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The EU and Asia within an Evolving Global Order: What is Europe? Where is Asia?

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Introduction

The papers in this special edition are a very small selection from those presented at the EU-NESCA (Network of European Studies Centres in Asia) conference on “the EU and East Asia within an Evolving Global Order: Ideas, Actors and Processes” in November 2008 in Brussels.¹ The conference was the culmination of three years of research activity involving workshops and conferences bringing together scholars from both regions primarily to discuss relations between Europe and Asia, perceptions of Europe in Asia, and the relationship between the European regional project and emerging regional forms in Asia. But although this was the last of the three major conferences organised by the consortium, it in many ways represented a starting point rather than the end; an opportunity to reflect on the conclusions of the first phase of collaboration and point towards new and continuing research agendas for the future.

With the importance of the regional level and inter-regional relations firmly established, key amongst these agendas is now to unpack the Euro-Asian relationship. On one level, this entails considering what drives policy by considering the interests (and the sources of those interests) that are at the heart of European policy. It also entails going beyond conceptions of a Euro-Asian relationship and instead focussing

on multiple sets of relationships conducted by a range of actors driven by different sets of ideas and political objectives. And underpinning both of these tasks of unpacking is the key question of whether European policy (however defined) meets its objectives (and if not, why not)?

Interregionalism and Europe-Asia Relations

The idea that regions can become actors in international relations now has a relatively long history. Not surprisingly, this work focuses on regional organisations in Europe which, notwithstanding the rising significance in studies of other regional projects, and indeed in the concept of “comparative regionalism”, remains by far the most studied and debated example of regional integration.² As discussed in more detail later, much of this study revolves around the idea of Europe as a different kind of actor in international relations; one that does not act from the “normal” motivations of states, but instead is as Duchêne (1972) argued, a “civilian” (as opposed to military) power promoting liberal norms of rights and democracy in its interactions with other parts of the world; the much debated and oft criticised idea of “normative power Europe” (Manners, 2002).

Building on this Eurocentric focus, the study of EU as a region that “acts” in international relations has spawned a new literature on how regions interact with each other in the international realm; the concept of “interregionalism” (Soderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2007). But while the understanding of what the region is in the European cases that acts is easy to identify as the EU (and its predecessors) the same is not true in other parts of the world. To be sure, there are plenty of regional organisations that the EU can interact with, but the membership of these organisations does not always

map onto the “region” that Europe wants to interact with. For example, if we think of the EU’s attempts to construct a relationship with something called “East Asia”, then ASEAN might be considered too small and/or too narrow and APEC too big and/or too broad.³

So when it comes to international relations at the regional level, the first step (quite logically) is to identify the region(s) under consideration. This is not quite as easy as it might sound. As the readership of this journal will fully recognise, identifying what we mean when we refer to Asia or East Asia remains a difficult and contested task.⁴ In some respects, the promotion of inter-regional dialogue between the EU and Asia has played a role in resolving this dilemma by forcing a decision over who would be part of the Asian side of the meeting (Camroux & Lechervy 1996). Initially, this understanding of Asia reflecting an emerging understanding of (East) Asia equating to the ASEAN states plus China, Japan and South Korea – the now fairly well established idea of ASEAN Plus Three (APT).⁵ But with India, Pakistan and Mongolia joining the Beijing summit in 2008 (alongside the ASEAN secretariat), and Russia and Australia invited to participate in 2010, the Asia that meets the EU in ASEM is becoming increasingly broad, diverse and heterogeneous.

The extent to which ASEM has ever been anything more than a “talking shop” is open to question.⁶ But while increasing the number of participants provides a wider basis for taking (and listening), it perhaps even further narrows the opportunities for reaching consensus, and for the EU to promote its interest and attain its objectives. And perhaps not surprisingly, despite the ongoing ASEM process and the EU’s participation in the ASEAN regional forum, much of the formal diplomatic business

of Europe-Asia relations is not so much a case of multilateralism as multiple sets of bilateral relations.⁷ For example, the EU has separate “strategic partnerships” with China and Japan, and is progressing bilateral relations with South Korea and individual Southeast Asian countries in addition to having a long standing inter-regional relationship with ASEAN as an organisation.⁸

Beyond Interregionalism: Multiple Asias, Multiple Relations

So on a very simple and basic level, one of our objectives in the EU-NESCA project as reflected in the papers presented here is to highlight the variety of types (in plural) of EU-Asia relations. This includes formal interregional relations; not just the ASEM process, but the above mentioned EU-ASEAN partnership considered in this special edition by Camroux.

