

# EUIJ, Kansai Roundtable

## TEACHING THE EU IN ASIA - CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS INSTITUTIONAL, CURRICULAR AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES (Kobe University, 25-26 JANUARY 2008)

The idea behind the topic of the January 2008 Roundtable emerged from the reality that beyond trade and political declarations, a solid way to increase the level of Asia-Europe interactions is developing the level of knowledge on each other, through educational and academic initiatives. Today, considering the level of EU presence in terms of trade, FDI and development programs in all the Asian countries, understanding the way it functions should be taken as a priority. However, while the Asian studies are relatively well represented within the European academic system not the same can be said as regards the presence of European Studies in Asia. Neglect, historical remorse or simply prioritization on the trans-Pacific area might explain this situation.

The first European/EU Studies programs timidly appeared in Asia in the second part of the last decade. There were failures and success stories. The success stories were measured mostly against the ability to survive beyond the initial grant coming from Brussels. Thus, after more than ten years of experimenting the “implant” of European Studies in Asia, we have considered that it is time for a general comparative review of the past and current experiences in order to place this academic discipline on a more practical and strategic path, in accordance with the current Asian realities.

Some of the questions the organizers intended to approach were the following: what is the current European Studies situation in Asia? what are the major difficulties encountered? are there examples of best practice? is there a need for a curricula adjustment in Asia? what are the most relevant Europe/EU topics in the Asian context? what are the best teaching methodologies in Asia? what are the institutional and managerial challenges? what are the perspectives ?

The EUIJ Roundtable was intended to be principally a gathering of Asian specialists on Europe/EU. Thus, there were participants from China, Singapore, Thailand, India, the Philippines, Korea and Germany (on behalf of the ESC Program in China). From Japan there was a very targeted participation from the current Jean Monnet Chairs holders (Keio University and Aoyama Gakuin University). Particularly relevant was also the participation of a representative from the Asia-Europe Foundation. All the participants were ``veterans`` of the curricular and institutional development of European Studies in Asia, being part of a small but growing community formed in the last ten years.

The Roundtable began with Dr. Silviu Jora from Kobe University, who made a review of the European Studies as a discipline and its teaching in Asia, with the situation in Japan taken as case study. The presentation was intended to ``warm up`` the audience with a review on the issues faced by the European Studies programs in Japan and Asia in general.

It has been underlined that considering the sinuous evolution and the ambiguities still surrounding the discipline even in Europe, nobody could expect a smooth emergence of the European Studies programs in Asia. The materialization of the first coherent European Studies programs in Asia in mid 1990s has been the result of a combination of some exogenous and endogenous impulses. On the exogenous part, it was the impetus coming from the part of EU with its new ``Asia Strategy`` (1994, renewed in 2001) which included financial resources for supporting the ``mutual understanding``, the most successful projects being those which were complementing the local endeavors. A couple of years after the ``first wave`` of EU supported projects, many were discontinued due to the lack of finance and domestic commitment. Sometimes the activity was continued at a minimal, and sometimes individual level. Dr. Jora further reminded that a ``second wave`` of programs begun with the extension of ``Jean Monnet Action`` to Asia in 2001, followed by the he ``Asia-Link`` program (2002) and the larger programs focusing on establishing EU Studies Centers and Institutes in China, Japan, Korea and, hopefully, India.

As a case study, Dr. Jora mentioned what he calls ``The Japanese Paradox`` which refers to the paradoxal discrepancy between the existence of a Western style academic system and research facilities, a solid tradition of ties with Europe as well as a strong interest in the dynamics of EU from a competitive perspective and, at the same time, the absence until recently of any European Studies programs. In Dr. Jora's view an

element of comparison for Japan is neither Europe nor the rest of Asia with its specificities, it is the situation in the United States which host tens of European Studies programs and is a source of specialized research on EU which often outclasses what is produced in Europe. Therefore, Dr. Jora expects that if the US is hosting no less than ten “Jean Monnet Centers of Excellence”, Japan should have at least three such centers around which academic degrees or specializations on EU issues should be structured.

