, political - exchanges at all levels. Of course, the EU cannot force Asia to promote itself here, but we have taken the lead by, for example, launching a scholarship scheme in China, funding cultural programmes across Asia, and extending the network of European Commission delegation offices in the region to Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, and Nepal. It is my sincere hope that the nations of Asia will reciprocate these efforts - they have much to share.

And what about those more specific action points adapted to the different regions of Asia? These reflect the underlying diversity of that massive continent, and will no doubt change and be adapted as things evolve. But it is possible to discern key issues today, to which emphasis must be given. China, more than any other country, has been subject to a maelstrom of change in recent years, which has led to the development of new areas of shared concern with, for example, illegal immigration, food hygiene, and genetically modified organisms all rising up the agenda. Combined with the fact that China is the world's second biggest consumer of energy and the third largest producer, and that the EU is now the largest foreign direct investor there, it is evident we have moved far beyond the trade and development themes which have traditionally formed the basis of EU-China relations since their establishment in 1975.

It is important to capitalize on this. Our political dialogue with China is constantly increasing, and could go further still. We should work together with other international partners to encourage a rapprochement between the two Koreas. Burma, as a major drug producer and potential source of instability, should concern us both. The maturing of our relationship also allows franker discussions of our differences. This is the basis for the human rights dialogue we have pursued since 1996.

Of course, 11 September changed everything. If we were drafting the new Communication today, we would say rather more than we have about Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the problems faced by the central Asian region.

I was in Islamabad the other day, and the EU is obviously pleased that the Pakistani government, faced with a choice between siding with the modern, pluralist world or with the enemies of decency and international cooperation, unhesitatingly chose the former. We are also pleased that in August, President Musharraf set out in such detail his plans for a return to democracy next year. We have in the lock a cooperative agreement with Pakistan. There has been no progress on it for two years. We are now prepared to sign that agreement, although obviously the process of ratification would be affected were Pakistan to abandon the path to democracy (which I hope will not happen). The agreement also includes the usual suspension and human rights clauses which indicate the priority we attach, in any relationship, to pluralist values.

We have also been considering how we can help Pakistan to deal with the impact of refugees on its society - a burden it has been carrying, largely unnoticed, for almost two decades - and how we can restore effective, long-term, development cooperation.



Chris Patten with Professor Wim Stokhof (r).

Wim Vreeburg

Clearly, the return of democracy in Pakistan also presents a challenge to President Musharraf, not least because the sorts of democracy frequently practised in the past in Pakistan were not always characterized by transparency, efficiency and a determination to meet the needs of the whole community.

But the future of Pakistan is only one of the issues that we will need to address more energetically in the wake of what we are all committed to making a successful operation to uproot terrorism. We will also need to facilitate the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan and then to give it the sort of long-term development assistance which will enable it to survive. The EU has already provided more than € 450 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan since 1991, making us the second biggest donor in the world to this battered country. But more must be done, by ourselves and the international community, if the people of Afghanistan are to have any chance of recovering from the barren rubble to which their beautiful country has been reduced, thanks to a ferocious medieval tyranny and long years of conflict.

However, encouraging a political settlement in Afghanistan should not mean imposing a government. Nor should it mean meeting all the demands of neighbouring countries which have often used Afghanistan to fight their proxy wars. If that happens, then the cycle of violence will only continue.

Beyond Afghanistan, we will need to look at developing a more coherent and sensible regional approach in the Central Asian Republics, focusing in particular on helping them in the campaign against drugs and assisting them in the development of adequate border controls.

Of course, one country in the region provides a beacon of optimism. It is the largest democracy in the world, and it has been leading the way in the fight against terrorism by sponsoring an anti-terrorism resolution at the United Nations. India, like China, will always be central to EU relations with Asia. As a major trading partner and an important regional and global player and a country that shares many of our values, it would be utterly crazy to ignore her. Building on this relationship will pay dividends for both sides. That is why the Communication calls for an enhanced partnership with India on global issues, alongside strengthened bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, and social spheres.

The growing links which exist between Asia and the West, links rooted in our shared, common values, make us fit to face down those who want to destroy those values. The Commission's Communication on a new strategic framework for Asia builds on this. The unprecedented international cooperation we are seeing today is not only strengthening those bonds within the international community, but creating new windows of opportunity as old suspicions and barriers are cast aside at an astonishing rate.

A strong East and West; borders no longer acting as barriers in a world where distance is decreasing; a partnership of the decent against those who would bring us low. Was globalization, with all the good and bad it brings with it, necessary to achieve this? Maybe. But Kipling - without airline travel, the Internet and satellite television - would have understood the challenges we face. And, I think, he would have approved of the way we are seeking to overcome it. <

Questions >

IIAS Annual Lecture: Question Round

To read the transcripts of the question round which followed the IIAS Annual Lecture by Commissioner Patten, please see the IIAS Website at: <http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/27/general/qround.html>



Editors' note >

This is a shortened version of the Annual Lecture delivered by Chris Patten. For the full text, please see the IIAS website at: <http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/27/general/patten.html>.