

# Alliance panel ASEM in an Evolving Post-9/11 World Order

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General

At the 2002 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in the capital of the USA, the Alliance organized a round-table on the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Eleven ASEM experts from Asia and Europe reflected on the impact of the attacks on New York City and Washington DC. In view of the upcoming fourth ASEM - the heads of state and government leaders meeting in Copenhagen in September this year - the topic was a controversial one: How can ASEM contribute to a more stable triangular global political environment and what will this mean for its relationship with the USA?

By Sebastian Bersick

It is necessary to set this question in perspective: Before the attacks the balancing dimension of a trilateral world order had been more of a theoretical construction than an empirical datum. Not least because the Clinton administration perceived the attempt of building a so-called missing link between the regions of Europe and Asia as a potential rival to US interests, the institutional and normative format of the ASEM has been conceived as soft and open.

After an introduction by the organizer Director Wim Stokhof of the International Institute for Asian Studies (Leiden/Amsterdam) the chair of the round-table Jürgen Rüländ (Freiburg) analysed the role and potential of ASEM in an emerging system of global governance. He set the analytical framework for the following reflections on the future of the ASEM process and US interests after 9/11. In the findings of Heiner Hänggi (Geneva) and David Camroux (Paris), who discussed the changing of ASEM's position in the triad, Hänggi pointed out that there is no security cooperation but a security dialogue within the ASEM process. His point can be attributed to ASEM's format and be explained in the light of the ASEM-actors' intention not to antagonize the USA. Nevertheless, the format supported the development of ASEM and thereby triggered the formation of a new East Asian regionalism. With respect to the interregional, intra-regional and sub-regional cooperation Julie Gilson (Birmingham) and Yeo Lay Hwee (Singapore) analysed the aspect of collective identity building within the ASEM process. Paul

Lim (Brussels) and Sebastian Bersick (Berlin) discussed ASEM and the New EU Asia Strategy in the context of the events of 11 September 2001. In the view of this new strategy the advent of a new kind of terrorism marks a challenge for the cooperation between Asia and Europe. Because of the rising unilateral behaviour of the Bush Jr.-Administration the potential of Asian-European relations and of ASEM as a balancer of the new US policy behaviour is becoming more and more apparent. In that respect the importance of ASEM as a mechanism which enables powerful Asian and European actors to cooperate without a direct interference by the USA has risen after 11 September.

As the PR China is being successfully engaged within the process ASEM can serve as an entity that stimulates multilateralism on the global, the interregional as well as on the intra-regional level. Thereby it hinders the dangers of rising unilateralism and regional divisions in a multipolar post-9/11 world order. The talks of all scholars underlined the rising importance of interregional cooperation within a system of global governance which is based on multilateral and not unilateral behaviour. A book on the round-table findings will be published this year. <

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