

EU-ASIA SECURITY

factsheet



Asia: essential partner for the European Union

The Asia Pacific region has become central to world-wide prosperity and to the EU's growth prospects. The world's largest population buys almost a quarter of EU exports. It is among the fastest-growing export markets and is home to the fastest-growing economies.

The EU cannot expect to address seriously any of the major global challenges – from climate change to terrorism – without strong cooperation with its Asian partners. The EU has crucial interests in the region not only in trade, finance and energy but also in politics, human rights and security. Europe has significant leverage, and it is committed.

EU security engagement in Asia

Asia is of strategic and security importance for the European Union. Therefore the EU's relationship with Asia has become more comprehensive, expanding from its initial focus on economic and trade matters to encompass the political, strategic and security dimension. As a provider of peace and stability in Europe through effective multilateralism and integration the EU is supporting the building of a security architecture in Asia to address and manage the various security challenges. Thereby the EU is guided by a comprehensive approach to security, a different approach to security relying on Three Ds, Defense, Diplomacy and Development. This toolbox contains diplomatic, economic, humanitarian instruments in order to address security challenges and their root causes in a long-term and strategic manner.

Mindful of the guiding principles of the Union's action on the international scene, and in order to protect the interests of the EU and its Member States as well as to foster bilateral, regional and inter-regional cooperation, the EU pursues the following main objectives in the region:

- Establishing the EU as a credible political and security player in the region through demonstrating relevant expertise and working with key allies from inside and outside the region.
- Supporting the region to manage security challenges, for example through helping to build an effective regional security architecture with ASEAN at the centre and through providing technical assistance.
- Working with the region to confront shared regional and global security challenges.
- Promoting sustainable policies to meet global challenges related to security such as climate change, energy security, cyber space, environmental protection, poverty, economic imbalances and pandemics.
- Protecting the economic/trade interests of the EU and its Member States as well as the security of citizens.

Adopting a holistic view on security means that the EU must take into account political, economic and environmental security. The Union is a stakeholder in Asia's security and any major security incident in Asia would have serious implications for Europe. Therefore, the EU participates actively in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in order to ensure regular political and strategic exchanges with its partners. The Forum will invigorate strategic partnerships in the region; foster conflict prevention and peace building; address security threats like nuclear proliferation, terrorism and radicalisation, transnational crime and trafficking in human beings; and promote human rights.

'Developing our relations with Asia across the board is a major strategic objective for the European Union. Put simply... Europe and Asia need each other.'

CATHERINE ASHTON

Milestones in EU-Asia relations

- Since the establishment of the ARF in 1994 the EU has taken part and contributed to fostering constructive dialogue on political and security issues of common interest in the Asia-Pacific region. The EU-ASEAN 2012 Banda Seri Begawan Plan of Action will deepen the relationship.
- In 1996 the EU, together with its Asian partners, set up the region-to-region dialogue ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) as a platform for enabling policy dialogue on political, economic, social and cultural issues. The process is driven by bi-annual summits; the 2014 Summit will take place in Brussels.
- The 2001 Strategy 'Europe and Asia' identified six objectives for EU-Asia cooperation including strengthened peace and security, increase in mutual trade and investment flows, enhanced development cooperation, protection of human rights, spread of democracy and good governance as well as actions raising mutual awareness.
- In its 2003 Security Strategy the EU specified its interest in the Asia-Pacific region, focusing on the challenges posed by nuclear proliferation and terrorism. The Strategy indicated that EU should develop strategic partnerships with several Asian countries. At this stage, Asia is home to four of EU's strategic partners, namely China, India, Japan and Republic of Korea.
- In 2012 the EU updated its 2007 East Asia Policy Guidelines providing a broad and up-to-date orientation for the EU's policy across the full range of EU activities.
- Also in 2012 the EU acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and expressed interest in

participating in the East Asia Summit (EAS) as well as in the enlarged meeting of ASEAN Defence Ministers.

Relevance of the EU economy for Asian partners

- The EU is one of the most important trading partners for Asian countries, with an annual average growth rate of trade of 5.8% (2008-12). In 2012 Asian partners accounted for 29.8% of EU imports and 21.4% of exports.
- For its Asian partners the EU is one of the most important trading partners, outperforming the US, China, Japan and South Korea. Four Asian countries are amongst the EU's top ten trading partners (2012 data). China (12.5%) takes top spot, followed by Japan (3.4%), India (2.2%), and South Korea (2.2%). Singapore follows closely (1.5%).
- The EU is also a major investor in Asia. In 2010 17.2% of EU outward investment went to Asia, while 24.7% originated in the region.

Partnership and free trade agreements

- The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Mongolia was signed in April 2013 and PCAs with the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines await ratification. Further negotiations are under way with Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, while the PCA negotiations with Singapore are very near to conclusion. The PCA negotiations with Thailand were concluded in March 2013.
- The first comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with an Asian partner (South Korea) has been in force since 2011, rendering 70% of bilateral trade duty-free and facilitating trade in times of economic recession.
- At the end of 2012, the EU and Singapore concluded a comprehensive FTA, the first with an ASEAN country covering trade, services and promoting 'green growth'. Talks on investments are on-going.
- FTA negotiations with Japan began in April 2013 after an extensive preparatory scoping exercise. In parallel a Framework Agreement is under negotiation.
- Additional FTA negotiations with Malaysia, India, Vietnam and Thailand are continuing.

EU assistance to the region

- The EU is finalising its commitment to the region for the 2014-20 period, which will see a continuation of the EU's engagement with a particular focus on poverty eradication through the Development Cooperation Instrument. Disaster prevention and response as well as humanitarian assistance will continue. Global challenges such as energy security, climate change and support to the external dimension of EU policies will be financed through the Partnership Instrument. The Instrument for Stability and other thematic instruments (e.g. the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) will also benefit the Asian region.
- For 2012 the EU committed around EUR 749 million to development cooperation in Asia, while the indicative geographical amount for the region under this instrument for the 2007-13 period is EUR 5187 million.
- The Union is also engaged in the whole region in disaster prevention and response, cooperating with individual countries and ASEAN. In 2012 the European humanitarian assistance (from the EU and its Member States) amounted to almost EUR 3 billion.

Cooperation in science and education

Researchers from Asian countries were strongly involved in the seventh Framework Programme and will also be able to participate in the next Programme. Scholarship schemes and exchanges between universities will continue.

The 12th IISS Asia Security Summit – The Shangri-La Dialogue

Since 2002 the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has convened the Shangri-La Dialogue each year in Singapore. This key inter-governmental regional security summit brings together defence ministers, commanders from the armed forces, and the most senior defence officials, together with distinguished non-governmental experts from universities, think-tanks, the media, and the private sector from all states with significant stakes in the security of the Asia-Pacific region. They engage in high-level international defence diplomacy on key regional security concerns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- EEAS: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/asia/index_en.htm
- TRADE: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/regions/asean/>
- DEVCO: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/overview/index_en.htm
- DG ECHO: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm