

Asia-Europe Research Strategies for the 21st Century in Asian and European Studies

Seoul, Korea, 7-9 October 1998

In August 1997, a small group of directors of Asian and European centres of European or Asian Studies met in Copenhagen to discuss ways in which their institutes might fruitfully co-operate, especially in the light of the developing political rapprochement between Europe and Asia. The meeting rapidly came to the conclusion that the political rapprochement reflected only one aspect of the need for closer collaboration between Asia and Europe and that the 21st century would require the development of a closer intellectual partnership between scholars in the social sciences and humanities in Asia and Europe. In comparison with the contacts between Europe and the United States and between the United States and Asia, intellectual ties between Asia and Europe have remained relatively weak since the end of the colonial era.

The meeting concluded that developing a shared research culture between the two ends of the Eurasian continent would not only deepen the quality of research in either region on global issues, but would enable attention to be directed more effectively to issues which are shared between the two regions but which do not commonly emerge on research agendas in the United States.

In order to anchor this conclusion in the broader research communities of the two regions, and to develop ways of promoting research integration, the meeting agreed to form a loose co-ordinating structure, which later took the name PEARL, Programme for Europe-Asia Research Linkages. It was also agreed to convene a workshop in Korea in 1998 to address the theme 'Asia-Europe Research Strategies for the 21st Century in Asian and European Studies'.

This first PEARL Workshop, held in Seoul on 7-9 October 1998, was organized jointly by Yonsei University (Korea), which acted as host for the occasion, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, The Netherlands), the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). It was co-sponsored by the European Science Foundation.

The workshop was intended both to clarify the philosophical basis for the rapprochement between Asia and Europe and to identify actions, programmes and institutions, which could bring that rapprochement closer to reality. The conference was attended by 32 leading figures in Asian Studies, European Studies and research policy, drawn from major Asian and European institutions. The aim in inviting participants to the conference was not to select national representatives, but rather to construct a relatively small group of specialists who could bring a wide range of skills and insights to the problems at hand.

The conference heard keynote speeches from Professor Wang Gungwu ('Roads to progress and tradition') and Dr John Clarke ('Beyond orientalism'),¹ as well as discussion papers from Ambassador Börje Ljunggren ('Philosophical aspects of Asia-Europe research strategies'), Dr Max Sparreboom ('From networking to joint re-

1 In this issue, pp. 5-16.

search programmes') and Professor Shamsul A.B. ('From fragmentation to convergence: constructing a future joint Asia-Europe research agenda'). A large part of the workshop, however, was taken up with small working groups set the task of turning the speakers' insights into practical proposals.

Towards a shared research culture

Discussion during the opening sessions of the workshop rapidly made it clear that any attempt to draw a tight definition of Europe and Asia would risk strangling the enterprise: Europe cannot be sharply distinguished from the West and the Modern, while modernity in Asia is far from being simply an import from the West. Both regions, moreover, are so diverse that some of the most fascinating similarities and parallels between Europe and Asia are found at the national and local levels. Nonetheless, the idea of Europe and the idea of Asia are both powerful concepts at the level of public debate and at the level of political and intellectual decision-making and PEARL has a valuable role to play in putting the intellectual dimension of the relationship between those two concepts on a basis of partnership and equality.

Further discussion made it clear that the problem was not simply one of two intellectual worlds which had somehow failed to make contact. Rather, there were structural forces at work which made communication difficult. Asian Studies on the one hand is an enormous and diffuse global enterprise. The links between scholars in different countries hampered by differences of language and culture, by distance and by lack of opportunity to engage intellectually, but those links exist, and a Japanese scholar of Southeast Asia is identifiably in the same vast scholarly community as a Spanish scholar of China.

'European Studies', however, is a much less clearly defined field. For some institutions it refers only to studies of the European integration process; for others it refers only to studies which clearly reach beyond national boundaries; for others still it is a branch of Cultural Studies with its specific theoretical orientation; and finally for some (mostly outsiders) it is the entire corpus of scholarship on Europe and its many societies. In all but the last sense, European Studies is a rather small enterprise in comparison with Asian Studies, but in that last sense it is a true leviathan, easily dwarfing Asian Studies in the world of learning.

Because this structural disparity will not disappear, the challenge for PEARL is not one of bringing together two self-conscious fields. Rather, there are two tasks: first, to create links which will help to make researchers on Asia more conscious of the additional insights which European comparisons can bring while making researchers on Europe more conscious of the additional insights which Asian comparisons can bring; and, second, to develop international research projects which call naturally for joint Asian-European research teams, either because those teams are the most capable or because the topic relates to some issue which is of specific importance in Asia and Europe.

Practical discussion in the workshop therefore focussed both on measures to draw the attention of European and Asian scholars to each other, both by means of exchange and through joint research programmes.

Exchange programmes

After some discussion on the issue of exchanges, there was a broad consensus that two lines of action should be pursued. First, effort should be put into developing exchange programmes for scholars in mid-career. Such scholars may have undertaken specialized research in their early academic years but now, established in teaching jobs, are both ripe for the intellectual stimulation which would come from a prolonged encounter with the other region, and are ideally placed to transmit cross-regional insights to their students. Not being of professorial standing, they tend to lack access to international networks but are a vital element in giving depth and diversity to the Europe-Asia intellectual relationship. It is likely that such exchange programmes can be organized most effectively on a bilateral basis, with PEARL acting as a kind of clearing house through which initiatives can be publicized and experiences exchanged. ASEF is currently commissioning an inventory of Asia-Europe intellectual exchange, and this inventory may be both a valuable source of data and a means of distributing information.

