

The article was previously published in:

Geopolitics, History, and International Relations, Volume 3(2), 2011, pp. 196–207, ISSN 1948-9145

No Asian Century without the pan-Asian Institution

Prof. (FH) Dr. Anis Bajrektarevic, Acting Deputy Director of Studies EXPORT EU-ASEAN-NAFTA
Professor and Chairperson - International Law and Global Political Studies
University of Applied Sciences IMC-Krems, Austria, EUROPE

ABSTRACT:

Following the famous saying allegedly spelled by Kissinger: “Europe? Give me a name and a phone number!” (when – back in early 1970s – urged by President Nixon to inform Europeans on the particular US policy action), the author is trying to examine how close is Asia to have its own telephone number.

By contrasting and comparing genesis of multilateral security structures in Europe with those currently existing in Asia, and by listing some of the most pressing security challenges in Asia, this article offers several policy incentives why the largest world’s continent must consider creation of the comprehensive pan-Asian institution. Prevailing security structures in Asia are bilateral and mostly asymmetric while Europe enjoys multilateral, balanced and symmetric setups (American and African continents too). Author goes as far as to claim that irrespective to the impressive economic growth, no Asian century will emerge without creation of such an institution.

For over a decade, many of the relevant academic journals are full of articles prophesizing the 21st as the Asian century. The argument is usually based on the impressive economic growth, increased production and trade volumes as well as the booming foreign currency reserves and exports of many populous Asian nations (with nearly 1/3 of total world population inhabiting just two countries of the largest world’s continent). However, history serves as a powerful reminder by warning us that economically or/and demographically mighty gravity centers tend to expand into their peripheries, especially when the periphery is weaker by either category. It means that any (absolute or relative) shift in economic and demographic strength of one subject of international relations will inevitably put additional stress on the existing power equilibriums and constellations that support this balance in the particular theater (implicit or explicit structure).

Thus, what is the state of art of Asia’s security structures? What is the existing capacity of preventive diplomacy and what instruments are at disposal when it comes to early warning/prevention, fact-finding, exchange mechanisms, reconciliation, capacity and confidence–building measures in the Asian theater?

While all other major theaters do have the pan-continental settings in place already for many decades, such as the Organization of American States – OAS (American continent), African Union – AU (Africa), Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE (Europe), the state-of-arts of the largest world’s continent is rather different. What becomes apparent, nearly at the first glance, is the absence of any pan-Asian security/

multilateral structure. Prevailing security structures are bilateral and mostly asymmetric. They range from the clearly defined and enduring non-aggression security treaties, through less formal arrangements, up to the Ad hoc cooperation accords on specific issues. The presence of the multilateral regional settings is limited to a very few spots in the largest continent, and even then, they are rarely mandated with security issues in their declared scope of work. Another striking feature is that most of the existing bilateral structures have an Asian state on one side, and either peripheral or external protégé country on the other side (which makes them nearly per definition asymmetric). The examples are numerous: the US–Japan, the US–S. Korea, the US–Singapore, Russia–India, Australia–East Timor, Russia–North Korea, Japan–Malaysia, China–Pakistan, the US–Pakistan, China–Cambodia, the US–Saudi Arabia, Russia–Iran, China–Burma, India–Maldives, Iran–Syria, N. Korea–Pakistan, etc.

Indeed, Asia today resonates a mixed echo of the European past. It combines features of the pre-Napoleonic, post-Napoleonic and the League-of-Nations Europe. What are the useful lessons from the European past? Well, there are a few, for sure. Bismarck accommodated the exponential economic, demographic and military growth as well as the territorial expansion of Prussia by skillfully architecting and calibrating the complex networks of bilateral security arrangements of 19th century Europe. Like Asia today, it was not an institutionalized security structure of Europe, but a talented leadership exercising restraint and wisdom in combination with the quick assertiveness and fast military absorptions, concluded by the lasting endurance. However, as soon as the new Kaiser removed the Iron Chancellor (Bismarck), the provincial and backward-minded, insecure and militant Prussian establishment contested (by their own interpretations of the German's *machtpolitik* and *weltpolitik* policies) Europe and the world in two devastating world wars. That, as well as Hitler's establishment afterwards, simply did not know what to do with a powerful Germany.

