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EU Relations with China, Japan and North Korea – Trends, Issues and Implications for the EU Role in Asian Security

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Introduction

Scholars and analysts largely agree that the EU will in the years ahead continue to remain reluctant to develop a security profile in Asia in accordance with its business and economic interests and influence in the region.

This, as EU policymakers usually point out, is not least due to the fact that the EU institutions' mandate and authority to implement foreign and security policies on behalf of EU 27 Member States are too limited to 'do' more with regards to global security, including in Asia. If that is true (and EU policymakers typically argue it is), then the EU Commission and EU Council do all they 'can' or all they are 'allowed' to do with regards to (hard) Asian security which translates into a very limited or even a 'non-role' in Asian hard security.

The nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and the emerging and recently re-emerging intensifying ethnic conflicts in Southeast Asia[1] are 'reminders' of the 'realist' character of Asia's security environment and the EU will continue to have a fairly limited role contributing to the resolution of these and other 'hard security' conflicts in Asia.

To be sure, the EU's so-called 'soft security' policies in Asia are a very different matter even if this sort of engagement does not make it to the front pages of the international press. The EU is the biggest donor of global humanitarian, food and development (providing more than 50% of the total) and the EU's so-called 'capacity-building' policies (e.g. technical assistance, technology and know-how transfers etc.) in many Asian countries have without a doubt contributed to peace and stability in Asia in recent years and decades.

The shortcomings and problems (such as problems related monitoring and supervision of projects on the ground) aside, there is agreement amongst Asian policymakers and analysts that a more prominent and visible European engagement in Asian 'hard security' issues could never be as constructive and promoting security as Brussels' 'soft security' policies in Asia.

[1]Recommendable are IISS scholar Tim Huxley's writings on recent and emerging ethnic and other conflicts in Southeast Asia; see http://www.iiss.org/about-us/staffexpertise/list-experts-by-name/tim-huxley/

This paper will provide an analysis of the EU's political, economic and security relations with Japan, China and North Korea, or: What does the EU 'do' or does not do in terms of politics, economics and security with Japan, China and North Korea?

While seeking to provide an overview of the EU's political, economic and trade and security relations with Tokyo, Beijing and Pyongyang, it will at the same time be sought to draw conclusions on the EU's overall role and engagement in Asian security, or: What does and does not EU security co-operation with Japan, China and (to a lesser extent North Korea) say about the EU's overall role and engagement in Asian security?

This approach of seeking to qualify and quantify the overall EU security involvement in Asia has its limits: The analysis of the EU's relations with three Asian countries in general and security ties in particular cannot provide results and conclusions regarding all issues and aspects of European security involvement in Asian security. In other words: The analysis of the EU's security relations with Tokyo, Beijing and Pyongyang is not necessarily representative of everything the EU 'is' and 'does' in terms of Asian security. It will also be sought to assess whether the EU's approach and policies towards Asian security relations point to the existence of a coherent and clear-cut overall strategy towards Asia in general and Asian security in particular.

The conclusions in this context drawn below are somewhat sobering: The EU's relations in general and security ties with Tokyo, Beijing and Pyongyang in particular do not necessarily enable the analyst and observer detect common and recurring patterns of EU security policies towards Asia.

Instead, individual European governments will continue to formulate and implement their own national foreign, foreign economic and security policies towards Asia competing with or worse contradicting EU Commission Asia policies.

The controversy (or from an EU and European policymaking perspective the 'debacle') surrounding the EU and European policies and approaches towards the EU weapons embargo imposed on China in 1989 demonstrated this 'impressively.'

The EU Commission's position on the lifting of non-lifting of the weapons embargo back in 2004 and 2005 lost much of its credibility when EU Member States chose (without consultation with the EU Commission) to advocate and implement their weapons embargo positions and policies individually (and their contradicting official EU positions).[2]

[2] During the height of the weapons embargo controversy in 2004 and 2005 hardly a day went by when EU Commission and EU Member States contradicted each other on whether and when to lift and not to lift the weapons embargo imposed on China after Tiananmen in 1989; while some Member States (above all the Scandinavian countries) urged the EU Commission to leave the weapons embargo in place other EU Member States frequently changed their position on the embargo, especially those under Chinese pressure to lose out on business opportunities in China if opposed to the lifting of the embargo (Germany, France and the UK). Worse from an EU policymaking perspective, the statements regarding the possible lifting of the weapon coming from the EU Council were not always compatible with the official EU Commission positions.

EU-China Relations[3]

Leaving controversial areas like human rights, the EU weapons embargo imposed on China in 1989, the ever growing trade surplus in China's favor aside, the expansion of EU-China institutional links and bilateral cooperation (at least on paper) has been second to none in recent years.[4] The 25 so-called EU-China 'sectoral dialogues' are part of this and take place on either working or ministerial levels covering areas such as energy, environmental protection, consumer product safety, civil aviation, competition policy, education and culture, employment and social affairs, intellectual property rights (IPR), consumer product safety, maritime transport, regulatory and industrial policy and others.[5]

Various stakeholders are involved in these dialogues, including officials, politicians and business. The dialogues take the form of working groups, conferences, annual formal meetings or regular informal meetings and representatives from nineteen Directorates General in the European Commission and their respective counterparts in China are involved in these dialogues.

Although not the same level of progress is being achieved in all dialogues yet (none in the one on human rights e.g.), some of them have in recent years produced concrete and relevant results, such as the one on the environment: EU-Chinese talks on car exhaust emission standards recently resulted in Beijing adopting EU rules and standards in this area. To be sure, Chinese officials in both Beijing and Brussels continue to insist on the 'informal' (as opposed to 'legally-binding') character of those dialogues when refusing to meet European demands voiced e.g. in the sectoral dialogues dealing intellectual property rights and market access in China.

The EU-China Country Strategy Paper (2007 - 2013) sets out three main areas for cooperation and the multi-annual indicative program is allocating €128 million for the first four years (2007 - 2010).[6] These funds will be invested in areas covered by EU-China policy dialogues, including the ones dealing with trade, socio-economic development, support for China's internal reform process, climate change, the environment and energy.[7] In addition to the EU's assistance and aid programs a number of EU Member States run individual assistance programs in the areas of poverty reduction, energy, healthcare, rule of law, environment and others.

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[3] For a very critical assessment on the EU's ties with China see Berkofsky, Axel, The Great Beijing-Brussels Disconnect; in: The Asia Times July 8, 2008 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/JG08Ad01.html;

[4] For a recent analysis see also Grant, Charles, Barysch, Can Europe and China Shape a New World Order?; Centre for European Reform London 2008; http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/p_837.pdf

[5] See European Commission, An Overview of the 'sectoral dialogues' between China and the European Union; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/china/sectoraldialogue_en.htm

[6] For details see European Commission, External Cooperation Programmes-China; http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/china/china_en.htm; the full version of the EU's China Strategy Paper is downloadable at: http://www.asia-programming.eu/wcm/dmdocuments/draft_CSP_China.pdf

[7] For further details see e.g. European Commission, External Cooperation Programmes, China http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/china/china_en.htm

Not One but (Too) Many Voices

The EU Commission's mandate and authority to implement one 'set' of European policies towards China on behalf of the Union's 27 Member States is limited and there is very little institutionalized coordination between the EU Commission (in charge of the Union's overall trade and economic policies) on the one and the EU Council (in charge of the EU's foreign and security policies) on the other hand.

