

# EU-Asia Security Relations – Cooperation Against the Odds?

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## Introduction

Asia represents not only one of the fastest economic growth regions globally, it is also the largest EU trade partner, thus bearing considerable security implications in terms of secure flow of goods and services. Various EU documents on Asia have signified that the EU's essential interests are closely tied up with the security of Asia and with the foreign and security policies of the region's main players (e.g., Council 2012; European Union 2016). The notion of common interests is also reflected in a myriad of EU-Asia institutional channels that facilitate regular interactions between the EU and its Asian counterparts. Through these shared interests and frequent interactions EU and Asian actors have advanced joint actions in certain security areas, such as on non-proliferation issues, energy security and climate change. However, these successes are piecemeal in nature and conceal the fact that EU security policy actions on Asia have been generally reactive rather than proactive in nature, often short term in implications, and lack a clear linear progression in dealing with Asia. There is also a perception among scholars and defence analysts that the EU is at best a minor player in Asia-Pacific security, and not generally regarded as a security actor in the traditional sense, unlike the US and China (Wong and Tay 2014).

Reasons for the absence of a clear EU Asia strategy or strong security presence in Asia are manifold and internal and external in nature. Lacking essential military capabilities and projecting normative or civilian power tools impedes EU prospects for dealing with potential conflicts in the Taiwan Straits, the simmering conflict between India and Pakistan, or Chinese assertiveness in the East and South China Sea (in which China is staking claim to roughly 80 per cent of the territory), or for that matter with upholding the freedom of navigation in that region. These deficiencies make the EU largely subservient to or supportive of US leadership in Asian security matters. They also link with the neutral status the EU has adopted with regard to territorial maritime disputes in the East and South China Sea, such as those involving the Senkaku /Diaoyu Islands. A second reason is the fact that the EU is basically a regional organisation and, as such, primarily concerned with preserving stability in its geographic region. Subsequently, conflicts in Asia often take secondary importance to conflicts that directly threaten Europe's interests – like those in the Middle East and North Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, or areas where Europe feels a moral or historical responsibility to show the flag like in sub-Saharan Africa (Wissenbach 2014, 141). Substantial resources and energy are hence devoted to EU enlargement and neighbourhood policies rather than to policy strategies in Asia. A third reason relates to the inability of the EU to free itself sufficiently from internal problems – such as

those caused by the Euro crisis, the refugee crisis and the growth of populism – which affect the cohesion and effectiveness of its external action, including those towards Asia. For some observers the internal problems are signs of an on-going process of fragmentation, which also affects the so-called West generally, as evidenced in trans-Atlantic tensions and the erosion of the liberal international governance order (Lind and Wohlforth 2019).

On the other hand, the Brexit vote in 2016 and Trump's disengagement from multilateralism have triggered European interest and willingness to step up European defence cooperation outside of NATO, notably through Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Intervention Initiative. These steps, in addition to promoting greater security in the EU's neighbourhood, might also allow the EU to become a more important security actor in Asia at a time when many Asian countries are increasingly wary of rising Chinese assertiveness and a potential US withdrawal or contestation in the region.

For the EU to become a more influential security actor in Asia requires not only improvements in its security and defence capabilities, but also in its external actorness. It is the latter aspect that will be explored in this chapter, starting with an assessment of how existing actions or guidelines of EU security policy towards Asia could be strengthened. This requires a review of the major security activities or engagements the EU has established with Asian counterparts so far. Before turning to historical aspects it should be noted that the volume is divided into parts, with the first being theme oriented and pursuing a strictly analytical analysis of ten security dimensions. The second part examines the EU's bilateral security relations with four Asian countries and ASEAN. Whilst exploring similar themes to those of part one, a less rigorous analysis of the ten different security dimensions will be applied there. The objective of this is to provide more details on the nature of the relationship the EU has with Asian counterparts and to explore in more depth the influence third actors, such as the US or Russia, have on these relations.

In the following, attention will first turn to a review of EU-Asia security relations; the chapter then deals with conceptual and empirical aspects in the analysis of those relations, and finishes with an overview of the contributions to this volume.