The aspirations and constellations of some of Asia's powers today remind us also of the pre-Napoleonic Europe, in which a unified, universalistic block of the Holy Roman Empire was contested by the impatient challengers of the status quo. Such serious centripetal and centrifugal oscillations of Europe were not without grave deviations: as much as Cardinal Richelieu's and Jacobin's France successfully emancipated itself, the Napoleon III and pre-WWII France encircled, isolated itself, implicitly laying the foundation for the German attack.

Finally, the existing Asian regional settings also resemble the picture of the post-Napoleonic Europe: first and foremost, of Europe between the Vienna Congress of 1815 and the revolutionary year of 1848. At any rate, let us take a quick look at the most relevant regional settings in Asia.

By far, the largest Asian participation is with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation – APEC, an organization engulfing both sides of the Pacific Rim. Nevertheless, this is a forum for member economies (not of sovereign nations), a sort of a prep-com or waiting room for the World Trade Organization – WTO. To use the words of one senior Singapore diplomat who recently told me in Geneva the following: “what is your option here? ...to sign the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), side up with the US, login to FaceBook, and keep shopping on the internet happily ever after...”

Two other crosscutting settings, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – OIC and Non-Aligned Movement – NAM (the first with and the second without a permanent secretariat) represent the well-established political multilateral bodies. However, they are inadequate forums as neither of the two is (strictly) mandated with security issues. Although both trans-continental entities do have large memberships (being the 2nd and 3rd largest multilateral systems, right after the UN), neither covers the entire Asian political landscape – having important Asian countries outside the system or opposing it.

Further on, one should mention the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization – KEDO (Nuclear) and the Iran-related Contact (Quartet/P-5+1) Group. In both cases, the issues dealt with are indeed security related, but they are more an asymmetric approach to deter and contain a single country by the larger front of peripheral states that are opposing a particular security policy, in this case, of North Korea and of Iran. Same was with the short-lived SEATO Pact – a defense treaty organization for SEA which was essentially dissolved as soon as the imminent threat from communism was slowed down and successfully contained within the French Indochina.

If some of the settings are reminiscent of the pre-Napoleonic Europe, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization – SCO and Cooperation Council for the Arab states of the Gulf – GCC remind us of the post-Napoleonic Europe and its Alliance of the Eastern Conservative courts (of Metternich). Both arrangements were created on a pretext of a common external (ideological and geopolitical) threat, on a shared status quo security consideration. Asymmetric GCC was an externally induced setting by which an American key Middle East ally Saudi Arabia gathered the grouping of the Arabian Peninsula monarchies. It has served a dual purpose; originally, to contain the leftist Nasseristic pan-Arabism which was introducing a republican type of egalitarian government in the Middle Eastern theater. It was also (after the 1979 revolution) an instrument to counter-balance the Iranian influence in the Gulf and wider Middle East. The response to the spring 2011 turmoil in the Middle East (including the deployment of the Saudi troops in Bahrain, and including the analysis of the role of influential Qatar-based and GCC-backed Al Jazeera TV network) is the best proof of the very nature of the GCC mandate.

The SCO is internally induced and more symmetric setting. Essentially, it came into existence through a strategic Sino-Russian rapprochement¹ (based, for the first time in modern history,

¹ Analyzing the Sino-Soviet and post-Soviet-Sino relations tempts me to compare it with the Antic Roman Empire. The monolithic block has entered its fragmentation on a seemingly rhetoric, clerical question – who would give the exclusive interpretation of the holy text: Rome or Constantinople. Clearly, the one who holds the monopoly on the interpretation has the ideological grip, which can easily be translated into a strategic advantage. It was Moscow insisting that the Soviet type of communism was the only true and authentic communism. A great schism put to an end the lasting theological (but also geopolitical) conflict in the antique Roman theatre. The Sino-Soviet schism culminated with the ideological and geopolitical emancipation of China (especially after the Nixon recognition of Beijing China). Besides the ideological cleavages, the socio-economic and political model of the Roman Empire was heavily contested from the 3rd century onwards. The Western Roman Empire rigidly persisted to any structural change, unable to adapt. It eroded and soon thereafter vanished from the political map. The Eastern Empire successfully reformed and Byzantium endured (as a viable socio-economic and political model) for another 1,000 years. Feeling the need for an urgent reshape of the declining communist system, both leaders Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping contemplated reforms. Gorbachev eventually fractured the Soviet Union with *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Deng managed China successfully. Brave, accurate and important argumentation comes from diplomat and prolific author Kishore Mahbubani (The New Asian Hemisphere, 2008, page 44-45). Mahbubani claims that Gorbachev handed over the Soviet empire and got nothing in return, while Deng understood “the real success of Western strength and power ... China did not allow the students protesting in Tiananmen Square”. Consequently, Deng drew a sharp and decisive line to avoid the fate of Russia, and allowed only *perestroika*. China has survived, even scoring the unprecedented prosperity

