The EUNAP Project Workshop -- EU Identity: Perceptions from Asia-Pacific

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RESEARCH BRIEFINGS

Islam and Europe in the 21st Century: The challenge of cultural confrontation?

Associate Professor Barrie Wharton, University of Limerick

As we move tentatively though the cultural maelstrom of a new millennium with unprecedented geo-political upheaval across the continent coupled with academic forecasts of the end of history, the question of Islam and its place in Europe remains a fundamental one which even when veiled or overshadowed, is still at the core of any debate on the shape of the entire European project. Indeed, the cultural past, present and future of Islam and the Islamic community may well come to determine the whole future of Europe as the perceived incompatibility of Islamism with the European project only serves to shine a light on its fragility and malleable character from a socio-cultural perspective. This keynote lecture intends to examine the present status of Islam and the Islamist movement in the European socio-cultural arena in order to assess whether the cultural heart of Europe may lie in Innsbruck or Istanbul or indeed somewhere in between. European values and the idea of a cultural Europe are concepts that have been catapulted to the forefront of socio-political agendas across the continent and beyond in the context of the Ukrainian conflict and Islam and the Islamist movement still remain as the most significant cultural "other" in this new European debate and as such, this lecture aims to help to highlight the often neglected importance of this "other" in the current conflict and its capacity to be ignited or to re-ignite itself at any time as the major challenge for European identity and indeed, by extension, European unit.

Normative power, political power or ('merely') an economic power: The EU as a promoter of peace and prosperity in Europe and the world

Dr Milenko Petrovic, Jean Monnet Chair, Senior lecturer Above the Bar, University of Canterbury

After the inclusion of the EU's norms of peace, liberty, democracy, respect of human rights and rule of law in the 1993 Copenhagen accession conditions had contributed to the successful democratisation and marketisation of post-communist states in East Central and Baltic Europe, Ian Manners (2002) defined Normative power Europe as the EU's ability to spread its influence and promote its norms and values in the international arena without relying on the hard political power of individual nation states. However, the scope of Normative power Europe has always been primarily restricted to countries which were included (or could have hoped to be included) in the EU enlargement process. As soon as the EU begun feeling enlargement fatigue in the mid-2000s, the relevance of its normative power in spreading influence and norms to the countries in its closer and wider neighbourhood faded and the EU's foreign policy became more similar to the foreign policy of "a 19th century great [political] power" (Manners, 2006). The 'Political power' Europe has however remained weak, not least

because of its full reliance and dependence on NATO in military terms. Most recent developments related to the Russia-Ukraine war have shown that the EU has (with partial exceptions regarding the introduction of economic sanctions against Russia and expressly granting candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova) been more or less strictly following the leadership of the US and its ex-member the UK in defining and launching political and military responses to this conflict. The definition of the EU as an 'economic giant, political dwarf and military worm' seems still very accurate…

The Middle Ages and the Shaping of Modern European Identity: A changing legacy?

Associate Professor Chris Jones, University of Canterbury

The Middle Ages, generally considered the period between the collapse of Roman authority and the Renaissance, present modern Europe with a dilemma. The period is the subject of active and wide-ranging studies that in recent decades have changed, fundamentally, our understanding of a dynamic thousand years in European history. And yet popular interpretations – from film to video games - often remain strongly marked by 19th-century nationalism, a legacy which often frames the period as the origins of modern peoples and national groupings. Many of these myths were debunked in the second half of the twentieth century and contemporary research continues to highlight the porous quality of medieval frontiers, the interconnected nature of communities and the flexibility of political conceptions. And yet the mythical Middle Ages, often the product of profound misinterpretation, remain not only popular but sometimes fuel extreme forms of nationalism and outright racism both in Europe and beyond, not least in the case of the Christchurch mosque shootings.

