

**“The EU Constitution and its Impact on the  
Politics of Interregional Relations:  
Strengthening Europe’s Role in Asia”**

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## 1. Introduction

On the occasion of the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 6/4 I would like to add a “Eurasian” reading of the tragic events that still shape the relations of the EU with China as the issue of the raising of the European arms embargo against the People’s Republic of China shows.

The increasing interdependence between Europe and Asia and in particular between Europe and China has already been extensive well before the term globalization had been invented. The citizens and students of Beijing who were on Tian An Men square on May 4<sup>th</sup> in 1919, demonstrated in order to criticize the policy of the colonial powers of the USA, Great Britain and France. Far away in Versailles – in Europe – those countries had decided that Japan should get the rights on the province of Shandong which Germany possessed until it lost World War I. The demonstrations triggered one of the most important political processes in the modern history of China: the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement. 70 years later on June 4 the people of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) realized – while watching the TV pictures of Tian An Men square and listening to the benign statements of East Berlin – which amount of force the East-German government accepted as legitimate to use against its own people. The peaceful German revolution of 1989 gained momentum in the following months not in the least because of the positive resonance that the leadership of the GDR paid to the events on Tian An Men square in Asia.

The peaceful fall of the Berlin wall and the peaceful end of systemic bipolarity in international relations would not have been possible without the formation of the European Union. In East Asia at the beginning of the 21st century we are witnessing the emergence of a new regionalism. This process of intraregional cooperation between Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia is inspired by the European model of regional cooperation. Though the historical, social, political and economic differences between Asia and Europe are large the idea of regional integration and functional cooperation, which has been developed in the European context is being discussed and analyzed in the Asian context. The ASEAN+3 process, the Asian Cooperation Dialogue and the coming institutionalization of an East Asia Summit this December in Malaysia’s capital Kuala Lumpur are examples of this paradigm shift in international relations. The developments are hard indicators of the strength of European soft power of which institution building is the most important one. Besides a common currency, the Euro, a European Constitution would be the most obvious achievement and symbol of the process of European integration. From a comparative point of view the European Constitution rests on two fundamental principles, namely regionalism and multilateralism. Without the political will of European nation states to integrate on a regional level the idea of a legal personality among the nation states of the European region would not have been operationalized.

As I will argue a successful ratification<sup>1</sup> of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe would have a crucial impact on Europe’s role in Asia. The analysis of the treaty’s

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<sup>1</sup>Whether the ratification process will be successful or not can only be decided after the process has been finished.

impact on the politics within the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process offers a strong argument for a strengthening of Europe's soft power<sup>2</sup> in Asia.

## **2. The EU Constitution's impact on the EU's external relations**

The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe<sup>3</sup> falls into four main parts. It is the third part that deals with the policies and the functioning of the EU. With respect to the EU's interregional relations with Asia I will concentrate on three main institutional innovations that the ratification of the treaty would bring about, i.e. the position of a Foreign Minister, a revised Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the position of a new President of the EU Council.

### **2.1 The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs**

With relation to the new position of a Foreign Minister Article I-28 of the constitution formulates:

- “1. The European Council, acting by a qualified majority, with the agreement of the President of the Commission, shall appoint the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs. The European Council may end his or her term of office by the same procedure.
2. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs shall conduct the Union's common foreign and security policy. He or she shall contribute by his or her proposals to the development of that policy, which he or she shall carry out as mandated by the Council. The same shall apply to the common security and defence policy.
3. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs shall preside over the Foreign Affairs Council.
4. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be one of the Vice-Presidents of the Commission. He or she shall ensure the consistency of the Union's external action. He or she shall be responsible within the Commission for responsibilities incumbent on it in external relations and for coordinating other aspects of the Union's external action. In exercising these responsibilities within the Commission, and only for these responsibilities, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be bound by Commission procedures to the extent that this is consistent with paragraphs 2 and 3.”