on parity) to deter external aspirants (the US, Japan, Korea, India, Turkey and Saudi Arabia) and to keep the resources, territory, present socio-political culture and political regime in the Central Asia, Tibet heights and the Xinjiang Uighur province in line.

The next to consider is the Indian sub-continent's grouping, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation – SAARC. This organization has a well-established mandate, well staffed and versed Secretariat. However, the Organization is strikingly reminiscent of the League of Nations. The League is remembered as an altruistic setup which repeatedly failed to adequately respond to the security quests of its members as well as to the challenges and pressures of parties that were kept out of the system (e.g. Russia until well into the 1930s and the US remaining completely outside the system, and in the case of the SAARC surrounding; China, Saudi Arabia and the US). The SAARC is practically a hostage of mega confrontation of its two largest members, both confirmed nuclear powers; India and Pakistan. These two challenge each other geopolitically and ideologically (existence of one is a negation of the existence of the other; the religiously determined nationhood of Pakistan is a negation of multiethnic India and vice versa). Additionally, the SAARC although internally induced is an asymmetric organization. It is not only the size of India, but also its position: centrality of that country makes SAARC practically impossible to operate in any field without the direct consent of India (be it commerce, communication, politics or security).

For a serious advancement of multilateralism, mutual trust, a will to compromise and achieve a common denominator through active co-existence is the key. It is hard to build a common course of action around the disproportionately big and centrally positioned member (which would escape the interpretation as containment by the big or assertiveness of its center by the smaller, peripheral members).

Finally, there is an ASEAN – a grouping of 10 Southeast Asian nations², exercising the balanced multi-vector policy (based on the non-interference principle) internally and externally. This, Jakarta/Indonesia headquartered³ organization has a dynamic past and an ambitious current charter. It is an internally induced and relatively symmetric arrangement with the strongest members placed around its geographic center (like in case of the EU equilibrium with Germany-France/Britain-Italy/Poland-Spain geographically balancing each other). Situated on the geographic axis of the southern flank of the Asian landmass, the so-called growth triangle of Thailand-Malaysia-Indonesia represents the core of the ASEAN not only in economic and communication terms but also by its political leverage. The EU-like ASEAN Community Road Map (for 2015) will absorb most of the Organization's energy⁴. However, the ASEAN has managed to open its forums for the 3+3 group/s, and could be seen in the long run as a cumulus setting towards the wider pan-Asian forum in future.

in only the last two decades. Russia has suffered a steep decline in the aftermath of the loss of its historic empire (including the high suicide and crime rates as well as the severe alcohol problems). Gorbachev himself moved to the US, and one vodka brand labels his name.

² The membership might be extended in the future to East Timor and Papua New Guinea.

³ Symbolic or not, the ASEAN HQ is located less than 80 miles away from the place of the historical, the NAM-precursor, the Asian-African Conference of Bandung 1955.

⁴ Comparisons pose an inaccuracy risks as history often finds a way to repeat itself, but optimism finally prevails. Tentatively, we can situate the ASEAN today, where the pre-Maastricht EU was between the Merge Treaty and the Single European Act.

Before closing this brief overview, let us mention two recently inaugurated informal forums, both based on the external calls for a burden sharing. One, with a jingoistic-coined name by the Wall Street bankers⁵ - BRI(D)C/S, so far includes two important Asian economic, demographic and political powerhouses (India and China), and one peripheral (Russia). Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iran are a few additional Asian countries whose national pride and pragmatic interests are advocating a BRIC membership. The G-20, the other informal forum, is also assembled on the Ad hoc (pro bono) basis following the need of the G-7 to achieve a larger approval and support for its monetary (currency exchange accord) and financial (austerity) actions introduced in the aftermath of (still unsettled) financial crisis. Nevertheless, the BRIC and G-20 have not provided the Asian participating states either with the more leverage in the Bretton Woods institutions (besides a burden sharing), or have they helped to tackle the indigenous Asian security problems. Appealing for the national pride, however, both informal gatherings may divert the necessary resources and attention to Asian states from their pressing domestic, pan-continental issues.