### **What is Asia?**

There are at least two noteworthy concerns with respect to any reflection on EU-Asia security relations. The first has to do with the very idea of Asia, which itself is fraught with ambiguity, complexity and contestation (Wang 2010). As a former top diplomat from the region once mused, 'Asia is a political and not just a geographic concept; it is politics that defines geography' (Kausikan, 2014). While there is no question that European colonialism has contributed significantly to shaping the idea of Asia,<sup>1</sup> others have argued the importance of premodern Euro-Asia relations. For example, according to Andre Gunder Frank, both regions were, in his view, already profoundly

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one does not have to fully subscribe to the logics of Orientalism to appreciate the notion that Asia was perceived and treated by Europe as its 'Other' (Nozaki 2009).

entwined by the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Frank 1998).<sup>2</sup> For our present purposes, Asia's complexity is also apparent in its myriad regionalisms, which alternatively complement and compete with one another (Buzan and Zhang 2014; He 2017). It is also seen in the region's relatively under-institutionalised character; tracing the patterns of existing and emerging cultural, economic and political exchanges that define contemporary Asia, an interdisciplinary team of prominent scholars described Asia as weakly bounded, network-oriented, pluralistic and multitemporal (Duara 2013).

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Asia's 'noodle bowl' of multilateral security arrangements – such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), all of which are predicated upon the putative 'centrality' of ASEAN in the region's architecture (Tan 2017) – whose different yet overlapping memberships and potentially competing remits exemplify the ambiguity and complexity of the region and its brand of regionalism. Moreover, Asian regionalism remains highly susceptible to pressures exerted upon it by its non-ASEAN participants, whose strategic rivalries with one another threaten to hinder regional cooperation or, in the worst case, tear the region asunder (He 2019; Tan 2015; Tan 2018a).<sup>3</sup> All of this stands in contrast, at risk of oversimplification, to the institutional singularity of Europe as embodied in the EU. As reflected by the chapters in this volume, there is no single 'Asia' – for that matter, 'Southeast Asia' – with which the EU engages but multiple actors and agencies at both the national and regional levels at any given point.

Secondly, Asia's ambiguity and complexity does not mean the region has thereby been passive and lacking in political agency. Consider, for instance, the position taken collectively by the Asians at the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993 – a negotiated outcome of the Asian Group preparatory meeting held in Bangkok two months earlier – which contended that human rights, though universal in nature, needs however to be considered in the context of an evolving normative milieu and different historical, cultural, religious and political backgrounds (Bauer 1996). If politics shapes regional idea and identity, then the normative ambivalence of the Asians at the Vienna Conference – a crucial pillar of the EU's human rights framework – was significant in terms of shaping the course of Europe-Asia intraregional ties at least and specifically that of the ASEM process (Keva 2016). That said, while this development has been seen by some, fairly or otherwise, as emblematic of Asia's ability to coherently articulate its own 'values' (Cauquelin, Lim and Mayer-Koenig 2000), it is also evident that variances between the region's illiberal countries and their more democratic neighbours – or, alternatively, between

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<sup>2</sup> Frank's claim contested by others less over its observation about the existence of premodern intraregional ties than its allegedly flawed challenge against the primacy and relevance of modern Eurocentric interpretations of Asia (Arrighi, 1999; Graham 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Of the great powers, China, India, Japan and the US have been and remain the most active in Asia today (Goh 2013). Russia has also begun to turn towards Asia, but the hurdle to substantiating its economic turn remains the persistent political perception among many Russian elites that all good things for Russia stemmed from the West, and that it is with the West that Russia therefore ought to continue to engage ((Karaganov 2016).

conservative countries and their activist counterparts – often constrain and delimit the extent and depth of Asian regionalism.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, where the ADMM-Plus is concerned, regional countries have hitherto demonstrated their ability to cooperate in particular facets of non-traditional security so long as the collective will to do so exists (Tan 2018b). Be that as it may, prospects for EU-Asia security collaboration have to be seen in the light of Asia's inherent challenges.

### **Historical overview of EU-Asia security relations**

When reviewing the development of EU-Asia security relations, the first thing to note is the relatively late arrival of security as a distinct phenomenon in that relationship. Whilst the EU had a number of important agreements with Asian counterparts between 1970 and 2000, like the 1985 Trade and Cooperation Agreement with China (Council of the EU 1985), the Joint Declaration with Japan in 1991 (European Communities 1991), or the communication on Toward a New Asia Strategy in 1994 (Commission of the EU 1994), they contained only general references on security such as with regard to economic security, human security, civil protection, and non-proliferation. Some security aspects – such as non-proliferation – arose also in the context of activities in the United Nations and the Organisation on Security Cooperation Europe.

