

The Germanification of European Foreign Policy in East Asia

European Foreign Policy in East Asia is a relatively new phenomenon. Though diplomatic relations in a purely national context were established as early on as the 16th century in the case of Japan and the United Kingdom, it is only in the 1990's that a veritable shift in European political interest towards East Asia is noticeable. Two reasons account for this. The first pertains to the European Union's (hereafter EU) objective of regaining its former pre-war glory by enhancing its diplomatic and military presence abroad; Maastricht provided the spring board for this (Turnbull-Henson, 1997). The second is the dramatic economic growth coupled with an increasingly widespread and powerful political influence of East Asia here constituted of China, Japan and South Korea¹; this is demonstrated by the European Commission's 1994 communications where emphasis is put on the need for "greater priority" towards East Asia, and the establishment of strategic frameworks allowing for the creation of a strong partnership attest to this. The aim of this paper is to provide the reader with further understanding as to the European Union's foreign policy (hereafter EFP) in East Asia. Accordingly, this paper will be split into 2 sections. First, we will survey the EFP highlighting that of the big three (France, the United Kingdom (hereafter UK) and Germany). With important economic and business interests in the region (trade represents €296.5 billion, €92.8 billion and €53.9 billion² for China, Japan and South Korea respectively; Datamonitor Database), a high degree of political cooperation and programmes and cultural exchanges i.e. the Asia-Europe Foundation, EU-Asia relations seem to have resulted in a solid strategic partnership. Nonetheless, a wide range of mechanical and institutional pitfalls are observable. EFP is described as suffering from a 'capabilities expectations gap' (Hill, 2004), too complex a structure and a problem of voices and historical baggage. On an Asia specific level, the EU's lack of hard power signifies that it is incapable of influencing a region where hard power has become primordial. In the second section, we argue for the Germanification of EFP towards East Asia.

¹ Though one could include Vietnam or North Korea, we believe that these three countries occupy a greater importance both economically and within the EU and Member States' foreign policies.

² Percentages exclude intra-European trade

The European Union's Foreign Policy: From one to many, from effective to vain

In this section, we shall firstly analyse the EFP in terms of its economic, security and cultural policies, stressing its achievements and we will secondly discuss its' shortcomings in relation to East Asia.

EFP: An Overview

20 years post creation, due to the dynamism of the East Asian economies, EFP has undergone much change (Hawkesley, & Holberton, 1997). In 1992 Germany published the Asian concept paper emphasising the region's potential as well as the need for strong bilateral relations, particularly on an economic level i.e. a greater degree of business with the region (German Federal Foreign Office Website). This policy acted as a catalyst to the 'East Asian rush', where France, UK and a number of other countries equally identified the region's economic importance. With a fifth of the world's population (CIA Factbook website) and showing important GDP growth, if the Member States and the EU were to maintain their economic power, a reformulation of policy was necessary. The EU rush is portrayed in two papers. Published in 1994, the first advocated for a strengthened "economic presence in Asia in order to maintain its leading role in the world economy." The EU believed that rising Asia would fundamentally shift world order. The second paper published in 2001, entitled 'Europe and Asia: A strategic framework for Enhanced Partnership' is perhaps the union's first attempt at producing an actual strategic framework in which the partnership between the countries could be achieved. Though not specifically targeted at East Asia (but at Asia on a whole), the document delineates 6 key objectives³ leading to the promotion of a "new round of multilateral trade negotiations". Case in point, the EU has designed a broad policy approach and represents member states based on this framework (Weinrod, 2006). Observable in both of these papers is the EU's intention to apply its normative values to its East Asian policy. This would, from a European perspective, lay the foundations for the export of the EU model to Asia, giving the EU a strong political presence in the region. One could argue that the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), is a steppingstone to achieving this (ASEM Infoboard website).

³ These 6 objectives are the following: contributing to peace and security in the region and globally, promoting mutual trade and investment flows, addressing the root causes of poverty, protecting human rights, the building of global partnerships and alliances with the Asian countries, and finally promoting EU-Asia awareness.