But despite the growing significance of and interest in interregionalism, the majority of the EU’s interactions with Asia remains focussed on individual Asian states. In particular, the rise of China has resulted in a flourishing of the study of EU-China relations.⁹ At times it almost seems as if the study of EU-Asia relations has been swallowed up by the primacy of the EU-China bilateral relationship. Indeed, the intensity of interest in the relationship combined with the EU’s attempts to build a new relationship with China had led some to conclude that a new strategic alliance is emerging that might even undermine the global power and reach of the US.¹⁰

It is not surprising that China looms so large in the EU’s Asia policy and strategy (though the relative neglect of Japan perhaps more so). China is, after all, the EU’s second largest trade partner after the US, the single biggest provider of imports and

perhaps the best bet for new sources of foreign investment into Europe. And of course, as a non-democratic state, China is just the sort of place where the civilian/normative/democratisating pretensions of the EU as a new and “different” sort of international actor could and should be tested.

This sinocentricism in much of the work on EU-Asian relations was a reoccurring theme in the workshops and conferences over the three years, and its importance is reflected in the papers by Balducci and Gottwald in this collection. But in Egreteau’s paper on Burma and Camroux’s on ASEAN, we attempt to address the balance to a degree by focussing on other case studies – though interestingly case studies that generate some very similar conclusions to the nature of EU actorness and the effectiveness of EU foreign policy as studies of the relationship with China. Indeed, in combination, these papers make us rethink not so much the nature of this thing called Asia that Europe wants to engage with, but instead what is this thing called Europe? In particular we wanted to turn our focus to the European side of the relationship and the definitional problems that emerge from understandings of “Europe” as actor in international relations. In particular, we ask if the EU’s apparent objectives in interactions with Asia can actually be achieved though EU level interactions.

Europe-Asia Relations: What is Europe?

In the emerging literature on interregionalism, the focus is clearly on the regional institution as actor – hence the use of the idea of EU as interacting with Asia. But of course, the EU is not the only voice, or interest or actor in Europe (however we defined the region). And during the course of reading various academic and policy papers as we defined the topics for the NESCA workshops and conferences, we found

that terms like “Europe”, “the EU” and “Europeans” were often used interchangeably – even within single pieces of work - reflecting continuing confusion over the nature and location of interests, power, and action.

For example, the investment and trade decisions of firms based in Europe are sometimes used as evidence to show European engagement of Asia in pursuit of the EU’s objective of building “strategic partnerships”. While the partnership might indeed be facilitated by non-state action (or indeed, non-state interactions might be facilitated by the establishment of partnerships), to think of these sets of relationships as being part of a concerted single unitary effort built around a single “given” interest is somewhat misleading.

So one of the key questions that informed our work was whether this thing called “Europe” has become imbued with too much “actorness” (Hill, 1994) and if other sources of interest and action have become sidelined or compounded into a single unit/level of analysis. In the entirely correct attempt to show that nation states are not the only actors, has the balance tipped a too far towards the idea of a single European component of Europe-Asia relations?

From the onset it is important to point out that this is not a political exercise in “euroscepticism” nor an academic exercise of denying the significance of the EU as actor. There is no suggestion that the EU *should not* play a role, nor any suggestion that it *does not* play a role. The EU level of analysis is extremely important – partly in terms of what is done collectively at this level, and also partly in the way that EU level legislation plays out at the national level. Moreover, the speed at which the EU

has emerged as an actor of whatever sorts in relation to Asia is noteworthy. But as we study the EU's relations with Asia, we need to make sure that we retain a focus on other levels of interest, authority and action within Europe and not simply subsume them into a single process with a single interest.

