Theme: Afghanistan: Picking up the Pieces

Eight researchers assess what’s lost, recovered, and revived of Afghanistan’s cultural inheritance.

Enhancing EU’s Partnerships with Asia: Never the Twain Shall Meet?

Adapting Kipling to a Globalized World

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Much has changed since then. Empires have crashed to the ground. The horror and upheaval of world wars - two very hot and one ice-cold - have come and gone. With the recent criminal acts in America we have, in a nightmarish way, come full circle: The Ballad of East and West is set in the vicious and war-torn Afghanistan of 1892.

But the biggest change of all, the change that has and is touching more lives than even the world wars did, is the phenomenon known as globalization.

Of course, there is nothing new about globalization. What is new about this ‘second wave’ of globalization is not the ideas which underpin it - belief in free trade, open markets, private ownership, property rights, and capitalism - but its scope, driven in large part by the technological progress that has been made in the intervening 100 years. Not only is globalization now reaching into a vastly greater number of countries, it is also reaching into vastly greater areas of our lives.

Increase in trade, coupled with the revolution that has taken place in transport, means the peoples of the world are coming into greater contact with each other than ever before. In many cases (although sadly not all) this greater exposure to each other's cultures and societies has led to greater dialogue and understanding. It has even brought some semblance of stability and prosperity to areas where there was none before.

However, it would be naïve to say that globalization has been an unalloyed blessing. I am referring not just to the fact important though it is - that the globalization that has transformed the lives of many, has still left too many marooned in poverty. I am also noting the way that many of the problems governments now face have also globalized, in the sense that they do not respect national frontiers: international drugs trade, environmental degradation, global epidemics, cyber...
The Six General Objectives and Priorities

1. Further strengthen our mutual trade and investment flows with the region; Action Points:
   - Work to strengthen our bilateral economic relations, reducing non-tariff barriers to trade and facilitating investment, and helping build a pro-development policy climate.
   - Support cooperation between economic operators in our two regions.
   - Strengthen our policy dialogue on economic and financial issues, and promote the use of the Euro internationally.
   - Continue to ensure favourable market access for the poorest developing countries.
   - Recognize the role of transport and energy in our trade relations as well as the impact of both sectors on the environment.

2. Strengthen our engagement with Asia in the political and security fields; Action Points:
   - Strengthen our engagement on regional and global security issues.
   - Strengthen our dialogue and cooperation on conflict prevention issues.
   - Enhance our cooperation on justice and home affairs issues.

3. Demonstrate our effectiveness as a partner in reducing poverty in Asia; Action Points:
   - Strengthen our dialogue on social policy issues.
   - While completing the reform of our own aid management.

4. Contribute to the protection of human rights and to the spreading of democracy, good governance, and the rule of law throughout the region; in contributing to democratization, good governance and the rule of law, and respect for human rights we should strengthen our bilateral and multilateral dialogue with our Asian partners, encourage civil society dialogue, and ensure that human rights and government issues have mainstreamed in our cooperation activities.

5. Build global partnerships with key Asian partners, working together to address the global opportunities and challenges which face us all and to strengthen our joint efforts on global economic and security issues; Action Points:
   - Strengthen the work of the United Nations and its different agencies.
   - Strengthen the open international trading system embodied in the WTO.
   - Safeguard the global environment.

6. Strengthen the mutual awareness between our two regions; Action Points:
   - Strengthen and expand the network of EC Delegations across the region.
   - Work to strengthen educational and cultural exchanges between our two regions, and to promote enhanced civil society contacts and intellectual exchanges.

In fact, few European countries show real interest in ASEM. Even after September 11, this has not really changed. However, as I see it, ASEM is a unique vehicle for rapprochement between East and West within Asia. It allows for a wide range of initiatives – also in the cultural, intellectual and civil domains. ASEM should now more than ever, become an instrument for better mutual understanding. Fortunately, the Commission is the motor behind the European side of ASEM and it should be praised for its endeavours, however, the Union should do more with regard to the third “pillar.” It should not underestimate the importance of cooperation in the cultural and civil domains and especially the long-term impact of joint interregional research on topics of common interest such as environmental degradation, global epidemics, terrorism, migration, social welfare, poverty reduction, etc. The sixth framework programme could, for instance, support and embrace joint Asia-Europe research initiatives for the benefit of all aspects of a sustainable Asia-Europe partnership.

