



EU-Asia Connectivity: Concepts, Contexts and Contestations

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Bersick, Jean Monnet Chair, RUB

Jean Monnet Lecture Series on EU-Asia Connectivity

03.12.2020

Introduction

Thank you so much Songhoon for your kind introductory remarks. We already had a highly productive first day webinar yesterday and it is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to continue our exchange with colleagues and friends of the SPEAC project and deliver a lecture on the topic of “EU-Asia Connectivity: Concepts, Contexts and Contestations”. My talk is also part of the “Bochum Lecture Series on EU-Asia Relations” within the framework of my new Jean Monnet Chair on “Connecting Europe and Asia: People, Power and Policies”. One major activity of a Jean Monnet Chair is teaching and I am thus happy to not only welcome students from the Ruhr University Bochum but also from Korea University.

Since this lecture is about the relations of the European Union and Asia, and since our projects and Jean Monnet Chairs are supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union let me start by quoting a former Jean Monnet Chair (2013-2016), Josep Borell. In his blog Josep Borell, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission for a Stronger Europe in the World recently stated “that it is clear that the Indo-Pacific will be the most dynamic region in the world and the center of growth for decades to come.”ⁱ

The High Representative Borell wrote this two weeks ago after 15 countries in Asia had signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which will create the world’s largest free trade zone, covering 30% of the world’s population and GDP. Borell went on stating “The key question will be what will be the nature of the regional order?” And one might add: What will be the role of Europe in that order? Will it co-shape the evolving normative-institutional architecture? And in how far does and could the new buzzword “connectivity” play a role in these dynamics?

In my lecture I will critically assess the concept of connectivity in EU-Asia relations from a regional and transregional perspective and draw conclusions that aim at stimulating debate about the EU's role and objectives vis-à-vis Asia and the broader region in the making, that is the Indo-Pacific. As I am going to argue, a window of opportunity has opened up for the EU to increase its role in Asia, the Pacific and the Indo-Pacific. However, the EU needs to demonstrate internal unity and Europe needs to offer an incentive to the actors in the region. Such an incentive for strengthened cooperation and integration should take the form of a major political project that tells the story of EU-Asia cooperation and integration anew.

Covid-19, China and Changes in the Global Economy

We are living in a quite remarkable time in terms of the quantity and quality of change that can be observed on the global and domestic levels of international affairs. Covid-19 and its worldwide disruptive impact on the lives of people, on the economies and politics is a disruption that transcends all living memory. Maybe the structural impact of Covid-19 can be compared to that of the end of the Cold War 30 years ago.

The global economy is one dimension in which accelerated change can be observed. According to the OECD latest forecast world trade declined by more than 10% in 2020 and is expected to continue recovering slowly from the contraction caused by the pandemic, rising on average by around 4.25% a year in 2021-22.ⁱⁱ In the recovery process very much depends on the second biggest economy of the world, that is the People's Republic of China. In economic terms Beijing's so called war against the virus is successful as the latest numbers of its Manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index show and China recovers from the Covid-19 shutdown.ⁱⁱⁱ According to the Economist also the digital economy and E-commerce sector have helped to boost consumer demand.

According to a new survey from HSBC "China has overtaken the U.S. as the top foreign market for companies across Asia-Pacific"^{iv} and trade is expected to grow in Asia-Pacific in 2021 by nearly 7%. This year ASEAN overtook the EU as the largest trading partner to China.^v

The International Monetary Fund also points to risks that lie ahead and the grim prospects for a global trade-led recovery, mainly because of "weak global growth, closed borders, and tensions around trade, technology and security".^{vi} In a recent book publication by the Asian Development Bank on the "Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific" it is observed that "unilateral policies threaten the basic principles of the rules based economic cooperation and practices"^{vii}. Yet, the recent signing of the RCEP, that includes all ten ASEAN countries and China, Japan, South Korea as well as Australia and New Zealand, reminds us of the multilateral initiatives and processes for regional economic integration that do exist in Asia and the Pacific, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is now called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). Part of the change that can be observed is that regional integration is practiced in Asia-Pacific even though the United States under President Trump withdrew from multilateralism and even though China is increasingly perceived as a risk factor in security terms. This only shows how intraregional market dynamics in Asia are deeply intertwined with security affairs, as the ongoing deterioration of Australia-China relations exemplify.

