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KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

ASEAN-EU RELATIONS: NAVIGATING DIVIDES, DEEPENING COOPERATION



REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON

**ASEAN - EU RELATIONS:
NAVIGATING DIVIDES, DEEPENING
COOPERATION**

**31st of October -- 1st of November 2019
Phnom Penh, Cambodia**



SPECIAL FOREWORD



It is for me a great pleasure to support the publication of this report on the Conference on “ASEAN-EU Relations: Navigating Divides, Deepening Cooperation”, organized by the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Cambodia (KAS) in Phnom Penh, in 2019.

This important event brought together some of the best experts in the region and in Europe, to reflect on the significance and relevance of EU-ASEAN relations and the opportunities and challenges for our future engagement towards a real strategic partnership.

Although this conference took place before the Covid-19 pandemic, the reflections made then by the participating experts become now more relevant than ever.

As this new global challenge endangers human lives, destroys jobs and threatens our economies, the need to work together for multilateral solutions is a matter of urgency. Supporting multilateralism has evolved into an imperative.

ASEAN and the EU are already important economic, investment and development partners. Both organizations share an interest in promoting international law and internationally agreed norms and standards, thereby contributing to a peaceful, fair and prosperous world. Promoting multilateralism is essential to protect our prosperity and sovereignty, both for ASEAN and for the EU.

As the multilateral and rules-based international order is under pressure, and new global challenges emerge, we will have to find the means to work together, and redouble our efforts to strengthen and promote our cooperation.

The reflections and debates made by the experts gathered by the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Cambodia (KAS) at this conference, that are now being published in this report, could help us shed some new light into the challenges and opportunities ahead for the relations between the EU and ASEAN in this new context.

We hope this will not be a one-time event, and that in the near future we can participate in other meaningful and necessary debates such as this one, and engage more with our experts, scholars, journalist and civil societies on this reflection on the future of the relation between both regions and their multilateral organizations.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Cambodia (KAS) for organizing this important conference and take this opportunity to offer them again all our recognition for their work and our support in their efforts to create these crucial platforms to foster our mutual knowledge and understanding.

H.E. Ambassador Carmen Moreno
Head of the Delegation of the European Unions to Cambodia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the most prominent integrated organizations in the continents of Europe and Asia, the cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) underscores the importance of multilateralism which is the prevailing diplomatic apparatus in the realm of international relations. With the embracement of this, it is believed to be timely relevant for countries of both regions in general, and Cambodia in particular as the host of the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to be held in Phnom Penh under the theme: *“Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth”*. Significantly, these notions are particularly appealing in the contemporary global context in which multilateralism is impeded by the growing force of protectionism and unilateralism.

Essentially, the relationship between the two regional organizations can be traced back to 1977 when the formal ASEAN-EU dialogue was established. In the course of their relations, ASEAN and the EU have seen the growth of their multifaceted cooperation on a wide array of issues ranging from economics, trade and investment, aid, and political and cultural affairs. Following the adoption of the EU-ASEAN Plan of Action for 2018-2022, both sides agreed to strengthen their cooperation in broader areas, including the protection of human rights, counterterrorism and countering violent extremism, cybersecurity, climate change, sustainable development, etc. While ASEAN and the EU are committed to strengthening their cooperation, there has been renewed optimism that the two would upgrade their relations to a strategic partnership which will remarkably shape the future path of the global political and economic outlooks. Nevertheless, there are yet certain impediments that hold back these two prominent blocs from realizing their strategic partnership.

In light of this setting and in an attempt to serve as a platform for scholars and experts to exchange their views as well as identify the hurdles that could hinder the prospect of the ASEAN-EU partnership, my Institute CICP, was particularly pleased to be able to host this International Conference entitled *“ASEAN-EU Relations: Navigating Divides, Deepening Cooperation”* with the generous supports of the Konrad Adeneur Stiftung (KAS) in Cambodia and the European Union Delegation to Cambodia. We would like to express our utmost appreciation to all the eminent role players, distinguished guests, and participants for sharing their insightful views that remarkably contributed to the composition of this Outcome Report. We hold a strong conviction that the compilation of diverse views and ideas in this Publication will trigger positive contributions and stimulate more substantial deliberations among scholar, academic, as well as the diplomatic communities in the pursuit of gaining and reinforcing more profound comprehensions which will ultimately serve as the basis for the further quest of elevating the ASEAN-EU relations to a new height.

Ambassador Pou Sothirak

Executive Director

Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP)



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CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

The two-day conference provided an environment for attending experts, scholars, policy makers, state-actors and journalists to expand on the importance of EU-ASEAN relations, the realities of the relationship, its current equilibrium, the feedback mechanisms supporting that equilibrium, and the possible scenarios for further development of the relationship. The conference held over 100 attendees, including speakers and observers from the European Union delegation, Vietnam, Thailand, France, Germany, Singapore, Philippines, the US, and Cambodia.

The conference supported further understanding and the development of partnership between the EU and ASEAN and additionally highlighted the blunders of current strategies and dialogues. In this international conference, a variety of topics, perspectives and critiques were brought forward in the following discussion panels:

The first session discusses the current realities of ASEAN-EU relations by looking at recent successes on the political, social and economic fronts, the efficacy of recent initiatives, gaps in collaboration, and the operation of existing mechanisms linking the EU and ASEAN. This panel brings a particular focus on assessing the mechanisms of cooperation in the context of the institutional and policy changes underway in both the EU and ASEAN.

The second panel assesses ASEAN-EU relations in the wider context and also looks at potential scenarios as to short, medium and long-term prospects? How can we make ASEAN more relevant to the EU in the evolving institutional order and the critical regional security architecture? What are the main scope of cooperation (from the ASEAN perspective) to deepening and enhancing this relationship further?

The third panel looks at potential scenarios for the future of EU-ASEAN cooperation in the short, medium and longer terms. Where do we go from here? How can perceived crises be operationalized as critical junctures to create new opportunities and new mechanisms for both deepening and broadening the EU-ASEAN relationship? How could the EU's roles in ASEAN be better perceived and be embraced as genuine 'constructive engagement'?

The fourth panel places EU-ASEAN relations in of the diverse set of global challenges that both institutions will have to confront in the coming decade. In addition to the issue of shifts in global geo-politics, the question of addressing the drivers of climate change and the mitigation of its effects will be examined. Panellists will also explore issues around continued economic integration between ASEAN and the EU and the likely dynamics of future trade, paying particular attention to the EU's role and relationship to the developing ASEAN Economic Community. Panellists are encouraged to bring into their discussions additional, macro-level issues that necessitate stronger ASEAN-EU cooperation.

The final session will be devoted to open discussion among all participants, bringing together the diverse themes explored in order to examine potential policy recommendations and highlight cross-cutting issues explored across the prior four panel.

PROGRAM AGENDA

31 October 2019

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| 08:00 – 08:30 | Registration |
| 08:30 – 08:40 | Welcome Remarks H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak Executive Director Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), Phnom Penh |
| 08:40 – 08:50 | Opening Remarks Dr. Daniel Schmücking Country Representative Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Cambodia |
| 08:50 – 09:10 | Special Remarks Mr. Lucas Cibor Deputy Head of Mission of the EU Delegation to ASEAN |
| 09:10 – 09:40 | Keynote Address H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana Senior Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia and High Representative of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) of Cambodia |
| 09:40 – 09:45 | Group Photo Session for Role Players |
| 9:45 – 10:15 | Coffee Break |
| 10:15 – 12:00 | Session I: Reality Check: ASEAN-EU Past and Future Relations The first session discusses the current realities of ASEAN-EU relations by looking at recent successes on the political, social and economic fronts, the efficacy of recent initiatives, gaps in collaboration, and the operation of existing mechanisms linking the EU and ASEAN. This panel brings a particular focus on assessing the mechanisms of cooperation in the context of the institutional and policy changes underway in both the EU and ASEAN. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dr. Fraser Cameron Director of EU-Asia Centre, Brussels- Ms. Pich Charadine Deputy Director, CICP- Dr. Frederick Kliem Research Fellow, Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore- Mr. Andrew Mantong Research Fellow, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Jakarta, Indonesia- Instigator: Ms. Gwen Robinson Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP & Senior Fellow, ISIS Thailand Editor-at-Large, Nikkei Asia Review |

12:00 – 13:30

Lunch

13:30 – 14:50

Session II: The Relevance of ASEAN to EU: Responses and Collaborations

The second panel assesses ASEAN-EU relations in the wider context and also looks at potential scenarios as to short, medium and long-term prospects? How can we make ASEAN more relevant to the EU in the evolving institutional order and the critical regional security architecture? What are the main scope of cooperation (from the ASEAN perspective) to deepening and enhancing this relationship further?

- **Dr. Chheang Vannarith**
President, Asian Vision Institute (AVI), Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- **Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee**
Director of the European Union Centre, Singapore
- **Dr. Aries A. Arugay**
Research Fellow, Asia Pathways to Progress, Philippines

- **Instigator: Ms. Pich Charadine**
Deputy Director, CICP

Q&A and Discussion

14:50 – 15:10

Coffee Break

15:10 – 16:30

Session III: EU's Constructive Role in ASEAN: Expanding Engagements

The third panel looks at potential scenarios for the future of EU-ASEAN cooperation in the short, medium and longer terms. Where do we go from here? How can perceived crises be operationalized as critical junctures to create new opportunities and new mechanisms for both deepening and broadening the EU-ASEAN relationship? How could the EU's roles in ASEAN be better perceived and be embraced as genuine 'constructive engagement'?

- **Dr. Bradley J. Murg**
Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP
Professor of Political Science and Director of Global Development Studies Seattle Pacific University, USA
- **Dr. Tran Viet Thai**
Deputy Director General
Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV)
- **Dr. Frédéric Grare**
Chargé de mission in charge of the Indian Ocean Center for Analysis, Planning and Strategy Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France

- **Instigator: Ms. Gwen Robinson**
Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP & Senior Fellow,
ISIS Thailand Editor-at-Large, Nikkei Asia Review

Q&A and Discussion

1 November 2019

08:30 – 08:45 **Opening Remarks**
Mr. Simone Pieri
Deputy Head of Delegation of the EU Delegation to Cambodia

08:45 – 10:30 **Session IV: ASEAN – EU Partnership: Addressing Global Challenges**

The fourth panel places EU-ASEAN relations in of the diverse set of global challenges that both institutions will have to confront in the coming decade. In addition to the issue of shifts in global geo-politics, the question of addressing the drivers of climate change and the mitigation of its effects will be examined. Panelists will also explore issues around continued economic integration between ASEAN and the EU and the likely dynamics of future trade, paying particular attention to the EU’s role and relationship to the developing ASEAN Economic Community. Panelists are encouraged to bring into their discussions additional, macro-level issues that necessitate stronger ASEAN-EU cooperation.

- **Ambassador Sun Suon**
Senior Fellow, CICP
Adjunct Professor, Paragon International University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- **Dr. Eva Pejsova**
Senior Analyst, French Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS)
- **Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn**
Senior Fellow, ISIS Thailand Columnist, Bangkok Post
- **Dr. Felix Heidux**
Senior Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

- **Instigator: Dr. David Koh**
Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP

Q&A and Discussion

10:30 – 11:00 **Coffee Break**

11:00 – 12:00 **Session IV: Open and Free Discussion**

The final session will be devoted to open discussion among all participants, bringing together the diverse themes explored in order to examine potential policy recommendations and highlight cross-cutting issues explored across the prior four panels.

Moderated by H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak
Executive Director, CICP

12:00 – 12:10 **Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks**
H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak
Executive Director, CICP

12:10 – 13:30 **Lunch**

ROLE PLAYERS



H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana

Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia

H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana is a practicing attorney and the Managing Partner at Sok Siphana & associates, a law firm specialized in international trade and corporate law in Phnom Penh since 2009. He was appointed by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, concurrently as Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia, Advisor to the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC) and to the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) with rank of Minister in 2009, 2011 and 2013 respectively. Since 2013 he acted as Cambodian SOM Leader for the five Mekong Cooperation mechanisms and recently as Chair of the National Secretariat of Cambodia for Mekong-Lancang Cooperation under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia.

From 2005 to 2009 he served as Director at the International Trade Center (ITC) a joint technical agency of UNCTAD and WTO in Geneva, Switzerland. Previously from 1999 to 2005, he served as Secretary of State at the Ministry of Commerce, where he worked extensively on issues related to trade policies and development, commercial legal framework and economic integration. During his service at the Ministry, he was also a negotiator in Cambodia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Between 1993 and 1999, he was a legal adviser with the United Nations Development Programme attached to the Office of the Council of Ministers and subsequently to the Council for the Development of Cambodia. From 2011 to March 2018, he served also as Chairman of the Board of Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), Cambodia's oldest and prominent independent research institute. Dr. Sok holds a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from Widener University School of Law, Delaware (USA) and a Ph.D. from Bond University School of Law, Gold Coast (Australia). He is currently pursuing another Ph.D. with the University of Paris II Panthéon-Assas, Paris (France).



H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak

Executive Director

Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP)

In addition to being the Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) since 2013, Ambassador Pou Sothirak also serves as Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia as of February 2014. He was appointed as Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia from September 2013 to January 2014. He was a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore from January 2009 to December 2012. He also served as Cambodian Ambassador to Japan from April 2005 to November 2008. He was elected Cambodian Member of Parliaments twice during the national general election in 1993 and 2003. He was appointed as Minister of Industry Mines and Energy of the Royal Government of Cambodia from 1993 to 1998. He obtained a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from Oregon State University, USA in March 1981 and had worked with the Boeing Company from 1981-1986. Ambassador Pou Sothirak has written extensively on various challenging issues confronting the development of Cambodia and threatening peace and security of the region of Southeast Asia.



Dr. Daniel Schmücking

Country Representative

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Cambodia

Dr. Daniel Schmücking was born in 1982 in Germany. He studied political science and sociology at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena (Germany) and the Palacky University in Olomouc (Czech Republic). His professional and scientific focus is on political communication

and election campaigns. He worked as a campaigner for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). In his dissertation, he devoted himself to the topic: The effect and development of negative political advertising in Germany.

As part of his doctoral studies, he spent time at the University of Maryland (USA) and the University of California (USA). He was teaching at universities in Jena (Germany), Erfurt (Germany) and Budapest (Hungary).

From the beginning of 2015 until the end of 2017 he headed the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's (KAS) office in Mongolia. Since March 2018 he is country director of KAS in Cambodia.



Mr. Lucas Cibor

Deputy Head of Mission of the European Union Mission to

ASEAN Jakarta

Mr. Lucas Cibor is currently the Deputy Head of the European Union Mission to ASEAN, having been appointed to this position in September 2017. Previously, he worked with European institutions on external relations with Egypt, Iraq and the State of Israel. From 2009 to 2013 he served as Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Political Section at the European Union Delegation to Haiti.

Prior to joining the EU, he worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. He holds a Master's Degree in Humanitarian Affairs.



Dr. Fraser Cameron

Director of EU-Asia Centre Brussels

Dr. Fraser Cameron is Director of the EU-Asia Centre in Brussels, a think tank seeking to promote closer relations between the EU and Asia. He is a regular visitor to all major Asian capitals to meet officials and speak at events.

He is a former European Commission advisor and well-known policy analyst and commentator on EU and international affairs. He is visiting professor at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, St Andrews University, Scotland, and the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

He is a Senior Advisor to the European Policy Centre (EPC) and the German Institute of Global Affairs (GIGA).

Dr. Cameron was educated at the Universities of St Andrews (MA) and Cambridge (PhD). He was a Research Fellow at the University of Hamburg (1973-74) and a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Kent (1974-75). From 1975-89, he was a member of the British Diplomatic Service serving mainly in Germany, and covering economic, political and press affairs. He joined the European Commission in 1990, as an advisor in external relations, and was closely involved in enlargement, transatlantic relations, the Balkans, Asia and global governance. He was Political Counsellor in the EU delegation in Washington DC from 1999-2001.

Dr. Cameron has lectured widely to business, academic and media audiences around the world. He is also a consultant to the BBC and a number of governments on EU affairs. He is the author of several books and articles on the EU and external relations. His recent books include *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*, *The Future of Europe* and *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (published by Routledge).



Ms. Pich Charadine

*Deputy Executive Director in charge of Research, Training, and Publication
Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP)
Phnom Penh, Cambodia*

PICH Charadine is currently the Deputy Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) in charge of Research, Publication, and Training and concurrently serving as the Coordinator of the Global Center for Mekong Studies (GCMS-Cambodia Center, a Track II think tank network of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation). She was also the adjunct lecturer of ASEAN studies in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Paragon International University (formerly Zaman University), in Phnom Penh.

Ms. Pich obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and International Relations with High Honors from Zaman University (Cambodia) and holds a Master of Arts in International Politics (concentrated on political dialogue) with Merit from Keele University (United Kingdom). She was nominated to the 2019 U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on ASEAN-Nations of the South China Sea – Sovereignty and Rules-based Order. She was also the Visiting Fellow at the China Institute for International Studies (CIIS) in 2018 and Visiting Scholar at China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU) in 2019.

She has written on various issues concerning Cambodia's political development and its subsequent foreign policy implications. Her focus is on Sino-Cambodia relations (particularly political economy dilemma, foreign aid policy, and economic statecraft), ASEAN regional framework and ASEAN-China partnership, Cambodia's politics and foreign relations, and Mekong sub-regional cooperation, especially on Mekong-Lancang Cooperation.



Dr. Frederick Kliem

*Research Fellow, Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS)
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*

Frederick Kliem is with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore. Frederick's research interests include regional integration and multilateralism in Asia and Europe. In particular, he researches and teaches on International Relations and Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific, Multilateralism and Multilateral Orders in Asia and Europe, ASEAN, European Union, and ASEAN-EU Relation, Regional Integration and Comparative Regionalism and Chinese Foreign Policy in Asia and Europe.

Besides teaching, at the Centre for Multilateralism Studies, he studies ASEAN, Southeast Asia and geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific, as well as the European Union and comparative regionalism. In addition, Frederick is freelance Consultant and Key Expert. Before joining RSIS, Frederick was Senior Program Manager at the political foundation Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Singapore.



Mr. Andrew Wiguna Mantong

*Research Fellow
Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CICS) Jakarta, Indonesia*

Mr. Andrew Wiguna Manton joined CSIS in January 2016. Prior to joining CSIS he served as the Secretary of Undergraduate Program at the Department of International Relations, Universitas Indonesia. His expertise includes topics such as non-traditional security, state-society relations, Indonesian foreign policy and ASEAN.

He also teaches some international relations related courses on foreign policy, global civil society, theory and methodology at the Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Indonesia. He obtained bachelor degree in International Relations from Universitas Indonesia in 2008 and master degree in International Relations from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, in 2012. Since 2016 he has been working with national and regional officials and academics to provide trainings and workshops related to foreign and security affairs, to conduct numerous studies and to formulate policy recommendation for various foreign policy stakeholders.

Some of his research includes multiple studies on Indonesian defense diplomacy formula for maritime affairs, Indonesia's perspective on ASEAN maritime security frameworks, and Indonesian foreign policy under President Joko Widodo's administration. He is also currently observing state-society relations in Indonesia in issues like terrorism and radicalism, cybersecurity, and broader non-traditional security issues.



Ms. Gwen Robinson

*Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP
Editor-at-Large, Nikkei Asia Review
Senior Fellow, ISIS Thailand*

Gwen Robinson is editor-at-large of Nikkei Asian Review, the English-language journal and website of Japanese media group Nikkei Inc, and is a senior fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, where she specializes in Southeast Asian, contemporary politics and security issues. She was a Senior Fellow at Lowy Institute in 2004 and UK-based Legatum Institute in 2013-14. She was for 18 years a correspondent and editor with the Financial Times in Europe, Asia, and America (1995-2013), and was Tokyo-based correspondent for The Times of London 1993-95. In the 1980s, she was Manila-based correspondent for the National Times, an Australian weekly journal, covering Southeast Asia (1985-88) and Bangkok-based contributor to the London Observer, Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter and Economist Intelligence Unit. She was born in Japan and educated in Australia (BA, ANU).



Dr. Chheang Vannarith

*President, Asian Vision Institute (AVI)
Phnom Penh, Cambodia*

Dr. Chheang Vannarith has over a decade of work experience as a geopolitical and geo-economic analyst, with a focus on Southeast Asia. He was honored a Pacific Forum Young Leader in 2010, Young Global Leader (World Economic Forum) in 2013 and Southeast Asia Young Leader (IISS Shangri-La Dialogue) in 2016. He is currently the President of the Asian Vision Institute (AVI), Chairman of the National Assembly Advisory Council, and Advisor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

He was the Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) from 2009 to 2013, a lecturer of Asia Pacific Studies at the University of Leeds (UK) from 2013 to 2016, and a Southeast Asia Consultant at the Nippon Foundation (Tokyo) from 2016 to 2018. He was also a visiting fellow at IDE-JETRO (Japan), East West Center (US), China Institute of International Relations (China), and ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute (Singapore).

Chheang got his BA in International Relations from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam in 2002, MA in International Relations from the International University of Japan in 2006, Graduate in Leadership from the East West Center in 2008, and PhD in Asia Pacific Studies from the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in 2009.



Dr. YEO Lay Hwee

Director, European Union Centre, Nanyang Technological University

Dr. YEO Lay Hwee is Director of the European Union Centre in Singapore. She is also Council Secretary at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, Adjunct Fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and Adjunct Faculty at the Singapore Management University.

Lay Hwee sits on several Advisory Boards including Centre for European Studies at the Australian National University, KU Leuven's Master in European Studies Programme; Centre for Asia-Pacific Studies, Tallinn University of Technology, and the Leiden Asia Centre in Leiden University. She is also a member of the Scientific Committee of a multi-year research project on "Trends in Global Governance and Europe's Role" (TRIGGER) led by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (<https://trigger-project.eu/>)



Dr. Aries A. Aruguay

Research Fellow

Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress, Philippines

Dr. Aries A. Aruguay is Associate Professor of Political Science and Co-convenor of the Strategic Studies Program of the Center for Integrative and Development Studies at the University of the Philippines in Diliman (UP).

He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on comparative politics, international relations, research methodology, and political thought. He also regularly delivers lectures and handles modules on security and politics at the Philippine Public Safety College, National Defense College of the Philippines, Development Academy of the Philippines, and the Foreign Service Institute.

He was previously a visiting fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies (Thailand), Department of Government and International Relations-University of Sydney, Jeju Peace Institute (South Korea), and the National Institute of Defense Studies (Japan). He currently serves as Senior Editor of *Asian Politics & Policy* and Associate Editor of the *Philippine Political Science Journal*. His current research projects are on political polarization, regional civil society, performative populism, and regime instability in democratic regimes. He has published in the *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *Philippine Political Science Journal*, *Philippine Sociological Journal*, and *Thammasat Review* and wrote several book chapters published by international publishers such as Routledge and Palgrave.

He obtained his PhD in Political Science from Georgia State University in Atlanta in 2014 as a Fulbright scholar. He holds an MA and BA (*cum laude*) in Political Science from the University of the Philippines- Diliman. In 2015, the US-based Southeast Asia Research Group (SEAREG) named him as a Young Southeast Asia Fellow. He was recently awarded the 2019 Shett International Alumni Award for Exceptional Achievement by Georgia State University.



Dr. Frédéric Grare

Chargé de mission in charge of the Indian Ocean Centre for Analysis, Planning and Strategy

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France

Dr. Frédéric Grare is “Chargé de mission”, in charge of the Indian Ocean at the Center for Analysis, Planning and Strategy of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is also a non-resident senior associate in Carnegie’s South Asia Program. At Carnegie, his research focuses on South Asia Security issues and the search for a security architecture. Prior to joining Carnegie, Grare served as the Asia bureau at the Directorate for Strategic Affairs in the French Ministry of Defense. He also served at the French embassy in Pakistan and, from 1999 to 2003, as director of the Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities in New Delhi. Grare has written extensively on security issues in Asia, in particular South Asia. His recent publications include *India Turns East: International Engagement and US- China Rivalry* (Hurst Publisher).



Mr. Simone Pieri

*Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Political Section
European Union Delegate Phnom Penh*

Mr. Simone PIERI is currently Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Political Section at the European Union Delegation to Cambodia. Mr. Pieri has been working for European institutions for over 20 years, with extensive experience in areas such as external relations, international trade, environmental cooperation, and multilateral issues. He has served as Head of Section at the EU Delegations to Latvia (1999-2002) and to Brazil (2010-2014). He holds an extended University Degree in International Law and a Master’s Degree in International Relations.



Ambassador Sun Suon

*Senior Fellow, CICP
Adjunct Professor, Paragon International University
Phnom Penh, Cambodia*

Dr. Sun Suon is formerly Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the UN Office, the WTO and Other International Organizations at Geneva (2007-2013). He was concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Cambodia to Switzerland and as the country’s Permanent Representative to the UNIDO in Vienna. His previous posting was in New York where he served as Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations (1999-2003).

As a former senior career diplomat, Amb. Suon has served the country in various capacities, mainly in the areas of multilateral diplomacy and other related issues of international law. His previous works also include issues of regional affairs, (with a particular focus on issues of the

Mekong regional integration).

His main education backgrounds include: Law degree, (Jurist /LLM), PhD in Jurisprudence from Sofia University (Bulgaria) and MA in International Relations, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (US).

