

# **THE ENLARGEMENT AND INTEGRATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EAST ASIA: RATIONALE, VISION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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## General

1. The experiences of Europe and East Asia provide an interesting comparative study of exercises in regional cooperation in two different continents. The study is useful not just for academic purposes, but even more importantly, for a better appreciation of the issues, challenges and responses involved in the building of regional cooperation.

## Rationale

2. For both Europe and East Asia the primary original impetus for region-building was economic. In Europe it was the desire to coordinate the coal and steel production of the original six members. This later developed into broader cooperation in the spheres of economic, foreign and security policy and justice and home affairs.
3. In East Asia the financial crisis of 1997-1998 drove home the critical need for regional economic cooperation among countries that were trading and investing more and more in each other. This later expanded into a desire for cooperation in other areas as well, including energy, environment, social and cultural.
4. Although economics was the original primary rationale for regional cooperation, strategic and security considerations were also important. In Europe the need to manage Franco-German relations, prevent German resurgence and respond to the Cold War threat from the Soviet bloc provided strong impetus for closer cooperation. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Sovbloc gave added impetus to the enlargement of

- the EU: fulfillment of the European dream, the expansion of Western European democratic principles and political protection and assistance to the Central and Eastern European previously under Soviet dominance.
5. In East Asia confidence building, conflict prevention, human security and regional stability were significant considerations, though it was then decided that the major responsibility for addressing regional security issues should be borne by the ASEAN Regional Forum.

### Vision

6. In terms of vision, the European and East Asian counterparts are essentially similar. The EU vision is to create a union of independent European states based on the European Communities and founded to enhance political, economic and social cooperation. In East Asia the vision is to build an East Asian community of peace, prosperity and progress that also covers political, economic and social cooperation.
7. There are however also some vital differences in concept and vision. The European vision embraced all of Europe from the beginning. The East Asian vision is limited to eastern Asia, at least for the present. The European vision is supranational, the East Asian vision is very much rooted in national sovereignty. The European approach is very ideological, limiting membership to states that practice democracy and respect civil and political rights. The East Asian model is generally ideologically blind, embracing within its fold democratic as well as non-democratic states.
8. Both visions are fundamentally “racist”, the former European and the latter Asian. The Maastricht Treaty for instance, restricts membership to European states that respect the principles of the European Union. Charges of racism however are hardly leveled at Europe, whereas they are frequently invoked against East Asia, including by some Europeans themselves. East Asia must also constantly defend and reiterate its model

of regionalism as “open”; Europe is generally spared this necessity although European protectionism and exclusivity is high.

9. Indeed, no other regional construct, be it European, American, African, Arab or South Asian, is assailed for being “exclusive”, or “racist” as East Asia is. None of them have to be as defensive and be made to feel as guilty too, including by some of its own members.

### Development

10. Europe is driven by the large powers of Germany and France. East Asia is driven by the small powers of ASEAN, though much is sometimes made of China as being the apparent driver.
11. The EU developed incrementally, in five waves, from the original six to the present twenty-five. There is more expansion to come, through the addition of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey. East Asia has yet to add new members, and is focusing on deeper rather than wider integration. Any expansion is limited by the geographical confinement to eastern Asia, and will be incremental. A conceivable option is for “East Asia” to metamorphose into “Asia” with the inclusion of countries such as India.
12. Neither Europe nor East Asia is fully inclusive. In the case of Europe Norway and Switzerland are not members by their own choice, for they are not prepared to cede some of their sovereignty to a supranational entity. In East Asia North Korea and Mongolia are not members, not by their own choice but because they have not been invited.
13. Europe has developed far more along the path of regional integration than East Asia. Europe has become a Community in the political, economic and social sense. It is also working on a large degree of commonality in its

security and foreign policy. Some even consider Europe a security community as well.

14. East Asia is significantly behind, partly because it started much later (1997 compared to 1953 in the case of the European Steel and Coal Community or 1957 in the case of the Treaty of Rome), but partly also because it has no intention of becoming a supranational entity at present or in the foreseeable future (though a degree of sovereignty may be ceded as integration deepens). East Asia is working towards a community with a small “c”, unlike Europe. In this respect East Asia is the norm in regionalism, and Europe the exception. The factors working against supranationalism in East Asia include the fact that nation-building is still in its relatively early stages for many countries in the region; lingering bilateral animosities; and differences in political systems that make political integration impossible at present.
15. For the same reason, institutionalisation is greater in Europe than in East Asia. However, this should not be viewed as reflecting negatively on East Asia. The level of institutionalisation is generally commensurate with the level of regional cooperation and integration, and there is intense Track One activity to promote regional cooperation. No less than 33 regional governmental mechanisms are in place, and they meet regularly.
16. In both Europe and East Asia, Track One and Track Two processes as well as the critical private sector are heavily involved in regional cooperation and integration. Track Three is also growing stronger in East Asia, and will become more important as civil society becomes more empowered.
17. Both Europe and East Asia have evolved mechanisms to engage extra-regional states for mutual benefit. In the case of Europe engagement and association of non-European states is enabled through the Barcelona process and the European Neighbourhood Policy. In the case of East Asia

it is through the East Asia Summit (EAS) process, though this is still in its incipient and evolutionary stage.

18. The mechanism for regional integration and community building in Europe is quite clear (under the aegis of the Council of European Union, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice). In the case of East Asia it is the ASEAN+3 process. But the inception of the East Asian Summit process is being seized upon by some participants of the ASEAN + 3 process, especially Japan, to also give a role in regional community building to the EAS process. The primary motive for Japan and some others appears to be to balance what they perceive as the dominance of China in the ASEAN+3 process. How significant and strong the EAS process becomes in the regional community building architecture remains to be seen. If it develops and even supplants the ASEAN+3 process, then the whole complexion of East Asia and East Asian community building will change. Countries and peoples who are not in East Asia will also be building the East Asian community, and become part of it. How viable and credible such a “Community” can be, remains to be seen.

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