In fact, there are no inner-EU mechanisms and fora coordinating respective Commission and Council policies towards China. Apart from the fact that the lack of inner-EU policy coordination slows down the Union's decision-making process, it has in the recent past resulted in at times inconsistent and contradictory EU China policies. The controversy and inner-European disagreements in 2004 and 2005 over the EU weapons embargo imposed on China after Tiananmen in 1989 is an (infamous') example in this context.[8]

European inconsistencies and contradictions on whether or whether not the weapons embargo should be lifted led Beijing to claim (and complain until the present day[9]) that the EU is not a credible foreign and security policy actor and consequently not 'worthy' and qualified to implement the so-called 'strategic partnership' with China.

To be sure, Beijing was (and still is) exploiting the inner-European disagreements and controversy on the weapons for its own purposes, EU and European weapons embargo policies were an example of how not to recommend itself as unified foreign and security policy actor.

Beijing's policymakers and their Brussels-based diplomats are of course aware of and well-informed on the EU's problems and complexities with regards to decision-making and inner-EU policy coordination and are without a doubt taking advantage of them. Beijing and their representatives in Brussels have over recent years made it a habit pointing out and complaining about the inner-European policy inconsistencies.

For the time being, Beijing is very likely to continue to choose dealing with either EU institutions or individual EU Member States' governments according to what suits its interests best, as a European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) April 2009 paper authored by François Godement and John Fox argues in a very straightforward manner.[10] EU Member States for their part will like in the past continue to implement their 'own' individual China policies as they see fit regardless of the fact that these policies are not necessarily in compliance or worse contradict the EU Commission's China policies.

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[8] The controversy surrounding the weapons embargo has led to the establishment of the so-called EU-US (2004) and EU-Japan (2005) so-called 'Strategic Dialogue on East Asian Security'

[9] Until today, Chinese officials and scholars likewise typically and persistently urge Brussels to lift the 1989 weapons embargo and end, as Beijing puts it, the 'political discrimination' against China at EU-China track (i.e. official) and track II (non-official) meetings

[10] See Godement, François, Fox, John, A Power Audit of EU-China Relations; European Council on Foreign Relations April 2009 http://ecfr.3cdn.net/532cd91d0b5c9699ad_ozm6b9bz4.pdf; the paper, this author learned through various conversations with EU officials, has been perceived fairly negatively by policymakers in charge of the EU's policies towards China at the EU Commission as the paper argues that the EU does not only not have a coherent strategy towards Beijing but also because it is unable to have one in view of the EU Member States' competing China policies

EU-China Security Cooperation

It has become increasingly clear over recent years that the EU and China have and pursue fundamentally different approaches towards security, be in East Asia, Central, Africa and elsewhere.

While the EU claims to formulate and implement (at least paper) its policies taking into account the protection of human rights, democracy (or willingness to democratize), accountability and transparency in countries it is getting engaged in (above all in the fields of financial and development aid as well as technical assistance), China is being accused of conducting so-called 'value-free diplomacy', implementing economic and foreign economic policies regardless of political oppression or human rights violations (or both) in countries it is doing business in.

This accusation has (in Europe and the US) in recent years in particular been voiced in the context of China's energy and energy security policies in Africa and Central Asia as well as in parts of Southeast Asia, i.e. Burma).

What Europe and the US refer to as 'value-free diplomacy' is what Beijing for its part calls policies along the lines of what it calls the 'principle of non-interference', .i.e. policies which do not 'interfere' with domestic politics in countries China is doing business in. To be sure, the credibility of Beijing's 'principle of non-interference' is debatable (or non-existent) in the context of Beijing's policies towards Burma, Sudan and North Korea. Economic, political, financial support for oppressive regimes (and in the case of Burma for a military junta) must realistically be defined as interference in the affairs of the countries-in this case at the expense of the population obliged to live under oppressive regimes.

EU-China and Taiwan

Brussels does not have a position on the so-called 'Taiwan issue' beyond declaring that Brussels is supporting a peaceful solution of Chinese-Taiwanese disagreements over the status of Taiwan being opposed to the use of force between Taipei and Beijing. Brussels' refusal to have e.g. a an outspoken position (beyond being 'concerned' on paper) on the number of (reportedly still growing number) of Chinese missiles directed at Taiwanese officially is to be understood in this context.

EU-Taiwan trade amounted to roughly 38 billion Euro in 2008 making Taiwan the EU's fifth largest trading partner in Asia (after China, Japan, South Korea and India) .[11] In view of these significant trade ties (plus in view of the fact that roughly 10.000 Europeans live and work in Taiwan) one would expect that the EU is more interested in and concerned about stability of cross-straits relations.[12]

[11]For details see European Commission, Bilateral Trade Relations, Taiwan; http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/taiwan/index_en.htm

[12] For a critical assessments see e.g. Berkofsky, Axel, EU-Taiwan: It's all Business; in: The Asia Times April 5, 2006; http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HD05Ad01.html; Berkofsky, Axel, Setting Course by Trade Winds; in: The Taiwan Review January 6, 2006; http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/site/Tr/ct.asp?xItem=1222&ctNode=128

Leaving the existence of Chinese ballistic missiles targeted at Taiwan aside, current cross-strait relations and the current quasi-absence of Chinese-Taiwanese tensions related to Taiwanese independence do not (at least not for now) necessarily 'require' a more outspoken EU opinion which from a European perspective would (as this what the EU Commission worries most about) 'upset' Beijing's policymakers.[13] Indeed, in the past Beijing-be it at official or non-official encounters-has reacted typically very strongly towards 'too much' EU (or anybody else's) interest in the so-called 'Taiwan question' reminding Brussels' policy-makers that a European opinion on China-Taiwanese relations going beyond announcing to be committed to the 'one-China-principle' is not welcome in Beijing. The EU - or better the EU minus the EU Parliament which much to Beijing's annoyance has in recent years been the author of a number of resolutions dealing with the 'Taiwan question- usually 'plays along' and seeks to avoid Taiwan as a topic as much as possible during official encounters - 'Realpolitik' EU-style.