2001 marked the start of EU accords with Asian regional entities and single countries that included both normative propositions, such as the preservation of peace and the strengthening of international security, but also definitive security provisions, such as regional security, energy security and climate change, counter-terrorism, organised crime and cyber security. It coincided with growing EU security concerns over the freedom of navigation in the East and South China Sea, disputes across the Taiwan Strait, territorial conflicts in the Asia region, and the nuclear programme of North Korea. A flurry of EU documents and guidelines on Asia security, mostly drafted by the European Commission, were introduced from this date onward. Among the more significant ones were Commission communications on Europe and Asia (Commission 2001); A New Partnership with South East Asia (Commission 2003); and The EU and Central Asia (Council 2007a). Other important communications came from the Council, such as the Council Guidelines for East Asia (Council 2007b), repeated in 2012 (Council 2012).

Whilst East Asia has been a main EU focus, the EU has also sought to cultivate strong security relations with the South Asia region. This primarily involves the ten countries of ASEAN, with which the EU shares the 'commitment to regional integration – as a means of fostering stability and prosperity – and to multilateralism – as a way to constrain unilateral and hegemonic attitudes' (Casarini 2012, 4). After a lengthy delay, a decision was taken by EU and ASEAN countries' Foreign Ministers on 21 January 2019 to upgrade their relationship to a Strategic Partnership (PubAffairs 2019). The EU has also become an active member in the ARF and the inter-regional dialogues of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). However, so far the EU has been unable to become a member of the EAS. The region of Southwest Asia also includes India, with which the

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<sup>4</sup> One analyst has referred to Asian regionalism as a 'frustrated' enterprise (Nair 2009).

EU has a strategic partnership, established in 2004, but which has somewhat stagnated and not been upgraded or coupled with a EU-India Free Trade Agreement.

By contrast, EU security relations with Central Asia and Asia-Pacific are more tenuous than those of the aforementioned two Asian regions. However, the security and stability of Central Asia could be affected by the implementation of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While increasing connectivity could provide many opportunities in the region, authoritarian regimes, weak institutions, and the growing threat of extremism in an underdeveloped region could also represent a set of interconnected challenges with transnational dimensions (Gros 2015). Partly due to the enormous diversity in economic and political development of the Asia-Pacific region and partly because of geographic distance, the EU has found it difficult to devise a clear or effective strategy for that region.

Going beyond addressing security in Asian regions, the EU has also established individual Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA) with four Asian states (China 2003, Japan 2003, India 2004 and South Korea 2010), which contained specific security provisions and which, in the case of China and Japan, were later upgraded. For example, in 2010 China elevated the SPA with the EU to same SPA status it has with the US, and added a defence component to the SPA. Also in 2012, a EU-China High-Level Strategic Dialogue was established, and the organisation of High Level Seminars on Defence and Security began. These efforts were complemented in 2014 with the 2020 China-EU Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, and with the 2016 EU Strategy for China. In the case of Japan, a EU-Japan High-Level Group was established in 2010 and a new SPA was established in February 2019. Arguably, China has hitherto received disproportionate attention in the EU's approach to Asia, but this may change as a result of developments surrounding the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, the establishment of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and SPA with Japan, and renewed efforts to strike a Strategic Partnership Agreement with ASEAN.

Finding the right balance in the EU's security approach to Asia has not been easy, due to a diverse number of reasons. Some of the challenges are how to: strike a balance between a general strategy and accommodating to the enormous differences in economic, political and cultural development of the region; avoid being caught in the power rivalries between China and Japan,<sup>5</sup> between China and India, or between China and the US; make a meaningful contribution to overcoming the simmering conflict between Pakistan and India; play a constructive role in reducing tensions caused by the assertiveness Chinese maritime stance in the East and South China Sea; and engage sufficiently countries that have strong US security and defence ties, such as Japan, South Korea and Thailand.

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<sup>5</sup> Already there are accusations by Japan and other Asian countries that the EU Asian security policy has been too China-centric or receives undue attention. Indeed, EU-China relations are among the most institutionalised the EU has with external partners and comprise an extensive array of EU communications. On the other hand, due to Japanese and US insistence, the EU has maintained the arms embargo against China.

Realising its limitations as a military actor and building on its strength as a normative or civilian-oriented actor, the EU has prioritised a number of key themes or security sectors in its dealing with Asian security matters. Among these are both normative aspects such as the pursuance of peace and international security and effective multilateralism, and a host of specific security issues, such as regional security, counter-terrorism, organised crime, energy security and climate change, and cyber security. In pursuit of the normative aspects, the EU has advocated freedom of navigation (the UN law of the sea) in the East and South China Sea, has issued statements supporting The Hague Court and peaceful resolutions of the conflict in the East and South China Sea, and has supported ASEAN endeavours to reach agreement on a code of conduct in that sea region. Considerable EU funding has been provided for democratic reform programmes (the rule of law), humanitarian assistance, and natural disaster management in Asia.

In terms of regional security endeavours, the EU has undertaken a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) monitoring operation in support of peace efforts in the Indonesian province of Aceh (2006); sought membership of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2012; and, since 2008, is cooperating with Chinese, Japanese and South Korean navy ships in the CSDP anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden. In the case of Central Asia, the EU has appointed a Special Envoy, whose assigned role is to assist in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction issues.

Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction has been a long-standing concern of the EU, which motivated it to participate in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization project aimed to promote the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. EU efforts to emulate its successful role in dealing with the Iranian nuclear programme with regard to North Korea have received support from neither China nor the US. On the contrary, the EU has been prevented from being part of the Six-Party Talks dealing with the North Korean nuclear programme, including its flagrant missile testing activities in 2017 and 2018.

Energy security and climate change has been another key EU policy priority; an area where the EU is deemed to be a global agenda setter on regulatory pollution standards. Support for these issues from its Asian counterparts has been mixed, especially with regard to climate change matters, reflecting differences in the economic development of some Asian countries, but also policy differences about the extent of climate change, e.g., Australia, which is negatively inclined. Given these differences, the EU has welcomed support from China for the maintenance of the Paris Climate Accord, after the US withdrawal from the agreement in 2018.

Whilst in the areas of terrorism, organized crime and cyber security both the EU and Asian countries perceive common threats, cultural or definitional differences have prevented meaningful interaction in this area. These differences relate to the question “who is a terrorist?” (e.g., whether the Chinese Uighurs are a suppressed ethnic minority or a terrorist group), data protection principles (particularly with regard to open internet access), and extradition impositions (due to the adherence to the death penalty by several Asian countries). As a consequence there has been limited joint action and very little contact between the EU agencies of Eurojust and Europol with Asian counterparts, like Aseanapol.

As can be seen from the foregoing, there are security areas where the EU has cultivated links and sought cooperation, albeit with different levels of success. But it is also worth remembering that the EU is not seen as a major security actor in Asia. Moreover, different geographic security environments between Europe and Asia (for example, different threat perceptions over the rise of China), or US defence arrangements with certain Asian states, have acted as constraints on EU-Asia security relations. Overall, the EU focus towards Asia has been on soft power issues. However, some EU members have participated in NATO's ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission in Afghanistan and some – like the UK and France – have retained a certain level of military involvement in the area. Several EU member states are also selling arms and dual-use equipment to countries in the region (Casarini 2018).

Whether an EU focus on soft power issues is enough to meet future challenges, such as the impact of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Central Asia region and the influence of Trump's "America First" banner on European and Asian security, remains to be seen. While the BRI will have a more long-term effect, Trump's policies will most likely have a more immediate impact on EU-Asia security relations, either directly (US defence commitments to either NATO or its Asian allies) or indirectly (the role of multilateral institutions, and sustaining the Paris Climate Accord and the Iranian nuclear agreement). The EU-Japan EPA and SPA are likely to strengthen future EU-Japan security relations and potentially bolster their efforts to defend and promote the principles of peace and security at the regional and international level.

### **Key concepts in EU-Asia security relations**

This exercise will be guided by the use of a number of key concepts that serve as heuristic tools for subsequent empirical analysis that are linked in their practical application. *Convergence* (and its negative counterpart *divergence*) is defined in this context as the degree of policy conformity the EU and Asia are able (or unable) to achieve in a given security dimension with regard to threat perceptions and associated responses. Asia and the EU may agree (or disagree) on which security threats they find more salient and on how to respond to perceived threats. For example, in view of the rise in cyber attacks at regional and global level, both may express similar levels of concern and policy response. *Cooperation* is defined as the degree of actual security cooperation between the EU and Asia, whether in the shape of formal agreements or of joint actions (involving either material resources or firm commitments to joint standards) in each of the security dimensions under investigation. However, whilst it is plausible to assume that there is a strong link between the degree of policy conformity in threat perception and levels of cooperation, the possibility that cooperative arrangements or joint actions can arise independent of any such link cannot be discounted altogether: cooperation might occur spontaneously as a consequence of exogenous events such as natural disasters, something that must remain a potential scenario to be found in empirical research.