Further on, Dr. Jora insisted on the relation between the academic curricula and the “marketability” of European Studies in Asia which would require a stricter and more specific specialization. Therefore, creativity, adaptability, a combined approach and flexibility are all needed when tailoring a European Studies curricula for Asia. As an immediate priority, Dr. Jora underlined the need for short term intensive professional training programs in EU affairs for the Asian government officials, NGOs personnel and the corporate executives interacting with the EU in various instances.

The European Studies situation in Japan was further detailed by Professor Shotaro Hamamoto with a presentation on “The EUIJ-Kansai Curriculum Development Strategy”. Professor Hamamoto made a “supply-consumer” analysis. According to Professor Hamamoto, from the “supply” side the major problem is the lack of sufficient EU expertise at the Japanese universities, although there are numerous sectoral specialists who may cover various EU elements (like the competition law) or individual member states. In this context, presently, the structuring of an exclusive EU curriculum in Japan might be rather difficult. At the same time, in the presenter’s view, probably the most critical issue is represented by the “consumer” side, the students who are not motivated enough to study EU, first and foremost because there is not a clear link between the European/EU courses and their professional path. Especially for the law students, the EU related subjects are not among those required for the entrance exam, the Bar exam or the civil service exam and therefore they remain with little motivation for studying an optional subject. Currently, the experimental “EU Studies Certificate” offered by the EUIJ-Kansai has an ambiguous value for the students and only the most ambitious and open minded will take the EU courses. Thus, the EU related subjects as such should be better integrated within the faculty curricula ( Law Faculty in this case) which, of course, requires more cooperation from the part of University central administration and, more importantly, from the Ministry of Education. A shift of focus from the undergraduate to the graduate level, respectively the creation

of an MA degree in EU Studies is also a solution envisaged by Professor Hamamoto, providing that some related job market “niches” will be found for the holders of such degrees in Japan.

Similar views were expressed by Professor Katsuhiro Shoji in his presentation on “Teaching EU Law in Japan”. He also underlined that the law students in Japan are focusing on passing the national Bar exam which concerns only Japanese law and, as such, little spare time remains for studying other optional subjects like the EU Law.

The “Chinese Experience” was presented by Professor Gunter Heiduk who, as academic evaluator of the latest “European Studies Centers in China Program” (ESC), benefited from a panoramic perspective on the issue. The experience coming from advising and evaluating the 20 Chinese ESC have shown that the main China-specific constraints are among other things: the lack of university autonomy and administrative flexibility to introduce new degree programs in European Studies; the lack of experience in cooperating in interdisciplinary teaching and research programs; the lack of Europe-specific skills (language), knowledge and expertise; the lack of a critical number of experts in European Studies to establish full-fledged teaching programs and, of course, the lack of sufficiently clear professional perspectives. According to Professor Heiduk, the ESCs are still a more or less “alien” entities within the traditional institutional structure of Chinese universities and, as such, considering all the above, the sustainability of the Chinese ESCs is still an open question.

Further on the “Chinese World” was the presentation of Professor Kenneth Chan representing the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Institute of European Studies in Macau. Professor Chan indicated that Hong Kong and Macau programs offer a large diversity of curricula focused on Europe, dynamically stretching from language and culture to European integration. According to him, in contrast with the mainland, the situation in Hong Kong and Macau is different, due to the former colonial ties with Europe and the cosmopolitanism and “westernization” characteristic for these territories. Thus, in Hong Kong and Macau not less than five full fledged European Studies degree programs can be found and their sinusoidal evolution is relevant for the potential problems of all programs across Asia.