Through different agencies, the EU has itself done much to fund the study of the EU as an actor in international relations in general, and EU relations with Asia in particular (and perhaps even more particularly, EU relations with China). As recipients of some of this funding, we are very grateful for the opportunities it has provided, and the basis for long term linkages that this NESCA project has forged. If raising a few words of caution sounds ungrateful, it is not – they are words of caution to ourselves as observers and analysts about the sociology of our own endeavours and not to the EU itself.

There has been a considerable expansion of studies of the EU level of interaction in recent years in Asia; indeed it's probably fair to call it an explosion. There is nothing wrong with this in itself and indeed these initiatives should be applauded. The problem lies in the relative lack of attention on other dimensions of European relations and in following the funding we have perhaps collectively unbalanced the analysis by spending too much time on the EU level and not enough on the other dimensions. For example, the funding of EU/European studies in China has resulted in many who previously considered themselves to be country specialists rebranding themselves and refocusing their work on the EU. The study of Europe in China is increasingly becoming EU studies.¹¹

What is Europe? Levels of Analysis

“Statist” Europe Beyond the EU

Of course, there are many understandings of Europe that go way beyond the membership of the EU. Norway and Switzerland, for example are European states, but not part of the EU. Despite its previous appearance in this paper as a potential Asian member of ASEM, Russia is by most calculations a European state. Somewhat ironically, as perhaps the only state that can justifiably claim to be both European and Asian,¹² Russia is typically conspicuously absent and considered as separate from “Europe” in discussions of Europe-Asia relations (just as it is considered as separate to Asia). Overall, the EU website lists a total of 19 countries which it terms “other European” states – non EU European states¹³ - in addition to the three accession states of Croatia, Turkey and (the Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia.

So while we can quite easily put this aside and use “Europe” as simply short-hand for the EU, we should at least keep as a mental footnote the idea that there is more to Europe than just the EU – either as an entity in itself or as a conglomeration of member states. Indeed, we should also have a second footnote that reminds us that what we thus mean by Europe today includes 12 countries that were not part of “Europe” under this understanding in April 2003. Of course, this change in membership doesn’t matter if “Europe” becomes an entity in itself with an interest and actorness that is more than those of the member states confined. However, the argument here is that such an interest and actorness is only partial – and in this respect size and membership is indeed important.

Commercial Relations: Regional, State and Non-state levels of analysis

So if we accept these two caveats but also accept the idea of Europe as short hand for the EU, then we can move on to identify different levels of analysis emerging from the oft stated understanding that the EU might not be a state, but neither does it behave like a classic international organisation.¹⁴ Commercial relations provide an interesting example of the importance of EU as actor, but also the limitations of focusing on the EU alone.

The Commission for External Trade has clear responsibility for dealing with Asia on trade policy issues - both bilaterally and also within the WTO. Yet even here where member states have most clearly ceded “actorness” to the Commission, the situation is not clear cut. The EU’s interest is not simply “given” – an issue we will expand on shortly. For example, in the debates over how to respond to the growth in Chinese exports (particularly when the quota was filled early in 2005) revealed different positions from what we might call the “producers” and the “retailers” – the former those who wanted restrictions to reduce competition and the latter those who pushed for lax or even no restrictions in order to import and sell more Chinese made goods.¹⁵ Notably, during these debates, national governments became strongly associated with “their” dominant industries – Spain, France and in particular Italy with producers seeking limits on imports, and Britain, Germany and the Nordic states associated with retailers and therefore freer trade.

So when it comes to dealing with Asia, the EU as actor is clearly important, but raises questions over which or whose interests are represented by EU policy. We can think of this “who matters” question in different ways. For example, which “sectoral” interests matter and how these interests are articulated and pressed directly at the EU

level national level (to influence the EU level). Or which “national” interests matter? Was Susan Strange (1996: xiv) right when she argued that “international organization is above all a tool of national government, an instrument for the pursuit of national interest by other means”? If so, is EU policy dominated by the interests of the “core” European economies? Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and the Nordic states?