## Assessing convergence and cooperation

This discussion of convergence and cooperation as key heuristic concepts in the analysis of security relations raises questions about how to measure developments in this respect. It is necessary therefore to elaborate briefly here on the specific criteria used in this study. *Convergence* is assessed by the extent to which uniform positions exist between the EU and Asia<sup>6</sup> on the perception of threats and on the associated response with regard to ten specific security dimensions. This involves examining how each partner ranks the ten security areas on a scale between 'high' and 'low'. *Cooperation* is assessed by examining the extent to which the EU and Asia have engaged in joint agreements or actions either at the bilateral or the multilateral level. Joint agreements can be in the form of Summit declarations or the adoption (signing and ratifying) by both partners of, for example, UN conventions. But it will be important to distinguish the extent to which cooperation is merely at the level of "intentions" (rhetoric), or involve a number of actual joint actions: put differently, whether the prospects for cooperation between the EU and Asia remain at the level of discourse rather than practice. Joint actions can, at the low end, take the form of information exchanges on counter-terrorism activities, organized crime or cyber security and, at the high end, the joint anti-piracy maritime operations between the EU and some Asian countries off the coast of Somalia. With regard to joint actions it will be important to examine: the type, frequency or length of action; the material or personnel sources involved in these actions; the temporal or lasting effect which can be attributed to them; the springboard or multiplier implication which can be associated with them. It will also be interesting to establish whether cooperation is more pronounced at the bilateral rather than at the multilateral level and whether there is a strong correlation in performance between these two levels or none at all. Overall, levels of EU-Asia cooperation in the ten security areas will be ranked on a scale between 'high' and 'low'.

The following categorisation will be used for distinguishing between 'high' and 'low' levels of threat perception and cooperation.

### a) Levels of threat perception as perceived by either the EU or Asia

**High:** developments are regarded as a main or significant threat in official statements and associated with a high propensity to affect the peace and stability of the polity.

**Medium:** developments are seen as a threat in official statements but not involving a high propensity to affect the peace and stability of the polity.

**Low:** developments have received little, if any attention as a threat in official statements.

### b) Levels of cooperation

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<sup>6</sup> As mentioned earlier, the volume consists of two parts, the first part is theme oriented and the second is focused on bilateral security relations that the EU has with four Asian countries and ASEAN. For reasons of convenience, descriptions or assessment indicators relating to EU-Asia relations also generally apply to relations between the EU and Asian countries and with ASEAN.



**High:** both partners actively and frequently encourage joint actions either at the bilateral or multilateral level; including the involvement of resources or personnel.

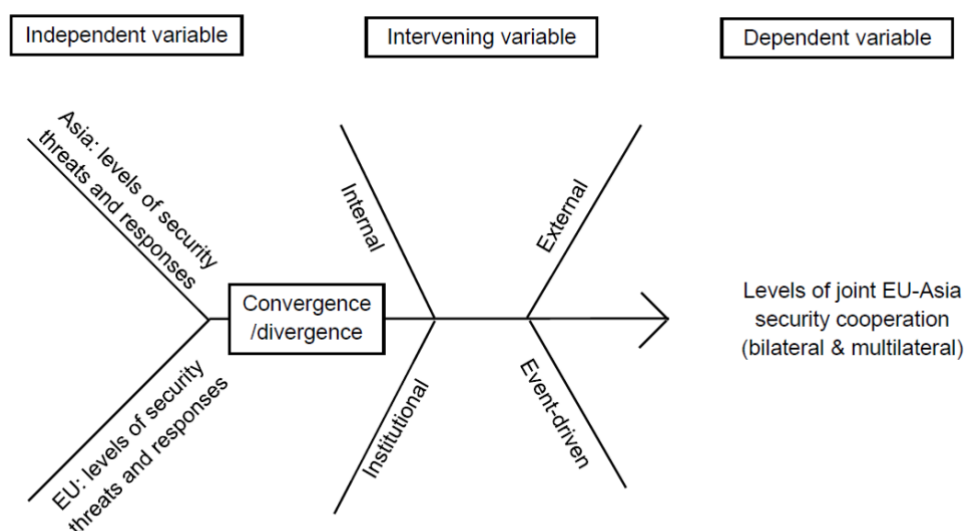
**Medium:** some institutionalised interaction together with a common understanding and recognition that problems can be jointly solved at either the bilateral or multilateral level, including the involvement of resources or personnel.

**Low:** an absence of active encouragement for joint actions; cooperation takes place at the level of discourse or intention rather than practice.