Discussing Human Rights, Sort of

The EU discusses human rights with Beijing twice a year, in the framework of the so-called EU-China Human Rights Dialogue. The results of this dialogue, EU Commission officials involved in the dialogue admit, must be described as very limited at best, not least because Brussels and Beijing do not agree on what exactly constitutes human rights. Whereas freedom of speech and expression, political and civic rights fall under the EU's definition of human rights, Beijing typically defines human rights above all as so-called 'economic rights', i.e. the right to leave poverty behind and prosper economically. What's more, Beijing has in the past been very clear about its limits to talk about human rights with others. Back in April 2007, Beijing e.g. decided to unilaterally cancel the track II (i.e. the non-official and so-called 'Experts Seminar') part of the EU-China human rights dialogue after the EU and Berlin invited a Beijing-'blacklisted' NGO, the Hong Kong-based China Labour Bulletin, an NGO publishing regular reports on the conditions and problems of Chinese laborers. [14]

The cancellation of the EU-China summit in December 2008 in Lyons[15] again demonstrated that Beijing remains very sensitive about what it considers to be interference in its 'internal affairs' and European 'advice' on human rights in China clearly falls into the category of such 'interference'.[16]

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[13] Any time in the past when the 'Taiwan issue' made it onto the agenda or even to it in the context of EU-China exchanges-be it track I or track II, the Chinese side (scholars usually included) reacted fairly strongly typically forbidding itself any what it refers to as 'interference' in China's internal affairs

[14] See China Labour Bulletin 29 May 2009; http://www.china-labour.org.hk/en/node/44896

[15] In protest over France French President Nicolas Sarkozy's decision to meet the Dalai Lama in the city of Gdansk on 6 December 2008, when Poland marked the 25th anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Lech Walesa; already in October 2008 the EU 'offended' Beijing when the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to imprisoned Chinese political activist Hu Jia; see European Parliament - Sakharov Prize 2008 awarded to Hu Jia; http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/015-39965-294-10-43-902-20081020STO39964-2008-20-10-2008/default_en.htm

[16] China, the official rhetoric in Beijing indicates, refuses to get involved in internal political affairs of states it is doing business with explaining e.g. the fact that Beijing has no problems with actively expanding political and economic ties with Sudan, Zimbabwe, North Korea, Burma; for critical assessments see e.g. Dosch, Joern, Managing Security in ASEAN-China Relations: Liberal Peace of Hegemonic Stability; in: Asian Perspective, Vol.31, No.1 2007, pp.209-236; also Restall, Hugo, China's Bid for Asian Hegemony; in: The Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), May 2007, Berkofsky,

In view of the dialogue's limited results, Brussels (as well as some EU Member States) have in recent years established bilateral dialogue on the rule of law. Leaving persisting disagreements aside, these dialogues (the one between China and Germany e.g. is one example) have produced some results and Beijing has proven much more receptive to European advice and input on the rule of the law than human rights.

Trade and Investment Relations

The EU became China's biggest trading partner in 2004, but the EU still exports more to Switzerland than to China, which according to the EU Commission is not least a result of market access obstacles for European business and investors in China. In 2008, EU-China bilateral trade amounted to €325 billion with a € 170 billion trade deficit in Beijing's favor.[17]

Then again approaching the EU-China deficit in isolation, economists and the EU Commission itself argue, is not necessarily doing justice to the quality and scope of Beijing's trade surplus with Brussels. In fact, Asia's share of EU imports has remained stable at 20 - 25% over the past decade and the growing trade deficit with China can to some extent be explained by the fact that exports from China have partly been replaced exports from other Asian countries. Besides, foreign multinational companies (many of them European) are responsible for roughly 65% of exports out of China, de-facto meaning that Europe (and ultimately European consumers who enjoy the cost benefit of products made in China) contributes to or indeed 'produces' a large of the EU's trade deficit with China.

Intellectual property rights (IPR) violations in China are another EU concern and EU statistics indicate that European business has lost up to Euro 20 billion in China through copyright and trademark infringements in 2008 alone.[18] Beijing has in recent years adopted a number of (at least on paper) effective laws and regulations related to the protection of intellectual property rights, but the enforcement process in China remains slow and only partly transparent, as European continues to maintain. 60% of counterfeit and pirated products sold in Europe are still made in China, the EU Commission complains.

EU business and its representatives in Beijing-above all the European Chamber of Commerce in Beijing-complain in regular reports[19] about persisting and numerous tariff and non-tariff trade barriers on exports from Europe, as well as restrictions on investment in manufacturing and services. In non-compliance with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and regulations,

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Axel, The hard facts on soft power; in: The Asia Times May 25, 2007; http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/IE25Ad01.html

[17] See Europa Press Releases Rapid 18 May 2009; http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=STAT/09/72&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

[18] For further details European Commission (October 24, 2006), Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities A policy paper on EU-China trade and investment: Competition and Partnership; for a critical assessment of the EU's China October 2006 trade paper see also Berkofsky, Axel, The EU Unleashes a Paper Tiger; in: The Asia Times February 3, 2007; http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China_Business/IB03Cb06.html; also Berkofsky, Axel, Europe Gets Tough on China; in: The Far Eastern Economic Review February 2007; www.feer.com http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0632:FIN:EN:PDF

[19] For details on EU complaints with regards to what the EU refers to as unfair trade, investment and business practices the European Business in China Position Paper 2008/2009 published at the European Chamber of Commerce Beijing; see: http://www.europeanchamber.com.cn/view/media/publications

the Chamber's 2008 'EU Business in China Position Paper' argued, Beijing continues to maintain a number of high tariffs in industries of particular importance such as textiles, clothing, footwear, leather and ceramics.

As regards Chinese non-tariff barriers, European exporters are according to the EU Chamber of Commerce facing an increasing number of non-tariff barriers such as product certification, labeling standards, import-approval requirements and customs clearance delays.[20] Brussels and the EU Chamber of Commerce in Beijing also request Beijing to abolish government-initiated so-called 'China-first approaches' in what Brussels and the chamber refer to as 'key sectors, such as steel, automobiles, shipbuilding and semiconductors. China, however, has only recently introduced these policies aimed at aiding and protecting local industries and limiting EU (and US) exports in the above sectors which makes it very unlikely that Beijing will abolish them any time soon as requested by the EU (and the US).

While the process of enforcing intellectual property rights in China will continue to be slow, the EU will continue filing anti-dumping cases against China at the WTO in Geneva on a (fairly) regular basis.

Implications

The bilateral EU-China agenda will continue to be dominated by issues related to trade and investments, above the trade deficit in China's favor, intellectual property rights, market access obstacles for European business in China and most recently the controversy centered around the EU extension of additional tariffs on shoes made in China (with the EU accusing China of dumping Chinese-made on the European market, i.e. selling (supported by subsidies provided for by the Chinese government) Chinese-made shoes below the price of production in China).[21]

The EU's above mentioned position on the so-called 'Taiwan question' and Brussels' decision not to 'rock the boat' by e.g. urging Beijing to reduce the number of Chinese missiles directed at Taiwanese territory is an indication that Brussels is not willing to get further involved in Asian hard security, especially if one of the concerned parties is China.

To be sure, Beijing will continue not to have to 'worry' about too much EU interest in the so-called 'Taiwan issue' with Brussels 'obeying' China declaring its commitment towards to the so-called 'One-China-principle' (acknowledging Beijing as the sole of all Chinese people, including those in Taiwan) at some point during every official EU-China encounter.

The EU-China so-called 'strategic partnership' (proclaimed in 2003) will continue not to include the notion of 'strategic' in a security sense (even if the US and Japan initially thought

[20] For the most EU's most recent (September 2009) request towards China to abolish trade barriers restricting EU investments in China see Europa Press Releases Rapid China: EU calls for less barriers, more IPR protection to boost investment http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1285&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en; see also e.g. Thornhill, John, Trading Strains; in: The Financial Times October 1, 2008

[21] A very controversially discussed issue inside of Europe, mostly because China is designated as 'non-market' economy meaning hat the prices of Chinese shoes are compared with prices in a third country, in this case Brazil; see also Beattle, Alan, Q&A: Dumping Shoes; in: The Financial Times Nov. 18, 2009

and feared so, especially when the possible lift of the EU weapons embargo made it to the top of the EU-China agenda in 2004/2005). Instead, 'strategic' will continue to stand for 'comprehensive' in the context of bilateral relations, amongst others reflected by the number of the steadily increasing number of the above mentioned 'strategic dialogues.'

The so-called 'EU-China Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)' is supposed to be the next 'big bang' on the EU-China agenda, Brussels has been announcing for more than 3 years.[22] However, apart from reading on the official record that the PCA will take EU-China relations to the 'next level', there is very little information available on how bilateral relations will change in scope and quality once the PCA gets adopted.[23] As it has become increasingly clear in recent years, China remains very unlikely to sign the PCA unless the EU decides to lift the above mentioned weapons embargo, to which China refers to as 'political discrimination.' As the EU remains unlikely to lift the embargo any time soon, the PCA is unlikely to be signed any time soon either. To be sure, when and if adopted, the PCA will not result in any additional EU-China security cooperation, due to the reason explained above.

EU - Japan Ties[24]

Joint European-Japanese global policies and policy initiatives go usually unnoticed and very rarely (i.e. almost never) get coverage by the international press. Put bluntly, EU-Japan relations and policies are not 'front page material.'

Back in 2001 Tokyo and Brussels had very ambitious (on paper) plans as regards international economic, political and security co-operation when adopting the so-called 'EU-Japan Action Plan for Co-operation' in 2001 (also 'EU-Japan Action Plan', for details see below). However, very few of the envisioned joint policies have actually been implemented and even if political rhetoric voiced during official EU-Japan encounters suggests otherwise, this is unlikely to change in the years ahead-not least in view of a lack of urgency to upgrade and intensify concrete EU-Japan co-operation in international politics and security.

Nonetheless, Brussels and Tokyo have over the last ten years established a framework for regular consultations and bilateral meetings, including regular consultations ahead of the annual session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Furthermore, the EU and Japan are jointly supporting international initiatives to achieve global nuclear disarmament and efforts to limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). This was accompanied by jointly signing various international disarmament and non-proliferation protocols.[25]

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[22] There is yet very limited (essentially none) information available on the new envisioned partnership agreement other than announcing that the new agreement will take EU-China relations to (a yet to be defined) 'new level'; for some limited information see http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/china/dialogue_en.htm

[23] See also Berkofsky, Axel, The Great Brussels-Beijing Disconnect; in: The Asia Times July 8, 2008; http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/JG08Ad01.html

[24] See also Berkofsky, Axel, True Strategic Partnership or Rhetorical Window-Dressing-A Closer Look at the Relationship between the EU and Japan; in: Japan Aktuell 2/2008, Institut für Asienkunde (IFA) Hamburg, Germany, auch: Berkofsky, Axel, The EU and Japan: A Partnership in the Making; Issue Paper European Policy Centre (EPC) February 2007; http://www.epc.eu/en/pub.asp?TYP=TEWN&LV=187&see=y&t=13&PG=TEWN/EN/detailpub&l=12&AI=555

[25] See 'Japan-EU Joint Declaration on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation' http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/japan/summit

To be sure, jointly signing nuclear disarmament protocols was one thing, following up on the signatures and implementing joint policies quite another as it turned out. In other words: The EU and Japan citing their joint signatures under international disarmament and non-proliferation protocols as achievements of bilateral policies in the areas of international politics and security have only so much credibility if these signatures do lead not and result in joint policies with a concrete and measurable impact on international security.

Tokyo and the EU in the 1990s

Following the EU-Japan so-called 'The Hague Declaration' in 1991[26], a so-called 'EU factor' made it into Tokyo's policymaking circles when identifying Japan's foreign and security policy partners in a post-Cold War era. The Japanese (at least on paper) motivation for expanding its relationship with the EU in the early 1990s was to 'diversify' its regional and global security policies, which throughout the Cold War had been defined and limited by its security alliance with the US. Intensifying relations with the EU, it was announced in Tokyo back then, should in the post-Cold War era balance Japan's global foreign and security policies, making it less dependent on US regional and global foreign and security policy strategies.

This announcement to make Japanese foreign and security policies less focused on the security alliance with the US resulted in the establishment of the so-called 'Task Force on Foreign Relations', a body set up by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2002. The November 2002 task force report identified the EU as a 'strong partner' in selected areas of cooperation arguing that 'In a new world order Japan needs to have a strong partner according to individual issues. In some issues, Europe can be a rational choice as such a partner.'

Co-operating with the EU in 'some issues', however, did not sound as if Japan was willing to embrace the EU as important global foreign and security policy partner. Indeed, the report did not result in any new EU-Japan policy initiatives which could have been understood as a (partial) 'diversification' of Japanese foreign and security policies.[27] In reality, the opposite took place when Junichiro Koizumi took office in 2001: After the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001 Japan intensified its security and military cooperation with the US which amongst others led to a Japanese refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of US military in Afghanistan and the deployment of 1 000 Japanese military troops to Iraq in 2004 to provide humanitarian and medial aid.

Furthermore, Tokyo expanded its security cooperation with Washington in Asia officially signing up for the co-development and co-deployment of a regional missile defense system to counter the threat posed by North Korean Nodong and Taepodong missiles. Also in 2005, Washington and Tokyo decided to revise the 1997 so-called US-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation which for the first time (at least on paper) would give Japan an active (as

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[26] The Hague Declaration was not least the result of a Japanese 'Europhoria' after the end of the Cold War and was accompanied by Japanese political rhetoric that the first decade of the 21st century would be a 'decade of Euro-Japanese cooperation.'

[27] See also Gilson, Gilson, Japan and the European Union: A partnership for the twentieth-first century?, Basingstoke, Macmillan 2002; for a critical Japanese perspective see e.g. Tsuruoka, Michito, Why the EU-Japan partnership cannot flourish; paper presented at the British International Studies Association Conference, University of Warwick, Dec. 20-22, 2004

opposed to a role centered around providing logistical and other forms of back-up support) military role in a regional contingency. This would (also for the first time) possibly (and semi-officially) include a regional contingency in the Taiwan Straits in the case of a US-China military confrontation over Taiwan.

The EU - Japan Action Plan[28]

In December 2001, the EU and Japan adopted the so-called 'Joint Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation' which identified more than 100 areas of bilateral cooperation, ranging from joint peacekeeping and security cooperation to strengthened economic and trade cooperation.[29]

Today and nine years later there is agreement amongst analysts that the action plan suffered from a lack of focus listing far for too many areas of bilateral co-operation to be tackled with the limited available resources. This is reflected by how little Brussels and Tokyo were actually able to 'do' (as opposed to signing protocols and documents) with regards to international politics and security over the last nine years. And this is despite the fact that the action plan committed the EU and Japan to coordinate their respective development, humanitarian and peacekeeping policies, and intensify cooperation in areas such as conflict prevention, non-proliferation, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction and assistance in Europe and Asia.