In hindsight, most EFP have been routed in economic interests; this is still true today. In 2010, EU-East Asian trade amounted to €570 billion representing 20.1% of the EU’s external trade, a 22% increase from 2006 (Eurostat website). China is the EU’s second largest trade partner, preceded by the United States. Japan and South Korea are respectively 6th and 9th (Eurostat website). On a national level, Germany is by far the leading trader, accounting for 40% of EU exports to East Asia, whilst the UK represents 8% and France 12% (Euromonitor International database). Similarly the EU is China’s biggest trade partner. For Japan and South Korea, the EU figures amongst their top 5 trading partners (Euromonitor International database). Given the quantity of trade, it is only normal that interdependence has developed. The Free Trade Agreement between Korea and the EU, launched in 2007 and signed in October 2010, is a further example of the developing relations taking place between the regions (Lee, 2011). Baptised as the “new generation of free trade agreements,” (Breuss & Francois, 2011) this FTA figures as part of the EU’s 2009 Global Europe policy strategy. Either doing away or decreasing the number of tariffs and trade barriers within the market, this FTA covers both trade related activities as well as manufactured goods, services and agricultural products. A bold move for Korea, for the EU this agreement is a stepping stone to a greater number of FTA within the region, notably with Japan with whom talks are underway (European Union Delegation of the European Commission to Japan website). One questions whether China will benefit from this trend.

Security and cultural ties have, adjacent to trade, equally been made but remain secondary. ASEM has provides the most significant springboard for security cooperation, where talks pertaining to the Korean nuclear crisis, terrorism and global threats have taken place (10th China-EU Summit Beijing). Though informal and greatly contributing to the harmonisation of ideology allowing the EU to better shape its policy vis à vis East Asian countries, disagreements are rife. The military junta in Myanmar and the associated disaccords on how to tackle the issues is one such example. However these problems have not halted the EU’s pursuit of involvement in Asian security matters; the EU attends the ASEAN Regional Forums’ ministerial meetings, aspiring to become a member. Conversely as demonstrated by the case of Japan, cooperation has mostly taken a non-military form, where economic tools are favoured. Despite significant initiatives being identified and consequent dialogues being set up i.e. EU-Japan Dialogue on East Asian Security, leading to bilateral agreements i.e. the joint signing of the non proliferation and disarmament protocol, there are

Table 1: destination of East Asian students in the big three in 2008

Country of origin \ Destination country	China	Japan	Korea	Total
France	20 852	1 908	2 292	25 052
Germany	25 479	2 233	5 137	32 849
UK	51 160	4 950	4 837	60 947
Total	97 491	9 091	12 266	118 848

Source: OECD.Stat website

few quantifiable results. Similarly, security policy towards China rarely covers security issues per say, but focuses on Chinese arms and human rights policies. In the case of South Korea, the EU's presence within the Korean Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) is a clear example of the strong security ties and policies aimed towards the East (KEDO website). On a national level, according to Irlenkäufer (2006) Germany does not possess a security strategy or policy and therefore heavily relies on that of the EU. By contrast France has pursued significant measures deepening defence ties (Wong, 2006). The Franco-Korean Samsung Thales Co, Ltd joint venture established in 1999 aiming at developing defence equipment (Thales Group website; Samsung-Thales website). Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon joint venture between AMEC plc, the Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO), the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS) and the Korea Development Bank (KDB), marks significant cooperation between the British and Korean governments (Amec website).

In respects to the cultural issues, the Asia-Europe foundation is an example of inter-regional cooperation. Created in 1997 by ASEM members and pivoting around three key dimensions (young artists exchange, process oriented

platforms for exchange and dialogue for policy and culture) it promotes intellectual, cultural and people to people exchanges (ASEM Infoboard website). Similarly Germany, France and the UK have built up a number of cultural centres within East Asia allowing for greater state

Table 2: Media industry evolution

	2010	2006-2010	2010-2015
	Revenue in \$ Billions	compound annual growth rate	
East Asia			
China	44.5	7.8%	9.7%
Japan	98.5	-0.5%	1.1%
South Korea	12.1	2.50%	4.50%
Eu member states			
France	42.3	2.50%	1.20%
UK	40.4	0.60%	-0.40%
Germany	50.4	0%	0%