A further criterion to be assessed is the extent to which cooperation is in line with the levels of perceived threats, or exists separately, for example, as exogenous events – possibly one-off – in response to events such as natural disasters or pandemics. Two additional factors or intervening variables can act as barriers to EU-Asia security cooperation. First, internal factors such as differences among EU institutions and/or between EU institutions and member states, and manoeuvres by Asian countries, such as China, to divide or undermine EU consensus in selectively dealing with EU institutions (Council or Commission) and individual EU member states can account for differences between levels of threat perception and levels of cooperation. Second, the roles the United States and Russia play can hinder EU-Asia security cooperation and hence deviate from given levels of threat perception. On the other hand, the degree of institutional entrenchment in relations between the EU and Asia can also reinforce a strong correlation between levels of threat perception and levels of cooperation. Rather than merely bringing to light the similarities or dissimilarities in the differences between levels of threat perception and cooperation, which would tend to portray a static view, the aim is to explore the dynamic element and to examine whether, over time, changes have taken place and/or the force of the argument for similar levels of convergence has either weakened or strengthened. The concluding chapter analyses in a systematic way the information contained in the individual chapters.

Diagram 1 below illustrates the analytical framework and, in particular, the role of intervening variables between the levels of security threat perception individually and jointly by Asia and the EU (seen as the independent variable) and the levels of EU-Asia security cooperation across the ten security sectors (deemed as the dependent variable).

*Figure 1 Causal Interactions in EU-Asia Security Relations*



In the following, a number of pertinent issues related to the chosen unit of analysis are discussed. This will be followed by a treatment of how the adopted conceptual framework will be applied in the book.

### **The levels of analysis problem in studying EU-Asia security relations**

The choice to focus in this analysis on EU-Asia security relations, rather than on the security relations of the EU's member states with Asia, or else on what is sometimes loosely referred to as 'Asia-European' security relations, may require some explanation. First of all, this volume is intended as a contribution to the literature on the EU's external relations and in particular on its evolving role as a security actor. From modest beginnings, the EU has developed a wide-ranging security policy (in particular with the Lisbon Treaty), and how this shapes up in relations with Asia is of considerable scholarly interest and political relevance.

The book does recognise that, undoubtedly, individual EU member states – for example, Germany, France and the United Kingdom – have a longer and more involved security engagement with Asia than the EU does. In the case of France and the United Kingdom, this greater involvement is the result of a combination of factors such as their status as nuclear powers and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and their defence cooperation agreements with some Asian states, including the development of military equipment, as is the case with Japan (Ueta 2013, 2). Equally, Germany has a long tradition of economic and political ties with China and Japan and has shared interests on the basis of their strongly export-oriented economies. Such bilateral security relations may provide interesting – even important – insights, but the analysis of those respective bilateral security relations would not provide a full account of what EU-Asia security relations entail in scope or degree.

Most importantly, focussing on the member states rather than on the European Union and its common institutions and policies would downplay – and risks neglecting – the host of instances where the EU has demonstrated that it does indeed constitute a security actor in its own right when dealing with Asia. Examples are the anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden, the climate change negotiations and counter-terrorism measures. However, all this is not denying the existence of a hybrid nature or co-existence of European and national foreign policies. Consequently, the choice in this book has been to focus predominantly on the European level as the main level of analysis while incorporating, where appropriate, the role of member states when examining the specific security dimensions which have been chosen for the analysis of EU-Asia security relations. In line with this choice, the following section turns to the theoretical and conceptual orientation of EU-Asia political and security relations.

### **Heuristic devices informing the analysis: ‘third actors’, structure and interests**

Although the main task in the following chapters of the book is to undertake a mapping exercise or inventory of different security areas, showing in which aspects of EU-Asia security cooperation there is greater convergence or cooperation and in which there is less, it will include consideration of the underlying causes which influence EU-Asia security relations. Consideration will therefore be given to factors such as major policy changes of the United States and Russia. Other factors, though perhaps not at the same level of significance, are internal developments such as Brexit or lack of cohesion in the EU, or natural disasters in Asia. Both external and internal factors affect the national interest of either partner and with it their relationship with each other. As Simmons *et al.* suggest, the effects of the internal and external changes can either promote or impede “interdependent decision making” where policy choices of one country are shaped by the choices of others (Simmons *et al.* 2006), in this case the decision making and joint actions in the field of EU-Asia security relations. The following will explore in more detail the three aspects that are seen to affect EU-Asia security cooperation in this manner.

#### *The role of “third actors”*

EU-Asia security relations do not take place in a vacuum but are embedded in or affected by so-called “third-actor” relations. The United States and Russia play a particularly prominent role in this relationship due to their economic and military capacities and geopolitical interests. The following is a brief account of how these actors interact with EU-Asia security relations. It is to provide the basis for further analysis in the subsequent chapters of the book.