When it comes to regional integration the recent developments in Asia paint a remarkably different picture than the one that can be seen in Europe. The UK left the European Union on 31 January this year and 11 months into the transition period to finalize a deal on their future

relationship it is still unclear whether a successful agreement will be reached although rumors have it that this week could bring a breakthrough. But even if agreement will be reached the European project has been seriously compromised by Brexit. In Europe regional disintegration instead of integration can be observed while in Asia-Pacific 15 countries agreed to form the biggest free trade region in the world. However, RCEP still needs to be ratified.

And yet, the European and Asian political and economic contexts of regional integration are quite different, as I will discuss in a couple of minutes. Too different are the historical and institutional contexts. But still, more change can be observed in both regions and their mutual relationships than was expected by many observers. The reasons can be linked to the external shock caused by Covid-19, but also to the role of major powers, especially China and the USA. The related uncertainties create huge challenges for the EU. In Asia, the nexus of economics and security becomes ever more relevant for foreign policy making. As a trade power the EU has a major interest in participating in the shaping of norms and institutions that constitute the future order in the Indo-Pacific. China's role in processes that shape regional order can hardly be overestimated – and this is also linked to the Belt and Road Initiative.

A Changing Strategic Context

In its Global Strategy in 2016 the EU had already declared that it will “pursue a coherent approach to China's connectivity drives westwards” and “also develop a more politically rounded approach to Asia”.^{viii} Two years later in September 2018 Brussels presented the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy “Connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU Strategy”.^{ix}

Since then, however, the international context has changed rather dramatically: The US had continued on its unilateral way under Donald Trump. And China is now perceived in Brussels and in European capitals as an actor that is “partner, competitor, and systemic rival at the same time”.^x But probably the most important change is the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic might have on China's international role. Similarly, the recent signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has huge potential to impact the geoeconomics of the world economy because it shows the new dynamics of regional economic integration in Asia-Pacific and China's role therein. I will turn to RCEP later on.

The perception of China as a “rival” constitutes a major change in EU-China relations. It puts into question the fundamentals of the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership. It even raises the question whether it is still accurate to argue that the EU and China do not pose a strategic threat against each other. And the contestations between the EU and its now 27 Member States and the People's Republic of China are increasing in number and scope: market access, wolf worrier diplomacy, mask diplomacy, 5G technology, the South China Sea, respect for international law, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang – just to mention a few examples from the growing list of contentious issues.

In addition, the current deterioration of Australia-China relations furthermore exemplifies the risks that can result from contestation. In view of the changing strategic context the EU-Australia Leaders' virtual meeting last week: “agreed to enhance cooperation to promote shared interests in security and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific, spanning the Indian and Pacific Oceans” and “restated their commitment to promote sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity (...) They also agreed to explore synergies between their cooperation on connectivity with third countries, particularly in the Indo-Pacific”.^{xi}

The spirit of the meeting sends a clear message to Beijing: The EU is diversifying, deepening and strengthening its relations with Australia and connectivity is regarded as an instrument to project shared interests and norms. Germany for example will send a frigate in the Indo-Pacific and German officers shall be deployed on Australian navy units.^{xii} This development is also in line with the recent publication of the German Indo-Pacific Guidelines. Also, France and the Netherlands published strategy papers on their respective role in the Indo-Pacific. So far, no EU Guidelines on the Indo-Pacific have been published.

A further area of competition and contestation is technology and digitalization and the newly emerging field of Cyberdiplomacy where cooperation, but also competition and conflict exists, e.g. over what the Internet is and how it should be governed. Chinese President Xi Jinping last week on the occasion of the 17th China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning suggested to ASEAN to create a “China-ASEAN digital port to promote digital connectivity and build a digital silk road”^{xiii}.

The challenges that emanate from the expanding global cyberspace and resulting connectivity need to be addressed in multilateral settings, establishing global rules, norms, codes and ethical guidelines for how new technologies like the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Quantum are applied. European and Asian state and non-state actors have a decisive role to play here.

