

Asienkonzept der Europäischen Union (EU)

Die EU hat inzwischen ein eigenes Asienkonzept. Der folgende Text ist die Pressemitteilung der EU dazu vom 13.07.1994, die den wesentlichen Teil des Konzeptpapiers wiedergibt.

Introduction

For the first time ever, the European Commission has today adopted a policy paper designed to launch a radical rethink of the European Union's strategy towards Asia. The Commission analyses the causes and effects of the rapid economic growth sweeping across much of Asia, and seeks to identify the reasons behind Europe's failure so far to establish an adequate economic and political profile in the region.

The Commission concludes that if Europe is to strengthen its presence in Asia, European policy-makers and business must accord it far higher priority than in the past, with all member states mobilising their resources and cooperating more effectively in order to boost knowledge of Europe in Asia, open markets, improve the climate for investment, promote exports, strengthen development cooperation, and undertake a far wider-reaching dialogue on political and security issues with Asian nations both bilaterally and multilaterally. Indeed, the European Union should seek to develop its political dialogue with Asia and look for ways to associate Asia more and more in the management of international affairs, working towards a partnership of equals capable of playing a constructive and stabilising role in the world.

The document, entitled *Towards a new Strategy for Asia*, does not set out a comprehensive set of specific policy actions but aims instead to inject urgency into the definition of the European Union's approach towards Asia, spearheading a debate that will lead policy-makers at national and European level to give Asia the priority it deserves. Once that debate is under way, the Commission stands ready to follow up this strategy with further concrete proposals.

Towards a new Strategy for Asia

Policy-makers in the Union and its member states should set their minds on the following overall objectives when formulating a fresh, proactive policy towards Asia:

- To improve policy coordination within the Union at national and European level
- To identify clear priorities in terms of countries and sectors, thereby avoiding the use of too many policy instruments on too many countries
- To strengthen the Union's economic presence in Asia
- To raise the profile of Europe in Asia
- To promote peace and security by strengthening relations with ASEAN and other regional groupings

- To encourage further Asian participation in multilateral organisations
- To pursue further market-opening and improvement in the investment climate
- To help integrate those Asian countries moving from state controls to market-oriented economies
- To contribute to sustainable development and poverty alleviation in the poorest parts of Asia

Towards a new Asia policy: priorities for action

Political dialogue

The EU should explore the possibility of continuing or initiating dialogue in a wide range of areas, including: extending the coverage of the UN Conventional Arms Register, itself the result of a joint EU-Japan initiative, as well as extending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; reinforcing the efficiency of the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency; cooperating over the exports of sensitive goods and technologies; urging its Asian partners to conclude a universal and verifiable treaty banning nuclear tests; strengthening the policy of encouraging the improvement of human rights.

Strengthening Europe's profile in Asia

The EU needs to make a far greater effort to explain its policies in Asia. It must also provide more information on economic cooperation, development aid and other activities funded from Europe. For example: the EU needs to boost educational visits and support educational and training programmes in Asia, placing trainees on in-house training programmes in Europe, pairing educational institutes, twinning cities and organising cultural exchanges.

Strengthening Europe's economic presence in Asia

The Union's cooperation in Asia will continue to be complimentary to that of the member states. In order to draw the private sector more closely into the exploration of the Asian market, the EU needs to:

- Lobby more forcefully and more systematically for the removal of laws hampering trade and investment through the discriminatory use of standards, intellectual property rights, and testing and certification requirements.
- Follow up the "EU market transition programme" in Vietnam with other initiatives offering policy advice to ex state-trading countries embarked on economic reforms; those countries already fairly advanced down that road, such as India and Pakistan, need more active help in installing deregulation programmes.
- Foster joint ventures between European and Asian companies by providing information on local investment conditions, opening up "European Business Councils" in China, Indochina and Pakistan, linking them more closely to chambers of commerce in Europe.
- Extend scientific cooperation in Asia, going beyond the example of the EU's Forum on Science and Technology in Japan.
- Establish European technology centres in key areas where Europe has a comparative advantage, notably banking, energy, environmental equipment, transport equipment and telecommunications.
- Promote investment by providing financing incentives for joint ventures and support trade promotion.

