



# **European-Asian relations: Continuity or change?**

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## What to expect

- ➔ Sharing observations about the current situation
- ➔ Looking back at 20 years of political and economical relations
- ➔ Experience a Déja Vu between Asia and Europe
- ➔ Mainly looking at governmental and economical relations –basic conditions for NGO activities



# Europe in crisis?

- ➔ Since the failure of the European constitution: EU and its institutions in a difficult situation
- ➔ The financial crisis showed the fragility of the unification process
- ➔ The flagship project „Euro“ is being challenged
- ➔ The european bureaucrat's vision of the EU as the third power in a multipolar world is being undermined
- ➔ The three crises are testing the predominant development model

# There is a lot of fear – not only in Brussels 1



- ➔ Peer Steinbrück (German federal Minister of Finance, 2005-09): Europe's influence is shrinking, Asia is on the rise
- ➔ Günther Oettinger (European commissioner for energy, since 2010): „Will only the USA and China affect world politics in the future or will the EU have influence as well?“
- ➔ The Copenhagen climate summit was a big shock
- ➔ Looking for answers: Since September 2010 there is an intense discussion on how to handle the BRIC countries (especially China and India), how to secure resources etc.



# There is a lot of fear – not only in Brussels 2

- The official answer: Europe must act more homogeneously
- Some call for an „European concentrated power against China“

## Questions:

- If Europe loses its influence, do stronger power politics gain importance?
- Is Europe really that weak or is the opportunity taken to reduce the role of the member national states?



## Europe – Asia: looking back

- Europe's colonial past still has consequences– in Asia as well as in Europe
- 1960s: Discussion about the „Japanese challenge“: has everything already been discussed?
- 1978: Beginning of the EU-ASEAN-Dialogue, 1980 official cooperation agreement
- Europe as an observer of the „ASEAN Regional Forum“
- 90s: Discussion about „asian values“
- The „pacific century“ is „beginning“
- 1997/98: Asian crisis – only temporary break



## ASEM: looking at Asia differently

- July 1994: EU changes its strategy for Asia – Japan as most important partner
- 1996: founding of ASEM
- Both parties hope to counterbalance the USA
- Extension of partnership beyond ASEAN by including China, Japan and Korea
- EU strategy papers are regularly updated and concretised



## European interests in Asia in view of the German Foreign Ministry

- Engagement in political and the security sector
- Mutual trade and investment relations
- Reducing regional poverty
- Strengthening civil society by spreading democracy
- Establishing partnerships concerned with global topics
- Mutual awareness raising and acknowledgement





# Aims, motives and interests

Most important interests:

Sales markets, securing resources, opening and liberalize new markets (WTO, FTAs), protecting european companies

- ➔ No military power – soft power
- ➔ Implementation of european values by political dialogue – system change
- ➔ Development aid: 2007-2013 more than 5 Billion

The global Europe strategy intensified the „neoliberal direction“

Critique (AEPF): social welfare, protection of environment and human rights may be sacrificed

# China moves into the centre of focus



- Since the beginning of the 90s China gets more and more into the focus of attention
- The main reason is Chinas integration into the world market (made possible by the chinese reform process)
- China became the „work bench“ for european products
- To enter the chinese market more and more european companies made investments
- China also gains more and more global political importance
- India as China's antagonist?

# Foreign Trade between EU27 and Asia



- The table shows Asia's growing significance and the relative significance of some countries
- China's rapid increase in importance

	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
	Import			Export		
Asia	41,8%	40,2%	41,9%	30,1%	30,0%	32,7%
Asian ASEM	32,3%	30,4%	33,3%	18,4%	18,1%	20,2%
China	16,2%	15,8%	17,8%	5,8%	6,0%	7,5%
Japan	5,5%	4,8%	4,7%	3,5%	3,2%	3,3%
India	1,9%	1,9%	2,1%	2,4%	2,4%	2,5%
Source: European Commission, Trade Statistics						
Asia figures include the Near East						



## Mixed response

- ➔ China (not Asia) dominates the public perception
- ➔ China „arrived“ in Europe—even if dimensions are exaggerated (investment, credit)
- ➔ Mixed response on Asia's significance
  - Euphoria because of economic opportunities
  - Concerned by growing competition
  - Fear of losing significance
  - Increasing concerns and fears

# How to continue?



- Also smaller asian countries fear China (and India)
- Dèja Vu? – China's rise not linear
- EU continues to hold onto policies that lead into the crisis
- Officially sticking to the „free trade credo“ while more and more call for protectionism
- Central role for ressource security – as provider or competitor
- NGOs have to design a vision on how to arrange EU-Asian relations so they serve peace, environment, human rights and social justice



**Thank you for your  
attention!**