At present, Ambassador Suon teaches international law and other courses of international affairs at Paragon International University- Cambodia.



Dr. Eva Pejsova

Senior Analyst

French Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS)

Eva Pejsova is a political analyst and commentator specializing in security in Asia, maritime security and EU -Asia relations. Currently affiliated with the French Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), she has been in charge of the Asia portfolio at the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) since 2014, promoting the EU's foreign and security policies in the region.

She holds a PhD in Strategic Studies from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore, an MA in International Relations and Japanese (Langues'O/ H.E.I. Paris), and has previously worked with the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Prime Minister's Office, the OECD and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).

Dr. Pejsova regularly lectures at SciencesPo (Paris School of International Affairs) in Paris, the Geneva Centre for Security Studies (GCSP), European Security and Defence College (ESDC), as well as briefs the Members of the European Parliament. She is member of the EU Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), the Asia-Pacific Research and Advisory Network (APRAN) and the Europe-India Research and Dialogue Network (EIRDN).

Her research focuses on cooperative mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region, good order and law enforcement at sea, as well as issues of good governance and environmental security. She is also interested in the role of the EU as a foreign and security policy actor.



Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn

Senior Fellow, ISIS Thailand

Kavi Chongkittavorn is a senior fellow at Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS) Thailand. He has been a journalist for more than three decades covering Thai and regional politics. He began his career as a reporter in 1983 and became the paper's foreign news editor in 1986. Then, he was asked to explore Indochina – first as Bureau Chief in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (1988- 1990) and later on in Hanoi, Vietnam (1990-1992). After a year in Oxford University as Reuter Fellow in 1994, he went to Jakarta and served as Special Assistant

to the Secretary General of ASEAN in Jakarta in 1995 before returning to journalism. He was named the Human Rights Journalist of 1998 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by Amnesty International.

From 1999-2000, he was the President of Thai Journalists Association. From 2000-2001, he went to Harvard University as Nieman Fellow. He served as a member of jury and from 2005-2008 as its chair of Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize organized by UNESCO.



Dr. Felix Heiduk

*EU's Representative on the ARF Expert and
Eminent Persons Group (EPG)*

Dr. Felix Heiduk is a Senior Associate in the Asia Research Division at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for Foreign and Security Affairs) in Berlin. His main research focus is on international politics and security affairs in Southeast Asia; specifically, on interstate and civil conflicts, arms dynamics, civil- military relations, as well as EU-ASEAN relations and regional integration processes.

Dr. Heiduk received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Free University Berlin. Prior to joining Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, he was a visiting scholar at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and taught International Studies at the University of Birmingham.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regardless of the geographical distance between the two regions, the cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) is remarkably compelling given its strategic importance in their respective regions and on the global arena. Convergently, building upon the pursuit of peace, stability, and the security of the people, ASEAN and the EU established the ASEAN-EU formal dialogue in 1977 in fostering partnership between the two regional organizations in the cause of realizing their common goals and objectives. However, the further quest for a more comprehensive and strategic partnership between the two regional organizations is unfavorably hindered by certain glitches featured by the political, historical, religious, and cultural divergences.

In light of this development, the Cambodian Institute for Peace and Cooperation (CICP), in collaboration with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) in Cambodia and the European Union Delegation to Cambodia, has organized an international conference on the theme: *“ASEAN-EU Relations: Navigating Divides, Deepening Cooperation”*. This conference serves as a reality check on the relationship between ASEAN and the EU and seeks to provide recommendations which lie as the foundation for future ASEAN-EU conference and dialogues. Scholars and experts from the US as well as the European and ASEAN countries provided their insights with regards to the realities of the ASEAN-EU relationship, its current equilibrium, the blunders of existing partnership and key areas of improvement, and the possible scenarios for the future development of the relationship.

During the conference, there was a general consensus that the ASEAN-EU partnership is timely crucial to strengthening the multilateralism and rule-based multilateral framework amidst the threat of rising protectionism and populism. Moreover, while the partnership between ASEAN and the EU is extensively emphasized on the economic dimension, there have been calls for the organizations to forge a strategic partnership that entails multi-faceted engagements in political security and non-traditional security issues, including cyber-security, climate change, terrorism, and the like. Despite these consistent calls and the existing mechanisms to elevate the ASEAN-EU partnership, the conference acknowledged that substantial efforts are needed for both organizations to overcome various hurdles marked by their respective internal challenges and external factors.

Explicitly, in the first panel session, the discussion intended to examine the current reality of ASEAN-EU relations by looking at the recent developments across political, social, economic, and security spectrums. There was a consensus recognition during the panel that the biggest regional integration bodies should start a strategic partnership in promoting the effective multilateralism through rule-based multilateral order. The panel also held a consistent view on the notion that the strategic partnership shall be built upon equal footings between the two organizations, and thus each side shall not strive to impose the normative norms and value that may sensitize their relationship. Moreover, the panel also identifies various challenges to realizing ASEAN-EU strategic partnership among which scholars stressed on the lack of understanding between ASEAN and the EU. Another major setback refers to the differences of *modus operandi* between the two regions, as the EU has supranational and institutional body,

while the ASEAN has an intergovernmental body that is consensus-based. With this setting, the panel agreed on the notion that these illustrations require new ways or different mechanisms of cooperation between ASEAN and the EU to elevate their partnership to the next level.

The second panel session mainly discusses the ties between ASEAN and the EU in a broader context and suggests potential scenarios for the short, medium, and long-term cooperation outlook. The discussion was made upon the general presumption that ASEAN could be more relevant to the EU in the current institutional structure and vital regional security infrastructure, and the panel further discusses the main areas of collaboration in order to strengthen and expand this partnership. In the face of the US-China competition, there was a wide acceptance during the discussion that it was time for ASEAN and the EU to build a new global order that is more inclusive and issue-based rather than being dictated by the major powers. In the pursuit of forging a strategic partnership that consolidates global multilateralism, there were calls for the EU to be more flexible and pragmatic while ASEAN needs to become more institutionalized and more integrated in order for the two to engage with different levels of state-to-state engagement, inter-regional engagement, and multilateral institutions engagement.

In the third and fourth panel discussions, the focus was broadly around the global challenges and future scenarios of ASEAN-EU collaboration. There have been solid calls for both ASEAN and the EU to accommodate the existing differences between the two organizations rather than adhering to their respective traits or striving to pursue the so-called 'Europeanization' and 'Aseanization'. In respect to the prospect of the ASEAN-EU multilateral cooperation, some scholars expressed their pessimistic views on the short-term expansion of multilateralism due to the rise of nationalism and populism in both the EU and ASEAN. Some rather examined the issue from the realm of geopolitical perspective featured by the competition and increasingly stiff divisions between the US and China, suggesting that the EU and ASEAN should proactively bridge those divisions by acting as the mediator to everyone and stepping up to embrace the so-called middle power diplomacy so as to defend rule base, global order, and multilateralism.

Finally, during the fifth session of open and free discussion, scholars reiterated the importance of building a strategic partnership between ASEAN and the EU. In the pursuit of this, some scholars stressed on the need to understanding the complexity on both sides and establishing a platform that is flexible for all relevant parties to adhere to the individualistic traits and as well their commonalities. There was a collective view on the notion that the organizations need to build a long-term trust and confidence by forging frequent dialogue, forums, and even to establish new form of communication channels. Substantially, this view is attributed to the intention to offset the existing limitations regarding the lack of comprehensive dissemination of information among the EU and ASEAN which has constituted the misconception among the EU and ASEAN member countries that would hamper the cooperation thereof.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OVERVIEW

The “ASEAN-EU Relations: Navigating Divides, Deepening Cooperation” conference was organization in partnership between the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace and the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Cambodia.

The two-day conference provided an environment for attending experts, scholars, policy makers, state-actors and journalists to expand on the importance of EU-ASEAN relations, the realities of the relationship, its current equilibrium, the feedback mechanisms supporting that equilibrium, and the possible scenarios for further development of the relationship. The conference held over 100 attendees, including speakers and observers from the European Union delegation, Vietnam, Thailand, France, Germany, Singapore, Philippines, the US, and Cambodia.

During the sessions, there were comprehensive and interactive discussions and critiques that further explored the benefits the partnerships between the two regions and on the areas of improvement to further strengthen the relationship. The following report is brief summary of the discussions and recommendations made over the course of the two-day conference.

OPENING SESSION



H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak opened the conference by welcoming the attendees and key speakers. He expressed his specific gratitude towards the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Foundation and Dr. Daniel Schmucking for making the event possible and further expressed his gratitude to the members of the EU delegation, Lucas Cibor and Simone Pieri for taking the time

to join the conference despite their busy schedules. He continued his introduction by detailing the proceedings of the whole conference and encouraged all members to participate during Q&A discussions.

Before passing the floor to **Dr. Daniel Schmucking**, H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak gave a brief overview of the EU and ASEAN partnership. He mentioned that the relations between the EU and ASEAN started when the European Economic Community first established the first formal dialogue with ASEAN in 1977. Since then, the relations between the two respective regions have been strengthened. This relation focus over the issues of development, humanitarian aid, foreign policy, and cultural affairs. Starting from 2012, ASEAN has benefited from bi-lateral visits between the EU and the ASEAN member states. He continued that, more recently, the two organisations have been working together to advance the counter-terrorism activities, cyber-security, and sustainable developments and counter violence. Ambassador Pou Southirak ended by sharing his hopes that this conference would be serving as a reality check between ASEAN and EU and open an opportunity to conduct analysis and discussions on the future of EU-ASEAN relations.

Dr. Daniel Schmucking took the stage and showed his appreciations to the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) for organizing the event. He was pleasant to receive the updates on the progress of the conferences and to see many experts and scholars who partaking as the speakers of the conference. He was grateful to CICP for having such a great network with the EU and ASEAN.

He then thanked the participants for attending the event, considering that it is a very timely issue; as the Asian-Europe Summit will be held in Phnom Penh Cambodia in 2020 with 51 leaders of the Asian and European countries joining together. On one hand it is important to see how Cambodia will present itself to the world and waiting to see the essential topics that the summit will cover.

He concluded by giving a brief overview of Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung's (KAS) history. KAS is a German Political Think-Tank; who is holding some of the best researchers that serve as the most important stakeholders in society, and media coverage. KAS has been active in Cambodia for 25 years already and they are active in 125 countries around the globe. KAS cover bilateral and multilateral topics, with six areas of focuses including foreign and security policies, education and research, social market economy, state and society, energy, and the contemporary history.

Mr. Lucas Cibor took the stage, thanking and congratulating the respective organizations on a successful event. He admitted that he is usually in a Brussels bubble, focused on the Europeans living inside Europe and often forgetting that there are many Europeans who are living in the other part of the world outside of Europe.

He proceeded to explain the relationship between EU and ASEAN and why it is necessary. He recognized that the two regions are worlds apart, and it is rare to hear them in combination. Yet, there is an economic opportunity that both organizations can gain from. Looking at the statistics,

the EU is ASEAN's largest investor (\$400 Billion) and is their second largest trading partner. He then made a note that the relationship does not focus only on financial aspect, but also on the political security of the two regions as well.

He stated that there is a lack of regularity between these two organizations. The EU has been very successful in promoting peace within their respective boundaries but has not translated it into other partnerships. Perhaps, one of the reasons that dialogue hasn't had more result is the difference of autonomous decision-making and normative ruling between the EU and its partners. In comparison to the EU, ASEAN has more differences among its member states.

It is clear that multilateral strategy is the way forward. Preserving the global governance system that creates more opportunities from supporters. However, multi-lateral dialogue is under the attack from bigger powers. Multilateralism gives voice to countries that may not have it otherwise. Looking specifically into the Nuclear Mission of Iran and the Paris Agreement against Climate Change, some countries have been delusional to believe that one country alone can solve the world's problem. An example of this success is Mission Sofia, when 25 flags under the European Union flag worked together to disband human trafficking. This conference is important in helping us to understand how we can develop our partnerships through cooperation. There needs to be a reality-check and the understanding that multilateralism cannot be done alone, countries need to invest in the strengths of partnership to strengthen their own agendas.

H.E. Sok Siphana, the High Representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia opened his remark by emphasizing the appreciation of the previous remarks of H.E. Pou Sothirak, Dr. Daniel Schmucking, and Mr. Lucas Cibor.

He noticed the success of the EU. However, he also added that there are many glitches that pose a great challenge to achieving fortuitous EU and ASEAN dialogue. He highlighted the differences between the EU and ASEAN in terms of their politics, history, culture and religion; and recommended that the EU has to make better efforts to customize their views on the ASEAN member states. The EU needs to be more sensitive in taking a bilateral approach, by not imposing sensitive issues in each member states (e.g. palm oil and deforestation issues in Indonesia, which still has a strong contribution to economic growth). On one hand you can look at ASEAN as a grouping, but it is also important to look at them as one individual country.

He noted the importance of back-to-back upcoming ASEAN/EU and APAC summits, because the summit will help to point out the similarities and differences between the two actors and this will help to identify the key areas of improvements.

H.E. Sok Siphana then moved on to his views of Cambodia's role in the partnership. He feels that Cambodia is not treated equally as other member-states and Cambodia responds emotionally. Even though Cambodia deals \$16 million in trade and Singapore deals \$80 million, in order to have multilateral partnership, both member-states need to be treated equally. Cambodia has expressed their support in multilateralism, but glitches have set the country back. Another glitch to stress, is the bilateral relations and disagreements that affect third-party relationships, a strategic partnership needs to be created.

H.E. Sok Siphana ended his speech by sharing his complete support of any cooperation with EU, but there are many glitches that needed to be addressed for the survival of the dialogue. He addressed the to the audience, stating that we had one year to work hard on the glitches to make sure the ASEAN-EU summit will have beneficial outcomes and dialogues.

SESSION I: REALITY CHECK: ASEAN-EU PAST AND FUTURE RELATIONS



Ms. Gwen Robinson instigated Session I, it featured speakers: **Dr. Fraser Cameron**, **Ms. Pich Charadine**, and **Mr. Andrew Mantong**. The session intended to examine the current reality of ASEAN-EU relations by looking at the recent developments across political, social, economic, and security aspects. The session was started by Ms. Gwen as she explained the role of the instigator in the seminar to shape the focus of the discussion on the conference.

Dr. Fraser Cameron, *Director of European Union – Asia Centre, Brussels, Belgium*, said that this conference is a good platform to reflect the foreign relationship between ASEAN and EU, because many other conferences and discussions primarily focus on the rise of China. He then stated that the EU has always supported regional organizations in many parts of the world, especially ASEAN. Drawing on European history, for hundreds of years many of the nations were fighting each other, only in the last fifty years have they decided to put sovereignty aside to achieve a single market, single passport, single currency union. Cameron then paralleled the example to ASEAN; by stating that ASEAN does not have to copy the EU, but that there is something that might be learned from the integration process in the EU body. Further, he noted that almost every month there is a delegation from ASEAN in Brussels learning how the EU manages certain affairs.

He mentioned that over the years the EU has supported the ASEAN secretariat financially, through intensive training and advisory consultations in focus areas. Moreover, he said that the

EU expects ASEAN to take a stronger strategic role in managing Asian affairs. He later stated that this is the right time to start a strategic partnership. The EU already prepared to sign the strategic partnership in January this year, however, the agenda changed due to the disagreement over the palm oil issue. Europeans have different points of view over the environmental impact of palm oil, whereas, ASEAN stated that there were other priorities to stress over that issue.

Because of the significant agenda of initiating a strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN, there are many important issues the countries of these organisations have to face, such as, the booming tourism in ASEAN countries, new security challenges that both EU and ASEAN face (e.g. cyber threats), and how to deal with China. Cameron mentioned the former Prime Minister of Singapore who once said ASEAN can take a role as the voice of reason and moderation. As ASEAN has adopted the multilateral approach, therefore, let's ensure that China and the US feel the combined pressure from ASEAN and EU to support the multilateral system. Thus, the EU and ASEAN have a special responsibility to preserve the rule-based system, as they benefit hugely from multilateralism.

Ms. Pich Charadine, *Senior Research Fellow, CICP*, drew upon H.E. Sok Siphana's cooperation statement, speaking of the partnership between ASEAN-EU and the continuing relationship over the past years. More recently, in 2018 there was a ASEAN and EU leaders meeting where an essential document was adopted into the EU-ASEAN Plan of Action 2018-2022 and the two regions agreed to strengthen cooperation on many aspects, including open trade, promoting protection of human rights, cyber-security, maritime security, energy security, clean energy, smart city, etc. With the latest 22nd EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, held in January 2019, the term "*Partner in Integration*" was coined. Yet, considering ASEAN and the EU are the biggest regional integration bodies there is the concern on how they will be able to maintain this strategy.

She discussed her opinion on ASEAN and EU that looks toward the promotion of effective multilateralism through rule-based multilateral order. But then amidst all of these setbacks and gaps, the constraint of how the individual ASEAN member states view the EU, perceives the EU, as well as vice versa on how each EU states views ASEAN as a whole. And also considering how the bilateral mission of each country. Moreover, she explained the second gap and setback on the differences of modus operandi between the two regions, as the EU has supranational body meanwhile ASEAN has an intergovernmental body. Moreover, the EU is very institutional meanwhile ASEAN more on consensus-based. But because of the differences, it is does not mean it's impossible to establish cooperation. There could be new ways or different mechanisms of cooperation between the two regions.

She shared her last concern with Dr. Fraser Cameron on the aspect of major power competition, including the rise of China and recent US-China frictions. She said that this situation remains a challenge forward, and it has spill over on the ASEAN-EU partnership as a whole.

Dr. Frederick Kliem, *Research Fellow, Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*, started with questioning the discourse behind the strategic partnership, for example how strategic is the strategic partnership is, or who are the actors behind it. He stated that the EU and the ASEAN are natural partners, and it is simply by

the virtue of being two regional organizations. From his experience in Southeast Asia, the EU was essentially seen as an economic investor. The partnership between the two regions mostly seen from the economic perspective rather than on security and other strategic aspects. He then explained the condition if one wants to be a strategic actor and at the same time projects values and norms beyond its borders, this may run into problems and has to proceed carefully. There is a sentiment in Southeast Asia that the EU approaches the relationship not as an equal. He stated that the essence of multilateralism is a relationship between equal partners. And if we look at the reality of the relationship between donor and recipient, how can it creates equality among the partners. And then it comes back to the question of whether multilateralism can work among Asia and Southeast Asia countries.

There are some unfortunate situations between ASEAN and the EU, in which the engagement process gets hung up on the normative projection of values. He then gave a couple of examples such as when the EU criticizes some countries in ASEAN (e.g., Vietnam) on democracy and human rights; this is not a conducive approach in establishing the relationship. The second example was about palm oil issues, as for Indonesia and Malaysia this sector means a lot more than saving the forests. Therefore, it also becomes an unfortunate situation when you are trying to attack a country's vital economic sector.

He then suggested to the EU side; trying to place ASEAN in an equal position, the importance of staying out of a country's internal affairs and focus on the big picture and engagement, and finally to focus on concrete outcomes.

Mr. Andrew Mantong, Research Fellow, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta, Indonesia, gave some disclaimers, as he will not touch upon issues in each of the different regions in ASEAN (the Mekong region and the maritime region of Southeast Asia). Then he stated that there are two important topics on the soft power that the EU has in Southeast Asia, the first is the normative power and the second is on regional power. These discourses have not made any entry marks in Southeast Asia. For example, when talking about the EU-ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific, he was shocked, as it has no reference to democracy. Then he questioned his colleagues on what they think about democracy, whether it is still an important topic in the region? The dominant response was no, and it reflects on most of the dialogue partners of ASEAN moving away from a normative stance towards more pragmatic one. For example, they discussed discourses related to openness, transparency, and other things that are more manageable in terms of moving forward within the cooperation.

The topics related to the EU in Southeast Asian media mostly revolve around issues of the future of the EU after Brexit, populism, and the consequences of the European election for the EU Parliament. Due to the fact that there are more green party political agendas in the EU, he and his colleagues wonder about the future of the relationship between ASEAN and the EU. On the mechanism level, there are different styles between the regions. This also might be influenced by the realities that the national buildings in ASEAN member states are not even finished. This condition may open some rooms where domestic politics increasingly shift the regional and the inter-regional dynamics.

Another issue regarding the institutional reality, there are three layers of relationships such as ASEAN talks however he was questioning how to move the talks in the future. And there are also available platforms such as ASEAN regional forum, and there is a discussion about whether the EU shall be included in the forum and also in East Asian Summit. He also expressed his surprise on the delay of the launching of the EU-ASEAN Partnership because of some domestic issues and national agendas. He also said that there might be difficulties in reconciliation between the different institutional mechanisms of the EU and ASEAN.

He expressed the irony that says ASEAN and EU both prefer multilateralism and openness to be maintained at the regional level, but when starting to talk about national economic issues such as Palm Oil, it might cause trade wars between ASEAN and EU that should be avoided in the future. Lastly, he mentioned about some other important issues that shall be addressed other than palm oil in the region such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, issues on radicalism and terrorism, and cyber security.

Questions & Answers

Ms. Gwen Robinson started the Q&A session by addressing a question on the strategic partnership prospects between the EU and ASEAN, by looking at both the big picture and the strategies (e.g., proposals, meetings, as well as domestic, regional, and interregional issues, etc.).

❖ **Dr. Fraser Cameron** mentioned ten strategic partnerships that the EU has with major powers; one of them is the recently signed trade deal with Japan. He thought that in the concept of strategic partnerships, discluding equal partnerships, the EU citizens directly elected the EU Parliament and they also ratified every agreement that the EU prepares. So, the EU cannot ignore issues such as human rights, labour rights, et cetera. Moreover, he stated that he did not see any fundamental conflict between promoting human rights and democracy, with good governance, as these aspects are an integral part of it.

❖ **Dr. Frederick** stated that if the EU wants to act strategically, at the same time they cannot accommodate all the voices from different actors. Therefore, he suggested trying to move away from the “big labels” because there are tangible issues that may limit the area of cooperation. He believed the fundamental problem of the EU engagements in Southeast Asia is that the EU does not understand the fundamental nexus between domestic politics in Southeast Asia and everything that happens from ASEAN. There is no actor from ASEAN who makes decisions for the organisation as a whole; the ten member-state leaders decide it. In the end, when looking at realistic cooperation, it could be seen that there is no strategic engagement between ASEAN and the EU because they are so fundamentally different in their approaches, institutional DNA, etc. ASEAN will never be close to the “good governance” standard, as defined by the EU. So, there is a need to appreciate the nexus between the domestic and the regional sovereign.

❖ **Ms. Charadine** recalled the discourse on the many people criticizing what ASEAN should do and comparing it with what the EU has achieved. She said that it is a wrong assumption to compare between ASEAN and the EU. ASEAN is not meant to be like the EU. ASEAN is an inter-governmental body that consists of ten different countries with different situations, different domestic politics, and concerns. This fact should be a consideration for the EU when detailing the aspect of the strategic partnership with ASEAN countries. She also stated that it is hard to use the term “compromise” in regards the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership,

and if anyone wants to engage the other as a partner, the process shall be through consultation by both sides, on equal footings on how to “settle down” rather than expecting the other partner to comply. So, there is an important aspect of understanding rather than “compromising” and sticking to the policy.

❖ **Mr. Andrew** expressed the importance of understanding the terms “strategic”, especially considering what does ASEAN/EU expect on being strategic? And strategic for what purpose? He then addressed “strategic”, in terms of maintaining the openness of the international system; currently, there are risks of unnecessary trade wars between ASEAN and EU as well as with Japan and Korea. The current occurrence is also influenced by each situation at the regional level, at the European side the condition is bound up by the certain decision-making processes, and in Southeast Asia, it is bound up by domestic politics.

Next, Ms. Gwen turned the floor to the participants if there were any questions. It followed with, H.E. Pou Sothirak, who gave sincere appreciation to the speakers before he asked a question. H.E. Pou Sothirak pointed out that right now EU is facing a period of uncertainty with the Brexit and populism issues; also, ASEAN is facing some internal problems on the decision-making process. He then said that there is a potential to learn from each other on how to manage those problems. He asked Dr. Frederick, how the EU manages to go beyond sovereignty, and putting regional interests over national interests. He then asked what advice would Dr. Frederick give to ASEAN on managing issues related to democracy, freedom of expressions, human rights, et cetera.

❖ **Dr. Frederick** recalled the historical contexts of the EU that shaped all of the European countries, in which they all shared the same level of economic development and shared the same democratic values. In terms of security, most of the members are part of NATO. Additionally, with regard to leadership, all of the countries are willing to accept the leadership role of France and Germany in the region. And above all, trust is the key element in the integration process. A similar pattern was observed in ASEAN, at the beginning Indonesia seemed to take the leadership role, however, in the last decade Indonesia has not prepared to take this role forward and therefore there has not been a real push in ASEAN to take the leadership role.

❖ **Dr. Fraser Cameron** explained the importance of fundamental agreement on where ASEAN and the EU want the relationship to head. If the relationship is supposed to be more than a dialogue of diplomacy, then there is a need to talk on expectation management in Southeast Asia. The region does not view the EU as a standard, so the EU needs to lower the expectation on what Southeast Asian governance would look like. He further stated that he did not see any positive trends from the European perspectives in terms of good governance and human rights.