The Role of the USA and its Impact on EU-Asia Relations

All these developments add complexity to EU-Asia relations. Not only because dealing with the global power shift from the transatlantic to the Indo-Pacific in itself isn't already challenging enough, but also because the EU only possesses limited agency, limited actorness, is neither a nation nor a federal state, and too often does not speak with “one voice”. But the more complex EU-China relations become, the more the EU is challenged to adopt its policies vis-à-vis Beijing and Asia. And this is mainly because the increase in strategic uncertainty is not only limited to the question of China's behavior, now that China has risen, but also to the question of US behavior. Now that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have been elected, the expectations are high that the US and Europe can team up and coordinate their China policies. And indeed there is new room of manoeuvre. The French and German Ministers of Foreign Affairs recently called for a transatlantic “New Deal” in order to adopt the European-American partnership “to global upheavals”. Jean-Yves Le Drian and Heiko Mass who co-authored an op-ed in the Washington Post argue: “We must work together to deal effectively with China's growing assertiveness, and also to maintain necessary avenues of cooperation with Beijing to face global challenges such as the covid-19 pandemic and climate change”^{xiv}.

However, it might very well turn out to be a strategic miscalculation to think and expect that the USA and the transatlantic relationship can deliver on the challenges and opportunities that the EU is facing with regard to Asia. Yes, the more Europe and the US are coordinating and cooperating vis-à-vis China probably the better but the answers to the importance of the Indo-Pacific in the 21st century should not overly depend on the possibility of a real interest in Washington D.C. to increase coordination across the Atlantic. For the EU to play a role according to its interests and norms more agency is needed. In fact, Trumpism has demonstrated that in many ways the principle of self-help, as Realism calls it, has re-gained practical relevance in global affairs.

At the same time and within the changing regional and global strategic contexts connectivity needs to be understood as a tool for the shaping of the international order with like-minded

partners, especially in a post-pandemic environment. An example on the bilateral level is the EU-Japan “Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure” that was signed in September 2019.

Since the EU’s competences and influence with regard to Asia are probably strongest in the area of its common commercial policy let me stay with the example of trade and the role of multilateral regional economic integration. But before turning to the latest developments in regional economic integration in Asia I shall briefly reflect on the different development paths and historical factors that impacted on regional integration in Europe and Asia.

Regional Integration in Europe and Asia Compared

Jean Monnet probably symbolizes and represents the European approach to regional integration more than any other person. He was the brain behind the Schuman Plan that led to the pooling of national sovereignty amongst the members of the European project. Theorizing on regional integration, especially in the case of Federalism, Functionalism and Neo-Functionalism, is largely driven by the assumption that national sovereignty, and by extension nationalism, too often has been the cause of contestation, conflict and war in European history. The problem being that military conflict between nation states is inevitable as long as no fundamental political concessions have been made by all regional actors. In the case of Jean Monnet it was the idea that the establishment of a supranational institution can provide the framework to manage and overcome rivalry and security dilemmas among nation states. The Schuman Plan resulted in the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the first international organization based on the principles of supranationalism. Unfortunately, the integration process of Western Europe also contributed to the political division of Europe, when the Iron Curtain, as Winston Churchill aptly observed in 1946, “descended across the continent”. The Cold War set the systemic frame not only for Europe, but for the world.

Developments in Asia took a different trajectory which, contrary to the European case, did not result in the pooling of national sovereignty and the evolution of supranational regional institutions. Seen from the perspective of regional integration Connectivity can thus be regarded as a very European concept because in no other region have nation states agreed to pool their sovereignty and form supranational institutions, with EU law breaking Member States’ law. It is thus only natural for the EU to become a more proactive driver, a leader, of connectivity, not only in the European intraregional context, but also in the interregional context. Compared to the EU, the regional architecture of Asia is a structure very much still in the making. The process was mainly stimulated by the end of systemic bipolarity in international relations in the early 1990s after the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 in Germany. Even before, in 1967, ASEAN was founded. But it was the end of the so called Cold War that triggered new region-building efforts and policies in Southeast Asia and beyond: In 1994 the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was founded and already in 1989 12 Asia-Pacific countries had met in Canberra and founded the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

APEC is, on its own account, the “premier forum for regional economic cooperation” whose new Putrajaya Vision 2040 aims at an “open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040 (...)”^{xv}. Yet, it has not become the premier forum for regional economic integration, at least for the time being. A main reason is the rivalry between two of its 21 members, i.e. China and the USA. It is APEC’s dilemma that, on the one hand, because of China’s and the USA’s participation it has the potential to truly integrate the Asia-Pacific in economic terms in the form of the envisioned Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP); on

the other hand, it is precisely the fact that not one but both actors are part of APEC which poses a major obstacle towards regional economic integration. Much thus depends on the further development of US-China relations. On his first day in office, US President Trump withdrew the USA from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement. This was a major political decision which went rather unnoticed in Europe. The President continued on his path against multilateral regional and global governance institutions as in the case of the Paris Climate Agreement, the UNESCO and the WHO or the WTO and even NATO. It remains to be seen in how far President Biden will re-calibrate the US China policy and whether the USA will reconnect to Asian-Pacific multilateralism.

Seen in the strategic context of the economic-security nexus it is all the more remarkable that 15 Asian countries now signed a regional trade pact that has the potential to propel regional economic integration. RCEP is an important political development of high symbolic meaning as it demonstrates the region's commitment to multilateralism and harmonization. For the first time China, Japan, and South Korea participate together in a regional FTA. This could have positive knock-on effects and e.g. also facilitate the further economic integration of Northeast Asia, even though many political and economic obstacles exist. Another example is the CPTPP. During last week's APEC summit Xi Jinping said that China will "favorably consider" joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).^{xvi}

According to an Euler-Hermes/Allianz research report^{xvii} it can be expected that RCEP will "foster stronger regional trade integration, but it could also make the region more attractive to further diversification of supply chains for multinational companies". From an economic perspective the RCEP mainly "consolidates and updates existing free trade agreements between ASEAN and its partners". "In fact, the average tariff of ASEAN countries on imports from RCEP partners had already dropped from 4,9% in 2005 to 1,8% currently." But "RCEP reduces non-tariff barriers by creating a common Rule of Origin (RoO), i.e. harmonizing the information requirements and local content standards for business to be eligible to the preferential terms of the agreement." Since all regional FTA have their own Rules of Origin the RCEP "will therefore facilitate supply chain management ... and reduce transaction costs for trading with multiple countries". It is estimated that "the common rule of origin could reduce export costs, thereby boosting merchandise exports among signatories by around USD 90bn on average annually".

The development shows that multilateral regional economic integration is a chosen model of Asian governments to counter unilateralistic policies of the USA and the dysfunctionality of the World Trade Organization.

It also brings to the attention that the EU is not part of the ongoing processes of multilateral regional economic integration in Asia. Neither in the APEC context, nor in RCEP or the CPTPP.

Concepts of Connectivity in Europe and Asia

So, where and why does Connectivity enter the picture?

The EU's Asia Connectivity strategy was published by the EU in September 2018. It is an example of rather reactive strategic thinking and foreign policy making because it was drafted in reaction to China's Belt and Road Initiative at the end of the European Commission's Presidency of Jean Claude Juncker (2014-2019). And it is by the way quite remarkable how bluntly the European External Action Service and the European Commission recognize that the Connectivity strategy is a reaction to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

According to the document “the EU is promoting an approach to connectivity that is “sustainable, comprehensive, and rules based”^{xviii}. This means that connectivity “has to be economically, fiscally, environmentally and socially sustainable in the long run Connectivity is about networks, and the flow of people, goods, services and capital ... , and that it is about “internationally agreed practices, rules, conventions and technical standards, supported by international organizations and institutions, enable interoperability of networks and trade across borders.” Maybe it is the element of a rules based approach that makes this European definition of connectivity (the European Way) most distinct from others and sets it apart. It points to the normative-institutional dimension of connectivity. Also the ten Southeast Asian ASEAN countries have developed a Connectivity strategy already in 2010 that focuses on their mutual connectivity and the vision of a “seamlessly and comprehensively connected and integrated ASEAN that will promote competitiveness, inclusiveness, and a greater sense of Community”^{xix} (Masterplan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025). During the 23rd EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, which was held via video conference two days ago, the ASEAN-EU Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity was adopted. “Sustainable connectivity” is considered to be “a key priority for the region-to-region relationship”^{xx} and in view of “the unique experience of connectivity and regional integration of ASEAN and the EU” the leaders “reaffirmed their commitment to promote connectivity within and between ASEAN and the EU”. This shall allow, amongst others, to advance the EU’s and ASEAN’s respective strategies for green growth, increase the cooperation and “spur sustainable investments, especially in infrastructure. In this respect “digital connectivity with a focus on our people as a key enabler to inclusive growth and sustainable development through cooperation in the areas of digital innovation, digital infrastructure and logistics, ... is highlighted.