Furthermore Article III-296 specifies that:

- “1. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, who shall chair the Foreign Affairs Council, shall contribute through his or her proposals towards the preparation of

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<sup>2</sup>Soft power being defined as the „ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment“. NYE Joseph, „*Soft Power: the Means to Succeed in World Politics*“ (New York 2004), p. X.

<sup>3</sup>See: [Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe](#), Official Journal of the European Union, C 310, Volume 47, 16.12.2004.

the common foreign and security policy and shall ensure implementation of the European decisions adopted by the European Council and the Council.

2. The Minister for Foreign Affairs shall represent the Union for matters relating to the common foreign and security policy. He or she shall conduct political dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and shall express the Union's position in international organisations and at international conferences.
3. In fulfilling his or her mandate, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be assisted by a European External Action Service. This service shall work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States and shall comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the Member States. The organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service shall be established by a European decision of the Council. The Council shall act on a proposal from the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs after consulting the European Parliament and after obtaining the consent of the Commission.”

## **2.2. Specific provisions relating to the Common Foreign and Security Policy**

Concerning the CFSP the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe states in Article I-16:

- “1. The Union’s competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence.
2. Member States shall actively and unreservedly support the Union’s common foreign and security policy in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the Union’s action in this area. They shall refrain from action contrary to the Union's interests or likely to impair its effectiveness.”

Article I-40 spells out the so-called specific provisions relating to the CFSP:

- “1. The European Union shall conduct a common foreign and security policy, based on the development of mutual political solidarity among Member States, the identification of questions of general interest and the achievement of an ever increasing degree of convergence of Member States' actions.
2. The European Council shall identify the Union's strategic interests and determine the objectives of its common foreign and security policy. The Council shall frame this policy within the framework of the strategic guidelines established by the European Council and in accordance with Part III.

3. The European Council and the Council shall adopt the necessary European decisions.
4. The common foreign and security policy shall be put into effect by the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs and by the Member States, using national and Union resources.
5. Member States shall consult one another within the European Council and the Council on any foreign and security policy issue which is of general interest in order to determine a common approach. Before undertaking any action on the international scene or any commitment which could affect the Union's interests, each Member State shall consult the others within the European Council or the Council. Member States shall ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene. Member States shall show mutual solidarity.
6. European decisions relating to the common foreign and security policy shall be adopted by the European Council and the Council unanimously, except in the cases referred to in Part III. The European Council and the Council shall act on an initiative from a Member State, on a proposal from the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs or on a proposal from that Minister with the Commission's support. European laws and framework laws shall be excluded.
7. The European Council may, unanimously, adopt a European decision authorising the Council to act by a qualified majority in cases other than those referred to in Part III.
8. The European Parliament shall be regularly consulted on the main aspects and basic choices of the common foreign and security policy. It shall be kept informed of how it evolves.”

### **2.3. The European Council President**

Concerning the President of the European Council the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe specifies in Article I-22:

- “1. The European Council shall elect its President, by a qualified majority, for a term of two and a half years, renewable once. In the event of an impediment or serious misconduct, the European Council can end his or her term of office in accordance with the same procedure.
2. The President of the European Council:
  - (a) shall chair it and drive forward its work;
  - (b) shall ensure the preparation and continuity of the work of the European Council in cooperation with the President of the Commission, and on the basis of the work of the General Affairs Council;

(c) shall endeavour to facilitate cohesion and consensus within the European Council;

(d) shall present a report to the European Parliament after each of the meetings of the European Council. The President of the European Council shall, at his or her level and in that capacity, ensure the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy, without prejudice to the powers of the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs. (...)"

### **3. EU-China relations and the politics of interregional relations**

Within the context of the EU's relations with Asia the People's Republic of China<sup>4</sup> plays an increasingly prominent role. The impact of this development on Europe's role in Asia is linked to the politics of interregional relations and the ASEM process.