Yet, besides the UN system machinery of the Geneva-based Disarmament committee, the UN Security Council, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – OPCW and International Atomic Energy Agency – IAEA, even the ASEAN Asians (as the most multilateralized Asians) have no suitable standing forum to tackle and solve their security issues. An organization similar to the Council of Europe or the OSCE is still far from emerging on Asian soil.

Our history warns. Nevertheless, it also provides a hope:

The pre-CSCE (pre-Helsinki) Europe was indeed a dangerous place to live in. The sharp geopolitical and ideological default line was passing through the very heart of Europe, cutting it into halves. The southern Europe was practically sealed off by notorious dictatorships; in Greece (Colonel Junta), Spain (Franco) and Portugal (Salazar), with Turkey witnessing several of its governments toppled by the secular and omnipotent military establishment, with inverted Albania and a (non-Europe minded) non-allied, Tito's Yugoslavia. Two powerful instruments of the US military presence (NATO) and of the Soviets (Warsaw pact) in Europe were keeping huge standing armies, enormous stockpiles of conventional as well as the ABC weaponry and delivery systems, practically next to each other. By far and large, European borders were not mutually recognized. Essentially, the west rejected to even recognize many of the Eastern European (Soviet dominated/installed) governments.

Currently in Asia, there is hardly a single state which has no territorial dispute within its neighborhood. From the Middle East, Caspian and Central Asia, Indian sub-continent, mainland Indochina or Archipelago SEA, Tibet, South China Sea and the Far East, many countries are suffering numerous green and blue border disputes. The South China Sea solely

⁵ The acronym was originally coined by Jim O'Neill, a chief global economist of Goldman Sachs, in his 2001 document report: "Building Better Global Economic BRICs". This document was elaborating on countries which may provide the West with the socially, economically and politically cheap primary commodities and undemanding labor force, finally suggesting to the West to balance such trade by exporting its high-priced final products in return. The paper did not foresee either creation of any BRIC grouping or the nomadic change of venue places of its periodic meetings. O'Neill initially tipped Brazil, Russia, India and China, although at recent meetings South Africa was invited (BRICS) with the pending Indonesia (BRIICS).

counts for over a dozen territorial disputes – in which mostly China presses peripheries to break free from the long-lasting encirclement. These moves are often interpreted by the neighbors as dangerous assertiveness. On the top of that Sea resides a huge economy and insular territory in a legal limbo – Taiwan, which waits for a time when the pan-Asian and intl. agreement on how many Chinas Asia should have, gains a wide and lasting consensus.

Unsolved territorial issues, sporadic irredentism, conventional armament, nuclear ambitions, conflicts over exploitation of and access to the marine biota, other natural resources including fresh water access and supply are posing enormous stress on external security, safety and stability in Asia. Additional stress comes from the newly emerging environmental concerns, that are representing nearly absolute security threats (not only to the tiny Pacific nation of Tuvalu⁶, but also) to the Maldives, Bangladesh, Cambodia, parts of Thailand, of Indonesia, of Kazakhstan and of the Philippines, etc⁷. All this combined with uneven economic and demographic dynamics⁸ of the continent are portraying Asia as a real powder keg.

It is absolutely inappropriate to compare the size of Asia and Europe (the latter being rather an extension of a huge Asian continental landmass, a sort of western Asian peninsula) but the interstate maneuvering space is comparable. Yet, the space between the major powers of post-Napoleonic Europe was as equally narrow for any maneuver as is the space today for any security maneuver of Japan, China, India, Pakistan, Iran and the like.

Let us also take a brief look at the peculiarities of the nuclear constellations in Asia. Following the historic analogies; it echoes the age of the American nuclear monopoly and the years of Russia's desperation to achieve the parity.

Besides holding huge stockpiles of conventional weaponry and numerous standing armies, Asia is a home of four (plus peripheral Russia and Israel) of the nine known nuclear powers (declared and undeclared). Only China and Russia are parties to the Non-proliferation Treaty – NPT (N. Korea walked away in 2003, whereas India and Pakistan both confirmed nuclear powers declined to sign the Treaty). Asia is also the only continent on which nuclear weaponry has been deployed.

