

Closing Remarks

Dr. Michael Reiterer

Well, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to address you at the end of three long days, and I will do that in Austrian English by the way.

I would like to use of course the occasion to thank first of all our co-organizers, the Osaka City University in general, but Prof. Yamashita in particular for the preparations. But I would also like to thank my staff, which worked over two years with you, and especially Miss Kitagawa who is with us. It was not easy to bring all of you together and I admit I was once in a while a little bit skeptical whether three days would really be necessary. But having been here I must say I have enjoyed it and I was also positively impressed by the attendance over the last three days.

Now I will not try to make a summary of these last three days, but perhaps I will just offer you some impressions because, as you have seen, I have used my pink papers not to fire at you many questions, but just to write down a few impressions.

I think talking about the European Union and the euro in the context of what can be learned was rather timely, because I know whenever I attend international conferences and there is talk about Asia in general, without a European speaker and without having Europe or European integration on the agenda, it takes a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes before somebody refers to the example of the European Union and I'm happy to say mostly in a positive way.

I think these two days or the last three days have also shown that we have to discuss the European Union in a rather broad angle. We have talked about monetary and related policies, about optimum currency areas, the role of the euro. We have talked about FTAs and customs unions. We have talked about multilateralism, about security, about reconciliation and the role of study papers, universities and think tanks in the process of developing integration.

Nevertheless, I had the impression that the prime interest lies in studying trade and monetary matters. I think that is justified by the facts. But nevertheless I would like to make a note of caution and just recall that nowadays the European Union is no longer just an economic animal. You have to think, and there was reference to the history, that we also have to have a sort of ideal, a goal. I don't know if I should call it a vision. But spreading peace in Europe, taking care of human rights, making sure that the rule of law is implemented, assure accountability if you wish, and that we are convinced of the value of a market-based economy, are the essential elements which should not be forgotten when talking about the integration process, whether in Asia or in Europe.

I would like to quote here something that the former president Delors has said which is quoted quite often: "You cannot fall in love with an internal market." I think this warning of Delors explains perhaps a little bit the difficulties which we have right now in the European Union because if you make it too narrow a concept then people don't feel attached to the concept any longer.

And we should not forget that the European Union has brought a very important innovation to international politics: regionalism. It is the pooling of sovereignty, the Europeanization of national interests, the binding of the nation-state into a cooperative framework and thereby enhancing effectiveness on the international level. That seems to have been an attractive concept. It is also called 'soft power'. In nowadays Europe, instead of forging alliances against the European Union, nearly all states on the European continent want to join the European Union.

Therefore one of the strongest weapons the European Union has nowadays is to reject a state; the Union is also able to set criteria which have to be fulfilled if a state is allowed to join. That was called the 'transformative power' of the European Union and I think this is a quite interesting and significant development not only in Europe but also for international politics in general. In short, the EU is more and more built on regionalism and multilateralism.

There are however, important differences between the EU and Asia. The Asian approach to cooperation and eventually integration, the ASEAN or the Asian way is to some extent contrary. It is underlining strengthening sovereignty, the concept of non-interference in internal affairs, and it favours bilateralism despite globalization. In Asia there is still a reluctance to build institutions, to accept legal obligations that are legally enforceable in courts, unlike in the EU where we have the European court system.

I also ask myself sometimes whether the many FTAs, which we see developing here in Asia, are they really an expression of the will of cooperation or are these bilateral negotiations also an expression of rivalry here in East Asia?

These are some of the significant differences I see in comparison with the European approach where institutions and their law play a dominant role. I think it is also for a good reason, because we in Europe, made use of this law and institution-based approach as a means to overcome diversity.

I want to dwell on that for a moment because I have the impression that because of the relative geographical coherence of Europe, compared to East Asia, our Asian friends sometimes underestimate the diversity of Europe in areas of mentality, of culture, of language. Therefore it is not without reason that "unity in diversity" is the leitmotif of the European integration.

I refer to this concept of law as we discussed today also the significant difference between Brunei and China if Asian integration were to happen. Yes, it is significant, but we had this difference from the very beginning when the European Union was formed. Small Luxembourg was ready to join the European Union together with big Germany, France and Italy. Why? Because there was a treaty, a legal system. Thus, the smaller countries, the Luxembourgers, the Dutch and the Belgians were sure to be protected by law.

In Europe we also needed a sort of common cause, and I use the word now, a vision to assure peace through cooperation, to set the process of integration in motion. A commonly accepted or acceptable vision is lacking in Asia. I

wonder whether securing raw materials or the security of energy or environmental protection could be the common cause in East Asia to set the process of integration into motion.

I therefore have the impression that despite the many vision groups and eminent persons groups, the overarching vision for integration in East Asia has not taken root yet. They might have one shortcoming namely that they are a bit artificial and sound preposterous. I don't know who of you ever looked at the Schuman Declaration, as we had as one of the timely issues for discussion, searching for an Asian Schuman Declaration. The Schuman declaration is about two pages, very simple, outlining in an understandable language a very clear concept.

I hope that this conference is the beginning of a discussion process, a process of dialogue for mutual exchange and to build trust, trust between the regions, but also within the region. Concerning the latter aspect I was very happy to see the participation of Japanese, Chinese and Korean panelists alongside European ones. I think this is the application of one of a very important principle to keep talking to each other even if you don't agree, the only means to find a common solution.

I propose that we think and continue along these lines when reflecting about a follow-up to the conference of the last days. I would like again to thank all of those who participated in the preparation and you the audience who were brave enough to stay until the very end. Thank you very much.