#### **3.1. Bilateral relations between the EU and China**

Last year the Far Eastern Economic Review depicted the relationship between the People's Republic of China and the European Union as a "love affair" that drives business and trade. After the reunification of Europe on 1 May 2004 it was the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao who visited the European Union as the first major world leader. On the occasion of his visit the then President of the EU Commission Romano Prodi stated: "Both of us want a multipolar world in which we have many active protagonists. This is a Chinese priority and it is a European interest"<sup>5</sup>.

During her recent journey to Beijing to mark the 30th anniversary of EU-China diplomatic relations the EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Neighbouring Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner stated: „Both the EU and China have changed beyond recognition in 30 years and so has our relationship. Our existing Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement simply doesn't live up to the dynamism of today's partnership. It's time to reflect the vibrancy of our relations with an ambitious new agreement that will help us move to a fully-fledged strategic partnership"<sup>6</sup>.

The signing of an EU-China Framework Agreement would be the next step in an ever more institutionalized relationship. The EU's China policy is currently based on a Commission policy paper from October 2003<sup>7</sup> which defines and categorizes the overall interests of the EU in China:

1. To engage China further through an "upgraded political dialogue";

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<sup>4</sup>As the Republic of China on Taiwan is not a member of the ASEM process I will not discuss the role of Taiwan in EU-Asia relations at this place.

<sup>5</sup>*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 May 2004, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>EU-China Ministerial Troika in Beijing to mark the 30th Anniversary of EU-China Diplomatic Relations 11-12 May 2005, <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleaseAction.do?reference=IP/05/5>, download: 11.05.05.

<sup>7</sup>Commission of the European Communities, Commission Policy Paper for Transmission to the Council and the European Parliament, A maturing partnership – shared interests and challenges in EU-China relations, Brussels, 10/09/03, COM(2003) 533 fin. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/china/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/china/intro/index.htm)

2. To support China in its transition to “an open society that is based upon the rule of law and respect for human rights”;
3. To facilitate the integration of China in the world economy through China’s full participation in the world trading system, and by supporting the process of economic and social reform in China;
4. To make a more successful use of the existing resources of the EU;
5. To raise the profile of the EU in China.

The EU Commission underscores the strategic quality of the relationship by stating that „[i]t is in the clear interest of the EU and China to work as strategic partners on the international scene“<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore the European Security Strategy from December 2003 recommends to develop the EU-China relationship into a “strategic partnership”<sup>9</sup>. During the latest EU-China Summit in The Hague in December 2004 the need to turn the relationship into a strategic partnership has been emphasized by both actors. They share the interest to manage the rising interdependencies between themselves – even in the area of hard security as the issue of the lifting of the European arms embargo against China indicates.<sup>10</sup>

The Chinese government formulated its interests in the EU in its first actor-specific policy paper, i.e. ‘China’s EU Policy Paper’ from October 2003.<sup>11</sup> Within the document Beijing underscores the “increasingly important role” that the EU is playing “in both regional and international affairs” and concludes that “there is no fundamental conflict of interest between China and the EU and (that) neither side poses a threat to the other”. The document outlines Beijing’s interests in the political field as well as in the fields of economy, in the field of education, science-technology, culture, health, and with regard to so-called military aspects.

### **3.2. Bilateral relations between the EU and East Asia**

While the expanded EU is developing a strategic partnership with China and has become China’s biggest trade partner and a counterweight to US influence<sup>12</sup> the United States will remain the “security linchpin for Asia”<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, the role of the European Union and of the PR China as actors in regional and global affairs has changed dramatically in recent years. Moreover, “the general trend in Asia” as Wang Jisi argues, “is conducive to China’s aspiration to integrate itself more extensively into the region and the world, and it would be difficult for the United States to reverse this direction”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>The same recommendation has been made for Japan, Canada and India. See: Javier SOLANA, „A Secure Europe In A Better World. European Security Strategy“, Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 14. [http://ue.eu.int/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?id=266&lang=en&mode=g](http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=266&lang=en&mode=g), download 18.07.2004.