As is well known, the peak of the Cold War was marked by the mega geopolitical and ideological confrontation of the two nuclear superpowers (whose stockpiles by far outnumbered the stockpiles of all the other nuclear powers combined). However enigmatic,

⁶ Tuvalu, a country composed of low-laying atoll islands, faces an imminent complete loss of state territory. This event would mark a precedent in the theory of intl. law – that one country suffers a complete geographic loss of its territory.

⁷ Detailed environmental impact risk assessments (including the no-go zones) are available in the CRESTA reports. The CRESTA Organization is powered by the Swiss RE as a consortium of the leading insurance and reinsurance companies.

⁸ The intriguing intellectual debate is currently heating up the western world. Issues are fundamental: Why is science turned into religion? (Practiced economy is based on the over 200-years old liberal theory of Adam Smith and over 300-years old philosophy of Hobbes and Locke – basically, frozen and rigidly canonized into a dogmatic exegesis. Scientific debate is replaced by a blind obedience.) Why is religion turned into political ideology (religious texts are misinterpreted and ideologically misused in Europe, ME, Asia, Americas and Africa)? Why is the (secular or religious) ethics turned from the bio-centric comprehension into the anthropocentric environmental ignorance? The resonance of these vital debates is gradually reaching Asian elites. No one can yet predict the range and scope of their responses, internally or externally. One is certain; Asia understood that the global (economic) integration can not be a substitute for any viable development strategy. Globalization, as experienced in Asia and observed elsewhere, did not offer a shortcut to development, even less to social cohesion, environmental needs, domestic employment, educational uplift of the middle class and general public health.

mysterious and incalculable to each other⁹, the Americans and Soviets were on opposite sides of the globe, had no territorial disputes, and no record of direct armed conflicts.

Insofar, the Asian nuclear constellation is additionally specific as each of the holders has a history of hostilities – armed frictions and confrontations over unsolved territorial disputes along the shared borders, all combined with the intensive and lasting ideological rivalries. The Soviet Union had bitter transborder armed frictions with China over the demarcation of its long land border. China has fought a war with India and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and other disputed bordering regions. Finally, the Korean peninsula has witnessed the direct military confrontations of Japan, USSR, Chinese as well as the US on its very soil, and remains a split nation under a sharp ideological divide.

On the western edge of the Eurasian continent, neither France, Britain, Russia nor the US had a (recent) history of direct armed conflicts. They do not even share land borders.

Finally, only India and now post-Soviet Russia have a strict and full civilian control over its military and the nuclear deployment authorization. In the case of North Korea and China, it is in the hands of an unpredictable and non-transparent communist leadership – meaning, it resides outside democratic, governmental decision-making. In Pakistan, it is completely in the hands of a politically omnipresent military establishment. Pakistan has lived under a direct military rule for over half of its existence as an independent state.

What eventually kept the US and the USSR from deploying nuclear weapons was the dangerous and costly struggle called: “mutual destruction assurance”. Already by the late 1950s, both sides achieved parity in the number and type of nuclear warheads as well as in the number and precision of their delivery systems. Both sides produced enough warheads, delivery systems’ secret depots and launching sites to amply survive the first impact and to maintain a strong second-strike capability¹⁰. Once comprehending that neither the preventive nor preemptive nuclear strike would bring a decisive victory but would actually trigger the final global nuclear holocaust and ensure total mutual destruction, the Americans and the