Very recently, the EU and Japan have started working on a new EU-Japan action plan which is likely to be adopted in 2011. There is a consensus amongst policymakers in Brussels[30] (and probably also in Tokyo) that a new action plan will have to cover far fewer areas and issues of co-operation in order to 'produce' tangible results and provide policymakers in both Brussels and Tokyo with guidelines and policy recommendations in the areas of the envisioned cooperation.[31]

However, it remains unlikely that the political will and probably more importantly the resources in Brussels and Tokyo will be increased to make a second EU-Japan Action Plan more successful and result-oriented than the first one. China and not Japan will continue to remain the EU's foreign and foreign economic policy priority in the years ahead and judging by Japan's newly-elected Prime Minister's foreign policy announcements and initiatives, Tokyo is planning above all to intensify the country's Asian policy agenda, including the resumption of Japan's leadership role as regards regional economic and political integration.[32]

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[28] See 'An Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation-Shaping our Common Future' www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/eu/kodo_k_e.html

[29] The plan is divided into four main sections: 'Promoting peace and security', 'Strengthening the economic and trade partnership', 'Coping with global and societal changes', 'Bringing together people and cultures'

[30] This author's conversations with EU Commission officials directly involved in the drafting of the new action plan confirm this. Conversations with Japanese scholars who are part of a so-called 'wise men group' to provide Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs with advice on the new envisioned action plan, agree that a new version of such a plan must be much more focused.

[31] This author is part of a group of scholars invited to EU Commission-sponsored brainstorming meetings (the first took place in October 2009, the second taking place in February 2010) dealing with EU-Japan relations in general and a new EU-Japan Action Plan in particular

[32] The Prime Minister is particularly keen on putting Japan to the forefront of the promotion and the envisioned establishment of the so-called 'East Asian Community', a (yet vaguely defined)

Furthermore - and probably more importantly for a successful implementation of an action plan with a list of issues and areas to cover and work on daily-the number of Japanese officials and bureaucrats within Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs working on Europe and relations with the EU are still by far outnumbered by their colleagues working on the US (or China for that matter). As regards the EU, it is fair to point out that the number of Commission officials working on relations with Japan within the Commission Directorate for External Relations (DG Relex in Brussels lingo) is not sufficient enough to dedicate the required resources and time to a more successful and result-oriented implementation of an 'EU-style' action plan, i.e. a plan that is far too ambitious typically reading like a 'shopping list' of unresolved international issues[33], unless a new action plan with Japan will indeed list far fewer issues and areas of envisioned bilateral cooperation.

EU - Japan Security Cooperation

EU-Japan co-operation on security issues focuses on non-military (or what is referred to as 'alternative') security co-operation, i.e. security co-operation using financial and economic resources to contribute to peace and stability through Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other forms of development and financial aid.[34]

However, non-military security cooperation with the EU continues to complement Tokyo's close military security cooperation with the US in a very limited fashion. From a Japanese perspective, the EU can contribute very little, if anything at all, to the country's security given the security environment in Tokyo's immediate geographical neighborhood. Close defense ties with the US, supported by roughly 50.000 US troops on Japanese territory, Japan's political mainstream and defense establishment maintain, is what keeps North Korea from attacking Japanese territory with conventional ballistic missiles or worse.

Japan's focus and dependence on the US for its national security notwithstanding, Brussels and Tokyo have over the last 10 years undertaken a number of bilateral initiatives and established bilateral dialogue fora to deal with international non-proliferation and security issues.

These included[35]:

- Jointly signing the 'Joint Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation' in June 2005[36]
- Joint promotion of the reform of the Conventional Weapons Protocol on anti-personnel landmines

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'community' comprising states in Northeast, Southeast and South Asia as well as Australia and New Zealand

[33] The EU's action plan with India e.g. is only but one example of the EU's action plans with other countries or regions are typically listing too large a number of issues and areas of envisioned cooperation for policymakers to follow-up on and implement

[34] See Hughes, Christopher W., Japan's Security Agenda-Military, Economic & Environmental Dimensions, Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2004

[35] Information provided by Japan Desk, European Commission, Brussels September 2009

[36] The goal of this agreement is to support the strengthening of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Main Battle Tank and Light Armor Weapon Law and the International Atomic Energy Agency's Comprehensive Safeguard Agreements and Additional Protocols

- Joint adoption of a declaration on Disarmament and Non-proliferation in 2004 promoting the acceleration of the UN Action Plan on small arms and light weapons
- Joint implementation and co-ordination on small arms and light weapons in Cambodia
- Co-operation on the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2003, 2005, 2007
- Co-operation on the reconstruction and rehabilitation in Southeast Europe by supporting projects through the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund
- Launch of the EU-Japan Strategic Dialogue on Central Asia with 5 meetings from 2006 to 2008
- Joint financial sponsorship of the International Criminal Court (ICC)[37]

Jointly signing non-proliferation and disarmament protocols, however, is not the same as implementing joint policies as a follow-up of signatures under international nonproliferation and disarmament protocols and EU policymakers do indeed admit that much more-to put it bluntly-has been done on paper than on the ground over the last decade between the EU and Japan.[38]

Talking About East Asian Security

In 2005 Brussels and Tokyo started to discuss Asian security issues on a regular institutional basis by launching the so-called 'EU-Japan Brussels Strategic Dialogue on East Asian Security' in September of that year.

The establishment of the 'EU-Japan Dialogue on East Asian Security' was preceded by the establishment of the EU-US Dialogue on East Asian Security in 2004' and given that EU weapons embargo imposed on China in 1989 was at all times the central issue on the dialogue's agenda[39], it is probably fair to assume that the motivation for Tokyo to initiate regular exchanges on East Asian security was identical to Washington's motivations in 2004:

Institutionalizing pressure on Brussels to leave the weapons embargo imposed on China after Tiananmen in 1989 in place.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, Tokyo and Washington were preoccupied (unnecessarily as it turned out as the lifting of the embargo is nowhere near the top of Brussels' China agenda) that the EU would lift the embargo, and resume weapons and military technology exports to China actively supporting Beijing's efforts to modernize its armed forces.

In retrospect (and in view of the fact that neither Tokyo nor Washington ever sought to include the EU in its security strategies for East Asia beyond informal consultations) it can be concluded that neither Tokyo nor Washington would have suggested to set up a dialogue on East Asian security without the possible lifting of the embargo on the agenda.[40] Before the

[37]There is agreement that European and Japanese financial contributions over the years turned out to be vitally crucial for the ICC to operate and function
[38] Author's conversations with EU Commissions policymakers in Brussels October 2009
[39] If not the only relevant issue for the US and Japan
[40] EU policymakers, of course, would disagree with this conclusion and argue (as they did when speaking with this author) that both Japan and the US were interested in discussing their respective regional security policy strategies with the EU

embargo issue was discussed in 2004, Washington and Tokyo have essentially not shown any interest in discussing Asian security with Brussels and neither the US nor Japan e.g. have never advocated a more prominent EU role in solving the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula such as encouraging or inviting Brussels to become a member of the so-called 6-Party Talks, the multilateral forum to achieve North Korea's de-nuclearization.[41]

Trade Relations

In 2008, bilateral EU-Japan trade amounted to €117 billion[42], down from €121 billion in 2006.[43] Like in the years before the EU in 2008 reported a trade deficit with Japan amounting to €32 billion.[44]

Among the EU27 Member States, Germany (€12.8 billon or 30% of the total EU-Japan trade) was the largest exporter to Japan in 2008, followed by France (€5.6 billion or 13%), the UK (€4.6 billion or 11%) and Italy (€4.3 billion or 10%). Germany (€17.4 billion or 23%) was also the largest importer, followed by the Netherlands (€11.5 billion or 15%), the UK (€9.6 billion or 13%) and Belgium (€8.4 billion or 11%).

Even though the EU's trade deficit with Japan remains a concern to EU and European economic policymakers, given the relatively limited scale (limited as compared with China above all, see below), the trade deficit does no longer (like in the 1970s and 1980s) feature on top of Brussels' trade agenda with Japan.

In recent years, the EU and Japan launched and held a number of dialogues, either to increase bilateral trade and investments or (probably more importantly) to help each other protecting themselves from intellectual property rights' or patent right violations.

These dialogues are amongst others:

I. The High-Level Trade Dialogue[45]
II. EU Industrial Policy Dialogue
III. Japan-EU Policy Dialogue on the International Patent Agenda (since November 2005
IV. EU-Japan Energy Policy Dialogue (since 2007)

In 2007, Brussels and Tokyo also adopted the so-called EU-Japan Action Plan on Intellectual

[41] 6-Party Talks: A multilateral forum hosted by China and aimed at de-nuclearizing North Korea. The Six-Party Talks were established in 2003 and the participating nations are the US, Japan, South Korea, China, Russia and North Korea
[42] See Europa Press Releases Rapid 29 April 2009; http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=STAT/09/59&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en
[43] The data on EU-Japan trade available on the EU's websites (on the DG Relex and DG Trade websites) ends with the year 2005; getting up-to-date data from EU websites is cumbersome and analysts often have to rely on press releases from DG Trade of Eurostat publishing recent data in press releases
[44] Most Member EU States recorded trade deficits with Japan in 2008. The largest in the Netherlands (€-8.5 billion), Belgium (€-6.2 billion), UK (€-4.9 billion), Germany (€-4.6 billion) and Spain (€-2.4 billion). The only significant surpluses were registered in Denmark (€+1.1 billion), Ireland (€+0.9 billion) and Finland (€+0.5 billion).
[45] For more information see also European Commission, 18th EU-Japan Summit 4 May 2009, Prague Joint Press Statement; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/japan/docs/2009_summit_js_en.pdf

Property Rights (IPR) Protection and Enforcement, a plan to strengthen und coordinate European-Japanese cooperation on IPR at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.[46] This dialogue was established not least due to the common problems Europe and Japan are confronted with when doing business and investing in China. Unsurprisingly Beijing called that dialogue targeted at China and Chinese business when the dialogue was launched.[47]

In the 1990s, the EU and Japan established the so-called EU-Japan Regulatory Reform Dialogue[48] aimed at facilitating European exports to Japan burdened by red tape and a complex and above all expensive Japanese distribution system. Many industry and trade sectors in Japan are still subject to regulations and, in Brussels view, excessive rules and requirements for foreign investors, including agriculture, food safety, transport services, telecommunications, public construction and the financial services sector.

Despite the obstacles for European business operating in Japan, the EU was Japan's main foreign investor in recent years with investments amounting to an average $5.5 billion per year, driven by investments in telecommunications, car manufacturing, retail and insurance sectors. European business leaders and business associations based in Japan[49], however, argue that European FDI to Japan could and indeed should by now be much higher if it were not for the continuous existence of obstacles and regulations distorting competition and rendering investments in Japan unnecessarily costly.

Implications

The EU's December 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) envisioned a strategic partnership with Japan (as well as with China, see below).[50] Until today, however, it is not entirely clear what exactly the 'strategic' dimension of bilateral ties is and why the EU and Japan are the 'natural allies' the EU Commission refers to Japan as when describing ties with Tokyo at official encounters.

Not least because too little of what Brussels and Tokyo and Brussels were planning to do on paper over the last decade with regards to international politics, economics and security got actually done and the EU-Japan Action Plan envisioned much more of what Brussels were able and willing to do, particularly in the area of security.

EU-Japan security cooperation over the last decade is a decade of many lost opportunities. Very little of what was envisioned to take place in terms of bilateral 'soft' security cooperation in the framework of the EU-Japan action plan (beyond the signing of disarmament and non-proliferation protocols) has actually taken place.

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[46] 'Target' from a European-Japanese perspective of this dialogue of this dialogue is without a doubt China which has after the establishment of the dialogue voiced claiming that Brussels and Tokyo are 'ganging up' on China and its difficulties implementing intellectual property rights in China

[47] And which in China was perceived as EU-Japan dialogue 'aimed' at China as the author's recent interview with Chinese officials indicate

[48] For details see European Commission, EU-Japan Regulatory Reform Dialogue; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/japan/regulatory_reform_en.htm

[49] Author's conversations with European business leaders in Tokyo in December 2009 suggested this and is in line with what the EU Commission in Brussels argues as regards the obstacles to European investments in Japan.

[50] As well as with India, Russia and Canada; for details see Solana, Javier, 'A Secure Europe in a Better World-European Security Strategy; European Council Brussels 12 December 2003; www.ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf

As regards the above mentioned EU-Japan 'Strategic Dialogue on East Asian Security, almost 5 years after its launch, the dialogue remains hardly known outside of Brussels and will very likely continue not to lead to joint EU-Japan Asian security policies. To be fair, European and Japanese officials counter criticism on the lack of results coming out of the dialogue by arguing that the dialogue was not supposed to produce joint EU-Japan policies, but is instead to be understood as an instrument and forum to inform each other on respective security policies in East Asia.

As regards EU-Japan cooperation in Afghanistan, Japanese Prime Minister has late last year announced to assign additional $5 billion in civilian aid for Afghanistan and some of the funds are envisioned to be spent on joint projects with the EU. There is certainly scope for further EU-Japanese cooperation in Afghanistan, but it remains to be seen-to put it bluntly-whether policymakers in Europe and Japan will put the money and cooperation where their mouth is, i.e. whether the envisioned civilian cooperation in the months and years ahead will actually take place in 2010 and beyond.

Furthermore, the Japanese Prime Minister announced during his speech at the UN in New York shortly after taking office last September that Japan plans to increase cooperation with the EU on global environment and climate issues (which as it is now widely agreed amongst analysts and policymakers have at least indirect implications on global security).

However, the recent UN climate summit in Copenhagen did not experience a noteworthy increase on EU-Japan cooperation with regards to climate change and so far it must concluded that intensification of EU-Japan cooperation on climate change issues as envisioned by Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama takes place on paper and paper only.

In conclusion, from a European perspective security cooperation with Tokyo has yet not turned out to be Europe 'entry ticket' into Asian security as it was hoped in European policy-making circles after the signing of the EU-Japan Action Plan back in 2001. Tokyo for its part remains relatively disinterested in including Europe and the EU in its regional security policy thinking and strategies, unless EU Asian security policies towards Asia have a potentially direct impact on Japanese security as it could have been the case if the EU had decided to lift its weapons embargo imposed on China in 1989.