Ms. Gwen then took over and questioned whether a regular ASEAN-EU summit and consultative process were needed, and where exactly the ASEAN process fits into this because it might go beyond the institutional level and high-level regular consultation.

❖ **Dr. Fraser Cameron** said that at the beginning he was a bit skeptical about the ASEAN-EU summit. However, he said that the last two summits were getting better and it is a quite useful format to continue. He then shared his opinions on similar summits that established the

relationship between the EU and Canada as well as the US.

❖ **Ms. Charadine** expressed her opinion that with the strategic partnership it may end up with endless meetings. Perhaps in the partnership and management, there should be commemorative summits of some sort, and then maybe every five years or ten years the leaders can discuss focus urgent issues. It does not have to be annually but perhaps it should be regularized.

Ms. Gwen turned the questions back to the floor, and an international relations student from Pannasastra University (Morris) asked a question regarding the issues that EU is facing right now, he questioned whether the increasing divisionism in the UK will hinder the strategic support of the EU and increase the gap between the EU and ASEAN.

What will be the impact of EU willingness of divisionism?

❖ **Dr. Fraser Cameron** said that the EU has a strategic and central role towards ASEAN and the stance will not change. And what happened with the UK will not directly affect the mechanism in general (ASEAN), however, the situation is considered a difficult time regarding the relationship between the EU and the UK.

❖ **Dr. Frederick** stated that Brexit is not a result of European Union divisionism, rather a result of the lost sense of sovereignty in the UK, which may be influenced by the rise of populism.

❖ **Mr. Andrew** highlighted the consequences of Brexit, on the future of ASEAN-EU partnership by giving some statistical facts; one of them is that from all ASEAN citizens living in Europe in 2015, 40.4% are living in the UK. Moreover, from all European citizens residing in ASEAN member states, 66% are from the UK. Also, regarding the destination of education in Europe for ASEAN citizens, 69% of ASEAN students are studying in the UK. Therefore, the facts show the influence of the United Kingdom within the relationship between the two regions. Mr. Andrew then continued to the security aspect, in which he gave facts that there is a significant presence of the British army's footprints in Southeast Asia.

David asked the next question on the discourse of the official development assistance (ODA) to Southeast Asia, between opting expertise and focusing on giving the money.

❖ **Dr. Fraser Cameron** said that he prefers to allocate money for girl's education. He pointed out that many studies show that the education of girls is the most effective way that you can actually carry out increasing development.

❖ **Ms. Charadine** said that she was unsure of the perspective on just focusing on giving the money to developing countries. Meanwhile, when solely focusing on expertise, to carry out the expertise and implement the subsequent initiatives from the activity there is a need for the money.

❖ **Dr. Frederick** thought that both are needed, the expertise and money. And related to the EU and ASEAN, the ASEAN Secretariat gets a budget of \$200 million from the EU, and it is able to address various aspects, including economic integration.

❖ **Mr. Andrew** said that there is a widespread assumption that if you give money the results will be trickled down to the people who can decide what is good for society. There is also another approach that considers when it comes to the ODA, it will be preferred to introduce the small government that works efficiently but might link it up to globalization. But in the context of Southeast Asia, it might be not the case. There is also an important issue on the capacity of the government to deliver the ODA to other parts within the country that might be influenced by the quality of bureaucracies, infrastructures, transportations, et cetera. The last question was from **H.E Pou Sothirak** on the uncertainty of the region that is led by the rise of China, as well as the friction between the US and China.

The question is, in which qualification could the EU join in the East Asian Summit? Considering that this is a good platform to discuss this concern.

❖ **Ms. Charadine** pointed out that the security issue is a very critical and sensitive point in Asian and Southeast Asia. What would happen if the EU jumped in as partner and external actor that might engage in the issues, there would be security issues about what areas they can explore? Regardless, there is a need for immediate partnership action, as many other external actors have already played in this area.

❖ **Mr. Andrew** said that the East Asian Summit would become the main platform for the operationalization of the ASEAN outlook in the indo-pacific. He also explained that there are some minor voices that ASEAN regional forum should also be the main forum as there is already some specific and technical cooperation in security aspects. But one important thing is that the EU shall look at the main agenda of the ASEAN outlook in the Indo-pacific. First, there is an agenda on maritime security, and the second there is agenda on sustainability. The second agenda (sustainability) is important as it might backfire into the Palm Oil situation. Whether they agree or not that Palm Oil could be improved from dangerous kinds of agricultural/plantation practices to more sustainable practices.

❖ **Dr. Fredrick** expressed the importance of EAS. He expressed what makes EAS special, is that it has a very limited membership (18 members). Moreover, it includes all-important states in the region with the leader states as the one that represents on the forum.

SESSION II: THE RELEVANCE OF ASEAN TO EU: RESPONSES AND COLLABORATIONS



The second session was instigated by **Ms. Pich Charadine**, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Global Center for Mekong Studies (GCMS – Cambodia Center) of CICP. The second panel discusses the ties between the ASEAN and the EU in a broader context and suggests potential scenarios for the short, medium and long-term cooperation outlook. In the current institutional structure and vital regional security infrastructure, ASEAN could be more relevant to the EU. The panel further discusses the main areas of collaboration in order to strengthen and expand this partnership (from the ASEAN point of view).

Dr. Chheang Vannarith, President of Asian Vision Institute (AVI), Phnom Penh, Cambodia, had three points of statement to present regarding to this topic. Firstly, the convergence of activities between ASEAN and EU was getting stronger. This was because of the global context, which needs both ASEAN and EU to work together in order to save the multilateral framework.

Secondly, the US, China and Russia power triangle relationships would further bring ASEAN and the EU together due to the fact that these two regional groupings were a constellation of small and medium size powers. Therefore, this was the time for ASEAN and the EU to build a new global order that is more inclusive and not dictated by the major powers. Through building a new global order and global governance, the interdependence between ASEAN and the EU would have a positive development.

Thirdly, the Asia-Europe connectivity strategy should be put into practice. The connectivity did not only cover economic, infrastructure or people to people mobility, but it also covers security connectivity. Once security connectivity was strengthened, there would be a greater impact toward the convergence of interests and visions.

Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee, Director of European Union Center, Singapore, started by asking three questions. The first question was what the strategic partnership meant, why the EU would want the strategic partnership, and what could achieve in the strategic partnership that could not

achieve in the comprehensive partnership or normal partnership. She viewed that in a normal partnership; the engagement was based on mutual benefits and mutual interests, like the economic partnership. However, the strategic partnership was forged between equal partners, which did not contribute only to the mutual benefits, but could have broader strategic landscape. Positively, the strategic partnership could bring global peace and stability, rules-based order, and a double down on multilateralism to protect the rules-based order. Negatively, this kind of partnership would contain a rising power.

The second question was about the reasons of why ASEAN and the EU could engage strategically with each other. ASEAN and the EU could engage with each other strategically due to some reasons. First, these two regional organizations were born out of peace and the determination to contribute peace and stability to the respective regions despite their own problems and challenges. Second, the increasing economic protectionism and nationalism could bring ASEAN and the EU to work together to maintain a multilateral trading order. Third, both regional organizations could learn from each other to navigate the rising tension and rivalry between China and the US. Additionally, the increase of risk from non-traditional issues that affect humanity, which she interpreted as “real security” issues. She recommended that both needed to be at the forefront of strengthening the regional governance and building bridges across regions. Instead of accepting the multipolar world-based power and sphere of influence, both should double down on multilateral based rules, norms and interests. Instead of relying on the hegemonic leadership provided by the US, there should be a system of inclusiveness, and a new model of leadership, which should be issue-based leadership.

The third question was on how to move the relations between ASEAN and the EU from strategic intent to pragmatic or concrete actions. ASEAN and the EU needed to strengthen their own internal unity first. She drew some confronting challenges of these two organizations. For the EU, there has been increasing divergence, which made the EU unable to make a quick consensus among the institution. Whereas ASEAN has only a loosely joint political declaration, but have no common actions. The EU needs to be more flexible and pragmatic and ASEAN needs to become more institutionalized and more integrated. Both organisations need to be coherent, cohesive, more agile, and engage more proactively with each other and other important partners.

Lastly, Dr. Yeo suggested two areas that ASEAN and the EU could start in strategic engagement. The first is the buzzword, “connectivity”, we have already stopped using the word “globalisation”, and it has reached a stage where the word cannot be used because it held many loose interpretations and links to state issues. The two organisations need to engage with different levels of state-to-state engagement, inter-regional engagement, and multilateral institutions engagement. Secondly, both ASEAN and the EU should consider making rules and regulations for new emerging issues, such as digital economy, AI, etc. She ended her speech by asking how do we bring these two organizations together to make rules.

Dr. Aries A. Arugay, Research Fellow of Asia Pathways to Progress, the Philippines, was the last speaker in this panel. He laid out the possibility of cooperation between ASEAN and the EU and called for sobriety in the relationship to achieve a more natural nature. He stated that the forming of partnership is more aspirational than empirical. There is no automaticity of

partnership, but it was the product of hard work and consistency of engagement. The pragmatism of engaging between the EU and ASEAN should not be construed and patronizing ASEAN with the EU's value of Democracy and Human Rights. Criticism on those values led to reactionary backlash from some of the ASEAN governments. Dr. Arugay raised the current Philippines' government as a case study.

He also stressed on the cooperation areas between ASEAN and the EU. ASEAN and the EU needed to work together to reform international institutions, global regime, international laws, and shared norms in order to enhance and improve the international orders. He stressed that these organizations must be truly institutionalized to be involved in larger contexts beyond the respective regions. Looking at the EU, populism has become a great equalizer between the youth and older communities and has been a concept peddled in recent politics. However, considering this, totalitarianism has remained popular. There is a key point both regional organisations are missing, which is causing problems with their structures of democracy.

Other than that, security was also the potential area for both regional organizations to cooperate. However, it required ASEAN to amend its own Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Before ending his remarks, he added that the engagement with ASEAN had grown beyond 10 member's government leadership, but with other stakeholders as well.

Questions & Answers

In the Q&A session, **Ms. Pich Charadine** asked the **Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee** on the view about the EU consideration on ASEAN as one, despite that it is a combination of the 10 member states. She directed a second question to **Dr. Chheang** on how ASEAN could navigate around the power competition and how external actors, like the EU fill the gaps to stabilize the regional architecture.

❖ **Dr. Yeo** responded that the EU needed to deal with ASEAN in different level rather than strict inter-regional approach.

❖ **Dr. Chheang** viewed that it was very challenging. He proposed to give more power to other rising powers and middle powers, like India, South Korea, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, perhaps Vietnam. Moreover, collective hedging strategy and collective position were needed to stand up against major powers, the coalition of small states. Dr. Yeo suggested that there should be proactive engagement between regions and regions. Both EU and ASEAN have let US and China dominate the path but have forgotten that there is 68% on the other side. There needs to be more engagement with this knowledge, that the world is not only China and the US. She ended joking that one solution would be to build a wall around the US and see how they handled themselves.

There was a comment stated that ASEAN was so diverse and very polarized. The participant asked on how this institution could further engage with the EU. Dr. Yeo acknowledged that creating more rooms of cooperative areas could boost the relations between ASEAN and the EU.

One participant stated that there should be two-way stream regarding the engagement between ASEAN and the EU. He then asked **Dr. Chheang Vannarith** and **Dr. Aries A. Arugay** on how to make ASEAN internally, essentially, externally more relevance to the EU.

❖ **Dr. Aries** agreed with the comment. ASEAN needed invest in institutionalizing itself. More than that, the ASEAN-Way should be respected, but at the same time it should be revisited and redefined.

❖ **Dr. Vannarith** responded that there was missing link of the domestic politics and sub-regional mechanism to the regional and global context. He added that ASEAN provided only aspiration and vision, but sometimes sub-regional mechanism, like the Mekong mechanisms implemented more efficiently. Moreover, he suggested connecting Mekong region with the Danube region in Europe.

Monk, **Som Sung Penh** from the University of Pannissatra, asked: **how can ASEAN contribute to be successful in multilateralism?**

❖ **Dr. Yeo** responded that intergovernmental is a step towards multilateralism. As long as the organizations still emphasize non-interference and work well with the constraint, there will be a way forward.

A member from KAS asking: **why do small countries want to collaborate against big powers? What is the purpose?**

❖ **Dr. Vannarith** stated that it was not to fight against these big powers, but figuring out how to navigate through the power to protect them. It is a challenge for small countries to achieve their development goals in rules-based order, so they need to be smart on how to make their destiny.

Dr. Felix Heidux added, saying that one could argue that ASEAN is almost exclusively focused on China and the US and has not considered any real partnerships with anyone else. For more coherent action, **what does ASEAN need to do to be even more relevant to the EU?**

❖ **Dr. Arugay** responded that there is humility in listening. As regional organizations move forward, cooperation becomes a two-way street. There is also a possibility that these powers are not going to be towed along, as powers can be diminished. ASEAN does however need a reality check, the organization and leaders need to understand that just because it has been created, is non-threatening and continues to exist, does not mean it will automatically attract people. There needs to be an assessment of ASEAN's convening power, and what benefits may stop and continue on. Some people say that ASEAN can do away with the EU and the EU can do away with ASEAN. However, it should also be considered that EU has other parts of the world they are interested in and if their attention is divided what cost does that incur to ASEAN.

SESSION III: EU'S CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN ASEAN: EXPANDING ENGAGEMENTS



The third panel looks at the short, intermediate and longer term, at future scenarios of EU-ASEAN collaboration. They emphasize on how other crises such as the rise of protectionism of the United States could be seen as creating new possibilities and new structures to both strengthen and expand connections between the European Union and ASEAN. To further, the panel t discusses how the EU could better understand and accept its position in ASEAN as a true' construct engagement'.

Dr. Bradley J. Murg, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, CICP. Professor of Political Science and Director of Global Development Studies, Seattle Pacific University, USA, began by emphasizing the question, how to increase multilateralism? He insisted that the answer of this question is fundamentally determined by the timeframe whether it is to be achieved in the short, the medium or the long-term.

For the short term, he stressed the challenges and events that currently confront multilateralism. In his view, in the short-term, it is unlikely that it would be about the expansion of multilateralism, but the protection of its existence from any shock events. He then mentioned the challenges by raised by the concern that 64% of US economists think that the US will have another recession; and it will continue to affect the EU and ASEAN. He continued, stating that in the meantime, there is also a rise of nationalism and populism in both the EU and ASEAN. Yet, any occurrence of economic shock could easily impede the prospect of multilateralism.

At the same time, there is a continued tension between the US and China. The US is changing its strategy from engagement to “congamegment” (containment + engagement). There is still more tension that could arise. Nevertheless, Dr. Bradley stressed that it is fundamental for the EU to have a clear engagement with ASEAN. He has demonstrated possible areas that could be enhanced. He insisted that areas of non-traditional security, such as maritime security or climate change are already being focused on. Besides, regarding connectivity, China, the U.S, Japan and

South Korea have projected a lot of initiatives.

He mentioned areas that the EU is more advantageous than others, regarding coordination. He continued that the tension between the US and China load too much pressure on ASEAN. Yet, the EU could play as a key player as it has been doing separately with ASEAN member states, assisting on cooperation and support.

Dr. Tran Viet Thai, Deputy Director General Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), began by demonstrating his outline that comprises of the historical development of the relations between ASEAN and the EU and how it reflects the future. Dr. Tran emphasized that the EU and ASEAN relations (started in 1972), is one of the oldest dialogues of ASEAN. It does benefit to be an old friend to Cambodia and Vietnam since mostly the EU focuses on economic, trade, and development. Yet, regarding security engagement, Dr. Tran concluded that the EU is far behind than any other dialogue partner. He continued that this is because both ASEAN and EU are not designed for defense purposes like NATO. And there are a lot of internal limits on both sides.

Moreover, as he tried to see the prospect of ASEAN - EU, he claimed that in order to predict the future we have to look at the current progress. For ASEAN, there is a huge transformation in its member states as most countries are having rapid economic growth. On the EU side, there is the case of Brexit and the rise of populism. In addition to that, he also mentioned the external case of protectionism and nationalism that happen at the other corners of the world, which does threaten the prospect of multilateralism.

Lastly, Dr. Tran noted that in order to be considered an effective strategic cooperation, the EU and ASEAN need to enhance the UN Charter, uphold the rule-based system in trading capabilities, develop capacity building (Maritime + Cyber) and support the EU in the ASEAN led mechanism on ASEAN Centrality.

Finally, Dr. Tran shared his Vietnamese experiences over constructive criticism on human rights issues, which they found is very important for improvement and development.

Dr. Frédéric Grare, Chargé de mission in charge of the Indian Ocean Center for Analysis, Planning and Strategy Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France, stressed that his outline is about the mid-term perspective approach toward multilateralism. He insisted that multilateralism is the mechanism that protects the small or weaker states. Concerning the relations of ASEAN - EU, there is an extension of ties between the two regions and rapid growth on the financial, political and cultural fronts. Numerous technical and biannual ministerial meetings have enhanced dialogue between the two regions.

In the past, much of the relations between Europe and South-East Asia have centred on Southeast Asia, but the direction of collaboration has shifted to strategic interest in which the two sides address regional and international topics, and eventually concentrate on non-traditional challenges and help for regional integration.

Dr. Grare mentioned the cooperation where the EU provided legal expertise training to ASEAN counterparts. He discussed about the joint cooperation of EU and ASEAN in the EEZ, under the maritime security cooperation. He also suggested that there should be an EU - ASEAN Center to have a better engagement between both regions physically.

Questions and Answers

Gwen Robinson asked, what would be the future of the EU - ASEAN relations?

❖ After all the panellists answered, there was a similar theme of response. The panellists thought there seemed to be three key questions that have not been resolved in the prospect of the EU-ASEAN ties. How long is ASEAN moving towards closer integration and how quickly? Second, is the EU-ASEAN FTA going to conclude? and, if so, how significant is it going to be? Thirdly, is the question of whether the EU should step closer and try to understand more of ASEAN integration history, coupled with an ASEAN desire to be more involved in influencing globalization legislation in view of the obvious benefits for the transparent and market-oriented South East Asian countries.

Another participant asked does the EU or France have their own Indo Pacific Policy/Strategy?

❖ **Dr. Grare** quickly responded that there is no Indo Pacific Policy for EU or France. In any case, they would instil their own norm into that policy.

The last question of the day was directed to Dr. Tran, “what are the experiences of Vietnam regarding the issues of dealing with human rights concerns with the EU?”

❖ **Dr. Tran** responded that constructive criticism is good because it leads to improvement. However, on some level, Vietnam calls for the EU to understand about Vietnam’s condition since they lack financials and capacity in implementing some sort of agenda or program.

SESSION IV: ASEAN- EU PARTNERSHIP: ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES



Instigator, **Dr. David Koh** addressed the importance of the relationship between ASEAN and the EU. He mentioned that there is a need that both regions challenge themselves on the differences in values and norms of the two regions. He started with a joke, saying 'it was asked and often asked about the significance of think-tanks. Think-tanks are people gathered to talk about issues so that tanks will not be used instead.' Today, trade, climate change and other non-traditional issues are being talked about. He continues that the intra-ASEAN trade is 2.8% in which people think that it should be higher, and some believe that the number is okay. He also included some statistics regarding ASEAN' trade with other regions including trade with Japan, the US and China.

Ambassador Sun Soun, Senior Research Fellow, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace. Adjunct Professor, Paragon International University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, mentioned that when talking about ASEAN, scholars and think-tanks usually mention the international/basic rule base system and the opportunities and strategic interests of the region. He stressed the importance of the EU and ASEAN partnership in an EU context. If talking about history, the EU and ASEAN also have quite a lot in common, the pursuit of peace, stability, and the security of the people, which is why ASEAN and the EU have some similarities and it, is also the reason why both regions are interested to cooperate with each other. The EU also took interest in ASEAN institutionalization, which hopefully ASEAN will continue to improve and modify. The two regions have been striving to improve its relations through its own respective histories and dynamic from the Cold War.

The milestone that the Amb. Sun Soun mentioned is the enlargement of the EU and ASEAN: The EU has 28 member states and the ASEAN has 10 member states. Both regions face their own internal challenges, domestically and regionally but they try to encounter it and at the same time improve the cooperation. Over the past 20 years, ASEAN-EU relations have covered various areas including poverty reduction, development, disaster prevention, academic, trade and climate change.

He also mentioned the development gap between ASEAN member states (CLMV). Since 1992, the region has changed a lot after the end of the Cold War, it can be seen that the process of regionalism has changed a lot as it moves forward. He additionally raised the point about ASEAN's rich and poor development gap, however it was an achievement that the countries have been continuously adapting to reach the development goal.

He added on the emergence of two regional frameworks about the Mekong, but there is an issue of how ASEAN can come together, talk together and move together like the EU. Now that both regions have been trying to upgrade their partnership to a strategic level on non-traditional security issues such as trade and non-proliferation, ASEAN plays an important role in encountering these issues. ASEAN has to narrow the gaps within ASEAN, maritime and mainland ASEAN.

He mentioned that one of the most important issues is about how ASEAN and the EU could bridge the gap for further cooperation. He further questioned how international cooperation can be promoted with relevant partners including the EU. He acknowledges that the EU has done a lot to cooperate under ASEAN framework. He believes that it is true that the EU and ASEAN both have their own challenges, but regardless of the challenges, the two regions should do their best in promoting the relationships between each other, on the governments and the academic level (think-tanks) as well.

Dr. Eva Pejsova, Senior Analyst, French Foundation of Strategic Research (FRS), mentioned about her previous meeting on the first EU-China dialogue, where she heard some criticisms about the EU intervention in the South China Sea. The EU was reminded of its strong economic ties and interests with China and the region, so the EU should stay as far as possible from the regional politics and security. The new reality is a world where the traditional comforting separation between economy and security is no longer respected.

The impact of the current US and China trade tension goes way beyond trade and beyond their bilateral relations. This new popularity of the multidimensional deterrent that China has been using with the US means that any disagreement in any field could be retaliated by means whether it is through cyber security or any pressure and it goes beyond the bilateral tension because it takes place in these proxy area: South-East Asia, Europe, North-East Asia and in any area which it could harm the interest of the other side. She continued that the world today is increasingly divided especially with the emergence of the Indo-Pacific concept. However, the Indo-pacific was originally created to promote inclusive regional architecture, connectivity prosperity, and cooperation. But when talking about the Indo-Pacific space today it has quickly shifted to the debate of the new world order, the new type of great world political rivalry and the countries in the middle trapped by power rivalry.

The dynamic is extremely dangerous to security, which could end in similar Cold War circumstances, but it is easy to predict and it is unsustainable. The reasons why Dr. Pejsova, believes that it is unsustainable, is because firstly, it neglects the achievements of the roles of other regional and global players to play their roles including the EU and ASEAN. Secondly, it is unsustainable because it undermines the multilateral security and uncooperative structure of the region when the world has two bilateral rivals that kidnap all the issues and all those

multilateral forms. It is also dangerous because it prevents the tackling of global challenges, such as climate change or any progress legitimization that could only be achieved with corporate partners including the US and China.

She mentioned that rather than navigating those divides, the EU and ASEAN should bridge those divided, through cooperation. This is the right time for the middle power diplomacy. The middle power here refers to a type of foreign policy of those who are in the middle. The one that steps up to defend rule base, global order, multilateralism, and is the mediator to everyone. Lastly, she acknowledged that it is really challenging because it is also happening in Europe, where there are issues where you need to choose sides but they do not want to so they do not know what to do. Connectivity is the low hanging fruit on the golden platter as the EU has just recently signed a partnership with Japan on sustainable connectivity and the EU also has many connectivity platforms active around the world as well.

Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn, Senior Research Fellow, ISIS Thailand. Columnist, Bangkok Post, picked up two points: First, he is really glad that the ASEAN and EU relations has gotten stuck. Why? Because it stops the Europeanization of ASEAN. Second, he believes that it is the right time for Cambodia to become the game changer, regarding the EU's attitude toward ASEAN the EU. ASEAN-EU relations have been suffering for the past 74 years. He questioned that how can a region that has given the most aid to the ASEAN region, not been recognized as a strategic partner with ASEAN? New Zealand has been recognized as ASEAN strategic partner in 2008. We are ignoring \$550 million from Europe as a strategic partner.

He believes that the problem could be solved easily by looking into the real products. The EU always wanted to Europeanize ASEAN, as it has done so with African Union, but ASEAN has its own characters. He mentioned that around 20 years ago, when the EU and ASEAN relations were separated it was because the EU thought that ASEAN supported Myanmar. However, ASEAN said that this is the issue of ASEAN, so let the ASEAN ways deal with it. Since then, it has been a long process for the EU to understand ASEAN as its core relations and has been held hostage by a single issue (the issue of Myanmar). He also expects that both sides will have a different attitude and walk out of their comfort zone. ASEAN-EU relations was at its lowest point in 2013. He expected that from now on the ASEAN and EU relation will be more realistic, not based on the perception of certain European countries.