We should also be aware that in many European countries, local governments are also important commercial actors, either promoting local companies interaction with Asia, or promoting the region as a source of inward investment. Again, these local governments often act in competition with other similar actors – both other European actors, and other national actors. For example, different local development agencies were keen competitors during the Japanese and then South Korean investment booms into Europe in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁶

Thus, within this commercial relationship we have a “mixity” of European relations with China based on different actors and different sites of authority.¹⁷ We see the importance of the EU level, but also of companies/non state actors, and of governments – both as actors in their own right, and as part of the power constellation at the European level.

So we have already reached a preliminary and perhaps rather straightforward understanding of the nature of the Europe that interacts with Asia. To this we might add two further layers of complexity. First, it is not just different national and/sectoral interests that feed into European policy. There are also differences of opinion and

interest at the EU level itself. For example, the parliament and the commission do not always wholly support each other's position. Different DGs also have different positions; for example, officials in at least one DG were dismayed at the dominance of economic considerations in the EU's first official document on relations with China (or more correctly, they were dismayed at how the economic dimensions were being emphasised in the dissemination of the strategy – the written report was considered to be much more balanced).¹⁸

Now this might sound wholly obvious – and indeed it is. But the reason for pointing to this diverse source of interests and actions is because of the way that some have tried to establish an idea of the EU as a “unique” actor in international relations. As Balducci argues in his paper, the promotion of the idea of the EU as a “norm promoter” – either as Civilian Power Europe or as Normative Power Europe – that does not act like “normal” states can result in the source of policy being overlooked. It can, at an extreme, depoliticise the study of international relations by taking interest and intentions as “given”. So even though the understanding of the nature of EU as actor is entirely antithetical to realist conceptions of power maximising rational state elites, the conception of EU as unique actor can result in a similar discounting of the drivers of policy.

The Non-State Sector and Meeting European Objectives

And not all of this action is undertaken by states. We noted above the importance of states (and also the EU) acting on behalf of key business interests in dealing with Asia. But of course these companies are not simply part of a coherent national (or European) effort. They might seek help where they can get it, and indeed some

theorists would argue that when states act, they do so on behalf of powerful domestic corporate/economic interests. Here, then, the state is conceived as agent of economic/class interests and not the other way round – but in some analyses at least, the overseas activity of firms is taken as being part of a wider “national” and/or “European” effort; the firms become agents of national interests; alternatives site of authority and alternative form of inter-regional relationships and governance are still important.

Of course firms are far from the only actors that have an at best ambiguous relationship with the state – and indeed firms are not usually considered to be part of the agenda when it comes to studying Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or inter/transnational civil society interactions. Such non-state interactions are an increasingly important element in Europe-Asia relations; and as Elmaco (2008) argues, in her paper, an increasingly important part of the European goal of democracy promotion.

Interestingly, Elmaco’s study does not pit state and non-state as mutually inclusive, but sees non-state actors as playing an increasingly important role within existing inter-regional frameworks – frameworks that have largely been established by statist action (either individually or through state-led regional organisations). And while we might hypothesise that some state and EU level action is on behalf of the interests of non-state (commercial) actors - often in competition with interests of other non-state (commercial) actors – it is not just a one way street. At times, what appears to be non-state action can actually be very closely related to state (or regional) objectives and goals. Indeed, it is often difficult to identify Non Governmental Organisations

(NGOs) that are really wholly independent of outside influence, and which meet the NGO Monitor's definition of NGOs as “*autonomous* non-profit and *non-party/politically-unaffiliated* organizations that advance a particular cause or set of causes *in the public interest* [emphasis added]”.¹⁹

For example, many development NGOs are really DONGOs – Donor Organised NGOs. This is particularly so with those NGOs that are charged (or created and charged) with delivering development projects on the ground; and in the European case, many NGOs rely on funding from governments and regional/global organisations, as well as from other NGOs. For example, according to CONCORD (the European NGO confederation for relief and development), around half of the European development NGO sector funding as a whole comes from a combination of member state governments, the European Commission, and UN specialist agencies (and the other half from private sources of different kinds).²⁰