In addition to the declared intent to promote connectivity the EU and ASEAN elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership. This upgrade of the ASEAN-EU-Dialogue Partnership is indicative for and needs to be explained in the light of the changing international context in general and EU-Asia relations in particular. Especially with regard to China’s increasing assertiveness. The upgrade of the relationship is of high symbolic meaning – but it will need to be backed up by what is often called tangible or concrete results. In the area of trade and investment that would be economic integration and trade liberalization in the form of an Comprehensive ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement. So far bilateral trade and investment agreements have been concluded with Singapore and Vietnam respectively.

However, it can be questioned whether the strengthening of EU-ASEAN relations is sufficient to respond to the changing global context and the challenges it entails, especially with regard to the role of the USA, China, and China-EU relations. It is therefore in the interest of the EU and its member states to embed ASEAN-EU relations in a broader institutional architecture and to provide a strong incentive and rationale for countries to join and participate.

The institutional framework to embed EU-ASEAN relations and by extension a future EU-ASEAN FTA could be the Asia-Europe Meeting process. ASEM has the advantage that cooperation between its now 53 members has been practiced for nearly 25 years. It has the disadvantage though that the cooperation has hardly resulted in tangible results, for instance with regard to the issue of trade liberalization or investment facilitation. Because of collective action problems and the lack of political will ASEM still remains a rather low-key forum in comparison to APEC for example. Maybe this is the reason why this year’s ASEM summit was, because of Covid-19, postponed to next year, instead of having a virtual ASEM summit, like in the case of the virtually conducted summits of e.g. APEC, the BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization or the G20. While Asian and European leaders did not meet, all leaders of the other respective fora met at least online. And China's leader Xi Jinping participated in all of them.

Connectivity and Challenges to the EU's Role in Asia

In recent years ASEM has incorporated the issue of connectivity and in 2017 the ASEM Foreign Ministers even contributed a definition of what Connectivity means and is about in the ASEM context: Accordingly "Connectivity is about bringing countries, people and societies closer together. It facilitates access and is a means to foster deeper economic and people-to-people ties. It encompasses the hard and soft aspects, including the physical and institutional social-cultural linkages that are the fundamental supportive means to enhance the economic, political-security, and socio-cultural ties between Asia and Europe which also contribute to the narrowing of the varying levels of development and capacities ... ASEM connectivity aims to establish the sense of building ASEM partnership of shared interests. It upholds the spirit of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit."^{xxi}

This is a very broad understanding of connectivity though. And it lacks a real strategic vector. Maybe the latter is currently most fundamentally needed in EU-Asia relations. What is the rationale for Asia-Europe cooperation? To answer the question it is interesting to compare the international and regional contexts when the first ASEM Summit took place in 1996 and today's. For all the change that has happened since then, there is also continuity.

In the early 1990s after the end of the Cold War and with the development of new strategic uncertainties ASEAN countries clearly had the China factor in their mind when they thought about establishing a forum for Asian and European leaders to meet. ASEAN saw the need to engage Beijing, "to coax China into the mainstream of world affairs", and it was also the interest of ASEAN leaders to meet their peers from EU member states in a dedicated forum. Europeans saw the opportunity to play a stronger role in Asia, especially in Asian markets. This was the time of the so called "East Asian miracle" and of apparent regional economic integration in Asia-Pacific and APEC. At least some Asian actors also expected Europe to potentially play a bigger security role in Asia. The Europeans, however, never really delivered. The expectations on the Asian side were hardly met after the Asian Financial Crisis had kicked-in in 1998. Since then, the global and regional geo-political and geo-economic contexts have changed significantly. Multilateralism and the liberal order, even the concept of "the West" is compromised. But there is also continuity and this is related mainly to China. How to deal with a rising China? How to deal with China in a post-pandemic environment now that it effectively has risen? In the early 1990s ASEAN's answer was that you need to engage China, especially by creating regional institutions, instead of antagonizing it. The ASEAN countries continued on their road to integration, regional institutions like the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East-Asian Summit or interregional ones like ASEM were founded, all with various success. Geo-politics and the interests of a few (too) often trump the region-building agenda.