He also talked about the EU's champion, with the example of the UK and France, in relation to African countries. They should try to deal with the region as a whole when there is certain problem. ASEAN and the EU found comfort in talking about cooperation on the environment and climate change. They pulled out of the US form tariff accord, it allowed ASEAN-EU to act openly with each other and they managed to sign a joint statement in the Philippines; both regions should continue this type of discourse. However, ASEAN still has the perception that ASEAN needs the EU to help with capacity building in encountering climate change. He addressed the speech of Dr. Pejsova, that it is time the EU should improve their relationship, not because of the rise of China, the US or India, but it is the time that both regions come to a new stage of the relationship. In order to promote ASEAN-EU security- strategic partnership we should overcome with the issues mentioned above. Additionally, it is important for the EU to have a seat in EAS as well.

Dr. Felix Heidux, Senior Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, raised several points regarding traditional and non-traditional issues. The regional organizations are forming the back-bone of multilateralism and collective security, which therefore prevents further conflict from happening within the respective regions. Thus, the US and China could also join the region for collective security as well. We are facing choices which are either going to China or the US. It is a massive challenge to regional organization, to the EU and ASEAN. So far when talking about regional security, especially when talking about regional integration it is driven by an external hegemon. But now, there is no hegemon, no one can force member states or regional organizations to choose side. Therefore, currently, it can be seen that more ad-hoc cooperation, sub-regional levels and an increasing tendency to go for the pursuit multilateralism. There is an increasing tendency for the EU and ASEAN to form coalition and a transnational government at different level.

He also stated that it can be seen that the countries now have a tendency to work in smaller groups. He assumed that in the future, the EU-ASEAN cooperation will become increasingly important in the security area and we will also see the diminishing role of the EU and ASEAN but increasing cooperation of the member states within the region. He added that the navigation of the ASEAN and EU is observable and stunning to keep.

Questions and Answers

Instigator **Dr. David Koh** kicked off the Q&A session by asking three questions direct to the whole panel.

- ❖ How does multilateralism impact ASEAN and its economic integration? Will it be difficult for the ASEAN countries to trade with the US?
- ❖ Is it right to ask the EU if it could play a role in the further economic integration to ASEAN? Should this be something that ASEAN could be done independently to cooperate with the EU?
- ❖ China is playing a large role in the investment of ASEAN, therefore if ASEAN moves closer to the EU, what would China think about this?

Followed by participants asking.

- ❖ What is the conflict zone of ASEAN and the conflict zone between the EU and ASEAN?
- ❖ Realistically, what should ASEAN and the EU do to improve the relationship?
- ❖ What would be the lesson learned from the EU to ASEAN?
- ❖ How could the relations between the ASEAN and the EU increase and how can ASEAN attract FDI from the EU?

Ambassador Sun Soun

ASEAN has to strengthen its role in delivering the improvement of ASEAN-EU trade but since ASEAN has a limited capacity, ASEAN cannot work alone in doing so, therefore it certainly needs the EU. The Mekong regions' growth is the linkage between mainland ASEAN and maritime ASEAN, and it will be the flashing point in the future along with South China Sea.

This is what ASEAN could learn from the EU, in the area of connectivity within ASEAN. He believed that the question of why the EU had not become a strategic partner with the EU was a very broad question that needed a very big discussion. Institutionalization is one of the challenging pursuits of EU-ASEAN strategic partnership. The development gaps are also another reason that keeps ASEAN from going further in cooperating with the EU.

Dr. Eva Pejsova

Minilateralism is a very smart way of tackling the issues in which they could find the approach in dealing with concrete issues. That could perhaps also be the way that could shield the EU-ASEAN relations. Somehow, the relationship between the EU and ASEAN are seen only through the institution but if it is looked at a lower level we could see more work on smaller projects that could stretch out to a better cooperation.

Dr. Felix Heidux

He believes that the peak of globalization had already been reached and now the rise of regional trade is being focused on. People are looking more into the intra-regional trade. From the EU's experience, to solve the problem of development gaps was based purely on market policy. The purely market based approach, however had a limited capacity in narrowing the gaps, therefore you have to move beyond market integrations to a more inter-regional cooperation.

Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn

It is time for ASEAN to rise and they have to bridge any parties regardless of being a super power country, middle power country, so on and so forth. In order for ASEAN and the EU to move away from their comfort zone, they have to take off their shoes. ASEAN comfort zone is non-interference and the EU's comfort zones are its norms and values. He also raised an example of Thailand and the EU relations with IUU as well. Additionally, he stated, that the process of the EU europeanizing ASEAN is now reversing. Germany was the first country to sign the treaty of amity in South-East Asia and the treaty of amity is slowly getting other EU member states to join them. This is what he called, Aseanization.

SESSION V: OPEN AND FREE DISCUSSION

H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak, Executive Director, the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), started the session by thanking Mr. Cibor for helping him instigate this session and the cooperation from the EU office. The session was designed to capture recommendations from instigators and speakers. He asked for concrete suggestions that focused on navigating the divide, bridging the gap, deepening cooperations. The recommendations should assess the relationship between the ASEAN and EU, the ASEAN view of EU, the EU view of ASEAN, and finally how can the EU and ASEAN work together to tackle regional and international challenges.



Mr. Lucas Cibor, Deputy Head of the Mission of the EU Delegation to ASEAN, set the tone of the session by recollecting on the word “trust”. The regional organizations need to trust each other and have a common understanding of what that means. Considering this, he thought in terms of a geo-political context the relationship was in a good place. If not, who then can states trust, which major geo-political actor can you put more trust in doing what they ask, being transparent, the directions via your organization, and the global challenges you face that can meet mutual benefit and understanding. There have been many years between ASEAN and EU to build up that level of trust, and though there are issues that undermine this sometimes, it has remained undeterred.

He followed that when it came to practical recommendations on what to do next. It is important to question why we need these recommendations, because the world is continually moving and evolving and ASEAN and the EU aren’t the only state actors in the world. If ASEAN and EU want to continue a strong relationship they need to remain engaged within each other’s radars. The EU is undergoing fundamental changes, on one level there is new administration coming in, this means that the new leaders will not have the five years of experiences the previous stakeholders had in this region. New relationships will need to be formed and they will need to be reminded that this part of the world is important. Therefore, for the next year, any ideas that the partnership has needs to be put forward and highlighted, otherwise the attention will be focused elsewhere. Mr. Cibor ended his introduction citing that he hoped that this view would guide the recommendations of the session.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, there is a need to deepening the connections between ASEAN and the EU. To achieve this, the organizations first need to have an understanding of the complexity on both sides. The platform should be simple, yet flexible to adhere to the individualistic traits and the commonality of the organisations and its member-states. This has been successful in the instance of the climate change agreement and the Paris peace agreement. From drawing on the commonality, common prosperity, and energy needs, it should also be suggested for a comprehensive framework for natural resources. Natural resource is often the root cause for conflict, and this is the consequence of bad non-traditional security frameworks.

The organisations should digitalize their cooperation. The overall institutional and economic cooperation purpose is to enhance governance and promote neutral accountability and trust. A digitalisation with increase transparency and the spread of knowledge of the cooperation and partnerships.

The organisation needs to build long-term trust and confidence within each other to have a successful relationship. This can be done through frequent dialogue, forums, and even new and changing forms of communication.

A platform to exchange experience, to understand the best practices or rules-based system, and to have a consolidation of cooperation and economic development. This platform can sort the issues from multiple dimensions

Dr. Felix Heidux, there is a perception that ASEAN actors see EBA on one side and power on the other. So, it is important to use the next ASEAN-EU summit to have a meeting of the perspective conflicting parties of the sidelines. And then put those issues on the front table, not in the background. They need to be very clear and avoid signalling issues and bring in a neutral third-party moderator. That way you can learn how to better manage the issues and there is not a repeat of a single-issue debate during the ASEAN-EU summit.

Mr. Cibor responded that the reason why this has not happened before is because the EU wanted to avoid “ASEANIZING” issues. For example, we are trying to resolve the palm oil issue, but the EU agreed there is fundamental danger in bringing bilateral issues to the front table. However, what the EU has done is this November there is going to be the first working group of palm oil, grouping together, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Columbia. We are trying to keep it separate from the EU-ASEAN track, to not create points of confusion between what are ASEAN issues and what are bilateral issues. Mr. Cibor then referred back to the “glitches” mentioned throughout the conference. He stated there will always be glitches in the process, but we need to be aware of how many of these glitches there are and that we cannot eliminate all of them.

Amb. Sothirak agreed with Mr. Cibor, stating that there are certain issues where the EU can mitigate the gap of partner issues. The ultimate goal is to solve this bridge, but if you put the problem in the public domain, a common circumstance is the big-headedness of the parties involved. There needs to be a level of respect to each channel as they solve these issues.

Ms. Gwen Robinson, ASEAN and the EU should have more pragmatist approach when looking at easier issues (non-controversial), like climate change, sustainability. They do not cross over the big lines of ASEAN non-interference or EU norms and standards. We should focus on these easy issues to find solutions that are achievable. This conference has heavily leaned on the side of what EU can do for ASEAN, but in terms of education, ASEAN can have a strong contribution in connectivity. In a previous meeting a suggestion was made to focus on education, through special-visa or subsidy programs, to offer EU students to come study in ASEAN member-states for one year. A two-way initiative focused on EU students, is highly achievable by ASEAN members coming together and agreeing on a common program.

Dr. Fraser Cameron, He thinks that the officials and other stakeholders don't seem to understand this, because this links to the construction of trust. Additionally, a better understanding of the EU from the right sources. The EU's image has publicly suffered the last two years, but this has been reported throughout Asia from a British lense. The majority of coverage comes from London, which thus makes the perception of EU errogenized. This is one part of a misconception of how the EU functions. Unlike ASEAN, the EU has to go through their Parliament. A further understanding of how the decision-making process differs between ASEAN and EU can deepen the understanding of the actions of each organisation.

Amb. Sothirak agreed that the dissemination of how EU operates is lacking, he suggested developing a booklet on the decision-making process for the EU in ASEAN languages.

A previous speaker brought up the notion that the two organisations have a lot of meetings and summits to attend, but the question is, do these events provide successful outcomes? Considering the busy schedules of each stakeholder attending numerous international summits every year, perhaps a video conference in every three months should be set up between the President of the Commission, President of the Councils and the Chair of ASEAN to discuss the points of the upcoming meeting. This continuous and more personal forum can build that trust between the two organizations on another level.

A lot more can be done by the EU and ASEAN. The two regions could reach out to universities. Often the type of information that is sent out is insufficient. The organizations can improve the dissemination of information about what is available. There is no ASEAN presence in the EU (even with the country ambassadors in EU). They can show the vital importance of this partnership through national efforts, by making youth more engaged in this relationship as well.

There needs to be a debate about sustainability and cities. ASEAN and EU cities should link up together and find common problems and solutions.

Dr. David Koh, from the perspective of the states, the most concerning issues that ASEAN has is the state and regional security. The EU can help ASEAN with their expertise on making sure there is no overturning regime and also finding the correct position for sovereignty. The EU has had success with this for many years.

Mr. Cibor responded that regime change is something that is not in the bylaws of the EU. It is not something in EU's history nor will it be in the future. Any military intervening is done to

stabilise a country, not to concur or destabilize. Our approach has always been to promote our values, but in some cases, some countries don't like that bilaterally.

Dr. Eva Pejsova, according to Dr. Eva, the EU should embrace the Indo-Pacific as a concept. Previously the way it has been packaged hasn't suited EU's interest. However, now it is more structured and backed by ASEAN. Indo-Pacific is a geographical fact; it is a concept that focuses on functional issues, such as connectivity and cooperation. It is a platform where we can push a lot of the issues we have discussed in this conference and it will also be an essential content playing field.

Another aspect is to improve the disability, as a practical contribution is to get to the local level. The partnership should go to cities and exploit the existing partnerships each state has in its provinces, sister-cities, and educational ties. Anything from ASEAN food fair or even waste management events can be a shared experience between local actors that forms lasting and tangible relationships.

Ambassador Pou Sothirak ended the session by posing three questions to the audience and asked them to raise their hand in response. Firstly, the majority of the room agreed that ASEAN should elevated EU as a strategic partner. And secondly, the room agreed that ASEAN should include EU as a member of EAS.

CLOSING SESSION

H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak, Executive Director, the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), started his closing statements by stating that the conference achieved the purpose CICP and KAS set out. Firstly, the conference set out how to navigate the division between EU and ASEAN and throughout the sessions we have critiqued and made recommendations. In the open discussion, the conference was able to cover a lot of different areas of the partnership.

Throughout the conference Amb. Pou Sothirak noted important trends and highlights in the discussions and dialogue.

❖ There is a need to address the 5% glitch. It is important to know how these organizations should proceed because it requires immense diplomatic skill. At the same time the 95% of the success of ASEAN-EU cooperation should be highlighted. EU has had a sincerity and commitment to ASEAN that has lasted 40 years, and there is something in that cooperation, partnership and strategy that has remained successful.

❖ There is an opportunity to move forward in the ASEAN-EU cooperation. This conference has affirmed that both organizations need each other. For this to continue to work, the trust issues need to be addressed. Amb. Sothirak still felt after all these years; ASEAN and EU still don't understand each other well. Therefore, to achieve what they want from each other, the trust needs to grow.

❖ There needs to be a deep look into bilateral, regional, global aspects of their cooperations, because they interlinked. Actions of the EU cannot be decoupled when regarding a single member-state.

❖ He recollected Dr. Pejsova's point on middle power diplomacy. ASEAN and EU should refocus strategically, not so much on politics but also in non-traditional security, the "lower hanging fruit". Cooperation should start with easy things, that way you can quickly agree on these matters and start building a relationship.

Ambassador Pou Sothirak ended his closing remarks by stating the "take-away" he wanted participants to continue to dwell on.

❖ ASEAN-EU must narrow down the gap of understanding and focus on strategic trust. This is what makes the foundation of a good partnership. Additionally, when creating this trust, not to forget the public sector. The EU needs to be particularly mindful of this.

❖ ASEAN-EU must face squarely on the new context of the new power rising. This not only means a potential hegemon, but the middle power rising as well (Japan-Korea, Taiwan Strait). If the organisations want to elevate the ASEAN-EU to the next level, they need to have wide-ranging and comprehensible outlook.

❖ Pay attention to small things, like the glitches and at the same time giving credit to the 95% success. It is important to continue to work together to make sure the 5% glitch doesn't overpower the 95%.

❖ Both sides need to agree that we need to look for a better way to look at the ASEAN-EU relationship. This conference is setting the stage for the next ASEAN-EU summit.

Amb. Pou Sothirak and **Mr. Lucas Cibor** then closed the conference by thanking the support of their respective teams, the participants, and speakers. And lastly added, that this conference and been extremely fruitful and successful recommendations would build the foundation for the next ASEAN-EU conference and future dialogues.

WELCOME REMARKS

H.E. Ambassador Pou Sothirak
Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,



On behalf of HRH Samdech Norodom Sirivudh, Chairman and Founder of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, I am privileged to welcome you all to this Regional Conference on the theme of “ASEAN – EU Relations: Navigating Divide, Deepening Cooperation” in the capital city of Phnom Penh.

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the honorable guests, the prominent role players and speakers, and the distinguished participants for taking their valuable time to attend this conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to two of our dedicated partners – the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Cambodia represented by Daniel Shmucking, KAS Director and the Embassy of the European Union to Cambodia, represented by Mr. Simone Pieri, Deputy Head of Delegation of the EU to Cambodia– for their valuable support in making this conference possible.

I would also like to recognize the presence of H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, High Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia who will deliver a keynote address shortly setting tone for this important conference.

Please allow me to say a few words about the special relationship that ASEAN maintains with the European Union.

The EU, then known as the European Economic Community, became ASEAN's first dialogue partner in 1972 and established formal dialogue relations beginning in 1977. Since that time relations between the two regions have progressively strengthened and continue to expand today.

It has been over four decades since the start of formal ASEAN and EU relations and this multifaceted relation has grown to include a wide variety of ranging from development to economics, trade and investment, aid, climate change, and political and cultural affairs. Since 2012, there has been an increase in high-level bilateral visits as well as the initiation and completion of various agreements between the EU and ASEAN member countries. In recent times, both sides have agreed to explore the resumption of negotiations of the ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement. Moreover, both sides are also keen to enhance cooperation in other areas - including counterterrorism and countering violent extremism, cybersecurity, climate change and sustainable development.

When ASEAN and EU Leaders meet, they discuss regional and international developments of mutual concern, and have regularly reiterated their shared interest and commitment to upholding multilateralism and the international trading system. Both sides have shown themselves to be committed to strengthening ASEAN-EU cooperation across all areas and in cooperating to resolve shared global challenges in order to better contribute to efforts to maintain peace and prosperity.

Recently there has been renewed optimism that the two sides would upgrade their relations. At the ASEAN-EU Foreign Ministers Meeting in Brussels on 21 January this year, EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini stated that *"We agreed to upgrade our relation to a strategic partnership. It is a recognition of the strategic partnership we already have in many fields. We are sending an important signal that the two most advanced and most successful integration processes in the world stand firmly behind multilateralism and a rule-based global order"*.

While there is a great deal of evidence to support the view that the future prospects for ASEAN-EU relations are moving forward steadfastly and that the relationship will deepen to reflect the relevance of the two institutions in the context of regional and global security and political structures, there also exists ongoing challenges that stand in the way of the deepening of this vital relationship. These impediments could ultimately hold back these two, successful blocs from ultimately appreciating one another as important and reliable partners that are able to shape and to influence the future path of global political and economic development. The primary constraint appears to be that, even after 40 years of engagement, ASEAN and the EU still do not fully grasp each side's respective goals and how best to cooperate in order to achieve them.

It is in this context that this conference has been organized in order to allow for an exchange of views and to discuss salient issues that could hold back the potential of the ASEAN - EU partnership.

During the opening session, after my welcome remarks, we will be honored to hear statements from the distinguished representative of KAS and the EU respectively. Subsequently, we welcome the High Representatives of H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia to the floor to deliver the Keynote Address. Remarks made during this opening session will set the tone for the next day and a half of this conference.

The five interactive sessions will feature in-depth debate among a diverse group of experts and participants as the conference explores more deeply the various aspects of the partnership between ASEAN and the EU.

These sessions are designed to act as a reality check as to the state of the affairs of ASEAN-EU relations. Session one pays particular attention to the future outlook for this relationship. The second session will discuss in the relationship in a broader context and seeks to identify the main scope of cooperation from the perspective of ASEAN member states. In session three, panelists will explore new mechanisms for deepening and broadening the ASEAN-EU relationship. Session four will examine shifts in contemporary geopolitics and deliberate on issues surrounding economic integration, the development of the ASEAN economic community, and climate change. The final session has been reserved for open, roundtable discussion to provide an opportunity to draw out the potential policy recommendations deriving from this event.

The ultimate aim of this conference is to uncover a better sense of direction as to where we go from here in ASEAN - EU Relations, how can ASEAN make itself more relevant to the EU and how the EU can create new opportunities for ASEAN to achieve deeper regional integration?

After the conference, my institute, CICP intends to produce an outcome report of the conference encapsulating all that has been discussed as well as to produce a set of relevant policy recommendations. I hope that these recommendations will help to move ASEAN -EU relations from a broadly consultative approach to a more substantive one and to galvanize a relationship that is not only rich in declarations and good intentions, but also in terms of real outcomes on the ground.

I would like to end my remarks by expressing once again my deep appreciation to all of our honored guests, particularly those who are sitting on this stage at the opening session. My special thanks also go to all my ASEAN and EU colleagues who serve as instigators and speakers at this conference. I should not fail to thank, once again, the valuable support given by KAS and the EU in order to bring about the realization of this important dialogue. I wish the conference excellent deliberation.

Thank you very much for your kind attention!

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Daniel Schmüchking

Country Representative of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Cambodia

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen,



Welcome to our conference, which is designed to discuss the ASEAN-EU Relations and more broadly the European-Asian Relations.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) for organizing this wonderful event. I have to admit that I am observing what CICP is creating for two years now, and I think you are getting better every single day. When I received the final version of the program yesterday, I was very impressed by how you achieved to host so many distinguished speakers from different countries and different regions.

I already knew that you have a very good network within ASEAN, but I just realized that you also have an exquisite network in Europe. Thank you very much for organizing the event. I would also like to express my thanks to the European Union for co-supporting the event.

Thank you very much to all of you, who are here with us in this morning and for the next day. I am looking forward to the discussion and believe that it is a very timely and pressing issue. We all know that Cambodia will host the Asia-Europe Meeting in 2020. That is a big event for Cambodia and the European-Asian Relations.

When the European and Asian political leaders met in 2016, the host country Mongolia built a village for them. A symbol of the connection between the two continents and how important a personal dialogue is. This year, Cambodia will have the opportunity to shine on the global stage

as the host of the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). The summit will be one of the biggest and most prestigious political events in Cambodia's contemporary history. Cambodia can portray itself as an open, multilateral and modern country, which is in particular important when we consider that the EU just partially withdrew the trade preferences for Cambodia after a decline in democracy under the "Everything but Arms" scheme for least developed countries. This is one example laying out the challenges that Asia-Europe relations face. Both continents are diverse in culture, political styles and socio-economic understanding, which often leads to differences about democratic development but also to unity in common objectives.

There is one central aspect to European thinking and its foreign and security strategy, namely democracy. The European foreign policy is people-centered and structured into peace, prosperity and democracy. Hence the general European approach is not just based on pragmatic assessments, but also on idealistic aspirations as outlined in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, which was titled: Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. This led and is still leading to tensions between the EU and Asian states.

ASEM is an opportunity to join hands between governments aiming to overcome differences and develop common interests and values. It promotes diplomatic and economic relations through dialogue and cooperation between two of the most economically dynamic regions in the world and is committed to globalization and a rules-based world order. The Asia-Europe meeting runs contrary to current global trends of increasing nationalism, populism and economic protectionism as reflected in current policies of the US and China. In this challenging environment, the Kingdom of Cambodia hosts the summit for the first time in Phnom Penh from the 16th to the 17th of November 2020. The official theme of this year's summit is "Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth". It deeply reflects Cambodia's needs: Foreign markets, joint climate action and a strategic partnership framework with the EU for the time after development support. Cambodia has now the chance to become a bridge builder between Asia and Europe.

A strongly needed platform for multilateral engagement

ASEM was founded in 1996. It has grown in size from 26 participating governments at the first summit in Bangkok to nowadays 53 participating governments (including the ASEAN Secretariat and the EU) from Asia and Europe. The platform has developed from a pure diplomatic multilateral platform to a multi-level and multi-sector dialogue platform. It centers strong sustainable economic cooperation beyond the development assistance glance, fair and equal world trade, open economies and stability and security. Economically, Asia and Europe together represent 60% of the global GDP, 55% of global trade and 75% of global tourism. The main guiding principles of the inter-governmental and inter-regional platform are mutual trust, mutual equality, informality, emphasis on equal partnership and a dual focus on high-level and people-to-people connectivity. ASEM is understood as a soft institutional approach to cooperation that most Asian states prefer. The European Union by comparison is built on strong formalized institutions including binding international law that is enforced through the European Court of Justice.

In a broader context, there are three main arguments why the ASEM summit plays an important role in the current international setting. Firstly, it is a crucial platform to deepen mutual

understanding and to strengthen ties between Europe and Asian countries. To this adds that the USA is not part of the ASEM, which could strengthen the European global leadership and constructive collaboration in areas like climate change, cybercrime and connectivity. Secondly, ASEM brings together a variety of levels from head of states to civil society activists which enables multi-level exchange and bounding. And thirdly, it is a commitment to a multilateral and rules-based world order.

Forming challenges into prospects

But it is not all rosy, the ASEM summit is often criticized because of its inherent deficiencies related to institution building and power imbalances. Due to its advanced institutions, the European Union is better coordinated than its Asian counterparts, which leads to power asymmetries. Furthermore, ASEM highly depends on the host country and the foreign minister and senior official's meetings, as ASEM has no own secretariat to prepare the meetings. This comes with several technical, organizational and budgetary challenges on the ground, especially if the host country is small and unexperienced. One challenge for Cambodia will be to host the heads of states or heads of government, inclusive their delegations and their airplanes. Imagine 53 head of states flying in, partly with their own government jets. Then there are budgetary challenges. For example, the Royal Cambodian Limousine Group had to purchase additionally 452 luxury cars, worth \$30 million USD, to drive the guests from their hotels to the summit location. Another task will be to organize and coordinate the summit itself, which means that an appropriate location has to be set up, a thematic frame polished, a sequence of speaking countries laid down and a final chair's statement be published summarizing the results. This is directly linked to the need to show deliverables and to mitigate the impression of solely being an expensive talk shop representing political platitudes. Additionally, the government organizes or at least coordinates seven side events, bringing together Asian and European business leaders, parliamentarians, young leaders, and journalists.

Shaping new narratives – Cambodia the developing star?