<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of the embargo issue see: Sebastian BERSICK, ”Lifting the arms embargo on China: A shift in EU priorities?“, [www.eias.org](http://www.eias.org).

<sup>11</sup>China’s EU Policy Paper, 13.10.2003, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/xos/dqzzywt/t27708.htm>, download 30.10.03.

<sup>12</sup>FEER, 12 Februar 2004, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup>Heinrich KREFT, „Die USA - Stabilitätsanker für Asien?“ [The United States – The Security Linchpin for Asia?], Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen, no. 148 (2004/2), p. 36.

The ASEM regime is a mechanism that facilitates this development.

In contrast to other interregional cooperation processes in which the European Union is involved (e.g. EU-ASEAN, EU-Mercosur) the ASEM process developed an extensive approach to manage the rising interdependencies between the EU and East Asia.<sup>15</sup> This approach is based on two fundamental principles: 1. multilateralism, 2. regionalism.<sup>16</sup> During the nine years of its development the cooperation between the ASEM participants has become more intense than anybody could have expected in the middle of the 1990s. The thematic diversity of the cooperation is twofold: On the one side ASEM activities are part of the economic dimension of globalisation. On the other side the process deals with the political dimension of globalisation. Since the dynamics of rising interdependencies are the most challenging aspect of globalisation the ASEM process can be understood as an answer to the challenges of a world which more and more relies on the cooperative interaction of all its inhabitants. This is why ASEM affairs aim at structuring the relations between different kinds of European and Asian participants: As well as governments and the European Union non-state actors like the private sector and civil society take part in the process.

### **Theoretical implications of interregional cooperation**

Though cooperation within the ASEM process is based on a multilateral approach it differs from other forms of multilateralism: All ASEM actors are organised in relation to their regional assignment. While this is obvious for the European side – which has a long experience in interregional cooperation with organisations in Asia and South- and Middle America – the Asian ASEM actors have not been organized in a regional institution before. What is more: The then ten Asian ASEM actors agreed to build a new institution to coordinate their respective interests in order to arrive at a common Asian position.<sup>17</sup> The Politics of Interregional Relations therefore produce a new type of multilateral cooperation, i.e. multilateralism on the interregional level.<sup>18</sup>

This development can be explained with the help of the neoliberal paradigm of International Relations theory. The cooperation between the regions increases the interdependence between the actors. But the policies of ASEM make sense in terms of an neorealist point of view as well. As the establishing of ASEM has been justified with the need of a link between the regions of Europe and Asia, ASEM can be explained as an empirical example of the logics of power politics and its balancing aspects. If one uses a constructivists' approach, ASEM is as an example of collective identity building between

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<sup>14</sup>Jisi WANG, "China's Changing Role in Asia", *Internationale Politik* (Transatlantic Edition), vol. 4 (3/2003), p. 73.

<sup>15</sup>See: Sebastian BERSICK, *Auf dem Weg in eine neue Weltordnung? Zur Politik der interregionalen Beziehungen am Beispiel des ASEM-Prozesses* [Towards a New World Order? On the Politics of Interregional Relations: The Example of the ASEM Process] (Baden-Baden 2004).

<sup>16</sup>See for instance: 'ASEM Declaration on Multilateralism', The Sixth ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Kildare, Ireland, 17-18 April 2004; 'Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000'.

<sup>17</sup>The two so-called ASEM coordinators enable the Asian ASEM actors to coordinate their interests and formulate common positions when meeting their European counterparts.

<sup>18</sup>For the following and the related conceptual approach that explains the ASEM process as a new kind of regime see: BERSICK, op. cit.

Asia and Europe. Due to the nature of the Politics of Interregional Relations a theory-based explanation of the empirical data needs to encompass and make use of different paradigms in International Relations theory.