This paper offers some initial reflections on the continuing role of the Middle Ages in shaping contemporary perceptions of Europe's shared heritage. It takes two case studies, the newly refurbished Musée du Moyen Âge at the heart of Paris and the recently renovated medieval galleries of the British Museum in London, and considers how each chooses to present the period in the early 21st century. Each institution is arguably its respective country's most important showcase for medieval material culture, and both hold rich and varied collections drawn from across the continent. The focus in this paper will be on the way in which each has chosen to tell the story of the Middle Ages via its collections. Do they continue to recount the Middle Ages as a series of "national" histories or is an attempt being made to shake off the nationalism of the 19th century?

Measuring the European Union's trade power: insights from quantitative text analysis of negotiating texts

Dr Matthew Castle, Lecturer in International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington

Trade is central to the European Union's external identity. The third largest economic market in the world, the largest trading bloc, and the most prolific negotiator of trade agreements in the world (the EU has more than any other country or territory), the EU is a major power both in and through trade. Yet these headline figures do not tell us how the EU's trade power is manifested in individual trading relationships. In this paper I make use of an opportunity afforded by the recent push for transparency in the EU's trade negotiations, namely the publication of draft negotiating texts for individual trade agreement chapters. I leverage quantitative text analysis tools to compare draft texts with final texts

of the recent trade agreement negotiated with New Zealand to identify the extent to which the EU can translate latent trade power into concrete negotiating outcomes across different issue-areas.

Unity in Diversity: The Development of a European Identity Through Disaster Response

Professor John Hopkins, University of Canterbury

The European Union has incrementally expanded its role in the field of disaster risk management (DRM) since the late 1980s. This expansion has often been very slow as states have regularly challenged the EU's growing role in an area traditionally seen as core member-state business. Nevertheless, the increasing inability of individual Member States to respond effectively to disasters led to the establishment of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) in 2001. The mechanism was significantly strengthened in 2019 with the establishment of the rescEU operational reserve and again in 2021 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper assesses the development of EU responsibilities in the field the Disaster Response in the context of EU integration. In particular, it explores how the increased risk from natural hazards has created a new driver towards European co-operation and integration, a driver that has also led to an increased role for the EU in developing such co-operation globally, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. As a result it poses the question whether disasters, ironically, will play a significant role in 'rescEU'ing the Union?

Shifting Responses to Refugee Crises in the European Union: A Socio-Legal Analysis

Dr Julija Sardelić, Senior Lecturer, Victoria University of Wellington

Why are different countries willing to accept some refugees but show extreme reluctance to accept others? Since the Second World War the European continent has seen three large movements of refugees seeking asylum in EU Member States. First, in the 1990s the conflicts and disintegration of the former Yugoslavia contributed to around 4 million people becoming displaced. Second, in 2015/2016 there were more than a million asylum applications in EU Member States, predominantly coming from war-torn Syria. Finally, from 2022, a similar scenario happened with the war in Ukraine. This paper offers a socio-legal analysis on the responses of the EU and of the 'new' EU Member States (Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic). While these EU Member States are all parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, they have been reluctant to accord a refugee status to asylum seekers during the mass influx. Instead, they have opted either for temporary protection or a non-official transit status. This paper looks at cases of 'new' EU Member States that have offered shelter to a high number of displaced people in one of these crises but have been reluctant to do so in another. For example, Slovenia and Croatia hosted a substantial number of displaced Bosnian citizens and Poland took a similar stance towards Ukrainian citizens. However, none of these three states took many Syrian refugees. The paper argues that the countries in question assess the political gains based on their own perceived national identity and politics of diversity. In conclusion, the paper turns to reflect New Zealand's response to the three 'refugee crises' in Europe as a country not directly affected.