Taking a not-too wide definition of an NGO to include think tanks, foundations and policy institutions as well as more “traditional” development/democratisation promoting groups, then we have a situation where there is often a close relationship between the EU on one hand, and NGOs that study it, lobby it, and/or deliver functions on its behalf on the other. But there are also groups that work outside this network of relationships – some of them on a national scale only – and other still who act in some form of opposition to what they perceived to be the errors or omissions of either their national governments, the EU, or both.

So it is not so much a case of trying to identify NGOs as an extra single layer/dimension of European interaction with Asia, but rather to disaggregate different types of such NGO interaction – some of which appears very much a part of a concerted EU level promotion of “normative power Europe”, some of which seems to be occurring in some form of network collaboration, some of which occurs with close relations to national governments and some of which appears to be as independent as perhaps is ever possible for any NGO.

Interpreting a European Interest: Europe as Actor viewed from Asia

The extent to which it is possible to place a national identity non-state activity is of course extremely difficult. This is partly because it’s difficult to identify the extent of the linkages between state and non-state as already outlined above, but also because of the transnational nature of much non-state activity. In terms of economic actors and EU relations with Asia, perhaps the classic example is Airbus, which might seem to be the archetypal European transnational company, but which seems to change nationality depending on which political figure is on an overseas trip.

For more traditionally defined NGOs the extent to which they are identified with a nation has also been blurred as many have become BINGOs – Big International NGOs – that operate transnationally. Others are very unhappy to be associated with national governments that they are themselves highly critical of - a sentiment that goes both ways with governments unhappy that the activities of groups that they have no control over sometimes reflects on them. The home country government is sometimes considered to be responsible for what its citizens do, and at times – for example, during the Olympic Torch procession through Europe – there seems to be a

conflation of action, identity and interest. The actions of individuals and groups in France that support Tibetan independence became simply “French”, and resulted in a popular campaign to boycott French goods and companies.²¹

Now clearly, this association of independent action with a nation and/or a concerted national effort, and/or even government policy is not something that is confined to Chinese perceptions. It is used here simply as an example of how perceptions of national identities and affiliations are important – and as noted above, many European companies are keen to exploit any national advantages that their governments can create for them. It might be possible to make exactly the same point about how different types of Asian actors are perceived as having a national identity in Europe. But the papers in this collection are specifically on conceptions of European actors and Europe as actor, and the final objective is to consider the way in which Europe is perceived from Asia.

Again, the question of what is Asia could be raised here, and perhaps should; but time and the specific focus of these sessions means we focus only on understandings of what is Europe. Returning to the discussions established at the start of this paper, we ask what is the Europe that Asia thinks of? Has Europe become synonymous with the EU, or when Asia thinks of Europe, is it thinking of a handful or “core” Western European states? Is Europe thought of as actor in its own right, or is it short-hand for the aggregate actions of the individual component actors? Has the focus on Europe replaced a focus on individual European States, or do the two levels of analysis co-exist (and is there any tension between conceptions of these two different types/levels of actor and actorness?). In combination, the overarching question is whether within

Asia there are emerging conceptions of Europe as single actor with a coherent set of interests and the means of transmitting interests into actions?

Collective Conclusions: Towards a Framework of Analysis

To repeat, then, the intention here is not to deny the importance of the EU as actor in relations with Asia, but instead to establish six key considerations that provide a framework for studying Europe-Asia relations, and attempt to contextualise understandings of European actorness and interest.