### 3.2.2. Chinese interests

In its first actor-specific policy paper, i.e. 'China's EU Policy Paper' from October 2003, the Chinese government formulates that "China and the EU should work together to make ASEM a role model for inter-continental cooperation on the basis of equality, a channel for oriental and occidental civilizations and a driving force behind the establishment of a new international political and economic order"<sup>19</sup>. The PR China is one of the most important actors of the ASEM regime and its *de facto* hegemon. This is for two reasons. Firstly, a reason for the formation of the ASEM process has been to engage China, or, to put it in the words of a Southeast Asian diplomat, "to coax China into the mainstream of world affairs". But although Beijing agreed to participate in the first ASEM summit in Bangkok in 1996 the Chinese input was very low at the beginning. Secondly, the interests of the PR China towards ASEM changed within the last years and can be differentiated into those before the Asian crisis and those that developed within the new context of the Asian crisis after 1998. Shen Guoliang, Senior Research Fellow at the 'China Institute for International Strategic Studies', describes Beijing's interest in the ASEM in four clusters: 1. Because of the imperialistic history between Asia and Europe the establishing of cooperation on an equal footing in the fields of economy, politics and culture ASEM is a historic event. 2. ASEM will further a process of multipolarization and by this help to establish a new political and economic world order. 3. ASEM shall counter-balance the influence of the United States. 4. ASEM lays the basis for an Asian-European partnership that shall lead to common interests and common positions. According to Shen there are conflicts of interests as well: Asia and Europe do not agree on issues like values, the role of the political dialogue and of security issues in the ASEM process, the liberalization of trade and investments. Zhang Yunling, Director at the 'Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' in Beijing, furthermore underlines the importance of European technology, which the Chinese government hopes to acquire with the help of the ASEM process. Beijing, for instance, took the lead on the 'Study Group on Enhancing Technological Exchanges and Cooperation', and hosted 'Asia-Europe Experts' Meetings on Technological Cooperation'.

According to Wu Xingtang, former Secretary General of the 'Chinese Association for International Understanding' the most important aspect of the ASEM process is that the United States does not participate in it. The Chinese interest in ASEM is also expressed by senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese Communist Party. Diplomats and cadres alike stress the importance of the ASEM process as a mechanism that allows for interregional cooperation with the Europeans without the participation of the United States. The absence of the United States explains why the Chinese government is convinced of the politico-strategic relevance of the ASEM process. As the Second Secretary of the 'International Liaison Department' of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China put it:

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<sup>19</sup>China's EU Policy Paper, 13.10.2003,op cit.

The absence of the USA in ASEM is good. There are three poles: North America, Asia and Europe. The USA does not want to recognize this. ASEM marks the end of a 50 year long phase in which the USA monopolized the Asian economies. The non-existence of the ASEM process would have a negative influence on the evolving of a new world order – especially in the political realm. Europe and Asia want to balance the influence of the USA.

The director of the ‘Department of Policy Research’ in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasizes the politico-strategic importance of the ASEM process as well. In that context he defines multipolarity as the „growing importance of Asia and Europe“. According to him the rising willingness of the Asian ASEM actors to cooperate on an intraregional level has a substantial impact on the cooperation between Europe and China. In addition to that he explains that when Chinese and European actors meet within the ASEM context not only bilateral issues are part of the agenda. „The common interest of Asia comes first. China’s interests are second“. In that context the director of the ‘ASEM-Division’ of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs argues that ASEM’s strategic relevance results from its aim to foster multipolarity through the strengthening of interdependencies between Asia and Europe.

The increasing interest of Beijing in ASEM results in a rising role of the PR China in the overall process. Not only did the PR China become an ASEM coordinator but she was also host of several meetings on the ministerial and senior official level. During the last ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Kyoto in May the Chinese government offered to host the seventh ASEM Summit in 2008 – the year of the Olympic Games.