The Way Forward: Re-multilateralization and Multilateral Connectivity

In view of these challenges and in the new context of a post-pandemic environment the EU might consider providing a new rationale for EU-Asia relations by proposing a strategic vector in the form of a major political project: to jointly work towards a future Comprehensive Asia-Europe Free Trade Agreement. Such a political project would aim at multilateralizing existing FTAs between the EU and Asia (EU-South Korea, EU-Japan, EU-Singapore, EU-Vietnam); but the project should also facilitate ongoing negotiations with like-minded countries like Australia

or India and Indonesia. And it could also provide a reason for ASEAN and the EU to move towards a region-to-region agreement and for the EU and China to enter into free trade negotiations, once and if the ongoing negotiations for the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) will be successfully finalized. Based on its open and inclusive character, all interested economies could participate, also Taiwan, if considered appropriate.

With regard to the area of trade and investment the EU would thus follow a policy of re-multilateralization as opposed to its current rather bilateral approach. Such an overall policy approach should send a strong signal to China and Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy project, i.e. the Belt and Road Initiative, as Europe would present a new narrative, a new story of its role in EU-Asia relations, namely that of a co-leader in multilateral connectivity as opposed to bilateral connectivity. In view of China's expected new 5-year plan, its new "dual circulation" strategy with a "focus on its domestic market and technological independence"^{xxii} as well as China's "New Development Paradigm" as it has been promoted by Xi Jinping at the recent APEC CEO Dialogues such a new role of the EU should facilitate the shaping of the evolving regional order in Asia and the Pacific. During his speech Xi Jinping stated that China will "get more actively involved in global economic governance".^{xxiii} And the Belt and Road Initiative is considered an important tool in its new development paradigm as "China will further harmonize policies, rules and standards with BRI partners", the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party promised. The new economic strategy, Xi furthermore highlighted, shall contribute to the "building of a community with a shared future for mankind".

The EU's incentive of a political project in EU-Asia relations and of a new narrative of trade would provide for an alternative that complements the Chinese approach to the evolution of a normative and institutional architecture.

Conclusion

Summing up it can be concluded that if actors in the Asia-Pacific proactively engage in multilateral regional integration as in the cases of RCEP and the CPTPP then the EU is a natural partner. But the EU needs to convince its counterparts, especially ASEAN and its members that it is ready to deliver. In this process, a Comprehensive ASEAN-EU FTA would be a first litmus test.

The EU should therefore offer its partners in the region a political project: a Comprehensive Asia-Europe Free Trade Agreement.

A more integrated connectivity strategy is needed to provide additional rationale, a vector, or in EU parlance *finalité* to the various processes and bilateral and multilateral formats that exist between the EU and Asia. The EU needs to frame itself as a provider of collective goods by creating markets, and enabling development for all based on rules and norms jointly agreed on amongst partners. At the same time, however, each step needs to be developed and judged in light of the EU's interests.