⁹ The Soviet Union was enveloped in secrecy (a political culture, eminent in many large countries, which the Soviets inherited from the Tsarist Russia and further enhanced) – a feature that puzzled Americans. It was the US cacophony of open, nearly exhibitionistic policy debates that puzzled Russians – and made both sides unable to predict the moves of the other one. The Soviets were confused by the omnipresence of overt political debate in the US, and the Americans were confused by the absence of any political debate in the USSR. Americans well knew that the real power resided outside the government, in the Soviet Politburo. Still, it was like a black-box (to use a vivid Kissinger allegory), things were coming in and getting out, but nobody figured out what was happening inside. Once the particular decision had been taken, the Soviets implemented it persistently in a heavy-handed and rigid way. Usually, the policy alternation/adjustment was not coming before the personal changes at the top of the SU Politburo – events happening so seldom. On the other hand, the Soviets were confused by the equidistant constellation of the US executive, legislative and judicial branches (for the Soviet taste, too often changed), the chaotic setup of dozens of intelligence and other enforcement agencies, the role of the media and the public, and the influential lobby groups that crosscut the US bipartisanship – all which participated in the decision prep and making process. Even when brokered, the US actions were often altered or replaced in zigzagging turns. The US was unable to grasp where the Communist Party ended and the USSR government started. By the same token, the Soviets were unable to figure out where the corporate America ended and the US government started. Paradoxically enough, the political culture of one prevented it from comprehending and predicting the actions of the other one. What was the logical way for one was absolutely unthinkable and illogical for the other.

¹⁰ As Waltz rightfully concludes: “Conventional weapons put a premium on striking first to gain the initial advantage and set the course of the war. Nuclear weapons eliminate this premium. The initial advantage is insignificant...”... due to the second strike capability of both belligerents. (‘The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed’ by Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N Waltz, 2003, p. 112).

Soviets have achieved a fear–equilibrium through the hazardous deterrence. Thus, it was not an intended parity, but the non-intended Mutual Assurance Destruction – MAD (with its tranquilizing effect of nuclear weaponry, if possessed in sufficient quantities and impenetrable configurations) that brought a bizarre sort of pacifying stability between two confronting superpowers.

As noted, the nuclear stockpiles in Asia are considerably modest¹¹. The number of warheads, launching sites and delivery systems is not sufficient and sophisticated enough to offer the second strike capability. That fact seriously compromises stability and security: preventive or preemptive N–strike against a nuclear or non-nuclear state could be contemplated as decisive, especially in South Asia and on the Korean peninsula, not to mention the Middle East¹².

A general wisdom of geopolitics assumes the potentiality of threat by examining the degree of intensions and capability of belligerents. However, in Asia this theory does not necessarily hold the complete truth: Close geographic proximities of Asian nuclear powers means shorter flight time of warheads, which ultimately gives a very brief decision-making period to engaged adversaries. Besides a deliberate, a serious danger of an accidental nuclear war is therefore evident.

One of the greatest thinkers and humanists of the 20th century, Erich Fromm wrote: “...*man can only go forward by developing (his) reason, by finding a new harmony...*”¹³

There is certainly a long road from vision and wisdom to a clear political commitment and accorded action. However, once it is achieved, the operational tools are readily at disposal. The case of Helsinki Europe is very instructive. To be frank, it was the over-extension of the superpowers who contested one another all over the globe, which eventually brought them to the negotiation table. Importantly, it was also a constant, resolute call of the European public that alerted governments on both sides of the default line. Once the political considerations were settled, the technicalities gained momentum: there was – at first – mutual pan-European recognition of borders which tranquilized tensions literally overnight. Politico-military cooperation was situated in the so-called first Helsinki basket, which included the joint military inspections, exchange mechanisms, constant information flow, early warning instruments, confidence–building measures mechanism, and the standing panel of state representatives (the so-called Permanent Council). Further on, an important clearing house was situated in the so-called second basket – the forum that links the economic and environmental issues, items so pressing in Asia at the moment.

Admittedly, the III OSCE Basket was a source of many controversies in the past years, mostly over the interpretation of mandates. However, the new wave of nationalism (often replacing the fading communism), the emotional charges and residual fears of the past, the huge

¹¹ It is assumed that Pakistan has as few as 20 combat/launching ready fission warheads, India is believed to have some 60, and Korea (if any, not more than) 2-3 only. Even China, considered as the senior nuclear state, has not more than 20 ICBM.

¹² Israel (as a non-declared nuclear power) is believed to have as many as 200 low-powered fission nuclear bombs. A half of it is deliverable by the mid-range missile Jericho II, planes and mobile (hide and relocate) launchers. Iran successfully tested the precision of its mid-range missile and keeps ambitiously working on the long-range generation of missiles. At the same time, Iran may well have acquired some vital dual-use (so far, peaceful purpose) nuclear technologies. There is a seed of nuclear ambition all over the Middle East (with Saudi Arabia and Turkey as the least shy ones).