- First, most simply, we need to take care that we know what we really mean (and others infer the same meaning) when we talk of Europe.
- Second, we need to identify different sites of authority within Europe by considering who does what in terms of differential levels of interaction with Asia – what lies within the competence and authority of the EU, what is done by governments (both national and subnational), and what is done by independent actors (companies and NGOs).
- Third, we should not conceive of the EU level as constituting a single actor with a single interest, but disaggregate it – for example, what is the role of the different DGs, or the European.
- Fourth, what is the relationship between non-state actors and both the national and EU levels of authority?
- Fifth, we need to consider the way that the actions of “other” European actors either contribute to or undermine the attainment of EU level objectives
- Sixth, and very much related, we should not simply accept the EU interest as “given” but instead go back to basic principles of the study of politics and consider where the interests of EU as actor derive from.

In combination, these considerations not only allow us to develop a more nuanced (albeit more complicated) understanding of the nature of Europe-Asia relations, and Figure One provides a very rough and simplistic diagrammatic representation of multiple actors and channels of action through which “Europe” interacts with Asia. And of course, if we were to unpack what we mean by Asia here as well, then the number of actors, the types of connections and the amount of interactions would increase dramatically; thus the idea of “simplified complexity”.

Figure One about here

“Simplified Complexity: Levels and Layers of European Relations with Asia”

Even if we restrict the focus to the EU level of action, then disaggregation allows us to consider the efficacy of the attempt to promote the idea and practice of Europe as a new and unique type of actor in international relations (Civilian Power Europe or Normative Power Europe). And the broadly defined areas for consideration outlined above are reflected in the collective conclusions from the papers presented in this collection.

Diverse Actors Diverse Interests

The first collective conclusion relates to the EU's ability to attain its self defined goals. The answer in part is that it depends on the issue at hand. When it comes to trade where EU member states have willed power to the EU level, then there is indeed considerable “actorness”. The same is not the case when it comes to more traditionally defined diplomacy and foreign policy which remain (for the time being at least) still largely the preserve of national governments.

Which brings us back to the discussion at the start of this paper relating to the EU as a different type of actor – a civilian/normative power. And perhaps the single most important collective conclusions of the papers by Egreteau, Camroux and Balducci and to a lesser extent Gottwald is that if the EU is trying to promote a new set of global norms in general, and to promote human rights and civil society in Burma and China in particular, then it has failed! Nor does there appear to be successful in its use of interregionalism as a means of transmitting its values; largely because of the myriad actors and interests that coexist not just alongside the EU level, but also at the EU level itself.

Throughout the papers in this collection, we see the way in which different priorities of individual member states result in diverse sets of European relations with Asia, and also competition to create EU level policy that reflects national interests. For example, Egreteau unpicks a wide range of different European policies towards Europe; the UK, Scandinavia and some East European countries hard line; the Netherlands and Sweden actually financed Burmese activists; Germany and France tried to move away from ostracising the Burmese regime; Italy was conciliatory; Poland and Hungary followed the US position; and the rest of the EU simply didn't seem to be really bothered. Moreover, Egretau even identifies a distinction between what is said by European governments at home and what their diplomats in Burma actually say and do on the ground. The EU might have a common policy, but in reality there is more diversity, fragmentation and competition than cooperation behind a single objective.

Building from this, a second theme that emerges is that while the expansion of the EU to a membership of 27 might have complicated affairs by bringing in new actors and interests, in reality it is a relatively small number of European states that dominate and shape agendas. At the risk of oversimplification, it is still the major powers of what was Western Europe in the Cold War that tend to be most important in shaping European discourses and policies.

And at the risk of further oversimplification, the collective findings suggest that these national interests are largely shaped by the nature of each country's economic engagement with Asia. This is not to say that public opinion is unimportant. In particular, in those north European countries that have a strong self identity as bastions of democracy and human rights, public opinion plays an important role in shaping policy towards authoritarian regimes in Asia. Companies too seem to be more than aware that being seen to be too close to unpopular regimes can have a detrimental impact at home. But by and large, economics seems to matter most, and be the decisive factor when economic pragmatism and ethical considerations pull in different directions.