### **3.2.3. European interests**

Europe’s interests in China are more complex than vice versa because the European actors have to be differentiated in supranational and national ones. However the adoption of the European Security Strategy in December 2003 which makes “the development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order” the EU’s objective is a strong indicator for the EU’s interest to contribute to the moulding of the international system after the end of the Cold War.<sup>20</sup>

This interest is as well inherent in the EU Constitution. Article III-292 spells out principles and objectives that shall guide the EU’s external actions:

- “1. The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human

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<sup>20</sup>For an intellectually stimulating discussion of the American answer to the challenge of „seizing the opportunity for systemic change or participating in an episode“ see: Henry KISSINGER, „Debating the ‚Freedom Agenda““, Realists vs. Idealists, in *International Herald Tribune*, 12.05.05, p. 7. See also: Michael E. SMITH, „*Europe’s Foreign and Security Policy. The Institutionalization of Cooperation*“, (Cambridge 2004), p. 247 pp.

dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

2. The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share the principles referred to in the (...) [above] subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations (...).”

The most important aspect with regard to the polity dimension of the ASEM process is that the EU Commission and the Presidency of the Council are the two ASEM coordinators on the European side. Since the coordinator of Northeast Asia and the coordinator of Southeast Asia change and the Presidency of the EU Council as well, the EU Commission is the only actor in the ASEM process that has – according to a German diplomat – “all the institutional knowledge of the ASEM process” and represents *de facto* “the only European ASEM coordinator”. The senior official states that this is an important power factor, since the Commission has a “quasi right of proposal on the European side.” Apart from the role of the EU Commission, the role of the EU Presidency is important as well. At least those national officials who work in the Consilium in Brussels and its ‘Asia-Oceania Working Group’ that is responsible for the coordination of the national ASEM policies of the EU member states hold the view that the ASEM agenda of the European side is worked out through intergovernmental mechanisms.

Like in the case on the Asian side not every European actor of ASEM shows the same level of interest in the process. Greece for instance has not co-sponsored a single ASEM initiative and Greek diplomats do not hesitate to confess the low interest of their government in Asia, due to the lack of their country’s economic relations with the Asian region. Other EU member states like Italy were engaged in the ASEM initiative at an early point. During the summit in London in 1998 especially the host country made use of ASEM in order to demonstrate UK’s interest in Asia and presented the country as an economic “powerhouse” and Asia’s “gateway” to Europe. It was Tony Blair’s government that proposed the ‘ASEM Trust Fund’ as a new ASEM initiative – though only as a reaction to pressure by the Southeast Asian ASEM coordinator. Apart from the UK, France and Germany have actively supported the process on the European side as well. Both countries lobbied their European counterparts and the EU Commission to start the ASEM process.

In the case of Germany, the identification of Asia as a new region of emphasis of German foreign policy was politically driven too, i.e. “securing Germany’s future”<sup>21</sup>, while being element of a global policy of ensuring peace. Particularly because the United States is not taking part German diplomats hold the view that the ASEM process transports an emancipatory element that provides the ASEM participants with the means to interact on a new basis. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the reaction of the US administration

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<sup>21</sup>“Asienpolitische Konzeption der Bundesregierung” [The conception on an Asia policy by the federal government], art. I, 1, [www.asienhaus.org](http://www.asienhaus.org), 06.11.2003.

to the threats of transnational terrorism this aspect of the cooperation within the ASEM process has become even more important to the diplomats and politicians involved. Senior officials of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin assess the role of the ASEM process in the new international security set-up as of rising importance. In fact, the need for the implementation of the ASEM regime is underlined by efforts of the US administration to pursue the interests of the United States unilaterally – instead of multilaterally.

In that context especially the French role in the ASEM process is an important one because Paris views ASEM as a mechanism to multipolarize international relations. Jacques Chirac, who took part in all five ASEM summits, frequently declares the necessity to establish a so-called multipolar world. And the leaders of Germany and the UK declared during one of the closed sessions during the second ASEM summit in London that they prefer a multilateral World Order. In its *Ostasienkonzept* the German Federal Foreign Office argues that the importance of regional and security issues in Asia has increased. In so far as developments in Asia have global impacts it is in the interest of Germany to use her influence, e.g. within the ASEM process. This is why the Federal Foreign Office calls the political dialogue between the leaders and the Foreign Ministers the centrepiece of ASEM and lists four priorities of a "German East Asia policy": 1. The peaceful solution of conflicts of interests on the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan and the South China Sea; 2. The promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law; 3. The building of structures for consultation and cooperation in order to commonly solve global issues; 4. The promotion of German economic interests.<sup>22</sup>