EU-North Korea Ties

North Korea's second nuclear test in May 2009[51] (the first one took place in October 2006) confirmed that the EU's role to denuclearize North Korea will be the same as in the years before: Providing however - shaped 'political support' for the so-called 6-Party Talks while continuing a very limited engagement course towards North Korea through equally limited and sporadic humanitarian and food and economic engagement activities.

The EU's current relative inactivity on the Korean Peninsula stands in contrast to the Union's economic and political engagement policies towards North Korea of the early 2000s. In May

[51] Which led to the reinforcement of existing EU sanctions against North Korea; see e.g. EU urges tough response to North Korea's 'irresponsible acts'; EU Business 25 May 2009; http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1243250640.71; EU adopts North Korea sanctions ; EU Business 26 May 2009; http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1248700622.95/view

2001, the EU established diplomatic relations with Pyongyang and many EU Member States followed the EU example in 2001 and 2002.

Today, 26 out of 27 EU Member States (except France which cites North Korea's human rights situation as obstacle to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Pyongyang) maintain bilateral diplomatic relations with Pyongyang.[52] The establishment of EU-North Korea diplomatic relations, however, has not led to increased EU influence on politics and security in North Korea (as it was hoped in Brussels in the early 2000s), not least because Brussels did not turn into a 'counterweight' of US policies towards North Korea as it was initially hoped in Pyongyang.[53]

After the detection in 2002 of what was believed to be a clandestine North Korean nuclear program, Brussels instead followed almost immediately (and without spending much time to verify whether what US spy satellites have detected was indeed a secret North Korean nuclear program) Washington's lead to interrupt economic and political engagement with Pyongyang.

The EU and the 6-Party Talks[54]

The so-called 6-Party Talks were established in 2003 after US reconnaissance satellites in October 2002 detected a clandestine North Korean nuclear program producing nuclear weapons-grade highly enriched uranium. The talks gained additional relevance when Pyongyang conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006 and declared itself a de-facto 'nuclear state.' The talks continued despite the nuclear crisis eventually leading to the so-called 'February 2007 agreement' which codified the provision of economic, financial and energy aid for North Korea in return for the verifiable and sustainable end of Pyongyang's nuclear programs (and eventually dismantlement of all North Korean facilities).

Brussels has never publicly requested a seat at the 6-Party Talks negotiation table in Beijing either and has until the present day essentially limited itself to offering verbal 'political support' for the 6-Party Talks.[55]

In a speech at the European Parliament on 11 October 2006, the EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner mentioned EU 'political support' for the 6-Party

[52] While seven EU Member States (Germany, Bulgaria, Sweden, Romania, Great Britain, Poland and Hungary) maintain embassies in Pyongyang, the other Member States have themselves represented by either their embassies in Seoul or Beijing. The EU itself does not maintain an embassy in Pyongyang and is (depending on the issue and the political circumstances) represented by its ambassador in Seoul.
[53] Various conversations with North Korean officials in 2003, 2004, 2007 and 2008 confirm this
[54] A multilateral forum hosted by China and aimed at de-nuclearizing North Korea.The Six-Party Talks were established in 2003 and the participating nations are the US, Japan, South Korea, China, Russia and North Korea
[55] For details on the EU's position on and approach towards the 6-Party Talks see e.g. Council of the European Union 22 July 2008, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the 6-Party Talks; http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/101890.pdf ; for a critical assessment of the EU's 'non-role' in North Korea see also Berkofsky, Axel, EU: On the Bench in Pyongyang; ISN Security Watch 17 February 2009; http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?ots591=4888CAA0-B3DB-1461-98B9-E20E7B9C13D4&lng=en&id=96587

Talks, but did not quantify and qualify what kind of 'political support' the EU is willing and able to offer to a forum and a negotiation process it is not part of.[56]

After Pyongyang agreed in February 2007 to disable and dismantle its plutonium-producing reactors in return for the provision of energy and financial aid, Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) announced that the EU would from now on request to be a 'player' as opposed to only 'payer' in a post-nuclear North Korea.

Glyn Ford, former member of the European Parliament and frequent visitor to North Korea calls this a 'No-say-no-pay' approach towards North Korea. The EU and Solana, Ford writes, were planning to take North Korea's (at least on paper) willingness to make progress with regards its denuclearization process as an opportunity to define and formulate a new and possibly expanded EU role in a post-nuclear North Korea.

'After February's deal in Beijing (2007), the spokesperson of Javier Solana, the High Official for the CFSP, speaking to the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee made it clear that this time around the EU wanted to be a player not a payer in any final ccounting.'[57]

However, these plans have not materialized and the EU Council and Solana have never followed up on that rhetoric which back then indeed sounded like a 'new' and decisively more active EU security policy approach towards North Korea. The EU remains as 'shy' as ever on North Korean hard security issues-North Korea in general and EU-North Korean trade in particular (see below) are seemingly not important enough for the EU to seek to include itself more visibly and actively in 'hard security' issues on the Korean Peninsula.

Food and Humanitarian Aid

The EU has provided North Korea with humanitarian aid worth roughly Euro 370 million from 1995 to the present even if the EU's most 'recent' notable provision of food aid for North Korea dates back to November 2006.[58] What's more, transport costs to and distribution costs in North Korea are included in the overall amount provided for humanitarian aid significantly reducing the actual money available for actual food and humanitarian aid such as medicines and medical supplies.

Through the so-called EU Food Security program the EU is funding NGO projects over the period 2007 - 2010 out of a 35 million Euro budget set aside for the DPRK in 2002, but for the time being the EU has no plans to provide North Korea with additional humanitarian and food aid arguing that North Korea's current humanitarian and food situation does not require additional large-scale food aid.

The World Food Program (WFP) does not share that assessment and maintains that North Korea's 2008 harvest is the worst in a decade. What's more, malnutrition amongst infants,

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[56] Ferrero-Waldner, Benita, North Korea Speech at the European Parliament 11 October 2006; http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/587&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

[57] See Ford, Glyn, North Korea on the Brink: Struggle for Survival; Pluto Press London 2008, S. 216/217

[58] Siehe dazu http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/korea_north/docs/2006_hu_assist_301106_en.pdf

children and women is still and as ever above 30% and more than 50% of North Korea's population, the WFP states in a report on North Korea, does not have access to basic medical services and supplies.[59]

EU Economic Engagement Policies

As formulated in the EU's 2002 North Korea Country Strategy Paper (CSP) a total of Euro 35 million had been set aside for EU technical assistance projects until 2006.[60] The CSP - together with the EU's National Indicative Program (NIP) for North Korea - set out the framework and objectives for technical assistance projects in North Korea. At the time, this made the EU the only substantial donor of technical assistance to North Korea and the CSP and NIP were to provide for training in market economic principles and projects designed to support and promote sustainable management and the efficient use of natural resources and energy in the DPRK, as well as institutional support and capacity-building.[61]

Basis for the aid and projects formulated in the CSP was the EU's assessment that support for North Korea's industrial sector (above all coal, steel) as opposed to support for the agricultural sector is crucial for a possible economic recovery in North Korea. Back then Brussels concluded that the structure of North Korea's economy is similar to the structure of many Eastern European economies of the 1990s (as opposed to the structure of fellow Asian economies with and large and developed agricultural sectors.) Consequently, EU aid and technical assistance in 2002 focussed on North Korea's industrial sector such as coal and the heavy industry.