¹³ “The Art of Loving”, Erich Fromm, 1956, page 76. Fromm wrote it at about the time of the Bandung conference.

ongoing formation of the middle class in Asia (whose passions and affiliations will inevitably challenge established elites domestically and question their policies internationally), and a related search for a new social consensus – all that could be successfully tackled by some sort of an Asian III basket. Clearly, further socio-economic growth in Asia is impossible without the creation and mobilization of a strong middle class – a segment of society which when appearing anew on the socio-political horizon is traditionally very exposed and vulnerable to political misdeeds and disruptive shifts. At any rate, there are several OSCE observing nations from Asia¹⁴; from Thailand to Korea and Japan (with Indonesia, a nation that currently considers joining the forum). They are clearly benefiting from the participation¹⁵.

Consequently, the largest continent should consider the creation of its own comprehensive pan-Asian multilateral mechanism. In doing so, it can surely rest on the vision and spirit of Helsinki. On the very institutional setup, Asia can closely revisit the well-envisioned SAARC and ambitiously empowered ASEAN¹⁶ fora. By examining these two regional bodies, Asia can find and skillfully calibrate the appropriate balance between widening and deepening of the (security) mandate of such future multilateral organization – given the number of states as well as the gravity of the pressing socio-political, environmental and politico-military challenges.

In the age of unprecedented success and the unparalleled prosperity of Asia, an indigenous multilateral pan-Asian arrangement presents itself as an opportunity. Contextualizing Hegel's famous saying that "*freedom is...an insight into necessity*" let me close by stating that a need for the domesticated pan-Asian organization warns by its urgency too.

Clearly, there is no emancipation of the continent; there is no Asian century, without the pan-Asian multilateral setting.

Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarevic, Chairman Intl. Law & Global Pol. Studies

Vienna, 16 NOV 11

anis@bajrektarevic.eu

¹⁴ The so-called OSCE–Asian Partners for Cooperation are: Japan (1992), Korea (1994), Thailand (2000), Afghanistan (2003), Mongolia (2004) and Australia (2009). Within the OSCE quarters, particularly Thailand and Japan enjoy a reputation of being very active.

¹⁵ It is likely to expect that five other ASEAN countries, residually represented in Vienna, may formalize their relation with OSCE in a due time. The same move could be followed by the Secretariats of both SAARC and ASEAN.

¹⁶ In Europe and in Asia (even when being at the HQ in Jakarta), I am often asked to clarify my (overly) optimistic views on the ASEAN future prospects. The ASEAN as well as the EU simply have no alternative but to survive and turn successful (although currently suffering many deficiencies and being far from optimized multilateral mechanisms). Any alternative to the EU is a grand accommodation of either France or Germany with Russia – meaning a return to Europe of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries – namely, perpetual wars and destructions. Any alternative to the ASEAN would be an absorptive accommodation of particular ASEAN member states to either Japan or China or India – meaning fewer large blocks on a dangerous collision course. Thus, paradoxically enough in cases of both the EU and of ASEAN, it is not (only) the inner capacitation but the external constellations that make me optimistic about their respective success.

Acknowledgments

For the last ten years I hosted over 100 ambassadors at my university, some 30 from Asia alone. Several of them are currently obtaining very high governmental positions in their respective countries (including the Foreign Minister posts). It would be inappropriate to name them here. However, let me express my sincere gratitude for all the talks and meetings which helped an early ‘fermentation’ of the thesis claim as such. Finally, I would like to name the following personalities for the valuable intellectual encounters and their sometimes opposing but always inspiring and constructive comments in the course of drafting the article:

H.E. Mr. Dato’ Misran KARMAIN, the ASEAN Deputy Secretary General

H.E. Mr. I Gusti Agung Wesaka PUJA, Indonesia’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and other IO’s in Vienna

H.E. Ms. Nongnuth PHETCHARATANA, Thai Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the OSCE, UN and other IO’s in Vienna

H.E. Ms. Linglingay F. LACANLALE, the Philippines’ Ambassador to Thailand and the UN ESCAP

H.E. Mr. Khamkheuang BOUNTEUM, Laos’ Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and other IO’s in Vienna

H.E. Mr. Ba Than NGUYEN, Vietnam’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and other IO’s in Vienna

H.E. Mr. Ibrahim DJIKIC, Ambassador and former OSCE Mission Head to Ashgabat

However, the views expressed are solely those of the author himself.

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