Professor Chan argued that the Hong Kong experience shows a highly flexible and

sometimes “ad hoc” approach to Europe from an “area studies” perspective, whereas Macau has adopted an EU-oriented program at the postgraduate level. In contrast with the ups and downs of the Hong Kong programs, the Institute of European Studies of Macau had a more steady evolution by adopting viable measures to maintain a relatively stable balance between financial support, supply of expertise and student intakes. What characterizes Macau is the reliance on the “imported” expertise in the form of visiting professorship. The administrative and financial support largely comes from the partnership with several governmental institutions, the institute being part of the official strategy of the “internationalization” of Macao. A steady stream of student intakes is assured through the partnerships with several mainland universities. Professor Chan concluded with the assertion that “the future shape of the European Studies in Asia will be determined by the interplay of several factors like the availability of expertise; financial resources, the public perceptions and the actual job market demand for the EU specialized graduates”.

In Korea, in comparative terms, the level of European Studies proliferation appears to be rather good, this coming out from the presentation made by Professor Si Hong Kim from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS). Started hesitantly during the 1980s, the proliferation of European Studies has been greatly facilitated by the mid 1990s Korean Government initiative to support international studies. Consequently, two European programs were opened at HUFS and the Seoul National University (SNU). Lately the Seoul National University hosts a first EU Studies Center as a three years EU project. There are also two major associations for European Studies in Korea, producing two related Journals. According to Professor Kim, the Korean European Studies managers were forced to become more creative in administrative terms since 2001 when the government funding has stopped. Nevertheless, considering the new EU-Korea FTA and the renewed interest in compared models of regional cooperation, there are further perspectives for the proliferation of European Studies in the Korean Peninsula. Professor Kim also presented the results of some opinion surveys among the students which indicate their interest for a more tailor made curricula focusing on the applicability of European experiences to Asia and an overall stronger comparative approach. Furthermore, in his view, some “standardization” of the European curricula appears as a necessity for the future in parallel with the increase in number and diversity of the academic programs focusing on Europe/EU in Korea.

The Southeast Asian/ASEAN countries have been a primary “target” for the emergence of European Studies in Asia. However, a decade after, the situation is characterized by various disparities reflecting the local circumstances and individual perseverance, as well as the level of interaction with the EU and the member states. Meanwhile, a set of common issues can be identified.

The situation in Singapore was presented by Professor Barnad Turner, from the National University of Singapore, which hosts the only program of this kind in the city state. Professor Turner indicated that although the European Studies in the last years took the shape of a cross departmental “virtual program”, it still runs a full four year BA honors-degree program. Professor Turner further exposed the ups and downs of a program in “virtual” form and the challenges which go beyond the institutional issues. In this context Professor Turner went into a subtle “perceptions” analysis based on a recent elite opinions survey. Thus, some socio-cultural challenges were revealed: the EU vs. the US (hard vs. soft power); indifference to the EU with its distant institutions; Europe as a competitor; ambivalence to the British period and the post-colonial legacy. As solutions, Prof. Turner suggested stronger ties with European universities; the adjustment of EU curricula to involve a strong comparative and inter-regional approach – ASEAN dimension, and eventually the setting up of an EU Studies Center with a starting financial support from Brussels. From the job market perspective Professor Turner appreciated that the potential in Singapore is particularly good, considering the thousands of EU companies with their Asian regional headquarters located in the city.

Optimism, this is what characterizes the current European Studies situation in the Philippines, this being reflected by the presentation of Mr. Atanacio Panahon, from the Ateneo de Manila University. According to Mr. Panahon, the general conditions for the proliferation of the studies focusing on Europe are particularly good in the Philippines considering the three centuries of Spanish colonial influence, and the role played by the European Catholic orders until today. Nevertheless only in the last 15 years some Europe oriented programs started to take shape at three major universities from the Metro Manila. Although the initial start of 1996, ignited by an EU sponsored three university consortium project, failed to pass the post financing sustainability test, nevertheless, in the last years several multi-disciplinary degree courses have emerged from the “ashes” of that initial program. Thus, the so called “ill fated” Philippines experience might have been more successful than it was initially thought. The European Studies Program at Ateneo de Manila University started in 1998 as a dual

track undergraduate program of international relations and global business and, since 2001 more than 500 diplomas were awarded. De la Salle University offers both a BA and an MA international studies degree with the European Studies major and University of the Philippines gives a BA in European Languages and culture. In comparative terms, this is quite an achievement considering the rarity of degrees on European studies offered across Asia. Mr. Panahon further offered various insights of the Ateneo ESP with its managerial and curricular problems, not hesitating to show different aspects which are to be corrected like the excessive focus of the pragmatic “professional” curricula orientation on the detriment of formal academic research. The “Ateneo” experience is also relevant in terms of finding flexible and innovative ways for achieving financial independence by revenue generating projects and various partnerships with the corporate world, the choice of an “EU Business Track” curricula being very suggestive.

