

# *Taiwan and China in the Global Communities*

*Summary by  
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In recent years a number of important changes have taken place in East Asia, in particular in the Korean Peninsula as well as in the 'Greater China' – comprising the People's Republic of China as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. This conference seeks to assess the importance of these changes for the regional stability as well as economic development and prosperity of the East Asian region, focusing in particular on the tension between China and Taiwan across the straits and the ways in which Beijing and Taipei see the future of their relations and how they relate to a series of global communities.

These two East Asian cases do not in any sense make up a full list of geo-political flashpoints in the East Asia region, in particular in view of continued tensions regarding Tibet and XinJiang and the ongoing instability in the Central Asian heartland. However, the two cases have many important parallels of which I shall only mention two, while tempting you to think of more:

- First, the divisions across the Taiwan Straits as well as between North and South Korea exists within a cultural-historical continuity – which puts them apart from inter-ethnic or inter-religious strife characterising many of the tensions between and within states of South as well as South East Asia. The most direct expression of this are the family reunions which we have seen across the Taiwan Straits as well as between North and South Korea – although only few are effected, these have a great emotional and personal importance. Some estimate that as many as ten million families are divided in the Korean peninsula, which could be a ground swell of
- Second, the histories are still fresh and wounds have not yet fully healed. Although both inter-chinese and inter-korean tensions find their deeper roots in successive British and Japanese colonialism from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the specific expressions of today's nationalisms have resulted from only a comparatively brief history of time. China-Taiwan dates back to the Long March of 1949, whereas inter-korean tensions find their defining moment in the armistice of 1954. With time-lines of about half a century, the scope for remoulding the conflict determinants by examining them afresh may be promising. It is neither too early for this, nor too late.

Norman Davies describes the international relations of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe as ‘remarkably stable’, with the five Great Powers that had organised the 1815 Vienna Congress able to police and suppress internal revolutionary outbreaks as well as to effectively engage into a fresh imperialist conquest across the globe. Serajewo 1914 signified the end to all of this.

The European Union is a marvellous first-best invention as compared to the two devastating world wars which characterised the first half of the regions’ 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second war was precipitated by the first one – following the disastrous 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which was the signpost of a Europe which traversed itself from being the powerhouse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a state of eclipse which was to last until the early 1950s.

The hallmarks of Europe’s integration after the savage second World War may well be described by commonalities of several kinds – history, values and interests. Our common history is one of ensuring no repeats or relapses into authoritarianism and fascism – knowing only too well that Europe’s eclipse, though perhaps inevitable in an historical sense-- had been to a very considerable extent self-inflicted and brought about by poorly regulated inter-state processes and unbridled business interests overseas.

The common European values relate to those of ‘openness’, ‘democracy’ and ‘self-determination’ – accepting dissent and difference, while not letting any single cultural, religious, political or regional tendency dominate to the exclusion of others. In the post-war process, Europe also undertook it to codify and make irreversible its commitments to collective and individual rights, in particular through the European Convention on Human Rights, and more generally through strengthening the European Court and the legal processes.

The commonality of interests is enshrined through the common policies of the European Union – an attempt to create a level playing field within the Union and therewith to secure a cohesive platform for individuals and enterprises from different countries and regions. One of the leading author on the European Union, Dr Nicholas Moussis, says that he needs to revise his classic book on the European Union at least once a year. He distinguishes as many as seventeen common policy domains for the EU - covering external relations, development, commerce, fisheries, agriculture, transport, energy, research and technology, industry, environment, competition, taxation, social progress, regional progress, consumers, information and citizen’s rights. To date there is no other intergovernmental integration process of a comparable kind – for example the ASEAN or the SAARC have hardly any common structures or policies. And last but not least we have EU institutions – mediating between national interests and representing citizen’s interests at the supra-national level, however imperfectly at this juncture.

### **Integrative Forces—Attraction and Direction**

The term ‘integration’ arrives to us from Latin and has the precise meaning of ‘the making up of a whole by adding together or combining the separate parts or elements’ – like in mathematics ‘integration’ refers to the opposite of ‘differentiation’ between the constituent elements of a whole. Perhaps most physical processes are

characterised by disintegration – if a drinking glass drops on the floor it may split apart in hundreds of pieces. And if I would wish to remould this glass, I would have to do so at extremely high temperatures – say 2000 degrees Celsius -- and under strictly controlled conditions within a blasting furnace. Hence, in the natural world integrative processes require some considerable energy to take place.

If we pursue this analogy for inter-state processes it raises the immediate question where the energies and forces would come from? Can one rely on ‘learning from history’ – that political and administrative decision makers could be entrusted to do the necessary to avoid repetition of historical mistakes? Few of us would be willing to gamble on such enlightened leadership – history is too full of massive ‘administrative’ mistakes including, for example, the great famines such as in China 1959-1962.

Hence, in the outline of this conference, we have identified three sets of determinants of federalist and integrative processes:

- first and foremost, the creation of institutions and organisations which provide agreed rules for procedures and codes of conduct;
- second, we look at the mutual attraction which may come from independent parties pursuing their shared economic interests;
- thirdly, we refer to cultural processes which may be critical for creating the conditions for cooperation, in particular farsighted ‘leadership’ as well as inter-cultural exchanges.

The participants to this conference are invited to assess these three factors critically and to assess how these as well as other key-factors may be expected to play a role in the process of reducing regional tensions in the East Asian region, in particular across the Straits as well as within the Korean peninsula.

### **Longer Term Scenario’s for East Asia**

In general, I remain optimistic and I personally have little doubt that the cross-straits tensions between China and Taiwan as well as the inter-korean tensions between the DPRK and ROK will be resolved peacefully during the first half of this century, perhaps even by 2020. However, neither the long term steady-state, nor the likely paths of transition are at all well defined at present. A great deal of ‘muddling through’ seems to characterise both these situation and there is no – if I may borrow the phrase – agreed framework.

#### *Korean Peninsula*

The absence of a longer-term vision appears to have been stalling progress in the Korean peninsula in particular – certainly until the launch of the Sunshine policy in 2000. The DPRK is indisputably in a long-term state of decline as a economic entity -