

Manipal Centre for European Studies
Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence

And
Nordic Centre in India

Online Winter School on

EU-Asia Relations in a Multipolar World
January 10-15, 2022

As power is rapidly diffusing from ‘West’ to East’, the world is facing a crisis of multilateralism and liberal values. The rapidly rising non-democratic powers are challenging the rule-based international order. These shifts have been in the offing for decades; however, their effects have now become visible. As these global power dynamics are shifting, Europe and Asia are trying to define their role in an emerging multipolar world. The unveiling of the EU’s Global Strategy, five years ago, indicated a considerate shift in the EU’s foreign policy narrative. A Union that shied away from power politics for a long time, has now donned the political cap, taking on a ‘geopolitical’ role and enhancing its resilience and strategic autonomy while simultaneously strengthening the rules-based multilateral order. And now with the global political landscape in flux, dominated by the pandemic, competition, technological changes, economic nationalism, shifting norms, and new security threats, there is a definite call for more coherent and effective external action from the EU.

Similarly, Asia is emerging as the new fulcrum for geoeconomic and geopolitical realignments. Regional initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), etc. are reshaping the economic edifices of the Asian region. Additionally, the Asian security architecture has been transformed by the increasing importance of maritime governance, the rise of the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), the revival of the QUAD, and the consensus on ASEAN’s centrality in IPR. These churnings narrate Asia’s efforts in navigating the political fracturing of the world into competing poles.

As the world becomes more multipolar and less multilateral, Europe and Asia, as two important regions in the world, have significant stakes in conciliating both these dimensions. The EU and Asian economies are intertwined through trade, supply chains, financial flows, connectivity projects, investments, and market demand. In recognition of this mutual interest, the EU has developed several strategic partnerships with the major powers in Asia – China, India, Japan, and South Korea – and in recent years, has made decent strides to be more visible in the Indo-Pacific region. EU’s interest in Asia vis-à-vis Asia’s interest in the EU reflects a strategic drift in global power dynamics.

This drift is also largely driven by the ruptures in Europe’s transatlantic relations, especially with the relative decline in American leadership, the crisis of multilateralism, and the wider political dis-alignments on China. In addition to the external pressures, the EU has had to deal with the internal fragmentations fuelled by BREXIT. COVID-19 has further widened the crisis of solidarity among the member states. Similarly, Asia’s search for deeper relations with Europe is gaining ground in

the context of significant domestic challenges confronting the region. Most Asian countries continue to be besieged with traditional and non-traditional security challenges. There is a growing clamour for connectivity projects in the region but differences allude to the approaches and strategies employed.

As the EU and Asia observe greater convergence in their strategic focus and practice, there is a need to advance our understanding of EU-Asia relations beyond the existing great power politics narrative. The prospects of deeper EU-Asia relations in the future will be subjected to greater scrutiny as both EU and Asia adapt to the new distribution of power, and the challenges that lie ahead. These developments are bound to influence EU-Asia relations in either a supportive or a detrimental manner.

This winter school will serve as a forum for examining the relations between the EU and Asia. The program encourages participants to employ a critical perspective on the many complex factors that shape their relations. It intends to bring together leading European and Asian scholars in the field of EU-Asia relations studies, promote opportunities for long-time academic and research cooperation.

Course Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

- Identify the common interests reflected in EU-Asia relations facilitating closer interactions between the two
- Analyze the nature of inter-regional cooperation between EU and Asia in the context of internal and external challenges
- Evaluate the challenges in their relations and propose strategies for enhancing cooperation

The course will be delivered as a combination of lectures, class discussions, panels and readings allowing participants, policymakers, and researchers to understand the dynamics involved in EU-Asia relations. The course is assessed through a written essay.

This course is suitable for PhD scholars, early career researchers, and students pursuing Masters in Area Studies, International Relations, Political Science from Europe and Asia. It is particularly suitable if you want a comprehensive interdisciplinary understanding of the context in which EU and Asian countries are forging closer ties.