Whilst Balducci argues that competing national interests largely shape the nature of conflicts over EU policy (and between EU policy on one hand and national policies on the other), he argues that membership of the EU does have a "socialising" impact on individual member states. For example, he argues that EU membership resulted in Sweden dropping its former critical approach towards China's human rights regime, towards a more "mainstream" pragmatic and business oriented one. Gottwald also suggest that things might be changing – in relation to China at least. When China was

conceived of as a great opportunity, then individual countries competed with each other to gain the best possible access for “their” firms. As conceptions of China shifted, and the discourse increasingly became one of China as a “threat”, then the tendency towards looking for collective action as a means of providing protection increases.

Of course, it is far too early to know how far the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty might also enhance the EUs ability to develop a stronger and more unified voice. But defining a single EU voice is not just a case of sorting through different national interest, but also different interests at the EU level itself. For example, Camroux points to the importance of the Parliament as the self defined promoter of a moral ethical position contra the more practical and (economically) pragmatic Commission. Balducci identifies similar divisions between the “pragmatic” Commission and the Council of Europe which is more prepared to adopt critical positions based on ethical concerns.

Ponjaert and Beclard move the analysis “down” from the apex of the EU level to focus on scientific R&D public projects in the shape of the Galileo project with china and the ITER process with Japan. While these reveal the importance of the EU as actor and the development of an EU “footprint” in Asia, they also reveal the “fragmented” and “opportunistic” nature of EU policy, and the multi-layered sets of interests that result in policy, with fundamentally different policies adapted alongside each other.

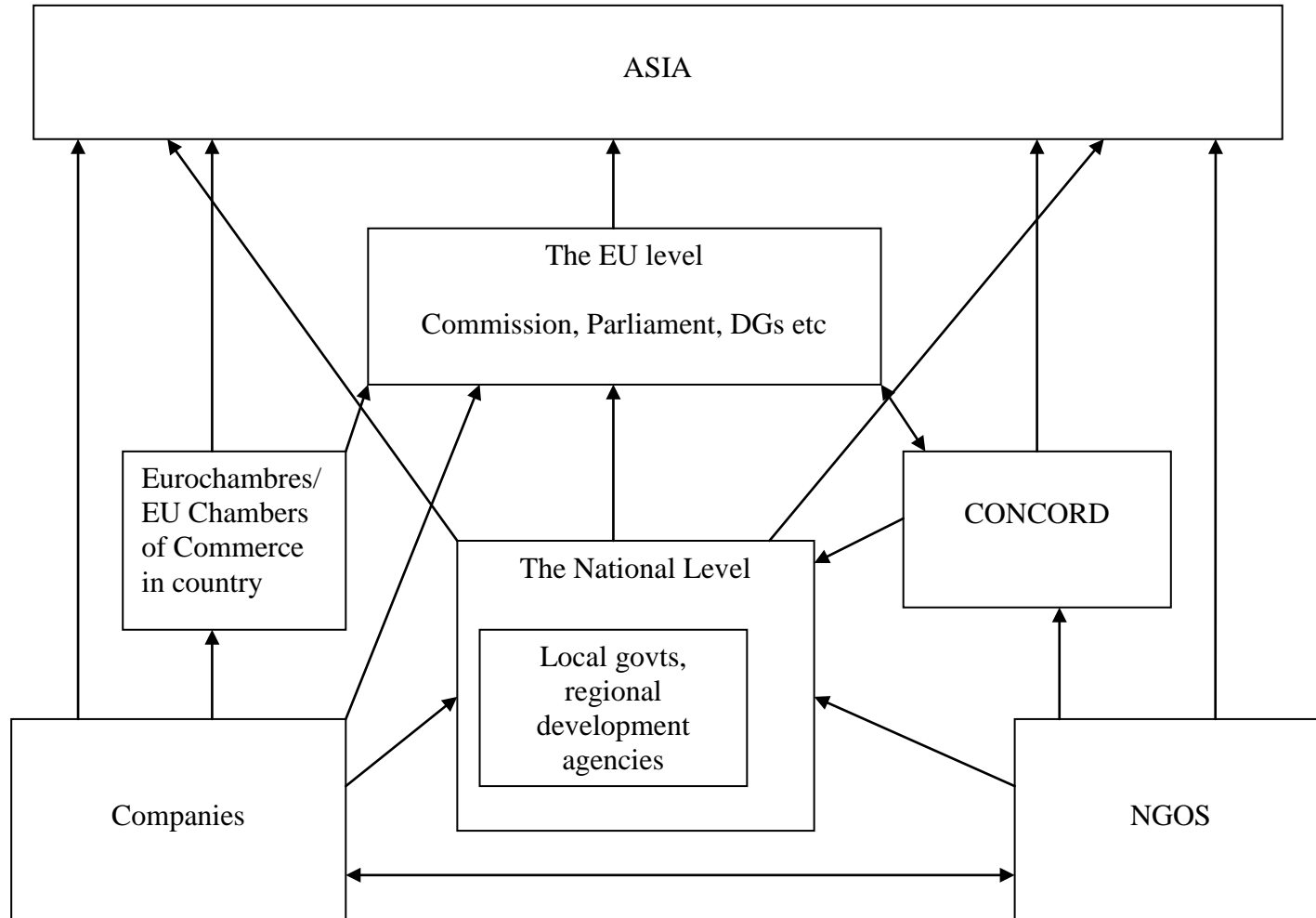
So our final collective conclusion is that the EU really is an important actor in Europe's relations with Asia, but it is not the only actor. Moreover, accepting the self-identification of the EU as a civilian power driven by morality and ethical standards in its relations with Asia runs the risk of ignoring the multiple interests, actors and processes that shape the myriad sets of Euro-Asian relations today. Politics is sometimes defined as "the art and science of government". But it is also often defined in Laswell's (1936) words as the study of "who gets what, when, how". We suggest that this latter understanding provides a fruitful starting point for the study of what is likely to become an ever more important but also ever more complex set of European-Asia relations in the future.