There is quite a consensus that the “flag bearer” of the European Studies in Asia is the program hosted by the Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, which gained notoriety by proving its continuous self sustainability since 1997. A sketchy presentation of the program has been given by Professor Charit Tingsbadh, who underlined that the Interdisciplinary Department of European Studies, established since 1997 is one of the pioneers in Asia to offer a Master of Arts in European Studies as a full time one year degree with a multidisciplinary feature. The academic expertise at “Chula” has been assured through a prolific international networking strategy which assures an “import” of more than eighty percent of the teaching staff from Europe. Professor Tingsbadh also mentioned the research side represented by the Centre for European Studies (CES) established in October 1997.

As for the situation in India, Professor Rajendra K Jain showed that indeed, it is a “particular case” with one of the oldest (since 1970) but also one of the most stagnant European Studies programs in Asia. Rajendra K Jain, a veteran among the EU studies promoters in the region, briefly traced the development of European Studies in India, insisting on the characteristics of the institutional and curricula typology in comparison with other programs in Asia. It was revealed that the postgraduate degree in European Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is the “one and only” program of this kind in the whole India out of 400 universities and a nation of more than one billion people.

Some scattered EU related courses were also proliferating at a few other Indian universities as spillovers of the JNU program. Professor Rajendra K Jain talked about an EU-India “mutual indifference” phenomenon, which is responsible for the low visibility of the EU in India although the former is India’s largest trading partner. India is suffering from a lack of EU related domestic expertise while, in striking contrast with other Asian countries, the “imports”/visiting professorships from Europe are practically nonexistent. India has not benefited until now from the exchange programs and the EC sponsored academic training in Europe. India has not been on the list for any Asia Link or Jean Monnet supported funding schemes for curricula development. There were no special invitations from Brussels or from the European universities and, from their part, the Indian academics neglected the opportunities of cooperation with Europe or were not skillful and motivated enough to follow the cumbersome application procedures. At the same time, there are some reasons for optimism coming from a long delayed EU program, following the “European Studies in China” model, which is preparing to launch four ES Centers in India in the course of 2008. In the end, Professor Rajendra K Jain indicated that, again, like in the case of all the other Asian countries, in India the interest on a particular subject is strictly related to the employment perspectives and, without a carefully tailored curricula to meet the local expectations and realities, the EU studies will remain something too exotic for an increasingly pragmatic public.

Having in mind the perceived need for a more professionally oriented European Studies curricula, the EUIJ-Kansai has invited Dr. Wolfgang Pape from the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. Dr. Pape explained that since its establishment in 1987, the Centre has been addressing the needs of business people in both the EU and Japan through training programs, in-company internships, seminars, etc. From the presentation of Dr. Pape we can deduct that a possible model for a professionally oriented European Studies curricula could be based on the type of topics supported by the EU-Japan Centre, which include: The EU Trading Scheme; European Energy Efficiency Policy and the Eco design Directive; European Emissions Trading System; Industrial Policy of the Automotive Industry in the EU; EU Industrial Policy and Service Policy in the Internal Market; European Company Statute; Company Taxation and its Effects on Japanese Companies in the EU; EU Corporate Tax Policy; EU Rules of Origin etc .

A general review on the European Studies situation in Asia would not have been complete without a reminder of the catalytic role played by the Asia-Europe Foundation

(ASEF). In this respect, Mr. Peter Ryan, the ASEF Director for Intellectual Exchanges made a presentation on the mission and role played by his organization with a particular focus on the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) program established in 2005.