This summit provides Cambodia a rare opportunity to showcase its culture and economic achievements to a broad audience with global visibility. Cambodia presents itself as a country that embraces both its cultural roots, biodiversity, and its socio-economic progress. Often associated with the Khmer Rouge, the socialist time afterwards and the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC), Cambodia can shape a new narrative and present itself to the world as an open, multilateral, competent and welcoming country to investors, business people, journalists and politicians. ASEM provides this platform and enables Cambodia to show its willingness to play a bigger role in regional and global multilateral settings. It is also one milestone to lay the groundwork to communicate its future development plans and go beyond the perception of being an aid recipient of Europe. But this depends on how the European-Cambodian relations will develop in the next months. As the ASEM dialogue facilitator, Cambodia has the unique chance to live up the summit values of mutual respect and benefit in the lead-up, instead of risking critical media coverage and the non-attendance of European head of states or governments. One scenario would be, that the Cambodian government shows good will and steps towards genuinely reestablishing credible democratic conditions in Cambodia. This would be a strong sign towards the EU, its member states and citizens and goes beyond

factual arguments, like how many NGOs or media outlets are in Cambodia, and the criticizing of double standards. It would also show that Cambodia is developing its democratic model in combination with a market economy, as stated in its constitution. Another scenario would see an unresolved conflict of values and perception between the EU and Cambodia. On one hand, we would have the EU insisting on its analysis of the situation. On the other hand, we'd see the Cambodian government referring to its non-negotiable values of sovereignty and non-interference. As Mongolia demonstrated in its own host role, the world is a village -- and, for a few days, Cambodia will be the village chief. That's an important, often challenging role. It sets the agenda, leads the discussion, listens to participants and tries to make everyone equally happy. This is true multilateralism. As a bridge builder Cambodia is in the position to constructively shape ASEM and advocate its own strong interests for a rules-based world order and, the fact is, Cambodia needs this. Otherwise, bridges between Asia and Europe will become dilapidated and walls will continue to exist.

Before we start, allow me to have some words about my organization, KAS. We are a German political think tank. We try to bring together the best researchers and the most important stakeholders in politics and economy, from civil society and the media sector. When I see the room, I must admit that we are doing this successful. Here in Phnom Penh, we have been active for 25 years now. We are not just working in Cambodia; we have offices in over 100 countries around the globe. We focus on political dialogue as well as bilateral and multilateral relations. In Cambodia we currently work on six different topics: foreign and security policy, youth empowerment, media and journalism, climate change and environmental protection, rule of law, and the change of economy and society in the era of digitalization.

Today, we also have the pleasure to invite all of you to a dinner reception on the occasion of the visit of Professor Norbert Lammert, chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. He will be here with us in Cambodia tonight. He is not just the chairman of KAS, but he also was the President of the German Parliament for 12 years, and he is one of the most inspiring politicians in Germany. He is famous for his sense of humor, his intellect, and his public speaking skills. So, you can be very excited tonight about his speech, and you will be given the opportunity for a Q&A session with him.

Thank you very much to all you. I wish you all for very good conference, very good conversations.

Have an inspiring day!

SPECIAL REMARKS

Mr. Lucas Cibor
Deputy Head of the EU Mission to ASEAN



Good morning and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would like to start by congratulating the organisers and in particular Ambassador Sothirak and the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, for the excellent organisation of this event.

It is a great pleasure to be with you this morning. In my work at the European Union's Mission to ASEAN I find that we tend to focus a lot on Jakarta, where we find the ASEAN Secretariat and your permanent representatives, and on the country currently chairing ASEAN, currently Thailand. I am therefore especially glad that this event takes place here in Phnom Penh, and I hope that it will bring the discussion about relations between the EU and ASEAN closer to everyone in Cambodia.

This morning, I would like to start by saying a few things about why the EU is engaging with Asia, and with ASEAN in particular. Then I want to mention how we ourselves are evolving, what we see as one of our greatest challenges as a global actor, and finally to talk about our ongoing and future cooperation with ASEAN.

So, to begin – why is the EU interested in Asia?

The simple fact is that, as the European Union, we have a clear interest in peace, security and economic growth on this side of the world. A peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific is also an economic opportunity for the European Union.

Our interests in this region are not hypothetical. We are already the world's largest investor in ASEAN. The EU currently has over 300 billion euro of FDI in the region. And we are already

ASEAN's second largest trading partner. We recently signed free-trade agreements with Singapore and Vietnam, and we hope Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and others will follow soon.

We have also increased our engagement with ASEAN as a whole, as an organisation, and indeed the whole of Asia. Earlier this year our Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan entered into force, a major element of which is the world's biggest-ever free trade agreement it covers nearly a third of global GDP and 635 million people.

Our economic engagement with Asia naturally translates into close political contacts, and we hold regular Summits with our four Asian Strategic Partners. In 2020 we will once again be meeting with China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea at the highest level. In this respect, I would say that the lack of regular summits between the EU and ASEAN looks like a missed opportunity. I hope that we will soon find a way to move ahead with our Strategic Partnership. We are also working with our Asian partners – and with others beyond Asia – to find solutions to the security challenges facing this region. We are actively involved in trying to resolve the confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, applying our unique mix of soft and hard power. Our value-added in the case of North Korea, is that we can be trusted to do all we can to find a mediated solution. Kim Jong-un and his advisors will have seen our work with Iran, and they know that we will seek a diplomatic way forward, working towards the goal of full and verifiable de-nuclearisation of the peninsula.

This takes me on to the second point in my intervention, which is that of European defence and security.

While one of the EU's greatest achievements has been to promote peace and stability within its own borders, the organisation has so far not been perceived as a security actor in its own right. However, this too is changing.

Despite our success in building peace inside the European Union, the last few decades have shown clearly that conflict in the rest of the world can have direct and dramatic repercussions on Europe in economic, security, and political terms. We have understood that our security as European citizens depends increasingly on security outside our borders.

This is why, following decades of discussions, we are at last focusing on what we can do to practically strengthen our strategic autonomy and to take more responsibility for our own security. The results include the decision to set up a unified command centre for EU military missions abroad which coordinates missions such as Operation Sophia, launched in 2015 to dismantle the business model of human smugglers. This unified European command has allowed us to mobilise the military capabilities of almost all our EU Member States and to have their uniformed men and women serving under one EU flag to save tens of thousands of lives in the Mediterranean.

European cooperation on defence and security is also saving Europe money. The European defence industry is technologically one of the best in the world and the defence spending of EU Member States taken together is second only to the United States. But defence spending in

Europe has traditionally been fragmented at national level, and so our objective is to create economies of scale that allow European defence budgets to be used as effectively as possible.

In short, the Europe of defence is essential for security as well as economic reasons, and will continue to grow as we develop our capacity to take foreign policy decisions more autonomously. But autonomously does not mean unilaterally. All our military and civilian missions have either been requested by their host countries or mandated by the United Nations. We see this as a way of strengthening the multilateral system through European action.

That brings me to my next point, which is about the EU's strong commitment to multilateralism as the most effective way of dealing with global and regional challenges.

Europe supports multilateralism, because it is the best way we know to give a voice to all nations on our planet, to all people, and ensure that decisions are taken in the most democratic, transparent and inclusive manner. We, as the EU, believe that this has a fundamental value.

For us Europeans, preserving and strengthening the global governance system is a way of investing in our own security and also in our own prosperity because our economic strength is based on a multilateral rules-based system.

But multilateralism is currently under attack, perhaps the greatest attack since World War Two, and it is time to stand up to defend the multilateral order. This is why we fought to preserve the nuclear deal with Iran. It's why we fight to build a global alliance in defence of the Paris agreement on climate change, why we fight for free and fair trade; and why we fight for the respect of international norms whether in Ukraine or on the Korean peninsula.

It would truly be a tragedy of global proportions if our disagreements were to provoke failure to stop climate change, or a breakdown of the global system of free trade. This is why the EU tries to bring all players to the table, especially if they have diverging views and interests – because having differences is normal and legitimate, but ignoring them until we reach breaking point is not.

This brings me to my final point, which is how we use cooperation to develop our partnerships, as we are doing with ASEAN.

We believe that making our friends and partners stronger makes us stronger too. This is why we invest in our friendships, both old and new. We want a strong network with those who share our interests and values. Our friends know that they can rely on us. Those who work for positive change know that they can count on our support.

This is why, since 2014, we have dedicated over 200 million euro to supporting ASEAN and its vision of a stronger Southeast Asian community. This assistance is complemented by our bilateral support which totals over 2 billion euros across all ten ASEAN countries, more than half of which has been benefiting the CLMV countries, including Cambodia.

Our flagship regional programmes focus on promoting intra-ASEAN economic integration and trade, on addressing climate change and protecting the environment, on quality higher education and student mobility, and on the rights and opportunities of migrant workers.

You may recall that last year we organised the first ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Safe Labour Migration. One of the areas of concrete follow up identified at that dialogue was enhancing social security mechanisms for intra-ASEAN migrant workers, and we were very glad to see that this topic, and in particular the portability of social security schemes, was the focus of last month's regional labour ministerial meeting in Siem Reap.

The EU is also committed to promoting greater connectivity, as highlighted in our Strategy for Connecting Europe and Asia which we launched last year. The EU supports connectivity that is sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based, with access to innovative finance for connectivity projects that target enhanced transport, energy, digital and human connections.

To conclude, let me assure you that in this increasingly volatile and unpredictable world Europe will continue to be a partner that you can trust and rely on. We will also continue to work closely with Cambodia and the whole of ASEAN to help your country and the region further strengthen its security and prosperity.

Thank you very much, and I wish all of us a fruitful and lively exchange over the next two days.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana

*Senior Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia and
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,



Thank you Ambassador Pou Sothirak, Executive Director of Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace for inviting me to deliver a keynote address at this interesting conference. On behalf of H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, I would like to thank CICP and the conference co-organizers for this invitation and I am pleased to share my thoughts on the relations between ASEAN and the European Union.

The EU has done a lot, in terms of their contribution to ASEAN. In term of Official Development Assistance (ODA), if we care to look at the sheer number and varieties of programs, initiatives, activities in ASEAN countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, the credit goes to the EU. As far as perceptions are concerned, the reality however can be quite different. Let me expand a bit on this. As I have mentioned just now the EU contribution to the development of ASEAN is enormous and for the sake of illustration, I say it is a 95 percent positive rating. Having said that, we can never underestimate the effects of the remaining 5 percent. I could say that the 5 percent are glitches – but these glitches could have devastating effects on the achievement of the 95 percent. Metaphorically speaking, a tiny fuse that blew up could bring total black out to the entire building, or worse, it could cause an electrical fire that could destroy the building. So, I would caution against this “taking the small things for granted approach” in

this block-to-block economic relationship. As in a business relationship, rarely does a partnership break apart because of major disagreements. It usually starts with a small misunderstanding. When left attended, this business divergence of view, as tiny as it can be, could grow to a point of irreconcilable difference. I don't think it is the case yet for the EU-ASEAN relations. Far from it.

For me, these glitches are a potential cause for concern for both the EU and ASEAN as they move forward to strengthen their partnership. Why is it so? I would argue that ASEAN is a group of 10 countries, very dissimilar to each other. We have the 5 Mekong continental countries interlaced the other 5 sea bound countries. Their level of development is very different, stretching to the extreme with Singapore on one end and Laos on the other end. We are not homogeneous; we are not monolithic. We cannot say that the EU is monolithic either as we could see that the ideological fragmentation has started to appear already on the surface. This is where the EU has to make more conscious efforts to adjust their policies toward ASEAN. ASEAN can be viewed as a grouping, but each country should be dealt with individually. Because each one of us has our own context, we too have our own development model. Some are very advanced and westernized, some are not but altogether, despite our ups and downs, we managed to thrive for more than four decades. This is how I see the challenge for the EU in navigating with this ASEAN's multi-dimensional grouping.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Let me be blunt. As a small country, irrespective of the diplomatic talks of mutual respect, we feel that sometimes we are not treated as equal, sometimes only I stress. That said, it is still a glitch, even if it is only a one-time glitch. We, Asian, are very emotional. We are very conscious of our face-saving. "Everything is about face, face, and face". The EU must exert more sensitivity when it comes to dealing with a small but proud country and it should be mindful of projecting a double standard approach. I don't want to go as far as to say the word 'hypocrite' but this word lurks in my sub-conscious. No Freudian slip of the tongue so far.

Cambodia only has 16 million populations in terms of market size. We do not have 80 million like Vietnam nor 70 million like Thailand. Sometimes, the EU do not look at us as similarly as these bigger markets. We know the EU does put a lot of emphasis on the market access, which it should, and I find it quite understandable. Nothing wrong about wanting to develop more business with emerging markets, but don't do it at the expense of smaller partners. Cambodia is a strong believer of multilateralism, of globalization, and we respect the principles and rules of the WTO. If we look at our economic liberalization policies, we are probably one of the most open in ASEAN, but sometimes it is those glitches that push us back. I can mention a few other countries in ASEAN that also have their own glitches with the EU, like Myanmar, Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Singapore does not seem to have any glitch yet.

This is all about *navigating the divides*. The EU can have a great prepared diplomatic speech, but if it does not tackle the countries' specific sensitivity, it will be a futile exercise of diplomacy, unfortunate at the great expense of the enormous efforts in the past to deepen cooperation and the billions of dollars spent. That is a real challenge for this partnership. We want the partnership

to yield good benefits for both the EU and ASEAN, at a times when the EU has also bigger glitches with its transatlantic partner, the US, with the rise of China. ASEAN still boasts a good market size of 600 million people and we do matter as a block.

As far as deepening cooperation, as I have said earlier, the EU has been doing great already. It only needs to navigate the current “real and present divide”, made up of small yet politically sensitive glitches. While for the EU, it is a small thing, but to some of us, it is a matter of survival. So, if you care to hear my brutal but very sincere opinion, if we want to realize the EU-ASEAN strategic partnership by next year, we have to work hard on the glitches. Thank You.

EU-ASEAN RELATIONS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Dr. Fraser Cameron

Director of the EU-Asia Centre, Brussels



Introduction

The European Union (EU) has always been a strong supporter of ASEAN, not least because regional integration is part of the EU's DNA and hence the desire to support the efforts of other regional groupings. The EU has a strong track record in promoting the development of ASEAN, including the ASEAN secretariat, and has provided 200 billion euros in funding in the past five years.

Although the EU concentrates on ASEAN as a body, it also has bilateral relations with the individual members of ASEAN as do the EU member states. The increasing importance of ASEAN to the EU was demonstrated by the appointment of a resident EU ambassador to ASEAN in 2015.

For many years the EU has been the largest investor in ASEAN and the largest provider of technical assistance. It has also encouraged ASEAN to play a more prominent role on the world stage. But hopes for a strategic partnership with ASEAN were dashed in January 2019 due to disputes over palm oil.

While the idea of a region to region FTA remains a future aspiration, the EU has taken a step back and placed more emphasis on relations with individual member states of ASEAN, signing far-reaching free trade agreements (FTAs) with Singapore and Vietnam. Others are under negotiation.

The Present

Although a strategic partnership would not have changed much, it would have had an important symbolic meaning. There is disappointment in the EU, however, that the overall relationship has been hijacked by bilateral disputes. There are on-going talks to resolve the palm oil question and it is hoped that the bloc to bloc relation can progress in the near future. There are also indications that both sides are moving closer on human rights which have traditionally been a divisive issue.

Negotiations for an aviation agreement are nearing completion and should give a boost to two-way tourism. There are plans to boost connectivity in different fields from transport and energy to data and people to people links. There will be increased funding for the environment and a new emphasis on cooperation on maritime, cyber and hybrid security threats. The EU considers that its soft power and overall comprehensive approach to security is something that would be of relevance to ASEAN.

The Future

Although there have been many years of positive developments there have also been some misunderstandings. Some in the EU thought that ASEAN would become more like the EU, but this was never realistic. Others in the EU failed to appreciate the depth of feeling about European colonialism in SE Asia. There is now a more sober and realistic expectation on both sides.

The EU has put forward many recommendations in recent years on how to deepen the relationship but has never received a comprehensive response from ASEAN. It would be useful for the ASEAN side to set down exactly how it would like to strengthen relations in the form of a policy paper.

It is important that the existing and planned dialogues produce results otherwise it will be difficult to maintain support and funding for ASEAN. There are also many new potential areas for cooperation including human security, migration issues, countering terrorism and radicalisation. Data is another hugely important and complex issue that should be on the agenda.

Above all, in an increasingly uncertain world, ASEAN and the EU have a vital common interest in defending the liberal, rules-based, international order. The defence of the WTO must be a top priority as both partners have benefitted hugely from common trade rules and an agreed dispute settlement mechanism. There is a danger that the EU and ASEAN will be asked to choose between the US and China on a range of important issues. This is a choice neither party wishes to make and the best way to avoid such a choice is to strengthen the rules-based international order. This has to be the common priority of the EU

ASEAN-EU STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: HOW “STRATEGIC” IS EUROPE’S APPROACH?

Dr. Frederick Kliem

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SYNOPSIS

It is a cliché that the EU and ASEAN are “natural partners”. With their “Strategic Partnership” on hold, however, the EU must question its approach to Southeast Asia and treat it as a partnership of equals.

Introduction

ASEAN and the European Union (EU) decided in-principle to upgrade relations to a “Strategic Partnership” on 21 January 2019. Becoming ASEAN’s strategic partner, for the EU, was supposed to be the next great step in a relationship of over four decades of “Dialogue Relations”, and it is indeed a great recognition on ASEAN’s part of the increasingly important role the EU plays in Asia. Ever since the EU signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2012, the EU is keen to play a role in the region beyond trade, i.e. a strategic role. The EU opened its “Mission to ASEAN”, an EU embassy, in 2015 in Jakarta, further underlining its ambition to upgrade the partnership to a strategic one. However, ASEAN has thus far refused to make it official and put the process on hold for now. The most immediate reason for this moratorium is the EU’s assault on the Southeast Asian palm oil industry with its eventual decision to ban its use in biofuels by 2030.

Not a Partnership of Equals

This is, however, merely a symptom of a broader sentiment among ASEAN representatives – at both track one and two levels – that the EU still displays residues of a condescending, somewhat moralistic attitude towards ASEAN; whether in trade, good governance, or human rights.

And this is essentially a correct observation. The European attitude towards ASEAN and its members is still more akin to a donor-recipient relationship than to a multilateral partnership on eye level.

No doubt, European financial and capacity building support of ASEAN integration is very welcomed in the region; indeed, it is even necessary to keep the ASEAN project in its current form operational. With broad support for ASEAN regional integration exceeding EUR200 million (USD 225 million) from 2014-2020, including support for economic integration and capacity building at the ASEAN Secretariat, the EU is ASEAN’s largest donor. In fact, the EU contributes more funding to structural ASEAN integration than individual ASEAN members contribute to their own integration project.

Unfortunately, this asymmetric donor-recipient relationship translates into a EU- ASEAN agenda that is too often overloaded with how the EU can assist ASEAN, although there is just as much ASEAN can teach the EU – resulting in a sense of EU condescension in many ASEAN capitals.

Simultaneously Strategic and Normative

Adding to this are the consequences of the substantial dilemma of all EU foreign policy: The EU's attempt to be a strategic as well as a normative actor. Its main foreign policy document, "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy", seeks simultaneously strategic relevance, and defines the global promotion of EU norms and values as a core interest. Each state's foreign policy is reflective of its identity and political DNA, and the same is true for the EU. The EU is a normative project, a successful attempt to overcome violent inter-state conflict via integration and norm distribution. Hence, the EU is and must be a normative actor. However, the primacy of norms is in the way of strategic foreign policy. In other words, EU foreign policy is a victim of the EU own domestic success.

Two examples demonstrate that prioritising norm projection is not conducive to establishing the EU as a strategic actor.

Everything But Arms

First, the review – and possible revocation – of preferential market access under the Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme with Cambodia and Myanmar is the result of Brussels' diagnosis of a democratic regress and human rights violation respectively in these countries. The Everything But Arms scheme grants full duty free and quota free access to the EU Single Market for all products (except arms and armaments).

The Cambodian economy especially depends on exports to the EU to a significant extent, in particular textiles, which account for over 70% of all Cambodian exports. Threatening an entire economy on normative grounds, and alongside it the socio- economic development of a Least Developed Country, is a harsh reaction. This is in particular true, since the textile industry employs a substantial amount of low-wage workers.

This review, and perhaps even the eventual cut of Cambodia from the EBA scheme is doubly hypocritical. For one, the EBA scheme is designed to function as an enabler of socio-economic development of Least Developed Countries. If Cambodia is pushed out of EBA because of violations of good governance standards, however, it will be some of the poorest in that country, the garment industry labourers, who suffer the consequences.

Secondly, it is particularly puzzling to see that at the precisely at same time, the EU completed a free-trade agreement (FTA) and defence cooperation with Vietnam, not a democratic country by any means. There are of course legal differences between EBA and FTAs; an FTA is not subject to the same normative conditions as EBA and unlike a FTA, EBA preferences can be withdrawn in case of exceptional circumstances, such as violation of human rights and labour rights and others. But such legalistic nuance is mostly lost in Southeast Asia, and from this perspective, Brussels' decision looks hypocritical.

Palm Oil Ban

Likewise, Brussels' unfortunate and very public and vocal decision to phase out the use of palm oil in biofuels by 2030 set up a clash with producers Malaysia and Indonesia. In both countries, palm oil export is a sizable share of their trade, and now an issue of heightened domestic tensions. The Indonesian government is currently escalating this case to the World Trade Organisation.

The main problem with both examples is that they were articulated rather obnoxiously and publically and contribute to the sense of a proselytising and moralising attitude towards ASEAN, not worthy of a partnership on eye level.

Those two examples alone immediately alienate four out of ten member countries, comprising more than half of the entire population of ASEAN; an organisation that operates on consensus. So, while projecting values and acting strategically may not necessarily be mutually exclusive, the former is certainly not conducive to the latter if not decoupled wisely.

Domestic - Regional Nexus of ASEAN

The fundamental problem is that EU officials fail to grasp the importance of ASEAN's national-regional nexus. When all talk and grand declarations are done, it is the senior official, ministers, and leaders of national governments who decide where the association is headed. And despite having some regional perspective, they all come with their national baggage.

Granted, the EU is a normative power and promotion of its own values, norms, and standards is in its very DNA. However, there are ways and means to quietly work towards mutually acceptable compromises.

It is unfortunate that EU stakeholders, most of all the EU Parliament, tend to go very public when announcing and implementing such measures.

Expectation Management and Humility

There is significant value in functional EU-ASEAN cooperation for both regions. Both can learn from each other and both can benefit. Both have a substantial interest in the survival and strengthening of multilateralism.

However, multilateralism requires understanding of, and mutual respect for each other's differences, interests, and most of all, constraints and sensitivities. The EU more often than not displays precisely the lack thereof vis-à-vis ASEAN.

EU officials in Brussels and Asia must pay more attention to local sensitivities and the psychological consequences of colonial history, and should display appropriate humility.

It is time to step back from grand declarations of strategic relationships and return to substantial dialogue on the basic expectations. Such dialogue must take place on eye level and should not be hijacked by individual stakeholders' PR campaigns.

A roaming ambassador or working group, representing ASEAN as a whole, could engage EU bureaucrats to clarify the important nexus of domestic and regional politics in ASEAN and the ASEAN way of quiet diplomacy.

Appreciating both and acting accordingly would go a long way in realising the enormous potential of closer cooperation between the two partners.

LAYERING CHALLENGES OF ASEAN-EU RELATIONS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM ASEAN

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As an ASEAN dialogue partner, the European Union (EU) has yet to enjoy the same predicate as other dialogue partner. The failure to improve ASEAN-EU relations to a new strategic dialogue partnership at the 22nd ASEAN-EU Ministerial meeting reflect the ongoing challenges that ASEAN and the EU both faced at the moment.

There are at least three layers of challenges to enhance cooperation today. The first tier is at discursive level. There are several themes that usually bracket the attributes and environment faced by ASEAN and the EU, such as “European normative power” or “trading power house.”

Both rubrics today are not making an effective entry point now in Southeast Asia. As the gravity of geopolitics are currently moving to the center of the region with issues such as U.S.-China competition and South China Sea dispute. ASEAN has increasingly been talking some geopolitical driven themes such as the newly launched ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

The EU has always been the champion of democracy and human rights, especially as reflected in some of the approach taken towards ASEAN and contained in the concept of normative power. However, recent theme on Indo-Pacific may pose a new twist. As the former Indonesian foreign minister spoke earlier this year at a meeting of CSCAP, the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, for instances, has no reference at all to “democracy.” This is particularly worrying while the theme was already included within the ASEAN Political and Security Community. Some discussion between ASEAN and other dialogue partners at the track II level has also been making some distance with democracy as dialogue participants are now increasingly more fixated on pragmatic, instead of normative themes. At the same time, big ideas such as democracy are reducible to some concepts such as openness and transparency, which are more manageable in term of how we move the cooperation forward.

At the heart of European politics, democracy has also seemingly been under challenge. If we collect some of the news here in the region about Europe, the idea when we talk about the European Union has increasingly been revolving around issues such as about Brexit, about the future of the EU after the wave of populism, and recently about the consequences of the European Election for the European Parliament. As the recent election show the increasing significance of Green Politics in the EU. This trend has prompted some strategic discussion in some ASEAN countries about the future between ASEAN and the EU.

At the second tier, institutional level, there have been different styles and different dynamics from both sides. Today, there are at least three layers included in the ASEAN-EU relations.