Technological maritime bordering and the EU's divergent identities

Anna Christoforou, PhD Candidate, University of Canterbury

Surveillant technologies have been rapidly adopted at the EU's maritime borders as a 'technical panacea' to the growing numbers of irregular migrants making the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean. Despite this, the rate of irregular maritime crossings to Europe is still increasing, and the death toll continues to rise – most recently in June when a vessel believed to be carrying 750 migrants sank in Greek waters. These bordering technologies are often introduced as a means to exert greater control over the EU's maritime borders, emboldening those who claim the EU is reinforcing 'Fortress Europe'. Yet, these technologies are also justified as a humanitarian tool, to better facilitate Search and Rescue operations in the Mediterranean and save lives at sea. These seemingly conflicting narratives on the motivations behind and operation of the EU's technological borders would suggest divergent identities: the EU as a hospitable protector of human life and dignity, or the EU as an inhospitable fortress. The ostensible contradiction of simultaneous narratives of care and control set within politics of pity and risk will be explored, highlighting the complex relationship between the two discourses. This research will explore how the EU justifies and operates its border technologies to reconcile these dichotomous identities, and whether, in practice, the technologies effectively serve either purpose.

The EU and New Zealand amidst the changing geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific

Dr Nicholas Ross Smith, Senior Research Fellow, University of Canterbury

New Zealand and the European Union (EU) have a strong and friendly relationship, recently bolstered by the signing of a Free Trade Agreement in 2022. However, when it comes to the Indo-Pacific, the EU is largely absent in New Zealand's strategy to date, other than a brief acknowledgement of the importance of the ASEM initiative. Under Jacinda Ardern's leadership (and likely to continue with the new Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins), New Zealand, like other smaller powers, has sought a middle-ground position in the Indo-Pacific – a kind of asymmetrical alignment in which New Zealand has strong security relations with the US but at the same time has increased trade relations with China. New Zealand's inherent multivectorism suggests a natural openness to a greater EU presence in the Indo-Pacific, particularly as it could possibly help pacify the threat of a new Cold War emerging (something New Zealand seems keen to avoid). Furthermore, there is a significant overlap between New Zealand's Indo-Pacific strategy and that of the EU's, especially a strongly aligned interest in maintaining a rules-based Indo-Pacific. Regarding specific domains for security cooperation, New Zealand and the EU have issued joint statements mentioning a desire to cooperate on "ocean governance and maritime security" as well as the areas of counter-terrorism, violent extremism, and foreign interference and disinformation. However, the appropriate conclusion is that for New Zealand, the EU is not a very relevant security actor in the Indo-Pacific at the current moment. Importantly, though, this is not a fixed conclusion and given the strong underlying relationship and the compatibility of their Indo-Pacific strategies, it is plausible that greater EU-New Zealand security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific develops in the coming years.

The EU and Security in the Asia-Pacific - Where the Two Powers Overlap

Rebekha Immanuel, PhD Candidate, University of Canterbury

This presentation looks at how the EU's soft power and hard power approach plays out or unfolds in the Asia-Pacific region. It first examines the definition of Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific and how this narrative fits into how its soft power (trade & commerce) and hard power (defence & military) geographical context shapes the EU's involvement. Although soft power does not involve the use of force but norms (in the EU context), it equally acts as a form of security in protecting EU's interests and preserving EU norms. The presentation discusses how this soft power approach fits into the EU's development policy in the Asia-Pacific; it then makes a connection to how the hard power shift links the involvement of EU members' interests through their hard power presence (such as Germany, the Netherlands, France and Denmark) since 2019. It discusses why this interconnection occurs or overlaps in the Asia-Pacific in the face of rising geopolitical regional tensions and questions the perception of security from two different lens: whose security and on whose terms?

A strategic partnership or strategic rivalry? EU-China relations since 2010

Dr Xiwen Wang, Postoctoral Fellow, University of Canterbury

The year 2003 marked the beginning of a perceived honeymoon period in EU-China relations, as both sides upgraded their bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership. Despite their willingnes to strengthen their relationship and overcome differences in various areas, the EU and China have struggled to establish an authentic comprehensive strategic partnership. It has resulted in what is often referred to as a "strategic vacuum" that still exists in their bilateral relations. Their policies and perceptions towards each other have also been shifting towards a direction that undermines the construction of mutual trust and understanding, especially after the 2010s. This paper provides an overview of the continuities and changes in EU-China relations by analysing their primary policy papers, evolving perceptions towards each other, and economic engagement between 2003 and 2023. Specifically, it also seeks to assess the impact of the EU's latest economic security strategy on EU-China relations.