Due to its defence arrangements with both European and Asian countries, the US’ role impinges simultaneously on EU-Asia security relations. There are also differences between the way the US and the EU relate to China. Whereas the United States see China’s rise as an economic and political power and its aggressive maritime stance in the East and South China Sea as a threat or as a rival power whose influence in the Pacific Ocean needs to be contained (in the US case by military means), the EU emphasises partnership and the use of economic and political tools in its dealing with

China (Christiansen *et al.* 2016). Not having a military presence in Asia, but being interested in Asian stability, the EU supports United States' efforts to maintain peace and order in Asia. But at the same time the EU seeks to preserve a certain amount of distance or independence from United States policy, for example, avoiding being dragged against its will into potential military conflicts between China and the United States over Taiwan or in the South China Sea. It often tends therefore to pursue a neutral role with respect to China, which causes irritation on the part of the US and Japan. Examples are when the EU tried in the early 2000s to lift the arms embargo (introduced by the West after the Tiananmen Square incident), or when the EU became a stakeholder in the Chinese-inspired Asia Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB).

The establishment of the AIIB and – even more – Chinese plans to establish the BRI project also bring Russia into the equation. As BRI would traverse Central Asia, it encroaches on Russian interests in the region. To secure its interest in the wider Eurasia region, as well as to counteract Western pressures and economic sanctions (introduced after the Russian annexation of the Crimea and the Russian role in the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine), Russia has introduced the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Moreover, it has also tried to woo China as an ally through the agreement to supply large quantities of natural gas to China. As the EU sees synergies between BRI and its own infrastructure projects for Europe (the Juncker Plan) some interesting dynamics are likely to emerge in China-EU-Russia triangular relations, which in turn have the potential to affect EU-Japan and EU-US security relations.

With the announcement of the Trump Presidency in 2017 to conduct an “America First Policy”, to reconsider its foreign and security policy commitments with partners and allies, and to redefine relations with actors such as Russia and China, there will likely be considerable spill-overs of these changes into EU-Asia security relations. In their selective examination of individual security sectors and country/ASEAN case studies, contributors will explore the extent to which “third actors” have influenced given levels of EU-Asia cooperation, or are likely to do so.

### *b) Structural factors*

While the Cold War was dominated by an overlay of a global conflict structure, the post-Cold War security landscape has increasingly been dominated by regional security interactions (Buzan and Wæver 2003) and regional integration dynamics (Hettne 2003). A core concern in this respect is the perceived rise of sub-system violent conflicts, often discussed under the header of “new wars” (Kaldor 1999; Münkler 2005). Generally, non-traditional security threats<sup>7</sup> have risen in importance

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<sup>7</sup> Although it is difficult in practice to make a clear distinction between traditional and non-traditional security, we link traditional security with military security, nuclear proliferation and regional security. Following Williams (2018), we deem these three aspects as being concerned with the interplay between the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states and states' perceptions of each other's intentions. Non-traditional security in our conception deals with the political, economic, societal and environmental security of states where issues of organizational stability, access to resources, the preservation of cultural traits and environmental sustainability are a concern. Among the aspects that have these non-

not only in Europe but also in Asia, including climate change, the threat of viral pandemics, the pursuit of food and energy security, as well as the effects of regional conflicts (Caballero-Anthony and Cook 2013). As a consequence, non-traditional aspects of security have become more prominent in EU-Asia security relations, although the return of geopolitics could shift relations back towards traditional security (Reiterer 2015). While stress is given to non-traditional security threats, issues of regional conflicts, military security and nuclear non-proliferation are also reflected in the selection of the security dimensions of this study.

### *The role of national interests*

Structural and “third actor” influences can be deemed as having two types of effect in EU-Asia security relations. One is when the interests of both partners are more or less equally affected by external influences, which is likely to lead to joint actions. The other type occurs when external factors affect one of the partners, which then in turn affect EU-Asia security relations. Examples of the first kind relate to the occurrence of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden in the mid to late 2000s, which led to joint EU-Asian countries anti-piracy naval operations in that region, and the fall-out from President Trump’s “America First Policy” might stimulate security relations between the EU and certain Asian countries. Examples of the second kind can be seen in European concerns over the Russian annexation of the Crimea and its role in the Eastern Ukraine conflict.

The derived heuristic devices of “third actor”, structure and interests will inform the empirical analysis of this study, by providing guidance as to why certain levels of convergence or divergence appear between the EU and Asia in the assessment of threat perception and associated responses. These levels will then act as a benchmark for the assessment of actual EU-Asia security cooperation.