ASEM has always been good talk shop that involves both parties, but it is now getting more attention on how to maintain its relevance given the new geopolitical concerns. Both parties have also involved in the framework of ASEAN Regional Forum. However, as the forum now receives less attention compared to others such as the East Asia Summit, it is now questionable whether the EU would remain institutionally entangled to influence the course of regional process driven by ASEAN. There have also been some discussions about whether the EU should be included in the ADMM Plus, and in the East Asia Summit. However, the institutional arrangement could now become part of tit-for-tat politics, especially as seen in recent delay of the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership due to some domestic issues and national agendas. There are also some difficulties in conciliating different mechanisms both in European level and ASEAN level. At this particular point, a question remains: Is the European Union still the teacher of norms when it comes to regionalism? Some commentaries and speech within the ASEAN region have revealed that Brexit case that recently happened in the EU shows that ASEAN process driven by consensus and less on detailed and rigidity of institutional measures is somewhat a blessing in disguise.

At strategic level, there has been a mismatch between values and interest to shape common priorities among parties. We always talk about the magnitude of the US and China rivalry, but sometimes we seem to forget that the most important constrain at the region is also related to the fact that the nation-building and state-building has not even finished in Southeast Asia. In this regard, domestic politics could shape the regional dynamics and even inter-regional dynamics. Some major strategic issues, such as the issue of palm oil and its relations to the national economic structure, the future of democracy and human rights in the region, have become major factors that limit convergence between ASEAN and the EU. Various national governments today in Southeast Asia, such as President Jokowi in Indonesia, President Duterte in the Philippines, and even Thailand to some extent, are now using foreign policy as the source of their efforts to stay in power. There are some complicated layers of governance across level in issues like the palm oil, democracy, and illegal fishing, but there are some linkages between regional and multilateral.

Over palm oil issues, although both ASEAN and the EU prefer a sort of multilateralism and economic openness in the regional level, if not managed well, debate about palm oil market in the Europe could be another story of trade war between ASEAN and the European Union. Given latest development, Indonesia and Malaysia has geared up diplomatic efforts to deal with palm oil issues. In Indonesia, the position of Vice Foreign Ministry is now set to not only regularly report to the Foreign Ministry, but also to the coordinating ministry of investment as well as the President on the issue of Palm Oil alone. Malaysia is now preparing to bring the issue up to the WTO.

Perhaps, the issue somehow has to be put in a spectrum of comparison with other, such as the IUU Fishing issues. Impression that people in Indonesia or Malaysia catch about the palm oil is that the Europeans increasingly tend to impose a standard which sets that palm oil that is already dangerous for everything. However, this may not always be the case in other sectors. If we look on how the EU sort of promoted the discrimination toward IUU Fishing, there are some rooms for maneuver between the ability of the national government to adopt and to rise up to the global standard. For example, if the EU sought to put a concern on fishing practice in an

ASEAN country, it will first send cautionary note that access to the European market will need the respective country to reform the business practice. With regards to palm oil, it seems that some ASEAN countries feel that they do not enjoy the same process. This is a very hard question because if the EU want some ASEAN behaviors to change, it may not be happening overnight. Therefore, instead of merely focusing at the danger of palm oil, both countries should explore other rubrics such as the sustainability.

However, there are some other issues that might attract more cooperation between the EU and ASEAN. When the ASEAN Outlook of the Indo-Pacific was launched, ASEAN has started to acknowledge the magnitude of the geopolitical dynamics in the region, especially related to the US-China competition. However, they have been followed up with some recommendations, for example on maritime security and sustainability, SDGs, or whatsoever. It somehow revives the concept of comprehensive security. Security in the ASEAN side is continuously observed to be achieved not only by the security measures, but also by extending area of cooperation into issues such as environment, natural disasters, humanitarian causes, human security, moderation, and cyber-security. These are areas that can attract more partnership and cooperation between ASEAN and the EU.

ASEAN-EU PARTNERSHIP IN THE NEW ERA

Dr. Chheang Vannarith
President of the Asian Vision Institute (AVI)



Global context

The world is become more complex and volatile. It is at an inflection point and paradigm shift accompanied with high uncertainties and high risks. State actors are developing the agility to enable continuous adaptation. It is necessary to develop an international system that is constantly responsive, adaptable and proactive.

Global power shift from the West to the East, power transition and diffusion at the national and international levels, the decline of liberal international order, and the return of great power politics have casted a long shadow over the strategic and economic outlook of the world. According the World Bank, global growth is to weaken to 2.6% in 2019 with substantial risks to be seen.

Violent extremism and conflict continue to destabilize different parts of the world. State fragility is present on different continents, from the Middle East to Africa and from Asia to South America. Moreover, the rapid speed of climate change, environmental degradation, changing demography, accelerating technological revolution, political polarization, fragmented societies, rising inequality, reducing social cohesion, greater human empowerment and democratization of international politics affects global landscape.

The rules-based international order is under increasing pressure and becoming more fragile. Multilateral trading system, especially the World Trade Organization (WTO), is under threat. Rules for the global commons of the high seas, cyberspace and space are being challenged by states and non-state actors, leading to uncertainty and tension.

Although the global situation is getting more complex, uncertain and unpredictable, peace and cooperation are expected to be the mainstream global trend, as growing global interdependence is an opportunity for increased cooperation.

Regional context

Intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation and integration have become more relevant for small states and middle powers to mitigate the risks stemming from the return of great power politics and rising complex geopolitical competition and confrontation, increasing entanglement between domestic politics and foreign policy especially due to widespread protectionist and populist politics, and the unfolding trade and technology war between the United States and other emerging powers particularly China.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) are the two most successful and dynamic regional organizations that have strong conviction in open regionalism. The EU is the most integrated regional organization in the world, featuring deep economic, social and political integration. ASEAN is second to the EU in terms of regionalism. Political integration in Southeast Asia is far more difficult than that in Europe due to the fact that ASEAN member countries still give priority to their sovereignty and non-interference.

In terms of identity building the EU is trying to balance between two foreign policy objectives namely building a normative power and promoting a trading power. The signing of the trade and investment agreement with Vietnam in 2019 demonstrates that the EU is leaning towards a trading power than normative power because Vietnam does not have human rights and democratic values that meet the EU's standards. On the other hand, in terms of bilateral negotiation with Cambodia on Everything-but-Arms (EBA), the EU seems to prioritize human rights and democratic values. This is a clear double standard and it also shows that the EU does not have a consistent stand on normative power projection.

ASEAN is also trying to build its identity, to be an honest broker, trust builder, and regional connector. However, evolving domestic politics and geopolitical rivalries between major powers have posed significant challenges to ASEAN unity and centrality. Although it is trying to stay neutral and maintain its strategic autonomy, ASEAN is facing a binary geostrategic choice between the US and China. Under such circumstances, it is imperative for ASEAN to engage more strategically with other emerging powers, middle powers and international organizations such as India, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United Nations, and the European Union.

Both ASEAN and the EU are grappling with the myriad of challenges deriving from global power shift and transformation, rising protectionism and unilateralism, the attacks on multilateral system, and the weakening of global regime. To surmount these challenges, ASEAN and the EU are compelled to work closer together to strengthen open society and a rules-based multilateral system. From the ASEAN's perspective, the rules-based international system generally refers to the United Nations Charter, the ASEAN Charter, and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

Three Convergent Forces

Three convergent forces that further cement ties between ASEAN and the EU. Firstly, both organizations have a firm belief in an open, inclusive, effective, and rules-based multilateralism system. Now this system is under unprecedented assault after the end of the Cold War, mainly due to the US's protectionist policy and the rising trend of extreme right-wing politics in some European countries. In such a fast-changing world with high uncertainty, ASEAN and the EU need to further deepen their partnership and be more innovative and proactive in strengthening multilateralism.

Secondly, the US-China competition and confrontation presents both opportunities and challenges for ASEAN and the EU. Both regional institutions could effectively implement collective hedging strategy to mitigate risks and expand opportunities from the US-China

rivalry. To do that, institutional capacity building and leadership are the core elements in order to effectively exercise institutional, multilateral pressures to shape the behavior of major powers as well as to put institutional constraints on the deviant behaviors of member countries.

Thirdly, harnessing inter-regional connectivity between the two continents has been the common vision and interest of the two organizations. In 2010, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) was launched with the aim to enhance physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity in Southeast Asia. Since then the “connectivity” has become one of the key pillars of ASEAN regional integration and community building as well as ASEAN’s external relations. In 2018, the EU also issued a strategy on connecting Europe and Asia which is informed by the principles of sustainable, comprehensive, and international rules-based connectivity. Specific connectivity projects include transport (air, sea, land), digital connectivity, energy connectivity, and people to people connectivity.

Three Policy Proposals

There are conceptual and policy areas that ASEAN and the EU need to work together to address the differences in order to deepen their partnership.

First, the definition of “rules-based international order” has been a controversial and contentious issue in international cooperation. Even among the ASEAN member countries, there is no standard or common definition of this term. ASEAN and the EU should further promote multi-track dialogue and consultation on the concept of rules-based international order and rules-based connectivity so that common understanding and position can be achieved.

Second, ASEAN and the EU should expand their cooperation on connectivity projects to also include security connectivity, which refers to connecting security issues, connecting security stakeholders, and connecting knowledges and solutions to address security issues. The case in point here is the development of a holistic solution to climate change and water-food-energy nexus. The EU has knowledge and experience in this field that is valuable for Southeast Asian countries particularly the Mekong countries. In this regard, connecting Mekong with Danube can be a new area of cooperation between ASEAN and the EU, with a focus on climate change and water-food-energy security nexus.

Third, the EU needs to be mindful of the gaps. The EU’s position on the Rohingya issue in Myanmar, palm oil issue with Indonesia and Malaysia, Sharia law in Brunei, and the threat to revoke EBA from Cambodia affect the quality of the ASEAN-EU bilateral partnership. ASEAN members are sensitive to foreign interference into their domestic affairs, as the memories of colonialism and imperialism remain in their strategic culture, nationalist narrative, and regime legitimization.

Outlook

ASEAN-EU partnership will evolve in a positive trend as both regional organizations share similar worldview and a commitment to strengthen an open, inclusive, effective and rules-based multilateral system. The 13th ASEM Summit to be held in Cambodia in 2020 will be an

opportunity for Asian and European countries to reflect, fathom and envision together to resolve some of global pressing issues such as climate change, inequality, fragmented societies, violent extremism, and a weak global and regional governance.

Two key words that will be addressed at the 13th ASEM Summit are multilateralism and shared growth. The task ahead for the members of ASEAN and the EU in particular is to build a united position against protectionism and unilateralism, while promoting effective and proactive multilateralism. Moreover, they need to work closer together to ensure fair share of growth and promote social justice and inclusion. They should refrain from interfering into the domestic affairs of other member countries and take prudent approach to not allow bilateral tensions or disputes to dominate inter-regional cooperation.

ASEAN-EU RELATIONS: NAVIGATING DIVIDES, DEEPENING COOPERATION

Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee

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There are three questions I would like to address in my essay on the current state of play in EU-ASEAN relations and how we can elevate this important relationship to a strategic partnership.

The first is: what do we mean by a strategic partnership? What do we want to achieve in a strategic partnership that a normal or comprehensive partnership cannot achieve? In my mind, a “normal or comprehensive” partnership is one focus on mutual interests and mutual benefits. A strategic partnership goes a step further. A strategic partnership is forged between equal partners who believe that if they work together, not only do they benefit, but the partnership also contributes to shape the broader regional or global landscape. A strategic partnership is forged for a broader strategic goal – whether in the negative sense to contain a rising or revisionist power or in a more positive sense to provide public goods. In short, a strategic partnership is forged for a greater purpose beyond immediate mutual gains.

The second question is to analyse if there are sufficient reasons for the EU and ASEAN to engage more strategically with each other. Do they have any shared strategic goals or common objectives that they wish to achieve beyond that of mutual benefits from increased economic and political engagements? From my perspective, there are indeed good reasons to upgrade our relations to one with a strategic purpose.

The EU and ASEAN are two most successful regional organisations and have played an important role in the peace and stability of their respective regions. While both have been challenged and have faced various crises, they have managed to remain resilient and relevant. They can therefore do more together not only to support each other’s role in their respective regions, but also potentially contribute to global peace and stability.

The external environment that the EU and ASEAN operate in has also changed drastically. The rising tensions and rivalry between the US and China have created volatility and uncertainties that needs to be managed to ensure that overall peace and development is not derailed.

Economic nationalism and protectionism are on the rise. The EU and ASEAN have benefitted from an open, multilateral trading system, and free trade is an important lifeline in alleviating poverty. There is a need thus for the EU and ASEAN to work together to salvage an open trading system with clear rules and norms that are fair and can help bring about growth and development that benefit the countries and communities involved.

Non-traditional security issues such as climate change, large scale migration and political extremism pose serious threats to all, and can only be addressed collectively – at regional, inter-regional and global levels.

These external factors created the dynamics for the EU and ASEAN to upgrade their partnership to one with a strategic purpose. Both have reasons to strengthen regional governance and build bridges across regions to forge a partnership that can support peace and development. Instead of simply accepting the move towards a multipolar world based on power and spheres of influence, both should work to support a multilateral order based on interests, rules and norms. Instead of relying on the US hegemonic leadership (which in any case is eroding), the two regional organisations could work towards a system of issues-based leadership.

There are clear incentives for the EU and ASEAN to upgrade their relations to a strategic partnership. Thus, the third and final question is how can we translate this strategic intent or purpose to pragmatic actions that really matter?

A truly strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN can be better realised if both regional organisations can get their act together to become strategic actors in their own right. ASEAN need to do more to shore up its centrality and remain in the driving seat of regional architectures, and the EU need to do more to achieve strategic autonomy. For these to happen, ASEAN need to become more institutionalised, and the EU need to become more flexible and pragmatic. And both need to become more coherent and cohesive but also more agile.

In a complex, highly contested and ambiguous world, the EU needs to become more flexible. The increasingly divergences within the EU means that it is often unable to reach quick consensus or act resolutely. Hence the EU while continuing its efforts to strengthen its unity must also allow for more flexible “coalition of the willing” constellation in its policy. Such “coalition of the willing” arrangements must be embedded in trust and solidarity and within a coherent strategic outlook.

For ASEAN, the exact opposite is necessary. ASEAN’s current modus operandi does not privilege collective actions over individual efforts. Its inter-governmental structure and strict interpretation of sovereign equality often result in joint political declarations but not necessarily common actions. ASEAN is sensitively attuned to the divergent interests of its member states and take a pragmatic approach to respect individual member states’ interests. This is sometimes done at the expense of collective regional interests exposing ASEAN to the dangers of being divided and weakened. To become a more effective regional organisation that can navigate and withstand the current rising tensions between China and the US, and deal with increased protectionism, ASEAN needs to become more integrated. It must speak more with one voice and undertake more joint actions. Much attention must be paid to reconciling intra-ASEAN differences.

Both regional organisations were founded on the desire for peace and stability. While borne of the Cold War era, they have managed to adapt to the changes in the external environment and remain relevant. Both need to now step up their efforts to remain relevant, and to do so require them to step up their diplomatic and pragmatic engagements with each other and leverage each other’s respective strengths to shape a new emerging order that is more inclusive.

This step-up engagement can be done at different levels:

- Between EU member states and ASEAN member states;
- Through more ambitious inter-regional EU-ASEAN endeavours; and
- Through EU-ASEAN efforts in multilateral forums and institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), United Nations, etc.

At the multilateral level, there are two areas that both can work on. This is first, in the area of connectivity in the ASEM agenda, and second, to come together whether in WTO, UN to shape general principles and norms to govern emerging areas of cooperation and challenges such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, etc.

Other more specific recommendations on how we can navigate our differences to truly move towards a more strategic partnership are:

First, avoiding the “singularity trap” – do not allow one single issue to derail the broader strategic need for engagement. For example, issue over palm oil should be resolved between those ASEAN member states and EU separately. This has long been ASEAN way not to allow bilateral issues (even those between ASEAN impact) to impact broader regional interests.

Second, having a certain level of maturity to deal with differences – just as we expect the EU to respect the “ASEAN way”, ASEAN should also respect the “EU’s norms”. Where the two collide, the approach is to agree to disagree and continue to seek convergence on issues of common interest and approach.

Before we can have a strategic partnership of substance, both the EU and ASEAN must show their commitment through “sustained presence” in each other’s region. The EU has real presence in ASEAN now with its various programs to build capacity in the ASEAN Secretariat, and various bilateral development projects with individual ASEAN member states. However, the EU still suffers from low visibility and hence need to do more at the level of public diplomacy.

For ASEAN, a more concerted effort to showcase ASEAN and engage the different EU institutions (such as the European Parliament) in Brussels. Embassies of ASEAN member states should get together to have an ASEAN day celebration every year.

On more specific cooperation projects, the following should be given priority:

EU could set aside more Erasmus scholarships or other short exchange scholarships for ASEAN students;

In return, ASEAN Foundation could work with ASEAN member states to develop program to encourage European students to spend a semester or a year in any of the ASEAN countries.

For cooperation at the multilateral level, ASEAN and EU should support each other to become more coherent actors. EU and ASEAN should meet bloc-to-bloc before any major multilateral meetings – whether UN General Assembly, ASEM or ARF to better understand each other’s positions on issues.

Within the ASEM framework, EU and ASEAN can coordinate on issues of connectivity to engender much needed infrastructure developments in the region and beyond. These infrastructure developments must be evaluated based on environmental, fiscal, and social sustainability. EU and ASEAN should proactively engage major “connectivity” players – China, Japan, and any other ASEM partners that support developments of an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

In summary, the potential to elevate the longstanding ASEAN-EU relations to a strategic partnership is there to be exploited. What is needed is the political will and willingness to look beyond some of the thorny issues and focus on the bigger strategic landscape and find pragmatic and practical ways forward.

RELATIONS BETWEEN ASEAN AND THE EU

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I shared three points relevant to the relations between ASEAN and the EU. The first point is the naturalness of the partnership between the two entities. But to say this alone will enable the forming of partnership whether strategy, comprehensive or not is more a potential and an aspiration than automatic. This means that cooperation does not just happen because of both actors find themselves in the same situation, in the same strategic environment of great power competition, or even in the belief of the same norms. There is no automaticity of partnership. Rather, this is the product of hard work and consistency of engagement more than the mutuality of interests. As one speaker said “One important element of cooperation is respect, and respect is not something that is rush nor demanded, but it is gradually earned through credibility and consistency.

However, the pragmatism of engaging with ASEAN should not be construed as patronizing ASEAN. Democracy and human rights remain thorny issues, but completely ignoring them for expediency are not very helpful. Acerbic criticism has led to reactionary backlash from some ASEAN governments. However, criticism whether direct or not direct should not be the start and the end of the relationship. In a way, this is particularly the position of the Philippine Government, President Duterte invokes the memory of European colonialism every time he hears criticisms from the EU and other western governments. This does not mean however the EU should stop registering their observations. There is a big space to navigate between definite silence, and humiliating criticism. And I think while the human rights record of the Philippines government under the question, and under severe criticism this does not mean that human rights promotion efforts from the EU should not stop. After all, the Philippines is not simply composed of the Duterte government. The EU can still work to promote human rights in the region but focus on the realization of other rights. This might not work well for the Universality Principles of Human Rights, but this is where the pragmatism can come in. For example, the Philippines under Duterte has been campaigning for a global migrant workers’ right convention. Indeed, if you approach the government, some of them might even agree that the plight of more than ten million Filipino working overseas. So, it’s not totally true that any particular country is against the human rights, per se. One must navigate the complexities of the issue of human rights.

According to Dr. Lay Hwee, one aspect of the pragmatism is avoiding the singularity trap. This means that no single issue, whether it’s trade, whether it’s arms, whether it’s human rights should monopolize EU-ASEAN relations and EU relations with each member state of ASEAN. There are a lot of decoupling rather than doubling down, I think that there is a need for a nuanced. As a lot of veteran ASEAN observers have already said, the foundation of any multilateral relationship, as far as ASEAN is concern, whether it is dialogue partner, like single member states, like EU at-large is good bilateral relationship. The basis of a good bilateral relationship must be consistent pragmatism, and not organized hypocrisy.

As someone who studies democracy, I observe that democracy remains deficient in our part of the world. The previous panels, there was a sentiment that populism and extremism are on the way out. I hope they're right because in my reading, they are likely to stay. Populism has become the great equalizer between the young and mature democracies. But this global crisis of democracy is not simply a crisis of democracy. It is a crisis of mainstream between liberal and illiberal variants of democracy. In the political science academic literature, there is a consensus that democracy not simply to be a liberal version. But if we go to other part of the world, liberal version coexists with other versions of democracy. To completely say leaders like Duterte do not have democratic credentials is problematic and reductionist. You have a leader with 70% approval rating despite of what he has said and done. The drug war in the Philippines has 80% public satisfaction, but this doesn't mean they're correct. It only means if we do not address why they're popular, why leaders, like Duterte able to command, and amount of loyalty, then we truly miss the point that what is wrong with democracy. Populists are supposed to be mirror of democracy. They reveal its darkest, its deceased version, but to simply see them as the solution to those problems, is the big mistake. To say that populism is the solution to democracy is a great error.

What it means to the EU?

I think the EU needs to dig deeper to help ASEAN. The EU needs to focus on ASEAN existed beyond the 10 governments and avoid the usual suspect. The usual suspect refers to the political elites. If the liberal political elite in the Philippines have done their jobs correctly, there would be no space for Duterte. In the Philippines, there has been under glaring level of economic inequality and widespread poverty despite having the oldest democracy in Southeast Asia.

Main scope of cooperation between ASEAN and the EU

I only heard that we need the international order defended, but I have not heard about enhancing it, and improving it, paying attention to those left behind by this international order. This requires ASEAN and the EU to work together to reform the international institutions, global regimes, international laws as well as shared norms. There is potential for security cooperation, in the ADMM plus, but that requires to amendment, just like the Treaty of Amity of Cooperation. One thing that I want to say is that ASEAN has grown beyond the 10 governments. These is a nascent regional civil society who present the differences within the region but held together by norms, such as pluralism, and moderation, which ASEAN could present the EU as the possible points of convergence. We need to go beyond the government leadership and the usual suspect. The ASEAN region is mostly composed of the younger generation with different ideas and visions. I think the EU needs to listen to their voice rather than just relying on the loud and cranky voice of the government.

In the documents of the EU and ASEAN, there are a lot of talk about rules and norms, and like Dr. Lay Hwee said ASEAN wants to be a ruled-based regime. ASEAN and the EU are in a position to tackle some of the larger elements of that international order, like reforming the UNCLOS or even the UN. Both of them must realize that in order to get institutionalized, there is a larger political context beyond the respective regional experiences.

As we move forward the cooperation, we need to have a sober reality check. ASEAN seems to be a center of everything, but it's actually not. Its convening power is not without weaknesses. The

world of ASEAN-led security architecture is different from the world we're living now, so ASEAN also needs reality check. Several member states of ASEAN said that they can walk away from the EU, but the EU can also walk away from "some" ASEAN's governments. I think we need to invest in institutionalizing ASEAN, like revisiting TAC, empowering the Secretariat. Some institutions existed only on the paper. Finally, the "ASEAN Way" has to be respected by the EU, but it needs to be redefined as well.

EU'S CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN ASEAN: EXPANDING ENGAGEMENTS

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The narrative on EU-ASEAN relations constantly oscillates between two extremes positions. The mandatory self-satisfaction demonstrated after each summit is almost systematically followed by a recurrent question: should EU and ASEAN do more collectively? Should they expand their engagement? Both attitudes are legitimate. EU-ASEAN relations have gone a long way and yet a lot remains to be done in order to intensify the relationship and help both entities exercise their full potential on the regional and international scene.

The question takes however a different dimension today. China and the United States, the two behemoths of today's international relations are moving away from multilateralism. Both are trying to deal with everybody, friends and foes, on a purely bilateral basis and force them into a rapport de force which will allow him to dictate their will according to their narrowly defined national interests. The intensification of their rivalry tends moreover to transform every dimension of current international relations into a zero-sum game.

Both factors threaten the *raison d'être* of EU and ASEAN institutions. The risk is not a fragmentation, that both the EU and ASEAN have so far been able to resist successfully (despite Brexit in the case of the EU), but of a gradual erosion of their internal cohesion. All divisions are being used to further divide. What is at stake is the future of multilateralism, both as a process and a objective in itself, the participation of all in decisions affecting our common future.

ASEAN has clearly identified the risk inherent in this situation by insisting on ASEAN's centrality in its "ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific", From a European perspective, ASEAN's centrality is not primarily geographic. That it does refer also, and more importantly, to a consensus-based decision-making process which protects ASEAN against all hegemonic temptation wherever it comes from. In doing so, ASEAN did not simply refuse to be coerced into a choice potentially detrimental to its own interests but asserted its own identity in the process. Europe has similarly refused to choose by refusing - so far - to endorse the US concept of Indo-Pacific which it perceives as polarizing,¹ but has failed so far to assert an identity of its own.

In such a context the current paper argues that although the expansion of their joint activities must continue, the priority of EU-ASEAN relations should be to evolve a common narrative articulating their common values and interests as well as the rationalization of their existing

¹ Interestingly though, some member states, like France, have endorsed the concept and developed it in their own ways for exactly the same reason.

cooperative mechanisms in order to diminish the risk of manipulation to further divide the institutions, facilitate their understanding by third parties and increase their visibility.