#### **4. The Impact of the EU Constitution on Europe's role in Asia**

With regard to the impact of the EU Constitution on Europe's role in Asia the analysis of the above described three indicators (the position of a Foreign Minister, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the position of a new President of the EU Council) in the context of the ASEM process shows that a successful ratification of the Constitution would result in a strengthening of Europe's role in Asia.

The main implication of a new President of the European Council for the ASEM process would be that the EU Commission would lose its dominant position as the only long-term ASEM coordinator. At the moment, the Council presidency rotates through the member states every six months. The new President would be a more permanent actor of two and a half or five years with much greater influence and symbolism. Continuity within the work of the ASEM coordinators would be gained. This change would raise the profile of the EU within the ASEM process.

In relation to the treaty's specifications on a Common Foreign and Security Policy, especially the objective to identify questions of general interest and to achieve an ever increasing degree of convergence of the EU member states' actions would lead to a more

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<sup>22</sup>See: Auswärtiges Amt (ed.), *Aufgaben der deutschen Außenpolitik. Ostasien am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts* [Tasks of German foreign policy. East Asia at the beginning of the 21st century], (Berlin 2002), p. 14.

coherent approach of the EU towards Asia. Such a development within an interregional context would increase the capability of the EU member countries to coordinate their respective Asia policies more efficiently. Thereby the European Union would reduce the risks to engage China in an asymmetric way as it is the case in the issue of the EU arms embargo against China.

Though the appointment of the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs is a great improvement one has to bear in mind that the new minister will only be able to speak on the behalf of the EU if there is an agreed or common policy. Nevertheless the post will combine the present roles of the external affairs member of the Commission with the High Representative on foreign policy. In addition to the new post of a Foreign Minister the EU will furthermore set up its diplomatic service that shall assist the Union Minister of Foreign Affairs. In effect the EU will be a more prominent international actor. With respect to the EU's relations with China and specifically to the EU's interregional relations with East Asia this development marks an important improvement as the consistency of the European Union's external actions will be increased. This process can in turn support the development of a more coherent Asia policy of the European Union.

## **5. Conclusion**

A successful ratification process of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe would have a decisive impact on the EU's interregional relations with Asia. This is for four main reasons:

1. The role of the EU within the ASEM process would be strengthened.
2. This development would strengthen the interregional cooperation between Europe and Asia.
3. Thereby the engagement of China on the interregional level between Asia and the EU would be deepened.
4. At the same time the ratification of the EU constitution would facilitate a deeper engagement of China on the intraregional level within Asia.

With regard to the EU's interregional relations with the Asian region the EU should intensify its policy of exporting the European model of regional cooperation and integration. The European track record of supporting institution building in East Asia is vast. The EC has been the first dialogue partner of the ASEAN. Only after having started to engage China through the ASEM process in the middle of the 1990s did the three Northeast Asian countries China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and the then seven ASEAN members agree to cooperate in an institutional mechanism and started to formulate common "Asian" positions. This process has strengthened and supported the forces in East Asia that favor a deepening of intraregional cooperation.

In order to further facilitate this paradigm shift of the international system it is imperative that the EU and its member countries continue to engage China bilaterally and multilaterally. Since Beijing holds the key to Asian regionalism China should be the main target of European soft power in Asia by exporting the principles of regionalism and

multilateralism to Asia. To what extent the EU and its model of regional cooperation and integration can influence the objective and trajectory of Asian regionalism will demonstrate partly the extent of Europe's soft power in the international system. The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe could have a crucial impact on the European actors' capacity to implement this policy. This development would in turn strengthen the EU's role in Asia.

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