Source: Datamonitor website

to state exchanges. Conversely, the British Council appears to be the most developed network between the three, promoting English language course and exams, exhibitions and clubs (British Council website). On the educational side, it equally offers a wide range of institutional and government grants (Helen Leavey, 2004). This is probably an important variable justifying the high number of exchange students from East Asia. Totalling 60 947 students in 2008, Germany and France only achieve a half and a third of this number respectively. In 1998, the total number of Asian students within the three countries was 26 074; in 2008, this number has more than quadrupled (OECD Stats Website), demonstrating that the UK, seems to detain a significant advance in the cultural ties with East Asia. Having said this, the EU's cultural influence in Asia is waning (Martel, 2010). Though globalisation has facilitated the export of cultural services i.e. Cinematographic, it is the American services which are most popular. Similarly, East Asia as a region is also experiencing an important

boom. Comparing the media industries in East Asia to those in France, the UK and Germany as demonstrated by table 2, it is clear that East Asia has a better developed and expanding market. Given the importance of cultural exchange in building bilateral relations, the consequences of the erosion and lack of interest for European services will, according to Martel (2010), result in the EU losing a significant degree of its soft power.

One, few, Many? How to characterise the problems of EFP towards Asia

Coherence in a Union of 27 is problematic and is further complicated by the intense power play between the Asian countries (Yeung, 2009). Conflict is not only disruptive in terms of good governance but equally to the Union’s ability to produce successful policies; limited have been the policies where unanimity has immediately taken place (Smith & Vichitsorasatra, 2010). “All animals are equal but some more equal than others” coined Orwell (1946), a description which exactly qualifies the European situation. ‘Primus inter pares’ states, France (because of its historical role as the motor of Europe), the UK (due to its military strength and role during wars), and Germany (the present economic powerhouse of Europe) appear more

successful than others at upload their own policy preferences and quelling the voices of smaller states (Hill, 2004; Hoffmann, 2000). Conversely these 3

Table 3: Total value of arms export licenses for China (in € million)

	2002	2003
France	105	172
UK	80	112
Germany	N/A	1
All EU Member States	210	416

Source: 2003 O.J. December 31, 2003 (C320) 9, 14, 30, 42. The Sixth report is found at Office Journal C 316 2, 2004 page 1-215

states themselves have different objectives and ties with each of the Asian countries, which inherently define the depth and breadth of their negotiations. These disparities were made clear when the issue of the non binding Chinese arms embargo was raised in 2004 (Goodenough, 2004). France and Germany rallied together to support the lifting; it is clear that the lifting would have huge benefits (Wolfe, 2004; Grimmett & Papademetriou, 2010). For France, this signifies a possible increase in the sales of arms (without the disapproval from other Member States). As demonstrated by Table 3, the arms embargo has in no way stopped the sales in arms, though one can hypothesize that it would have slowed it down. For Germany, it was said that relations with Beijing, would also have improved, strengthening economic ties. The embargo is thus considered backwards, a barrier to trade and “major