Rationalizing existing cooperation: EU and ASEAN need new mechanisms much less than they need to enlarge, deepen, combine existing ones

The cooperation between EU and ASEAN the two entities have gone a long way, since the early 2000, be it in development related matters, economics, socio-cultural cooperation or security. In security alone, the domains covered has substantially increased to include maritime, security, conflict prevention, mediation and reconciliation, crisis management, transnational crime, cyber-security, non-proliferation.² In July 2019, they decided to further enhance their cooperation on the environment and Climate Change. Soon the EU should propose new cooperation in the field of maritime security as well. One can therefore argue in favor of more cooperation, an extension of the number of domain covered or a qualitative improvement of any particular aspect of the cooperation. But it would be untrue to qualify the cooperation as inexistent.

These developments are welcome and necessary. However, the actual need may not be the addition of new mechanisms as much as the enlargement and rationalization of existing cooperation. A number of cooperation are bilateral ones and concern a very limited number of countries. They could easily be enlarged to the entire region?

In this perspective cooperation in the maritime domain is an obvious example. IUU fishing training is currently conducted with Thailand IUU fishing is a potentially destabilizing problem for the region. The current phase of the South China Sea issue started with the massive arrival of Chinese fishing vessels in Vietnamese exclusive economic zone, with subsequent domino effects. IUU fishing is a problem affecting large parts of the region and has been an occasional irritant between the EU and ASEAN member states. (Cambodia was yellow carded in 2012, Vietnam in 2017, the Philippines in 2014...). Indonesia, on the other side, which has lost some \$ 4 billion/year until 2014 is now better controlling its own waters and is now a net beneficiary.

In parallel, the EU is conducting coast guards training, which can be applied for addressing a variety of security issues, from IUU fishing to traffics of all kinds - with Vietnam and Indonesia. It could therefore make sense to set up an EU-ASEAN regional mechanism, integrate ASEAN and European expertise, and training people in a variety of domains including international law of the sea, security issues, ocean related environmental issues, and blue economy. It would thus effectively contribute to capacity building in the region and help develop a common EU-ASEAN maritime culture. It would moreover help the actors to think differently about issues which are traditionally considered in silos (economy, security, development, etc...).

Interestingly, such a mechanism would pose the sensitive issue of European participation in ASEAN led institutions such as the ADMM+ in very different terms as it would de facto address some of the same issues. It could later be extended to the contiguous regions and their regional institutions, in particular from the Indian Ocean.

² EEAS-Europa, *EU-ASEAN Blue Book 2019 : A strategic and Sustainable Partnership*, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-asean_blue_book_2019.pdf

The maritime domain is only one example of what could be done to enhance cooperation without necessarily expanding the number of fields. Such mechanisms would ultimately be an effective way to promote an effective multilateralism in the region, as it would help translate whatever is being decided in multilateral fora into actual national policies and build the capabilities to enforce them. In this case, it would help some ASEAN countries to re-appropriate their own EEZ, a process which would benefit the EU and the larger international community. It would therefore help defuse the current polarization and mitigate the consequences of the ongoing Sino-US rivalry.

EU and ASEAN need to tell their own story

The question remains as to how could the EU's roles in ASEAN be better perceived and be embraced as genuine constructive engagement? The question itself, often raised in regional fora, reveals a surprising deficit of perception. Europe has indeed embraced constructive engagement. It does cooperate with ASEAN and its member states in a number of fields and these fields are constantly expanding. Europe and ASEAN do constantly broaden and deepen their cooperation. Yet, Europe has to prove time and again that it is committed to the relationship and does not get political credit commensurate with its investment, whatever the nature of the investment.

EU-ASEAN cooperation is often too fragmented to be perceived, even less understood. Therefore, the rationalization of existing cooperation as described above is part of the solution. It would give much greater visibility to EU-ASEAN cooperation and send a clear message about EU and ASEAN resolve to address problems security on their own terms with clear potential benefits, economic and else, for all.

But EU and ASEAN have so far failed to explain what they are trying to achieve jointly. The display of the *raison d'être* of Europe's cooperation with ASEAN is as necessary for Europe itself as it is for ASEAN and their common interlocutors. But Europe in particular is being blamed because it has been unable so far to elaborate a narrative explaining its policy. Such a narrative would give political coherence and visibility to existing instruments which are often efficient, even though sometimes too limited in scope and insufficiently integrated. Failing to define one will on the contrary place Europe on the defensive and deprive it once more of the influence and political benefits that should naturally accrue from its cooperation with ASEAN.

In this perspective could the Indo-Pacific constitute the basis of EU-ASEAN common narrative? The concept has been endorsed by ASEAN which has redefined it around the ideas of ASEAN centrality, inclusivity, connectivity. The same concept has not yet been accepted by the EU which believes it does not need it, and more importantly does not want to choose, but does conduct policies which are in line with everything the terms entails, including connectivity, inclusivity, etc.

The paradox is that Europeans want the same things than ASEAN. Both want to better manage their relations with China and establish some sort of level playing field, both want also want to preserve their relationship with the United States and both equally want to abstract themselves from the consequences of the Sino-US rivalry. But, on the specific Indo-Pacific question, which main purpose is to provide a framework to address these three issues, they use opposite rhetoric.

Ultimately, for both EU and ASEAN, the perception issue will not be solved through the extensive use of public relations consultancy firms. It will be primarily done through is the rational explanation of what they do as well as the enumeration of their political objectives. They need to tell their story and this story is both, in intent and content, an Indo-Pacific one.

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Simone Pieri

Deputy Head of Delegation of the EU Delegation to Cambodia



When earlier this year Ambassador Sothirak mentioned to us at the EU Delegation the idea of holding a conference on the EU-ASEAN relation, we were immediately convinced. In recent times, the EU-Cambodia relationship has been largely led by an intense but quite narrow bilateral agenda, with an almost exclusive focus on development cooperation and trade relations. The idea of having foreign scholars and experts here in Phnom Penh to discuss regional issues was particularly appealing for the Delegation, firstly, to give us a possibility to widen the current political debate to include the larger regional perspective and, secondly, to show the extent of current EU-ASEAN political, economic and people to people cooperation, which has produced a large number of joint projects and initiatives that remain largely unknown here in Cambodia.

Cambodia will host in 2020 the 13th Asia-Europe Summit, an occasion to showcase its development and societal achievements, but also most prominently to offer the ASEM members the possibility to discuss and possibly contribute to solve the many existing global challenges, in an era of increasing global political and economic instability. This CICP Conference can offer interesting ideas on what the EU and ASEAN could do to further contribute to the broader Europe-Asia relationship.

As important regional institutions with a clear multilateral vocation, the EU and ASEAN can and should play a central role in promoting ASEM collaboration. The EU and ASEAN are widely recognised as the two most advanced regional integration projects in the world. The 10 ASEAN member countries were able, around the concept of "ASEAN centrality", to set an ambitious political and economic regional agenda as well as to maintain a good degree of strategic autonomy in relation to the larger powers active in Southeast Asia.

Still, as highlighted during the first day of the Conference, the two sides are facing challenges in cooperating with one another and in projecting themselves as key players in this region of the world. Despite its long-standing commitment to support South-East Asia through trade, investment and development aid, the EU role as a key partner for ASEAN has at times been overshadowed by geopolitical considerations (dynamics of US-China relations, geographical distance, etc.) and, at the same time, hindered by the intrinsic complexities of a cooperation between two regional organisations which, despite many communalities, have different governance structures and different objectives.

We all can agree that bilateral irritants – between the two regions but also inside the two regions - cannot be ignored and, if not properly handled by the two sides, may become a nuisance also for the broader regional cooperation. However, the EU and ASEAN members are well aware of their key interest in staying united to have a bigger say in international affairs. They also know

that stronger and more cohesive regional institutions constitute the necessary building blocks to revitalize the multilateral governance system, which they cherish and which today is worryingly losing steam. The one between the EU and ASEAN is therefore in a sense a "necessary" cooperation, which both sides should actively promote and strengthen, especially in addressing global challenges, such as climate change, the circular economy, fair and open trade, maritime and cyber security.

So, how can we navigate existing divides between the two regions and consolidate mechanisms for cooperation? Yesterday's discussions have highlighted some possible paths and the next session on "ASEAN-EU Partnership: Addressing Global Challenges" as well as the final panel discussion, may offer more concrete ideas on the way EU-ASEAN cooperation could be further improved. I would like here to very briefly contribute to this debate, by highlighting three possible avenues.

Firstly, the EU and ASEAN should focus on better communicating, as mentioned yesterday, "the 95% that is good" in the relationship, and get the message across to opinion makers, business people and the more general public in South East Asia and in Europe. The EU and ASEAN have been partners for over 40 years and together they represent over one billion citizens. The EU is the largest foreign investor in ASEAN countries and the second largest trading partner. Together, they successfully work in areas such as climate change, governance, food security, disaster management, connectivity, research and education and increasingly on security-related matters. The results of this cooperation should be better and more broadly publicized.

Secondly, we should focus more on addressing the concrete problems of the citizens rather than on the process of cooperation. Adequate structures and mechanisms for cooperation are necessary but these should not become the aim of our cooperation. We should most proactively help addressing crises with concrete action as well as to more systematically encourage regional solutions for regional problems. This approach may also help overcoming the dichotomy between regional and bilateral cooperation and existing divides, as these may be - at least partially - offset by the additional gains of a successful regional cooperation.

Thirdly, much in the relation with ASEAN depends upon trust and respect. Both sides should work on these by listening more carefully to each other. The EU should continue to build trust and respect, especially by treating ASEAN partners as equals. ASEAN members should however also develop a deeper understanding on how EU structures are working and about the constraints EU countries may be facing.

In an increasingly unpredictable world where the temptation to find unilateral solutions is becoming greater, it is worth for both sides to continue engaging to find new and more efficient ways to work together to show, as High Representative Mogherini recently said, that "the two most advanced and most successful integration processes in the world stand firmly behind multilateralism and a rule-based global order."

I am very keen to listen to the suggestions of the speakers in the next session and in the final panel discussion.

Thank you

ASEAN- EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS: IN THE MEKONG CONTEXT

Ambassador Sun Suon

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU), are two oldest regional organizations in Asia and Europe.ⁱ As natural partners, both regions have much in common to share in term of their integration objectives in promoting peace, economic development and prosperity. The official partnership between ASEAN (then ASEAN 5) and the EU (formerly known as ECC) was formalized in 1977 (Blue Book, 2019, pp.6-7). Since then the ASEAN-EU relations have grown over the past four decades navigating across several stages of regional developments through their own respective dynamics and histories. Both institutions are recognized as the most successful regional blocs for their respective achievements.

As an older and more advanced regional institution, the European Union differentiates itself from ASEAN with its highly integrated and supranational structure; and it is consistently committed to good governance, respect for human rights, and democracy. The EU has been instrumental in supporting the ASEAN integration process. As for ASEAN, it is an inter-governmental organization with a much looser and less-legalistic regional status. ASEAN promotes confidence building among its member states and embraces a consensus based decision-making process, through mechanisms of dialogues and consultations: –a structure through ASEAN Way and ASEAN centrality due to its diversity and history. As such, the Association had charted its own course toward the building of an ASEAN Community, even if many of its successes stories have been inspired by the EU's experience.

Following the end of the Cold War, ASEAN and the European Union have enlarged their membership to ten (10) and twenty-eight (28) respectively. This heralded a milestone of the ASEAN-EU relations characterized by deeper transformation of both organizations toward their respective regional integration processes.ⁱⁱ The EU is the first regional organization that acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) on 12 July 2012 (EC Website). Since then, the relations have continually become more active with an increase of high-level bilateral visits to promote cooperation through initiatives and conclusion of various agreements between ASEAN and the EU member countries.

Today, the ASEAN-EU relations are multi-faceted, covering a wide range of fields, ranging from social, economic, trade, developmental issues, to political, security, humanitarian and environmental dimensions and challenges. The European Union is now ranked as the ASEAN's second largest trading partner, while ASEAN, as a group, is the third EU largest trading partner outside Europe, – after the US and China (Blue Book, 2019, p.24). The EU is also the largest

source of foreign direct investment (FDI) and critical development and humanitarian aid to the region (EC Website). In spite of those achievements, the relationship between the two regional institutions have not yet reached its full potential. In addition, each region has to cope with many of domestic and regional problems.

ASEAN and the EU are now working to upgrade their relations to the next level: – that is of strategic nature. This shared aspiration for an enhancement of closer partnership is affirmed in the Joint Statement on 40th Anniversary of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations (2017) and following the decision taken at the 22nd EU-ASEAN Meeting of Foreign Ministers in January 2019 (Rueppel, 2019, p. 9; Blue Book, 2019, p.6).

Since five Mekong nations (CLMV and Thailand) comprise the bulk of the mainland of ASEAN, in its community building process, the ASEAN regional integration depends on the prospective more active role of ASEAN, and together with consistent support and participation of all relevant external partners to enhance these inclusive regional dynamics. To this end, this paper is an attempt to provide insights and discussions on some of critical issues on the Mekong connection, underscoring the importance of deepening of ASEAN-EU cooperation that contributes to reinforced implementation of the ASEAN agenda toward its full regional integration objectives: – a process encompassing the mainland ASEAN in the Mekong sub-region.

ASEAN-EU Partnership: Engagement in the Mekong Sub-region

Progress, Development Disparity and Challenges

Since 1992 the Mekong region has progressively transformed itself into an emerging center of growth as a result of the successive Mekong countries membership to ASEAN. A group of new state members, – (namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam: -known as "CLMV" or "ASEAN four") have been increasingly integrated with ASEAN, East Asia and the global economy.

It is worth noting that over the past decades gross domestic product (GDP) of the Mekong sub-region has grown at over 6% per year on average, and the poverty incidence in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) countries based on national poverty lines has substantially declined (Asian Economic Integration Report 2018). With the exception of Thailand, (as a founding member and a second largest economy of ASEAN--after Indonesia), the ASEAN four (CLMV)) in the Mekong region have consequently made major progress in meeting the other MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) (ASEAN Statistical Report on MDGs, 2018).

In spite of progress, however ASEAN still has a long way to go. Statistics have shown that there is still a larger proportion of widening gap of their GDP between and among the ASEAN six and ASEAN four. Amidst CLMV group, while Vietnam has made greater progress in term of its GDP (along with other economic indicators), other three countries are still categorized in the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), even though their last economic status is ranked among the lower-middle income countries.ⁱⁱⁱ The variations of indicators should also include other sectors, such as the state of the infrastructure, the level of competitiveness, human resources and institutional capacity.

ASEAN, as an institution, has also attached high priority to the agenda that aims to narrow the development gap through implementation of its relevant programs and blueprints: – such as ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC), Initiatives for ASEAN Integration (IAI-plans I,II, and III), the ASEAN connectivity agenda (Master Plans of ASEAN Connectivity-MPACs I and II), among others. Those relevant instruments had to play a major role in addressing the crucial needs of Mekong integration into the ASEAN economic community. However, their projects remain relatively in a small scale, focusing most notably on capacity building while their overall implementation remains relatively slow, along with structural and financial constraints (Sun, 2019 pp. 25-28).

Support for an Enhanced Development Policy and Partnership

Against this background, enhancing support for the Mekong integration is thus an important component of the ASEAN connectivity agenda 2025. It is a core complement to regional process toward the achievement of community building objective.

In the meantime, while the region is growing, there is a question (even with concerns) over the increasing existing Mekong mechanisms accounting for more than 10 development initiatives (Sun, 2019 pp.05-25). The Mekong sub-region is arguably becoming a locus of competing strategic interests by external development partners, partly due to the proliferation and complexity of development initiatives, --presently taking place in the midst of the geopolitical changes rapidly altering the dynamics of broader regional contexts in Asia and beyond. However, the implementation of the related development policy and programs in the Mekong context depends largely on the assistance through external funds and related partners.

Based on the aforementioned assertions, it is a compelling case for ASEAN to further intensify the efforts in helping to shape development cooperation policy, through an enhanced international partnership. ASEAN, through its centrality, must seek its legitimacy at a strategic level to promote and engage in an inclusive development partnership for mutual benefits with all relevant actors, including the European Union.

As an oldest regional institution, the European Union is known as a longstanding partner of countries in Southeast Asia. The EU has continually made significant progress of cooperation through its various development and partnership programs, emphasizing mutual interest in supporting ASEAN regional integration. These include, among others, the enhancement of ASEAN capacity programs specifically across the three pillars of ASEAN Charter to address its connectivity agendas and relevant blueprints (Blue Book, 2019, pp.10-54; ASEAN Focus, 2019, pp.20-24).

Further, the Second ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022) as adopted by both regional groups provides a new impetus with more strategic directions of cooperation for a wide range of fields; and it is basically focusing on three main areas namely: political and security, economic, and socio-cultural cooperation. In that context, it covers two prioritized cross-cutting topics: connectivity and narrowing the development gap in ASEAN, including the climate change, environment and disaster management (ASEAN Website, 2017).

Within the Mekong region, the European Union has been a key development partner (individually or collectively) to the Mekong countries since the early 1990s, – particularly in the lower part of the sub-region, – either via bilateral or multilateral sub-regional cooperation.^{iv} Illustrative of this is the EU long-standing cooperation with the Mekong River Commission (MRC), mainly focusing on the strengthening of capacity in response to climate change challenges and environmental protection in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam (Chheang, February 2017, p 5). In addition, each of ASEAN LDCs countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar), still benefits from the European Union the most favorable preferential tariff system -GSP, (under “the Everything But Arms:-EBA Trade Scheme”) (API Report № 02, 2018). As overall, the EU is recognized as one of major's development partners that have continually provided bilateral assistance in supports for each of those CLMV Mekong countries throughout the past decades.^v

Promoting Markets Expansion

From a perspective of broader framework of ASEAN- EU economic cooperation, the two regional blocs have more potentials to mutually generate benefits in term of markets expansion in their respective regions. First of all, deeper engagement in the policy of Mekong development would further help ASEAN member states to achieve simultaneously multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), – the UN global agenda. Subsequently this would help member states to make an important step forward towards the achievement of ASEAN Economic Community objective in 2025. By doing so, development in the Mekong region would further enhance inclusive integration within ASEAN ten. In addition, with more economic and capital resources (in both-private and public), older ASEAN member states, – and together with the EU related financial projects, – stand to gain even more than the Mekong countries in tapping investment benefits when soft and hard infrastructure are enhanced (Khmer Times, October 23, 2018). Accordingly, this development expansion helps secure greater market access for both, including in the Mekong region as a new market. As overall, the above policy is instrumental in facilitating the negotiations of bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between the EU and individual ASEAN countries; and thereby serving as building blocks toward eventual conclusion of a region to region Agreement (ASEAN-EU-FTA) in a future:-an ultimate goal that allows for further increased cooperation and markets expansion between the two regional blocs.^{vi}Further, while the global economic center of gravity is presently shifting toward Asia, the deepening of ASEAN-EU partnership is strategically even more relevant in broader regional contexts. For ASEAN, it has been portrayed itself as a platform at the center of regional architectures in the Asia-Pacific, and in that capacity, it may become a gateway for the EU into Asia.

Promoting a Rule Based Order: In the Mekong Context

ASEAN integration at this stage is set to advance the process of strengthening a rules-based international system (Pongsudhirak, 2018; Chheang, April 2017). This framework policy is agreed upon as one of consistent principle positions of both regions, (as manifestly reflected in relevant ASEAN-EU statements), reaffirming their shared commitments to promoting multilateralism and a rules based international order. In the Mekong context, this is a compelling case, when it comes to dealing specifically with issues and questions as to synergy and coordination (e.g. addressing issues of complementarity and proliferation of existing institutions and related projects in the Mekong region). Of equal importance is the focus on ways of addressing conflict

prevention and management, including conflict resolution in the context of trans-boundary water management issues.

As scientists have warned that growing dynamics of water security in the region may become another regional security flashpoint, along with other regional issues, – due to "water shortages that are likely to be the key environmental challenge of this century (The Guardian, May 2018; Brauer/Kliem, 2017, p.51). The EU possesses a great deal of experiences in these matters, including its leadership on the climate change agenda. The aforementioned areas of interest are well articulated in the focus of relevant documents and blueprints of ASEAN and the EU respectively (EU-ASEAN Bluebook 2018, p.8). Based on the Second ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018–2022), for example, both institutions had placed an emphasis, among others, on the promotion of social-economic development and sustainable water management, including in the Lower-Mekong region, drawing out from the relevant EU experiences, as well as its supports for the promotion of the sustainable use of inland waters, coastal and marine environment (ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018–2022).

Likewise, the aforementioned transboundary matters are manifestly prioritized by most of other development partners through their key existing mechanisms in the Mekong region, placing an emphasis on environment and water related issues in their respective programs.

To sum up, while ASEAN has a central role to play in many ways as regards these matters, Mekong-EU partnership helps to reinforce the dynamics of regional integration; – as it forms a complement to the existing trans-boundary mechanisms and their related instruments in the region. A typical example of these is relevant technical and expertise assistance (including capacity building programs) that the EU shall continue to offer to partner with member states in order to strengthen inclusive regional cooperation within existing Mekong mechanisms. This partnership is equally useful in further supporting other related frameworks that member states may mutually consider to establish, including a future plan on drafting a “Code of Conduct” (similar to the South China Sea framework project). The project must be based on the Mekong spirit, emphasizing a holistic approach of regionalism through the concept of sustainability and the enhancement of confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and peaceful settlement of disputes for the Mekong sub-region.

Conclusion

The deepening of ASEAN-EU relations to a strategic level is indeed timely for both regional institutions to further reinforce their respective needs and positions in response to the changing geo-political and economic dynamics of both regions. This enhanced partnership must include the Mekong countries of mainland ASEAN as a core complement to the regional agenda, particularly in order to address development disparities between the old and new members of ASEAN, (among others) in a pursuit of comprehensive integration towards the realization of an open, dynamic, inclusive and resilient community.

As both regions are caught in the crossfire of major powers rivalry (including the US-China trade war), ASEAN and the European Union, have much to share at a strategic level. In this sense it should be noted that ASEAN is inherently vulnerable to great power dynamics due to its

polarization, including in the Mekong sub-region. As a key regional platform, ASEAN must therefore stay relevant by strengthening its centrality that remains essential for the group to achieve its common goals of community building. As a political construct, however, ASEAN centrality depends on the ability of the group, to maintain its strategic autonomy, through its mechanism of consensus-based decision-making process. This guiding principle would be an immense challenge for ASEAN unity, especially when it comes to dealing with important and strategic matters, and given the diversity among ASEAN members. However, it must be preserved and well managed for the sake of cohesion and effectiveness of the group. For this purpose, it was argued that the European Union, as an institution of highly integrated autonomy, can be collaborative in term of helping ASEAN to stay relevant, considering that the EU supports ASEAN centrality, while ASEAN is receptive to a stronger EU role in the region. In addition, both regions are simultaneously committed to peace and security and embrace pluralistic approach of cooperation, although in a different way (Hwee, June, 2017; Rueppel, 2019, p. 9).

Recognizing that there remain differences on some important issues, ASEAN and the EU must pursue the sustained dialogues on a regular basis. Both sides need to rather concentrate at the first place their joint projects of practical cooperation on issues of relevance, while pursuing their common works, along with persistent efforts at addressing other pending issues and related challenges for their mutual benefits. In the Mekong context, the existing Mekong subregional mechanisms (including ASEAN initiatives and mechanisms), must be reinvigorated and strengthened through the aforementioned partnership, including the enhancement of international think-tanks linkages, together with greater participation of other stakeholders and civil societies from both regions.

ASEAN and the EU share most of the similar fundamental values, even if not at the same levels. And they are faced with many of similar challenges. For these reasons, both institutions must reinforce their cohesion and unity on many important and strategic matters in a pursuit of shared goals for the sake of peace, prosperity and sustainability, integrating through the enhancement of a rule-based process; – a process which is concomitantly very relevant in the Mekong context.

ENDNOTES

¹ The EU traces its origins to its first precursors –the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), --both of them were established, respectively, by the 1951 Treaty of Paris and 1957 Treaty of Rome in the aftermath of the Second World War. ASEAN was established 10 year later during the Cold War. See, *Diverging Regionalisms: ASEAN and the EU* (By Hoang Thi Ha; Moe Thuzar; Sanchita Basu Das; Termsak Chaiempalanupap). ASEAN Focus, 2016, pp. 4-5, and pp.11-13.

² ASEAN is now comprised of 10 members through the inclusion of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam. Consequently, all four new members " called 'CLMV "along with Thailand (which is a founding member) are located in the Mekong sub-region forming as five nations of the mainland ASEAN. As for the EU, the Institution has grown to 28 members, through its subsequent enlargement to the countries of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Cold War. See, *Ibid.* pp.11-13.

³ This “development gap” is revealed not only the average per capita income of the six older ASEAN member states and that of the newer four, but also in term of other variations of their individual markets. See, David Wijeratne, (Partner). *The Future of ASEAN – Time to Act* (Growth Markets Centre Leader PwC), May 2018, p.2-3. Retrieved from <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/growth-markets-centre/publications/assets/pwc-gmc-the-future-of-asean-time-to-act.pdf>

⁴ Most of their prioritized projects are building on their comparative advantage in soft regional connectivity, i.e., issues ranging from human resources development and institution-building to connectivity and poverty reduction from trade facilitation and competition policy to sustainability and environmental protection.