Combatting poverty

This must remain a central plank of the EU's Asia policy, given that rapid prosperity alone will not narrow the wealth gap in Asia. This area in particular needs better coordination between the Commission and the member states, with the best experience from among them being pooled to alleviate poverty (since aid administered by the Commission only accounts for about 10% of the EU's total aid to Asia). Special priority should be given to improving primary education, health care, the environment, drinking water and the supply of services to urban slums. The EU needs to ensure that the balance between poverty alleviation and economic cooperation fits the changing conditions in Asia. Economic cooperation accounts today for 12% of the EU's aid to Asia.

The nature of the Asian boom

The rise of Asia is dramatically changing the world balance of economic power. By the end of the century, parts of Asia will have witnessed such growth that one billion Asians will have significant consumer spending power, of whom 400 million will have average disposable incomes at least as high as their European and American contemporaries.

The EU is now the second biggest market for exports from developing Asian countries after the US, absorbing 128 billion ECU, or 27% of their total exports, in 1993. Concomitantly, the share of developing Asia in Union exports jumped from 15 billion ECU in 1980 to 93 billion ECU in 1993, showing that the two zones are becoming ever more independent. Despite this, the EU's relative share of oreign direct investment has declined sharply, boosting the need for a far more proactive investment promotion strategy.

Also by the year 2000, Asia will still contain the single largest concentration of the world's poorest people, as rapid growth leads to wealth disparities which hamper their potential as future markets for European business. Poverty alleviation must therefore remain a crucial strand of the Union's Asia strategy.

Coinciding with the end of the Cold War, economic development in Asia has also led to a gradual but profound shift in political and security relations between Asian nations as well as with the major powers. The US will continue to play the key security role, but it is now focussing more on participating in Asia's economic expansion. While Asian prosperity will undoubtedly enhance stability and reduce inter-regional tensions, it is also paving the way for increased military spending and a growing desire for an active role in peace-keeping and other aspects of international diplomacy. Whereas global military expenditure fell by 20% in 1993, East Asia was the only region where it actually grew.

As economic prosperity increases Asia's role in the world balance of power, Asian countries are justifiably acquiring a new political confidence, notably in South-East Asia.

The European Union's current role in Asia

The EU's bilateral relations have already deepened considerably, as have its regional ties, notably through enhanced political dialogue with the ASEAN grouping.

Between 1976 and 1991, the EU and its member states disbursed aid worth over 32 billion ECU to Asia, making it the second largest aid donor after Japan, and three times greater than the US. Since the 1991 Council resolution on human rights, democracy and development, the EU has been promoting human rights and democracy more actively than ever before, supporting elections, NGO's, free media, the protection of vulnerable groups and providing information on human rights abuses. Likewise, it operates a highly sophisticated web of trade preference under its GSP scheme, which enhanced market access to Europe for some 72% of Asian imports in 1992.

European influence on Asia has been exerted mainly through the medium of trade policy, as well as development cooperation and cultural exchanges. The mainstay of the EU's trade policy has been to promote liberalisation either via the Uruguay Round or by promoting market access through bilateral negotiations. The EU's main trade and investment promotion, however, has been carried out by the member states acting individually.

The cost of failure

If it fails to adopt a more coordinated, proactive strategy, the Union stands to lose out on the economic miracle taking place in Asia because of strong competition from Japan, the United States and increasingly from companies within the region. Japanese companies, for example, are already competing with each other to consolidate their position in Asian markets, investing heavily and creating the type of sales and distribution systems which European companies have found so hard to penetrate in Japan itself.

If European companies are unable to take a full share of Asian growth over the next decade, this will affect their profits and competitiveness worldwide. This in turn will have political costs, and at the very least will exacerbate calls for more defensive policies from those who view Asia as a threat rather than a partner in prosperity.