impediment for developing stronger EU-China co-operation on foreign policy and security matters” (Vinocur, 2011). On the other hand, the UK oscillated between supporting France and Germany (having overcome the rift created by the Iraqi war) and supporting the American positioning (to whom they owe their transatlantic mediating position within the EU) (BBC News, 2008). The UK stated that whilst the lifting would have little impact on arms sales due to other constricting EU legislation concerning the sale of arms, it would however constitute a ‘relaxation’ of EU policies in respects to human rights (Archick et al, 2005). Despite the ban not being lifted in 2004, the issue received renewed attention in 2010 when Ashton supported the lifting (The Economist website; Wan, 2011). The UK this time round fiercely opposed the lifting on “security and human grounds”, whilst Germany relaxed its stance (Agence France Presse, 2010; a). Another stalemate, this contentious issue likened to the prisoner’s dilemma by Bitzinger (2004), made clear the complexity of the EFP system. A further problematic characteristic of EFP is its structure; two stumbling blocks are visible. The first is the prevalence of strong national policies. When President Sarkozy’s (also acting as President of the Council at that time) planned to meet the Dalai Lama in Poland, China cancelled the EU-China summit that was to take place (BBC News, 2005). Qualified as ‘reckless’ by *China Daily* (2008), this move hurt not only Paris-Beijing relations but equally that of Brussels (Traynor, 2008). This occurrence raised the issue of ineffectiveness of the EU and serves to decrease its legitimacy on the world stage. It is therefore vital that policy be approved and carried out in one spell by all 27 states. Although there is talk of the Europeanisation of foreign policy, (Wong 2002; Strang 2007) the extent to which these are taking place is not enough to overcome fragmentation problems. With the reforms brought on by Lisbon, it is widely debated as to whether the European External Action Service will gradually put an end to this problem (Gaspers, 2008). Acting as a foreign ministry and diplomatic service to the EU, it remains to be seen whether this body will become a veritable harmonising and action centre for national foreign policies, leading to the dismemberment of member states’ embassies worldwide. Though wholly unlikely at present as a result of each member state’s keen hold on its sovereignty notably France, over the years one may predict that this may be the case. As demonstrated by the Libyan crisis, one can already notice member states deferring to the EEAS. It is only a matter of time before this becomes a permanent feature. The second is the international character of EFP. Characterised as a multilevel and multi-location element by Justaert & Skander (2008), European foreign policy involves a wide spectrum of players ranging from the local and national levels (Member States) to the international (i.e. European institutions) as well as international organisations

such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) or the United Nations. All impact upon the decision making procedure and the outcomes of policies, implying that speaking as one coherent and coordinated voice is made more difficult. For the Asian countries, exploiting fragmentation (Breslin, 2010) has become a powerful negotiation tool. Divide and rule has become a real *modus operandi* (Waterfield, & Foster, 2010). Rather than trying to wrap its head around the EU's complicated mechanisms, China, Japan and to a lesser extent South Korea favour inter-state relations resulting in the establishment of varying intensities of strategic bilateral partnerships and inter-EU rivalry. Asia more often than not therefore comes out victorious of negotiations, achieving greater concessions from states than if they had been negotiating with Europe as a whole.

However even if Europe possesses a coherent foreign policy, as a soft power its ability to successfully interact with East Asia remains limited (Geeraerts, 2011). As it currently stands, Europe is an underdeveloped power when contrasted with the United States, and is constantly sidelined in favour of states that are better equipped in adapting to the shift in eastern power (Berkofsky, 2010). Europe for all its grand norms cannot keep up with the East Asia, who rather than following Europe's approach is now able to set its own rules and policies, many of which conflict with the EU (Holslag, 2010; Van Rompuy, 2010). Europe's absence in the Taiwan debacle and during Copenhagen was duly noted, indicating that whilst it may be present economically, politically it is only there in name (Berkofsky, 2010). The US with a 25 000 soldier stronghold in South Korea (US State department Website), is an active player in the North Korean nuclear debacle and consequently regularly consulted by third parties; in juxtaposition the EU is excluded from the six party talks concerning the peninsula. Risk aversion to war, as stated by Laidi (2011), is one of the fundamentals for this. Rather than building both an economic and military (translating into political) powerhouse, the EU prefers to conduct relations by the use of diplomacy and norms or rely on the US (Diez & Pace, 2007; Whitman, 2002). Paradoxically, in an environment increasingly defined by hard power, how can Europe be taken seriously by international players, when their security and defence policy is routed in soft power and they do not possess the 'military equipment' that matters internationally. Whilst normative power has served Europe up to the present, in the wake of a rising East Asia, this is no longer sufficient (Pardo, 2009).