- ⁱ Borell, Josep (2020), The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership – what does it mean for the EU?, November 19, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/88997/regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership---what-does-it-mean-eu_en, last date of access: 30.11.2020.
- ⁱⁱ Kim, Sam (2020), Asia's Export Engines Tow a Weary World Economy Along, December 1, [Supply Chains Latest: Asia Export Engines Tow Weary World Economy - Bloomberg](#), last date of access: 30.11.2020.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Economist (2020), Espresso, The world in brief - December 1st 2020, December 1, <https://view.e.economist.com/?qs=e8a5584a1b8194c69a5382e8dee4775569b2fc0f6de231e9d2365e74fa9e70a2cc9fff5053e199e147f5560704a94fef6887da5440fc34c1cfa6d221dba1a12aeac796313e013ba2b38c978ad476d519>, last date of access: 30.11.2020.
- ^{iv} Kim, Sam (2020), Asia's Export Engines Tow a Weary World Economy Along, December 1, [Supply Chains Latest: Asia Export Engines Tow Weary World Economy - Bloomberg](#), last date of access: 30.11.2020.
- ^v Wong, Catherine (2020), 15 Asian nations sign RCEP, world's biggest free-trade deal, after eight years, November 15, 27.11.2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3109939/china-declares-victory-15-asian-nations-sign-worlds-biggest>, last date of access: 27.11.2020.
- ^{vi} Kammer, Alfred (2020), Europe Needs to Maintain Strong Policy Support to Sustain the Recovery, October 21, [Europe Needs to Maintain Strong Policy Support to Sustain the Recovery - IMF Blog](#), last date of access: 26.11.2020.
- ^{vii} Alisjahbana, Armida Salsiah (2020), Introduction, in: Asian Development Bank (ed.) Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, November, download available: <https://www.adb.org/publications/future-regional-cooperation-asia-and-pacific>, last date of access: 27.11.2020.
- ^{viii} European External Action Service (2016), Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, June, download available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf, last date of access: 25.11.2020.
- ^{ix} European External Action Service (2018), Connecting Europe and Asia Building blocks for an EU Strategy. Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank, September 9, Download available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/50708/Connecting%20Europe%20and%20Asia:%20Building%20blocks%20for%20an%20EU%20Strategy, last date of access: 25.11.2020.
- ^x European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2019), Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council. EU-China – A strategic outlook, Strasbourg, March 12, download available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>, last date of access: 16.06.2020.
- ^{xi} European Council (2020), Joint Press Release: EU-Australia Leaders' virtual meeting, November 26, download available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/11/26/joint-press-release-eu-australia-leaders-virtual-meeting/>, last date of access: 29.11.2020.
- ^{xii} Power, John (2020), Germany's defence chief calls China a 'systemic challenge' as Berlin ramps up military presence in Asia, November 5, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3108666/germanys-defence-chief-calls-china-systemic-challenge-berlin>, last date of access: 20.11.2020.
- ^{xiii} Zhou, Laura (2020), 'Let's build a digital Silk Road': Xi Jinping looks to cement China's ties with Asean, November 27, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3111612/lets-build-digital-silk-road-president-xi-promises-ways-china>, last date of access: 29.11.2020.
- ^{xiv} Jean-Yves Le Drian and Heiko Maas (2020), French and German foreign ministers: Joe Biden can make transatlantic unity possible, November 16, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/16/german-french-foreign-ministers-joe-biden-transatlantic-unity/>, last date of access: 27.11.2020.
- ^{xv} APEC Secretariat (2020), APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040, https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2020/2020_aelm/Annex-A, date of last access: 02.12.2020.
- ^{xvi} Global Times (2020) China to 'favorably consider' joining CPTPP, November 21, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1207536.shtml>, last date of access: 21.11.2020.
- ^{xvii} Georges Dib, Francoise Huang and Anita Poulou (2020), RCEP: Common rule of origin could boost regional trade by around USD90BN annually, November 17, https://www.eulerhermes.com/content/dam/onemarketing/ehndbx/eulerhermes_com/en_gl/erd/publications/pdf/2020_11_17_RCEPrulesoforigin.pdf, last date of access: 01.12.2020.
- ^{xviii} European External Action Service (2019), Connecting Europe & Asia: The EU Strategy, September 26, download available: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/50699/connecting-europe-asia-eu-strategy_en, last date of access: 01.12.2020.
- ^{xix} ASEAN Secretariat (2016), Master plan on ASEAN connectivity 2025, August, download available: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Master-Plan-on-ASEAN-Connectivity-20251.pdf>, last date of access: 27.11.2020.

xx ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (2020), Co-chairs` press release - 23rd ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting - 1 December 2020, download available: [23rd-AEMM-Co-Chairs-Press-Release.pdf \(asean.org\)](#) last date of access: 29.11.2020.

xxi Asia-Europe Meeting (2017), ASEM Connectivity, download available: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31705/annex-i.pdf> last date of access: 30.11.2020.

xxii Xin, Zhou (2020), China's Liu He vows Beijing will not give up economic opening with 'dual circulation' strategy, November 25, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3111333/chinas-liu-he-vows-beijing-will-not-give-economic-opening>, last date of access: 27.11.2020.

xxiii Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2020), Xi Jinping Delivers Keynote Speech at APEC

CEO Dialogues, November 19, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1834112.shtml last date of access:

27.11.2020.