To summarize, a “moderate optimism” is what characterizes the current and future prospects of European Studies situation in Asia. In East Asia, Japan is expected to show a lot more in terms of European Studies proliferation considering its global standing and the dynamic of interactions with the EU. As a high developed society, Japan would be expected to nurture a level of EU related academic interest close to that existing in the US which means, keeping with the scale, at least three strong EU Centers of Excellence and some spillovers in terms of EU courses spreading across the country. The situation in Korea appears to be quite satisfactory with several European/EU degree programs and research institutes. As for China, the mainland has witnessed a European Studies “Big Bang in the last several years and it will take a period of “gestation” to see if the EC generated “implant” will take solid roots or not. The Hong Kong and Macau territories show a rather high density of European/EU degree programs and courses with a variable impact to the public, some curricular and managerial adjustments being needed on the way. The Southeast Asia/ASEAN region shows a very diverse European Studies map with few “benchmarks” and still some “white spots” . The program at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand might represent the “benchmark” although it failed to generate spillovers to the rest of the Thai academic system. The Philippines indicates an unexpected optimism with three programs running independently since the failed EC consortium program at the end of the last decade. Singapore continues to run a rather diluted and “virtual” European Studies program living ground for much more while Malaysia has an emerging and yet unconvincing program in Penang. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are currently not hosting any EU Studies program, the biggest and most striking “white spot” being Indonesia where an urgent EC supported “implant” would be needed considering the size and importance of this country as well as the indications of some domestic interest proven by the efforts of individual academics. Lastly, India would be probably the biggest “white spot” on the map of the world of European Studies if wouldn’t be for the old JNU Program and the scheduled 2008 launch of a set of four ES Centers.

From the debate following the paper presentations resulted a review of the challenges

waiting ahead for the development of European/EU Studies in Asia:

- On the administrative and financial side, the participation in the EU Programs is very difficult for the Asian partners due to the cumbersome paper work and administrative requirements and the lack of sufficient project management expertise comparing with EU and US. Therefore, an “EU Project Management” training program should be considered with priority as well as, eventually, some adaptation of the EU administrative requirements to the Asian specificities. On the financial aspects, probably more than in other regions, the support from the EU is still essential for the sustainability and further proliferation of European Studies in Asia. In parallel, additional financial resources are to be sought from the local budgets and private resources although, until now, the success has been rather limited and the perspectives are not much brighter.
- The European Studies curricula needs adaptation and flexibility to the local specificities, along with a strong comparative approach. At undergraduate level, mono-disciplinarily will hardly work in Asia while a narrow specialisation would be more suitable at postgraduate level. At the same time, intensive short term programs on EU issues are urgently needed for a selected number of civil servants from key ministries and agencies. The professional programs could be extended, on a commercial basis, to corporate employees. A more “professional” EU curricula should also include a package of “EU Project Management” courses.
- The “marketability” factor is probably the most common and critical challenge facing the development of European Studies across Asia, both in institutional and curricular terms. This issue is of particular importance considering the increasingly pragmatic and career-oriented features currently characterizing the educational process in Asia. A rise in the “demand” for European studies in Asia is directly related to the identification of some clear professional perspectives for the graduates. There is a need to encourage Asian central administrations, as well as the corporate actors to value the competence and knowledge obtained through the European Studies Programmes. The perspectives of employment offered by the private sectors were not yet scrutinised enough while the current curricula do not offer

enough on the kind of EU specialised knowledge required by the corporate world. Therefore, on short and medium term, a more pragmatic and professionally oriented European Studies curricula is needed in Asia, with a strong comparative approach in closer partnership with the corporate actors.

- At “perceptions” level, considering the current EU’s Global presence and multidimensional impact, it should be no longer regarded as an idyllic and exotic topic but as a rigorous and pragmatic discipline with a hard technical, legal and business related content.

The institutional and financial sustainability, the continuous commitment from Brussels, the adaptation of curricula design to address the “marketability” and the regional “perceptions” , all are decisive factors in determining the evolution of the European Studies in Asia and, not least, the dynamics of Asia-Europe relations.