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1 The EU-NESCA consortium was coordinated by Reimund Seidelmann at Justus-Liebig-
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(IEM), and included partners from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Fondation Nationale des
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Technological Development, and we gratefully recognise their support for this project.
2 For good introductory overviews of the evolution of the concept and practice of Europe as
actor in international relations, see Smith (2008) and Bretherton and Vogler (2005).
3 On how the EU perceives of and tries to construct this idea of an East Asian region to interact
with interregionally, see Gilson (2005) and Doidge (2008).
4 Amongst many others, I have made my own attempt to do this in Breslin (2007).
5 Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar were not part of the original process but joined in 2004.
6 On what ASEM has actually done, See Gaens (2008).
7 And here ASEM is important in providing a locus for summits with individual Asian countries
alongside the multilateral process – as was the case, for example, with the first EU-China
summit that directly preceded the ASEM summit in London in 1008.
8 And if we take a different view of what is Asia, then the EU also has a strategic partnership
with India and separate relations with SARC.
9 For a good representative example of the range of issues that this literature covers, see Kerr &
and Liu (2007).
10 For an overview of these arguments and a critique of them, see Callahan (2007).
11 I am grateful to Song Xinning for providing this observation.
12 UEFA's definition of Europe for footballing purposes includes in Kazakhstan a country with
an easternmost border that is roughly on the same latitude as Urumqi, Sikkim and Kolkata.
Kazakhstan withdrew from the Asian Association in 2001, and was admitted into the
European association the following year.
13 Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland,
Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Russia, San Marino, Serbia,
Switzerland, Ukraine, Vatican City.
14 For a good overview of the theoretical debates about the nature of the EU, see Pollack (2005).
15 Nedergaard (2009).
16 For example, according to the then Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Walker (1991), Toyota
had agreed to build its new factory in Newport, but this was moved to Derby, where more
parliamentary seats were at stake, after the direct intervention of Prime Minister Thatcher.
17 On the idea of mixity in trade relations and negotiations, see Meunier & Nicolaïdis (1999).
18 Personal discussions with an anonymous official.
19 See <http://www.ngo-monitor.org/index.php>
20 See www.concordeurope.org
21 Including Carrefour which primarily sells Chinese goods and is more indigenised than many
overseas companies operating in China.