⁵ Over the past decades, the EU provided bilateral development assistance to individual ASEAN countries with more than 2 billion EUR, of which more than half it supported the Mekong sub-region of CLMV countries. For Cambodia, (as an example): -- since the early 1990s the EU is one of the largest donors who provided assistances in various sectors, including capacity building and technical support for Cambodia's accession into the WTO as well as its continuing aid projects under the Program of Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) for Trade-Related Assistance for the Least Developed Countries, among others. See, *EU-ASEAN Blue Book: EU-ASEAN Cooperation 2019*, p.8 and pp.56-57.

⁶ So far, the EU has completed negotiations for bilateral agreements with two of them (Singapore in 2014 and Vietnam in 2015) while negotiations with Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines are currently on hold (as of 2019), See, *Blue Book 2019, EU- ASEAN Cooperation, (2019)*, pp. 26-27.

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The Indo-Pacific: an opportunity for the EU and ASEAN

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Abstract:

In 2019, the EU and ASEAN agreed to upgrade their relationship to a “Strategic Partnership”. When looking for its exact contours, the ongoing debate around the Indo-Pacific regional concept provides a useful guidance in terms of a common strategic objective, sense of purpose, as well as content. A stronger, more meaningful partnership between the two regional formations has a potential to bring stability to a region increasingly defined by a great power rivalry between the US and China. Whether or not this potential will be fulfilled depends both on the new government in Brussels to fully understand the challenges of the new geostrategic environment and its stakes within it, as well as

on the capacity of individual ASEAN member states to raise above their bilateral tensions with the EU and see the benefits of such partnership in the bigger strategic picture.

Over 50 years of relations between the EU and ASEAN did not bring much tangible results. The two longstanding “dialogue partners” and “partners in integration”, have been mostly limiting to trade, people-to-people exchanges, development cooperation and lessons-sharing in the field of institutional integration.

Discussions on the need to move forward with the relationship to greater political and security cooperation have been on the table since 2014, culminating with a decision to upgrade their relationship to a Strategic Partnership at the last EU – ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Brussels in January 2019.

But what does it mean in practice? A subsequent Joint Statement mentions an agreement “in principle”, based on oft-repeated commonalities, such as the commitment to multilateralism and the rule of law. While the list of actual ongoing activities is not negligible, a “strategic partnership” implies also a significant degree of trust, confidence in mutual capacities, shared security concerns, compatible worldviews and common sense of purpose.

If the road has been long and bumpy, it is because many of the above conditions were missing.

Moreover, bilateral tensions between the EU and a half of ASEAN’s countries (over palm oil exports ban with Indonesia and Malaysia and criticisms of human rights violations and undemocratic practices in Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines) have damaged bi-regional relations in the last years, downgrading the perceptions of Europe to a distant yet intrusive economic power with little to offer in terms of strategic leverage.

When looking at how to revitalise this relationship and make it truly “strategic”, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific regional concept provides a unique opportunity in terms of potential mutual benefits, shared strategic concerns, as well as substance.

First of all, the concept emphasises the natural confluence between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean spaces, shifting Asia’s geostrategic balance westwards. Reflecting the growing importance of the Western Indian ocean region and of the African continent, the redefined regional concept reaches out into Europe’s traditional spheres of influence and expertise. Geographically, the old continent is no longer a distant observer of regional affairs, but an integral part of it, with a potential to shape and positively contribute to the current developments.

Secondly, the Indo-Pacific theatre has progressively become the centre stage of a great power rivalry currently at play between China and the US. As a result, many small and middle-sized countries in Asia, but also in Europe, feel caught “in between”, facing an uncomfortable strategic dilemma of having to choose sides between the ‘status quo’ powers and the region’s rising economic hegemon. This new position provides the EU and ASEAN with a shared strategic concern, but also responsibilities to act as stabilisers.

Finally, in terms of content, the various Indo-Pacific visions, outlooks and strategies all focus on the promotion of connectivity and openness to boost trade and economic cooperation across the region. Cooperation on these issues already constitutes the basis of EU – ASEAN relations. The concept can not only provide an overarching framework for their future activities, but also an opportunity to work with other involved actors and promote their approaches within a broader regional multilateral structure.

Lost in translation: interpreting the Indo-Pacific

Ever since Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe first coined the term of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” in the regional geostrategic discourse in 2016, the concept was reinterpreted by several regional actors and ended up taking on various forms and meanings.

Originally emphasising free, open and fair trade, connectivity and respect of the existing rules-based order, its adoption by the US Indo-Pacific Strategy emphasised a deepening divide between the *status quo* powers on the one side and the revisionist ones, with China at the forefront, on the other. From Beijing’s perspective, this divide was further accentuated in November 2017 by the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the ‘Quad’) between Australia, India, Japan and the US, perceived to contain its rise.

ASEAN and its institutional structures have at first been left aside of the new regional concept, which paid little attention to the role and achievements of the existing multilateral security architecture.

When ASEAN, situated at the centre of the re-conceptualised region, published its own Indo-Pacific Outlook in June 2019, it brought a much-needed equilibrium to the debate. Contrary to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, which criticises China’s revisionist tendencies as a key challenge to regional stability, ASEAN’s Outlook proposed an inclusive vision for the region, built on

constructive elements of connectivity, cooperation and multilateralism. Reflecting the 'ASEAN Way' of consensus-building and compromise, the Outlook helped to place the regional organisation within the new powerplay and demonstrate its determination to maintain its centrality and act as a "ballast" for the current dynamic in the region.

Finally, Europe has taken a distance from the ongoing debate. Wary of the negative perception and the heavy strategic baggage the US strategy entailed, Brussels consciously chose not to refer to the "Indo-Pacific" region in its official discourse at all, aiming to preserve an autonomous foreign policy in Asia.

But times have changed, and the term has become part of the regional geopolitical lingo. With its overseas presence and active security policy, France is a fully-fledged Indo-Pacific power. The geographical coverage of the concept and the functional issues it promotes, including trade and connectivity are well in line with the EU's own interests. Finally, ASEAN's Outlook not only proved that the Indo-Pacific does not have to be a strategically sensitive or ambiguous concept, but also a valuable source of reference in terms of principles and content – for regional stability, but also for future EU - ASEAN relations.

Time for "middle power diplomacy"

Regardless of the various interpretations, developments within the Indo-Pacific region are largely defined by a growing great power rivalry between China on the one side and the US on the other. Current trade tensions between Washington and Beijing have far reaching implications beyond the economic sector and their bilateral relationship. Many small and middle-sized countries in and outside Asia find themselves "stuck in the middle" of this great power rivalry and suffer its negative economic, political and security consequences. ASEAN, but also South Korea, Japan, Australia or indeed the EU maintain strong economic relations with China and rely largely on the US for their security guarantees. Most of these countries find themselves in a difficult position, trying to navigate through this increasingly divided strategic environment without having to choose sides.

In searching for solutions, the idea of "middle power diplomacy" offers an interesting source of inspiration. From a theoretical perspective, the term "middle powers" refer to countries that are not superpowers but can exert influence in international relations through economic and diplomatic channels. In terms of their foreign policy, they act as stabilisers: the "good citizen" that promote compromise solutions, international cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as take care of the less traditional security issues such as human security and the environment.

In many respects, "middle power diplomacy" could provide a coherent overarching framework for the future EU – ASEAN Strategic Partnership. As the two most advanced examples of regional integration, their survival depends on multilateral cooperation, institutional governance and rules-based order, which means they share the interest in promoting those values across the Indo-Pacific. Together they represent a substantial share of the global economy and possess the diplomatic leverage to uphold the legitimacy of the current international institutions ...or undertake necessary reforms if needed.

Finally, both invest significant effort and resources to functional security issues, which may be one of their greatest value-added. Maritime security, sustainable connectivity, economic cooperation or climate change offer a multitude of everyday issue-areas that can only be addressed through effective multilateral cooperation and good governance. While these areas are indeed crucial for regional stability and at the core of the Indo-Pacific concept, they tend to get often sidetracked in times of great power rivalry.

Standing at the crossroads

The future of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership is in the hands of the political leadership in Brussels and Jakarta, who need not only to negotiate the details, but also agree on the overall strategic benefits of such partnership.

On Europe's side, much will depend on the capacity to maintain its determination to become a more proactive security actor in Asia - as promoted for the past five years under the watch of the High Representative/ Vice-President Federica Mogherini. The new government is now in a unique position to continue on this path, which may be the only way to maintain its strategic relevance and influence in the region and beyond.

Two months into office, it is too early to predict the exact contours and content of the EU's next policy towards Asia. The new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen already mentioned the urge for the Union to match its economic weight with political influence, which is a promising starting point. Although the new diplomacy chief Josep Borrell may be less assertive than his predecessor, he is also known as a fervent defender of a rules-based global order, multilateralism, as well as sensitive to environmental challenges and human rights. Borrell also displays interest in Europe - Asia relations, as stated during his first ASEM Meeting in Madrid, shortly after taking office in December 2019, which focused on "sustainable connectivity".

If Europe wants to play a more meaningful role in regional political and security affairs, it would be difficult to stay outside the current Indo-Pacific debate. Whichever terminology will Brussels decide to adopt in the end, it cannot ignore the mounting strategic rivalry and the danger it represents for regional stability and its own security interests. Joining forces with those who share the same concerns is natural; and the Indo-Pacific is an ideal common playground.

On ASEAN's side, the fate of the strategic partnership is now critically depending on the willingness of individual countries to rise above their bilateral tensions with the EU and acknowledge the benefits of bi-regional cooperation in the bigger geostrategic picture.

The EU - ASEAN Strategic Partnership should be more than a symbolic, political goal, or simply a willy-nilly next step to mark the decades of rapprochement efforts. Cooperation on multilateralism, maritime security, climate change or the fight against terrorism is an important foundation of the current relationship. But if this aspires to be truly "strategic", Brussels and Jakarta need to realize that they also share a key common interest: ensuring stability in Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of great power politics.

EU-ASEAN TIES: CURSES AFTER CURSES

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It was supposed to be an auspicious Monday when the ASEAN foreign ministers met in Bangkok on 21 January 2019. Thailand was in a great mood as it was serving as the ASEAN chair. Bangkok eagerly wanted to declare the EU as the 8th ASEAN strategic partner on that as all ASEAN members had agreed in principle to do so. But it was not to be.

Indonesia and Malaysia opposed the decision to make an official announcement due to the palm oil problem with the EU. Despite the substantive discussion between both sides cover the whole gamut of their 44-year old relations. In the joint statement issued after their meeting read: “We reaffirm the significant role played by ASEAN and the European Union in shaping the political, socio-economic and security agenda in both regions and globally and agree in principle to upgrade EU-ASEAN relations to a Strategic Partnership, subject to details and timing to be worked out.”

Nearly a year has already elapsed but both sides have not yet come to terms with their existing issues. The EU Foreign Affairs Council seems to hold all the keys whether the EU should forge any form of policy towards the 10-member individually and as a whole. Now a working group study has been set up to work out mutually acceptable solutions. It is a tall order given the current mood among the EU and ASEAN.

It is interesting to note that each time ASEAN-EU ties are on the upward swings, some unusual development occurs. In the past one year due to the major shifts in geopolitics regionally and globally, particularly over the US and EU ties, the EU is currently paying more attention to ASEAN wanting to strengthen ties beyond trade and investment including security and strategic matters. Likewise, witnessing the US backsliding from various multilateral forums, ASEAN is looking toward the EU as the new stabilizing forces for the region’s peace and prosperity. It is still a tall order as the EU is searching for the right approach to win the hearts and minds of the world’s second most successful regional organization.

Official documents from both sides often labeled their relations as “natural partners” – which indeed is a bit misleading. In fact, the ASEAN-EU ties are problematic and best characterized as “hate-hate” rather than “love-hate” relations, governing other ASEAN dialogue partners.

Had it not for Trump’s unpredictability and condescending views of Europe, not to mention the recent drum-beating on trade war, dramatic improvement their friendship would have not been possible. How could one explain after 44-year of relations given all the generous assistance and

knowhow, EU is still on the fringe without being a strategic partner? It is an obnoxious frequently asked question that needs to be asked and answered. This time the answer is more interesting.

Brussels now is in a hurry to make sure that EU is in the strategic games in the Indo-Pacific region. In the past, the EU focused only on China, Japan, and India as the Asian great powers. Its efforts to strengthen ties with both China and Japan simultaneously are facing difficulties as the No. 2 and No. 3 are no longer on amicable terms as before. Brussels realizes that better ties with them would facilitate its relations with ASEAN. The free trade deal last July between EU and Japan, the world's largest free trade bloc, put a positive spin and sense of urgency on ASEAN attitude toward the EU.

Now, the EU and ASEAN are discussing whether the free trade agreement between the two should begin again after the region-to-region negotiation was launch in 2007. After two years of intense works, they agreed to pause while Brussels decided to seek bilateral deals. Singapore was first to do the free trade deal with EU in 2012 after two years of talks. In 2012, the EU made a political decision to begin negotiate with Vietnam and completed it in 2015 after 14 rounds of negotiations. In the case of Thailand, it was launched in 2012 and talks discontinued due to political turmoils. Now, both sides are working on the deal.

In retrospect, the EU could have been the eight strategic partnership after New Zealand in 2015. But somehow EU decided to link up its strategic partner's status with its membership in the leader-only, East Asia Summit. In the ASEAN, it had to be a step by step process.

Now the EU agenda for ASEAN has ever-expanding with stronger strategic-oriented pathways. To be an effective game-changer in the region at this pivotal moment, EU wants to join the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting Plus like other dialogue partners as well. If possible, EU would like to have a one plus one with ASEAN defense ministers to discuss things Europeans can do that other dialogue partners such as China, Japan and the US could not do.

One more area that EU would like to cooperate is connectivity, the buzzword of the day. With so many connectivity plans from China, Japan, South Korea, and other countries, the EU senses that it is missing out on the big picture. It is still early to say what sorts of initiatives and action plan the EU and ASEAN could do in this area.

Among the EU bureaucrats, China's rise and its networks of connectivity really worry them unless they seriously engage ASEAN in ways that illustrate a new attitude and approach. Since 2014, the EU diplomacy towards Southeast Asia under Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini, the EU-ASEAN ties have made tangible progress, which is expected to continue under new leadership.

With EU President Donald Tusk attended the EAS in Manila November 2017, it changed the dynamics of their relations in positive ways. For the first time, both sides managed to issue a joint statement on climate change, much to the chagrins of the US, which has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Change accord. In the future, there are more joint efforts on non-traditional threats. The EU president was not invited during Singapore's chairmanship.

As the ASEAN-EU ties are getting stronger, new issues such as the Rakhine crisis and Cambodia's domestic development prove to be a big impediment that can slow down the progress. EU learned valuable lessons from their experience engagements with ASEAN individual members that value-approach has its own pros and cons. Today it is important to adopt strategic patience before any final decision is being done.

NAVIGATING THE U.S. – CHINA RIVALRY: REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE INTER-REGNUM

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A long-established argument in Europe and Southeast Asia on the role of regional organizations in the realm of security and defence holds that regional organizations essentially form the backbone of multilateral, collective security architectures. This dominant narrative claims, firstly, that multilateral regional organizations, such as the EU in Europe and ASEAN in Southeast Asia, have contributed a great deal to the management and resolve of inter-state conflicts. Through institutional mechanisms that enable confidence-building and trust and interdependence, as well as by establishing certain norms and values, regional organizations have served as conflict-managers for decades. ASEAN's so-called long peace since 1967, for example, is credited to be at least partially the product of the norms inherent to the so-called ASEAN way.³ The ASEAN-way emphasizes notions of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and non-interference among member states. Article 2 of ASEAN's founding document, the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC), states that it aims to espouse the independence and sovereignty of its members; the right of its members to exist without external interference; and non-interference in the internal affairs. In addition, article 13 calls for the resolution of conflicts between member states through non-violent, non-confrontational, friendly means.

Regional organizations have at times also played crucial roles in peace operations in zones of conflict as various CSDP missions, as well as for example the joint ASEAN-EU Aceh Monitoring Mission, illustrate.⁴ In short, it is a widely held assumption that regional organizations have been structurally as well as normatively transformative with regard to their regional security contexts. Thus, they have made armed conflict amongst their respective member states very unlikely as well as served to protect the security interests of their member states vis-à-vis external threats. Secondly, some have even argued that regional organizations, via close cooperation through extended multilateral forums (i.e. the East Asia Summit) or partnership agreements, can even

³ Timo Kivimäki, "East Asian Relative Peace and the ASEAN Way," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, October 8, 2010, lcq016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcq016>; Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁴ Muriel Asseburg and Ronja Kempin, eds., *The EU as a Strategic Actor in the Realm of Security and Defence? A Systematic Assessment of ESDP Missions and Operations*, SWP Research Paper (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2009); Michael Merlingen and Rasa Ostrauskaite, "ESDP Police Missions Meaning, Context and Operational Challenges," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10, no. 2 (2005): 215-35; Felix Heiduk, "ESDP in Asia: The Aceh Monitoring Mission in Indonesia," in *The EU as a Strategic Actor in the Realm of Security and Defence? A Systematic Assessment of ESDP Missions and Operations*, ed. Muriel Asseburg and Ronja Kempin, SWP Research Paper 14 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2009), 100-111.

socialize great powers like the U.S. and China into close partners or at least responsible stakeholders as part of multilateral security architectures.⁵

Structural changes: a post-liberal order and a new bi-polarism?

Fast forward to 2020 and especially the second assumption on the socialization of great powers via multilateral forums led by, and partnerships with, regional organizations has largely not materialized. Neither with regard to the U.S., where President Trump has considered the withdrawal of the United States from NATO, has repeatedly threatened to impose tariffs on EU imports, publicly referred to the EU as a “foe,” and reneging on his commitment to keep US troops in multilateral peace and stability efforts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq etc. Similarly, Trump has snubbed ASEAN leaders by skipping ASEAN-led multilateral forums such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2018 and 2019 even as Southeast Asia is facing mounting economic and security challenges. In 2019 no cabinet member was present, instead the White House send only the National Security Advisor to represent Trump at the annual meetings. More so, the virulent nationalism embodied in Donald Trump’s “America First” vision follows a transactional logic, favouring bilateral agreements and “deals” over multilateral approaches.

Nor has the socialization hypothesis turned out to be true with regard to China. Beijing has also not always acted as a responsible stakeholder. It’s Belt and Road Initiative, while often branded as a collaborative, joint effort, is based on government-to-government *bilateral* cooperation agreements.⁶ In addition, despite its membership in various ASEAN-led multilateral forums China has displayed assertive behaviour in the South China Sea.⁷ More so, the intensifying U.S. – China great power conflict by itself appears to have marginalized the role of regional organizations as well as their members as they are under pressure to choose sides between Washington and Beijing. Recent examples include, for example, the pressure exerted by the Trump administration on the EU and ASEAN member states to drop their ties with the Chinese telecoms company Huawei in the context of the development of national 5G networks. Some have even argued that there is a risk of smaller states becoming essentially little more than pawns in great power games as the so-called liberal international order ends.⁸ For the EU and ASEAN the resulting options appear binary: Swop *Pax Americana* for *Pax Sinica*? The resulting new bi-polarism, which some observers have even labelled the “new Cold War”,⁹ would suggest that regional organizations and their member states will be forced to choose between a Washinton-led and a Beijing-led order and in turn essentially fall in line with the specific hegemonic regionalism that is then enforced upon them by great powers. In this view the great powers would project their particular hegemonic regionalisms based on a hub-and-spoke model, similar to roles played by the U.S. and the USSR

⁵ Amitav Acharya, “Ideas, Identity, and Institution-building: From the ‘ASEAN Way’ to the ‘Asia-Pacific Way’?,” *The Pacific Review* 10, no. 3 (January 1, 1997): 319–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512749708719226>.

⁶ Felix Heiduk and Alexandra Sakaki, “Introduction to the Special Issue – China’s Belt and Road Initiative: The View from East Asia,” *East Asia*, no. Volume 36, Issue 2 (2019): 93–113, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-019-09312-y>.

⁷ Ian Storey, *Southeast Asia and the Rise of China* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁸ G. John Ikenberry, “The End of Liberal International Order?,” *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 7–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>; Mie Oba, “ASEAN’s Indo-Pacific Concept and the Great Power Challenge,” *The Diplomat*, July 17, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/aseans-indo-pacific-concept-and-the-great-power-challenge/>.

⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, “A New Cold War Has Begun,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed January 31, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/07/a-new-cold-war-has-begun/>.

during Cold War,¹⁰ throughout the world. As such, hegemons would come to define the borders of regions and their regional organizations, and heavily shape their respective regional institutions, norms as well as the behaviour of their member states.

Inter-regnum

A different interpretation of the structural changes world politics are undergoing right now posits that we are currently witnessing a transitional phase – an inter-regnum. Whilst the result of the power transition remains yet to be seen, the inter-regnum is characterized as more multi-polar than bi-polar. One reason is that, while military prowess remains an important power resource, it is overall a less important determinant of the structure of the international system than during the Cold War. During the Cold War deterrence, especially nuclear deterrence massively shaped the overall systemic structure of international affairs. While still a key determinant in the policy field of traditional (military) security and defence, it is nonetheless much less easily convertible into power and influence in other policy fields. A second major factor is that, unlike during bloc-based world of the Cold War, we are seeing a de-alignment of security and economic relations in the 21st century. During the Cold War security relations paralleled economic relations with these alignments centralized on the two superpowers. Nowadays economic relations no longer necessarily align with security relations and vice versa. Accordingly, more countries have more relations with one another on a wider range of issues. To be sure, some bilateral relationships will certainly remain more important than others, but few states perceive their strategic and economic interests strictly aligned with a single great power. Many Southeast Asian states favour close security ties with the U.S., but at the same time have made China their top trading partner for imports as well exports. At the same time, Japan, Australia as well as several European powers have emerged as key providers of ODA to Southeast Asia. Similarly, in Europe leading Western European countries including Germany, and France NATO members yet at the same time joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) despite U.S. opposition.

That said the structurally the inter-regnum might resemble less of a hub-and-spoke system than it might resemble something akin to a spider web. Economic relations or security relations might not be centered vertically on one or two major player anymore; instead, they might evolve much more in a multi-polar manner. In addition, intra-regional horizontal ties appear grow in their importance, too. This is very much already observable in Europe with regard to EU foreign policy making. The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and of the High Representative were meant to boost coherence and lead member states towards speaking with a single voice in foreign affairs. However, many recent interactions in foreign affairs among EU member states are not in line with this assumption. What one can observe is a tendency among certain member states to work in smaller, informal groupings. These are commonly referred to as ‘like-minded’, minilateral groupings etc. and are essentially informal, ad hoc, issue-based coalitions of member states. They often retain network-attributes in that they lack any formal contract, decision-making procedure, enforcing mechanisms, or formal agenda. In addition, while these informal groupings do aim to influence the EU as a whole, this is not necessary any

¹⁰ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

longer the primary goal. Hence, the EU is increasingly becoming one frame for member states' foreign policy coordination among others.¹¹ In ASEAN, which never aspired to forge a common foreign and security policy in the first place, informal groupings, sub-regional trilateralisms, and minilateralisms are the rule rather than the exception.¹² The underlying issue hereby is that regional organizations, be it ASEAN or the EU, are often perceived to have underperformed, i.e. the EU's perceived paralysis in Syria and Libya, or ASEAN's perceived ineffectiveness in the Rohingya crisis, the South China Sea conflict or the Sars epidemic.

What could this mean for the EU and ASEAN?

First, I would argue the "pawns in the great power game" scenario appears hyperbolic to an extent. So far the observable structural changes point more towards a more multi-polar order than a new Cold War. Intra-regional relations, be it the realm of security or economic affairs, might become less hierarchically structured than before. Thus, it does not seem likely for the time being that regional organizations will come under some sort of hegemonic regionalism resembling the Cold War era.

Secondly, the aforementioned changes could nonetheless trigger a crisis of the prevalent regional organizations in Europe and Southeast Asia. This is because regional integration processes especially in security realm historically driven by the regionally most powerful states. In Europe it has historically been the French-German partnership, in Southeast Asia Indonesia has long been regarded as some sort of *primus inter pares* and driver of regional integration processes. However, in a spider web their power to steer regional affairs becomes diminished. In the spider web, it is the concomitance of vertical and horizontal relations, which at times even can cut across regions, which limit the ability of a small number of regional or extra-regional powers to attain regional hegemony. This in turn, might result in an increasingly porous regionalism, and a weakening of regional institutions at the expense of ad hoc cooperation, minilateralisms, and so-called coalitions of the willing.

This is not to argue that these new arrangements, would they ever become the dominant regional *modus operandi*, would work well or would in fact be desirable. Yet as some of the changes I sketched out above do already present ample challenges for regional organizations like the EU and ASEAN I consider them at the least worthy of study in order to enhance our understanding of the challenges that could confront the EU and ASEAN in the future.

¹¹ Tom Delreux and Stephan Keukeleire, "Informal Division of Labour in EU Foreign Policy-Making," *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 10 (October 27, 2017): 1471-90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1216151>; Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi, "Informal Groups of States: A Growing Role in EU Foreign Policy After Brexit?," *The RUSI Journal* 163, no. 4 (July 4, 2018): 62-70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2018.1522046>.

¹² Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects* (Routledge, 2003); Geoffrey B. Cockerham, "Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way," *East Asia* 27, no. 2 (2009): 165-85, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-009-9092-1>.

ANNEX II











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