Second, the workshop agreed that efforts should be made to develop co-operation between the European Erasmus/Socrates programme and its Asian counterpart, UMAP, so that student exchanges between Asia and Europe can take place expeditiously.

Joint research projects

The workshop also agreed that it was of enormous importance to develop major long-term collaborative research projects involving both Asian and European scholars. The projects should not only be based on complex issues of direct contemporary relevance but should draw together novel combinations of researchers.

A wide range of possible projects was discussed, but the meeting agreed that the current global economic turmoil had thrown open a vast range of new questions needing sustained, collaborative research attention. Specific topics raised by the intensification of globalization and the economic recession include:

- the issue of good governance. The globalization process has thrown into disarray common assumptions about the autonomy of states and the responsibility of governments to their citizens. The tension between a global discourse on human rights and the global imperatives of the market require a comprehensive re-evaluation of the nature and practice of good governance and the responsibilities of government.
- labour relations and migration. Globalization has brought the world closer than ever before to a single labour market, yet that market operates within a framework of nation states which segment the market both through the instrument of nationality and through various regulatory structures. Capital and labour are both more mobile than at any previous time in history, but the remaining structures of segmentation in the capital market do not match the structures of segmentation in the labour market. The consequences of this disparity need thorough investigation.
- lifestyles and norms. It is clear that globalization has pushed the world's cultures in the direction of homogeneity, yet has increased the range of cultural options

open to many individuals and groups and well as encouraging a revival of local identities. Not clear, however, are the relationship between these processes, their long-term implications, or the most effective policies which can be adopted to manage them.

- environmental issues. As national energy policies can have great consequences for the global community, environmental issues tend to be addressed more and more from a world-wide perspective. Many aspects require attention here: the relationship between the management of natural resources and the national and regional economy, transfer of technological knowledge, the social implications etc.

In addition, the meeting identified promising projects based on the specifics of the Europe-Asia relationship, rather than on global issues. These topics included the following:

- the impact for Asia, especially in economic and strategic affairs, of European integration. What will be the implications for Asia when Europe becomes, like the United States, a single large economic and political force in world affairs, whereas Asia remains economically and politically fragmented?
- the role of the state in promoting economic development. Until the recent economic crisis, the dominant discourse in world affairs was sceptical about the value of close state involvement in and management of economic development. The crisis has not overturned this orthodoxy, but it has re-opened a debate on the question of how and whether state intervention can be beneficial. Both Asian and Europe provide many examples in the recent and more distant past of rapid economic development achieved in the context of state dirigisme, and a thorough re-examination of these cases is now needed.

Structure, funding and future operations

The workshop concluded with discussions on the structure and future operations of PEARL. It was agreed for the moment that IIAS, with the support of NIAS through the IIAS-NIAS Strategic Alliance, should continue to operate as provisional secretariat for PEARL and that no rigid administrative or membership structures should be adopted for the moment. In its early phases, PEARL should be driven primarily by its programmes and should not seek to develop a large administrative infrastructure. Nonetheless, PEARL should rapidly develop an identity within the research world and should not be allowed to lose momentum because of a diffuse structure.

It was hoped that PEARL would continue to co-operate with and to enjoy the support of the ASEF and that it would be able to develop closer links with the European Science Foundation. The meeting furthermore decided that steps would be taken to introduce PEARL to the separate national governments. Recognition of PEARL by the individual countries will enable the programme to put research, training and education on the agenda of the third ASEM summit in Seoul in 2000 and to be designated as a vehicle for implementation of these activities. Validation of PEARL will help to secure funding through ASEM, EU, ASEAN and ESF.

There was broad enthusiasm for continuing the PEARL workshop process. Delegates from France, China and Sweden expressed some interest in hosting a future planning meeting, while the ESF representative also indicated his willingness to play a role in the organization of the meeting.

Implementation

The three Alliance partners (IIAS, NIAS, Institut für Asienkunde) have been asked to appoint a consultant to draft a programme for PEARL. This proposal will be further developed in the context of the ESF programme in Asian Studies and will consist of three main parts:

- A proposal for an organisational framework;
- An elaboration of one or two of the suggestions made by the meeting in Seoul regarding long-term collaborative research programmes;
- A plan for academic facilitating, such as the exchange of researchers, academic meetings etc.

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Konferenzankündigungen

International Conference on "Crisis Management – Chinese Entrepreneurs and Business Networks in Southeast Asia"

Bonn, May 28-30, 1999

The objective of the conference is to shed light on the complex and little understood interconnections between Chinese business in Southeast Asia, globalization and the Asian financial and economic crisis. We believe that a new research initiative is justified since the issue of Chinese business is (i) often misrepresented both in the media as well as in the academic literature, (ii) vital for an understanding of the Asian crisis, some of its causes as well as its socio-economic impact and (iii) inextricably linked with the logic of global capitalism rather than 'Chinese capitalism'.

While ethnic Chinese have been the key drivers of the region's rapid economic growth over the past three decades, both the continuing economic crisis and global market forces are posing new challenges. Asia's economic malaise illustrates the fundamental socio-economic and political changes and threats to which Chinese business is exposed on local, regional and global markets. The dark side of *guanxi*, overexposure to non-productive sectors, paternalistic management methods, resistance to change, the IMF, increased competition, lack of credit, bankruptcies, dependence on western technology, high import bills for components, insufficient branding, legal-political insecurity, eroding strategic alliances with ruling power elites and ethnic conflicts represent some of the critical issues.

The latest developments in the region provide a timely occasion to reexamine taken-for-granted assumptions about the 'strength' and 'uniqueness' of what has been termed 'Chinese capitalism', networks and business culture in the age of globaliza-