A further point of contention is the EU and East Asia seeing eye to eye. In China, whilst Germany has clearly understood that if one is to conduct business successfully, a blind eye must be turned on certain issues i.e. Human right and Intellectual property rights (IPR), France has only just come to grasp with the idea (Wong, 2008). From Sarkozy's 2008 Beijing

Olympics boycott threats (O'Connor, et al, 2008,) (relating to human rights violations in Tibet) to President Hu Jintao's visit to Paris in November 2010 (Agence France Press, 2010; b), there is a clear signal that France has realised that to benefit from China's increased wealth and power, placating them is crucial. Conversely for a norm exporting society where human rights and IPR are one of the important attributes upheld by the EU, this ignorance is paradoxical and a clear example of self interest. Similarly, on the topic of EU and Japanese relations, though much has been written on paper i.e. the Joint Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation (2001), concrete results are scarce; of approximately 100 areas of bilateral cooperation, few were successfully completed. Tsuruoka (2004) attributes this phenomenon to Japan's low expectation of the EU (ability to deliver), coining it as the 'capabilities expectations deficit'. Hill (1993), on the other hand argues that it is more a 'capabilities expectation gap' whereby the EU, despite its best intentions is unable to deliver. In the European Foreign Policy Scorecard (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2010) the EU's foreign policy towards China was rewarded a C+ rating (in comparison to B- with the United States). This score clear points to a number of insufficiencies pertaining to unity amongst member states, allocation and utilisation of resources and the achievement of objectives which inherently lead to the EU's inability to 'define priorities' corresponding to China's core interests. Though it is claimed that the EU's renewed effort and their new strategy based on reciprocity is a step in the right direction, the pace at which developments are taking place are overall too slow.

The East wind blows west- what future for the EFP?

The problems highlighted in the first section demonstrate that achieving a unified strategy in the near future will be difficult. It will only happen if firstly, Europe builds up hard power consequently being seen as an equal by Asian states. Secondly, identifies and focuses on implementing only a handful of policies, rather than listing many and be unable to tackle them as well as shorthanded in terms of resources. And lastly, France, Germany and the UK need to let go of their primus inter pares status interact and with other Member States on a more equalitarian level.

For the next 5 to 7 years, we believe EFP will thus undergo a Germanification. The term Germanification is used in the sense that relations with other countries will strictly centre on business; sensitive issues i.e. Human Rights, will be simply ignored. This Germanification can be attributed to two factors. Firstly Germany's emerging leadership



within the EU as a result of its financial stability. As the current powerhouse of Europe, its social capitalist structure has proven robust, notably with the 2008 crisis. Furthermore, boasting of its lowest unemployment rate in over 20 years (6.6%) and detaining an important trade surplus (OECD Databse), the country's economy is ranked fourth worldwide; with such a success, a number of countries including France and the UK are adapting their economies to the German one (Moffett 2011). Secondly, with the decline of the French political leadership (especially with the last 2 enlargements and weakening of the Euro), it is increasingly hard to circumvent Germany (this is notably highlighted with the European Bailouts, where Germany is imposing its policy preferences on other states). One can already notice a Germanification in the French foreign policy towards Asia. President Hu Jintao's visit to France in 2010, is an example of this, where talks primarily centred on business deals. Human rights issues were relegated to the closet and press conferences where sensitive issues could have been raised remained unscheduled (BBC News, 2011). Conversely this leadership is also being pursued on an international level. Though highly contested within the German government, abstention on resolution 1973 pertaining to Libyan intervention can be interpreted to signal a clear rupture with its historical baggage. Germany is asserting its independence and ability to voice its opinion albeit forcefully. With this occurrence, Germany will thus become an international actor that cannot be circumvented. With its present bonds with China and Japan, other member states will find it hard to forcefully go against German wishes if they want to reap any kind of benefits. Though it is clear other nations like France, Britain and Italy will jockey for this position, the relative economic tardiness that they have to overcome, is such that it will take years for them to attain the identical level. Nonetheless German leadership will not prevail. France and the UK will certainly jockey for Germany's position. However with both countries having committed to the pooling of energy and military capacities, the build up of hard power can either be seen as a stepping stone to achieving stronger bilateral relations or a mere cost cutting strategy achieving little recognition.

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