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A third objective is for the EU to contribute more to peace and security in Asia. The current agreement with the area. More could be done to support conflict prevention efforts, strengthen our cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, and play a more proactive role in regional coop- eration fora such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. Peace and security are more likely to flourish in regions where free and fair elections are the norm, where adminis- trations are not blighted by corruption and where laws are not undermined by the lack of respect and the whims of those in power. So spreading democracy, good governance, and the rule of law is our fourth objective. Yes, this includes upholding the universality and indivisibility of human rights. It also includes encouraging the development of civil society and promoting a broader civil society dialogue between our two regions. All this can only make our societies stronger, providing a fuller base for our fifth objective, which is to build global partnerships and alliances with Asian countries so we can shape global agendas and better tackle the new problems of prob- it has been carrying. This should include improving our cooperation in the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, but also working together to tackle environ- mental and health challenges, and to fight international crime and terrorism. We should also exploit the opportunities offered by new technologies, help to diminish the digital divide, and reinforce scientific and technological cooperation. Finally, and this has taken on a sudden, grave importance in an atmosphere of straining to provide some apocalyptic clash of civilizations, we should strengthen aware- ness of Europe in Asia, and vice versa. This is not an optional extra. This is about promoting genuine educa- tional, scientific, cultural - and, yes, political - exchanges at all levels. Of course, the EU cannot force Asia to promote itself here, but we have taken the lead by, for example, launching a scholarship scheme in China, funding cultural pro- grammes across Asia, and expanding the network of Euro- pean Commission delegation offices in the region to Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, and Nepal. It is my sincere hope that the nations of Asia will reciprocate these efforts - they have much to share. And about what those specific more action points adapted to the different regions of Asia? These reflect the underlying diversity of that massive continent, and will no doubt change and adapt as we learn. I think it is possible to discern some key issues today, to which emphasis must be given. China, more than any other country, has been subject to a maelstrom of change in recent years, which has led to the development of new forms of shared concern, for example, illegal immigration, food hygiene, and genetically modified organ- isms all rising up the agenda. Combined with the fact that China is the world’s biggest consumer of energy and that the largest power investor there, it is evident we have moved far beyond the trade and development themes which have trad-itionally formed the basis of EU-China relations since their establishment in 1975. It is important to capitalize on this. Our political dialogue with China is constantly increasing, and could go far further. We should work together with other international partners to encourage a more open and well-governed society in China, for example, through the two Koreas, Burma, as a major drug producer and potential source of instability, should concern us both. The maturing of our relation- ship also allows franker discussions of our differences. This is the basis for the human rights dialogue we have pursed since 1996. Of course, 11 September changed everything. If we were drafting the new Communication today, we would say more than we have about the events in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the problems faced by the central Asian region. I was in Islamabad the other day, and the EU is obviously pleased that the Pakistani government, faced with a choice between siding with the US or the modern, pluralist world or with the enemies of democracy and international cooperation, hesi- tantly chose the former. We are also pleased that in August, President Musharraf set out in such detail his plans for a return to democracy next year. We have in the link a cooper- ative agreement with Pakistan. There has been no progress on it for two years. We are now prepared to sign that agree- ment. Although obviously the process of rationalization would have been affected were Pakistan to abandon the path to democracy (which I hope will not happen). The agreement also includes the usual suspension and human rights clauses which indi- cate the priority we attach, in any relationship, to pluralist values. We have also been considering how we can help Pakistan to deal with the impact of refugees on its society - a burden that has been largely unnoticed, for almost two decades - and how we can restore effective, long-term, devel- opment cooperation. Clearly the return of democracy in Pakistan also presents a challenge to President Musharraf, not least because the sorts of democracy frequently practised in the past in Pak- istan were not always characterized by transparency, effi- ciency and a determination to meet the needs of the whole community. But the future of Pakistan is only one of the issues that we will need to address more energetically in the wake of what we are all committed to making a successful operation to uproot terrorism. We will also need to facilitate the establish- ment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan and then to give it the sort of long-term development assistance which will enable it to survive: The EU has already provided more than € 450 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan since 1991, making us the second biggest donor in the world to this battered country. But more must be done, by ourselves and the international community, if the people of Afghanistan are to have any chance of recovering from the barren rubble to which their beautiful country has been reduced, thanks to a ferocious medieval tyranny and long years of conflict. 

However, encouraging a political settlement in Afghanistan should not mean imposing a government. Nor should it mean reiterating all the demands of neigh- bouring countries which have often used Afghanistan to fight their proxy wars. If that happens, then the cycle of violence will only continue. Beyond Afghanistan, we will need to look at developing a more coherent and sensible regional approach in the Central Asian Republics, focusing in particular on helping them in the campaign against drugs and assisting them in the development of national border control. Of course, one country in the region provides a beacon of optimism. It is the largest democracy in the world, and it has been leading the way in the fight against terrorism by spon- soring an anti-terrorism resolution at the United Nations. India, like China, will always be central to EU relations with Asia. As a major trading partner and an important regional and global player and a country that shares many of our values, it would be utterly crazy to ignore her. Building a productive relationship will pay dividends for both sides. That is why the Communication calls for an enhanced partnership with India on global issues, alongside strengthened bilateral coopera- tion in the political, economic, and social spheres. The growing links which exist within Asia and the West, links rooted in our shared, common values, make us fit to face down those who want to destroy those values. The Com- mission’s Communication on a new strategic framework for Asia builds on this. The unprecedented international coop- eration we are seeing today is not only strengthening those bonds within the international community, but creating new windows of opportunity as old suspicions and barriers are cast aside at an astonishing rate. A strong East and West, borders no longer acting as barri- ers in a world where distance is decreasing, a partnership of the decent against those who would bring us low. Global- ization, with all the good and bad it brings with it, neces- sary to achieve this? Maybe. But Kipling - without airline trav- el, the Internet and satellite television - would have understood the challenges we face. And, I think, he would have approved of the way we are seeking to overcome it.

This is a shortened version of the Annual Lecture delivered by Chris Patten. For the full text, please see the IIAS website at: http://www.iias.nl/ian/23/27/general/ifqround.html