### **Contributions to this volume**

As stated above, the volume is divided into parts, with the first being theme oriented and pursuing a strictly analytical analysis of ten security dimensions. The second part examines the bilateral security relations the EU has with four Asian countries and ASEAN. However, in both parts the chapters are structured along the lines of four core themes arising from the previous discussion: (a) threat perceptions; (b) response to threats; (c) the degree of convergence/divergence on threat perception and response; (d) the incidence of cooperation at either the level of EU-Asia relations, or EU relations with Asian countries and ASEAN.

The following description, while laying out details of the analysis in part one of the volume, bears many of the characteristics of part two, albeit in a less rigorous

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traditional security characteristics are terrorism and organised crime, climate change and energy security, economic security, and human security. For further details on the subject see Williams (2018) and Buzan *et al.* (1998).

analytical application. After having briefly explored the development of the particular security dimension, authors will examine the threat perceptions and policy response preferences of each of the EU and Asia in the respective security dimension. In a second step, the analysis will identify the degree to which policy convergence in threat perceptions and response exists between the EU and Asia. The presence or absence of policy convergence will then be related to an assessment of the degree of cooperation which the EU and Asia have undertaken in a given security dimension either at the bilateral or the multilateral level. Attention will also be paid to whether joint cooperative actions in the security field occur in the absence of convergence, for example, through spontaneous joint actions in response to natural disasters. While this step will examine the evidence for actual or potential cooperation, it will also examine the extent to which barriers exist both within the EU (problems of cohesion), between the EU and Asia (for example, attempts by China to undermine EU cohesion), and from “third party” influences, like the US and Russia, on EU-Asia security cooperation.

The book covers a range of traditional and non-traditional security dimensions that are examined by teams of authors along these lines. Specifically, the ten security dimensions that have been selected for this analysis are:

- military security
- regional security
- non-proliferation
- terrorism and organized crime
- climate and energy security
- human security
- civil protection
- cyber security
- economic security
- migration and immigration.

The choice to focus on these security dimensions is justified in terms of the explicit reference that both Asian official policy papers as well as key EU documents such the 2001 ‘Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships’ (Commission 2001), the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) (European Council 2003), the 2008 Implementation Report of the ESS (European Union 2008), the 2007 Guidelines on the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia (European Council 2007b) (modified in June 2012), and the EU’s Global Strategy (European Union 2016) make to these particular security areas.

The ten security dimensions have also been selected in part because of the expectation that they induce different cooperation characteristics. One assumption here is that there may be a variation between higher and lower levels of cooperation across these areas. Medium to high levels of cooperation might be expected for the chapters on: climate change and energy security (Biedenkopf and Len); economic

security (Defraigne and Park); cyber security (Christou and Raska); non-proliferation (Casarini and Tsuruoka); and civil protection (Dorussen and Cook). These are areas where either the common perception of threats has risen over a considerable period of time or where international norms, collaboration or regulatory arrangements have promoted the adoption of similar policy approaches between the EU and Asia (for example, ensuring that international trade routes are secured, or that measures are adopted in response to climate change).

In contrast, low levels of cooperation might be expected for chapters dealing with military security (Alles and Vennesson); regional security cooperation (Diez and Tan) and immigration/migration (Koff and Searle). Although there are internal EU differences with regard to immigration or migration, the EU's policy line is more flexible in this policy field than Asia. In part this is due to the EU's free movement (Schengen) policy. The security dimensions of military and regional are more closely associated with the different security concerns (proximity or intensity) of the two respective partners, or the support they can expect from each other in coping with the threats. As suggested by Berkofsky, the EU's ability to secure peace in a wider sense in the Asia region is seen in Asia as very limited (Berkofsky 2012, 270). However, partly due to the Crimean annexation by Russia and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, partly because of US pressures on the European NATO allies to increase their defence expenditures, and partly because of Brexit, the EU has taken steps since mid-2016 to mount a defence component. For example, the EU agreed in March 2017 to create a new military planning and conduct capability within the existing EU Military Staff of the European External Action Service and to enable joint rapid-reaction forces to be sent into action in Africa or Middle East (European Council 2017). Also the EU's Global Strategy (EUGS; European Union 2016) invokes the concept of 'strategic autonomy', the ability to decide and implement EU security policy without relying on the United States. While the EU is still far away from this goal, potential negative fall-outs from the Trump presidency on the position of NATO may make it more urgent for Europe to invest in the development of military capabilities and build effective command and control structures (Bond and Besch 2016). Interestingly, the EUGS also recommends a strengthening of the CSDP's Partnership policy with partner organisations and partner countries (European Union 2016, 30). As there is already some collaboration between the EU and some Asian countries in the EU's anti-piracy mission in Gulf of Aden, this policy might lead to further cooperation with these countries.

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