Initially, North Korea seemed willing not only to accept EU economic and financial aid but also to learn from Europe how to run and manage an economy in need of economic and structural reforms.[62] Amongst others, Pyongyang sent a group of senior officials to Europe in 2002 to learn about EU economic policies and models and welcomed the EU Parliament's initiative to establish regular exchanges between the European Parliament North Korea's political leadership.

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[59]Furthermore, the WFP estimates that 2008 could have been the worst harvest in North Korea for more than a decade. According to WFP there is a deficit of 1.6 million tons of grain and crops meaning that up to 7 million North Korean could suffer from acute hunger in the years ahead; for details see World Food Programme-Where We Work-North Korea; http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=408; see also Haggard, Stephen, Noland, Marcus, Weeks, Eric, North Korea on the Precipice of Famine; Policy Brief, Peterson Institute for International Economics May 2008;http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/08042HaggardNolandWeeks.pdf

[60]Siehe European Commission, North Korea Country Strategy Paper; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_korea/csp/index.htm

[61] See also, Berkofsky, Axel, EU's North Korea Policy a Non-Starter; in: The Asia Times 10 July 2003; http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/EG10Dg01.html

[62]On North Korea's economic reform process and later its interruption see e.g. Babson, Bradley, O., Economic Perspectives on Future Directions for Engagement with the DPRK in a Post-Test World; The Stanley Foundation December 2006; www.stanleyfoundation.org/publications/pab/BabsonPAB.pdf; also Berkofsky, Axel, North Korean Economy: Reform, Collapse; ISN Security Watch 8 May 2007; http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=17586; Frank, Rüdiger, Can Economic Theory Demystify North Korea?; Nautilus Institute http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0644Frank.pdf,Frank, Rüdiger, Systemic Restrictions, Quantitative Analysis, Ideological Background; in: Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy Vol. 10, No. 3, 278–311, August 2005

Precondition for the successful implementation of European aid and technical assistance programs was Pyongyang's willingness and efforts to implement economic and structural reforms. Initially, North Korea's political leadership seemed prepared to implement fairly and (by North Korean standards) wide-ranging economic reforms and in 2002 and partially liberalized wages and prices to enable farmers to make and increase profits.[63] Many of Pyongyang's economic reforms, however, have been interrupted, for now indefinitely as many analysts fear.

Although the outbreak of the nuclear crisis in 2002 put an end to the implementation process of the EU's North Korea CSP, Brussels has not suspended all economic assistance and engagement activities in North Korea. In 2004, 2005 and 2007 e.g. EU Commission delegations visited North Korea to hold seminars on EU-North Korea relations and economic reforms in North Korea.

EU-North Korea Trade Ties

The EU-North Korea trade volume is negligible and given its very small volume it does not even feature on the website of the Commission's Directorate-General for External Trade (DG Trade). The most recent data of bilateral trade available on EU Commission websites dates back to 2002.[64] According to more up to date (non-EU) sources the bilateral EU-North Korea trade volume between 1995 and 2005 fluctuated between $ 200 and 400 million annually representing an almost irrelevant share of the EU's overall external trade.

North Korea's overall external trade volume - mainly thanks to its booming bilateral with China -, however, has increased in recent years. Bilateral trade between China and North Korea in 2007 amounted to $1.7 billion and China is by now far the largest investor in North Korea. Roughly 150 Chinese companies are operating in North Korea and more than 80% of consumer goods sold in North Korea originate in China.[65] In 2008 trade with China amounted to more than 70% of North Korea's overall external trade.

[63] Siehe Babson, Bradley, O., Economic Perspectives on Future Directions for Engagement with the DPRK in a Post-Test World; The Stanley Foundation December 2006; www.stanleyfoundation.org/publications/pab/BabsonPAB.pdf; auch Berkofsky, Axel, North Korean Economy: Reform, Collapse; ISN Security Watch 8 May 2007 http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=17586

[64] More up-to date data are e.g. to be found on the website of the European Union Delegation to South Korea; http://www.delkor.ec.europa.eu/home/relations/dprkrelations/economytrade.html; see also Schmidt, Hans-Joachim, Peace on the Korean Peninsula-What can the EU Contribute to the 6-Party Process?; Peace Research Institute Frankfurt PRIF Reports No. 75, 2006; http://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/downloads/prif75.pdf

[65] For more and analysis on China-North relations see China and North Korea: Comrades Forever?; International Crisis Group Asia Report No.112, February 2006; http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3920&l=1

Implications

The EU could have continued its economic engagement towards North Korea in spite of the nuclear revelations offering North Korea and the international community an alternative approach of how to deal with a failing state on the brink of going nuclear. It did not do so and has instead chosen to follow the US lead back in 2002 and suspending its originally ambitious and comprehensive economic engagement programs towards North Korea as soon as Washington announced that is reconnaissance satellites have detected a clandestine North Korean nuclear programme.

Brussels' initial willingness to engage North Korea politically and economically as well as its contributions to the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in the mid-1990s have not convinced interested parties (US, South Korea, Japan) that the EU is 'qualified' for a role in solving 'hard security' issues on the Korean Peninsula.

To be sure, Brussels has not sought such a role and has never requested (at least not officially) to become a member of the 6-Party Talks, thereby probably confirming its (and its Member States') disinterest in investing resources and energies into a forum dominated by US and Chinese influence.

Accordingly, limiting itself offering to the above mentioned 'political support' for the 6-Party Talks stands for the EU's de-facto decision to exclude itself from solving the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

Conclusions

The above analysis of the EU's relations with Japan, China and North Korea sought to provide the reader with some explanations on why the EU's role and engagement in Asian security is bound to remain very limited and will continue to take place on an ad-hoc basis in the years ahead.

This trend will continue, not least - or probably above all in terms of day-to-day-politics - because Brussels is faced with the task of seeking to initiate and implement security cooperation with states and governments with different political cultures, political systems and different levels of preparedness to cooperate on (sensitive or controversial) security issues with others, including the EU.

While security cooperation with democracies (e.g. Japan, South Korea, India) should be (at least on paper) comparatively unproblematic (or at least possible), the same cooperation with authoritarian regimes and non-democracies is inevitably more difficult or more often than not often impossible, especially (as this is e.g. the case with Beijing on the above discussed so-called 'Taiwan question' and with North Korea on the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula) if the partner envisioned for security cooperation is part of a security conflict or contingency in question.

The above mentioned inner-European conflicts and problems with regards to the formulation and implementation of European foreign and security policies towards Asia aside, Asian security (as opposed to security closer to 'home' such as in Eastern and Central Europe and

Russia) will continue not to be a priority on the EU's external relations agenda in the years ahead, despite of strong European trade and business ties in and with Asia.

Nonetheless and concluding on a positive note, the EU will continue to remain Asia's main provider of 'soft security' such as food, humanitarian, economic and financial aid thereby contributing more to Asian regional peace and stability than involvement in Asian security ever could.

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Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

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