

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF: THE ASIA-PACIFIC

DANIEL KEOHANE, STEFAN LEHNE, ULRICH SPECK, AND JAN TECHAU | OCTOBER 29, 2014

*Carnegie Europe spearheaded a review process to assess the European Union's foreign policies. Drawing on consultations with experts from around the world, this memo proposes a new strategy for turning Europe into a more effective international actor.*

- 1) Prepare for geopolitical turbulence.** Europe has huge interests but little influence in the Asia-Pacific. In particular, Europe's economic interests in the region are considerable since the EU is one of the top three trade and investment partners for most Asia-Pacific countries. The region is currently optimistic economically, but pessimistic politically. Supporting a regional order capable of coping with crossborder problems and disputes should be the main overall EU objective. Many European governments are not currently focused on the large potential for geopolitical turbulence in East Asia. Numerous territorial disputes, mainly centered on China, could evolve into hard conflicts that would greatly harm Europe's economic interests. The EU should try to help its member states be aware and more informed of prospective instability in the Asia-Pacific.
- 2) Develop an Asia strategy and a China policy.** The EU should be clearer about its interests and goals in the Asia-Pacific and develop a European vision for the region. The EU currently lacks credibility in the region, and this will improve only if member states overcome their ambivalence and act in a more joined-up fashion. In addition, the EU needs to make itself much more visible throughout the Asia-Pacific. EU leaders should show up at high-level EU-Asia meetings and develop more personal contacts. And the union should continue to develop its technical support for managing crossborder challenges in the region in areas such as fisheries, water, and energy. More specifically, the EU cannot continue to dodge the inconsistencies in its policies toward China. These inconsistencies arise not only in the links between human rights and trade but also in the EU's approach to the U.S.-Chinese relationship. European governments must learn to resist Chinese attempts to divide the EU.
- 3) Clarify the EU's partnership with the United States on security challenges.** The EU should not play the

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role of an American junior partner nor automatically side with the United States. But it should cooperate and coordinate with Washington whenever possible, as not only do interests on many issues converge but the United States is also the EU's closest international partner. The EU should define its own positions on Asian security challenges based on international law (such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea) and communicate these positions to all sides. Militarily, the EU cannot do much, but it can help build a multilateral order and security architecture in the region to the extent that governments in the region are interested. ASEAN, although a Southeast Asian grouping, could be the nucleus of a new Asia-Pacific rules-based order, for instance via the ASEAN-affiliated East Asia Summits, and the EU should support such efforts. There may also be potential for offering EU experience with nonmilitary approaches to security, such as mediation, crisis management, confidence building, and application of the rule of law, to help reduce geopolitical tensions.

- 4) **Consider the consequences of an economic downturn in East Asia.** Europeans may not be able to ride on the coattails of projected Asian economic growth as much as they hope to in the coming years, and any Asian economic slowdown will have

major consequences for the global economy. Perhaps more worrying is that China already feels encircled by the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)—alongside U.S. security alliances in the Asia-Pacific. The EU should try to convince China to remain on a cooperative path within existing global economic governance bodies. The union should also explore the potential for a bargain under which Beijing takes East Asian security architecture more seriously in return for more weight in the Bretton Woods financial institutions. The EU should underline to Beijing that China's continued economic and political rise—and regime survival—depend on continued access to and strength of the global rules-based system for the open movement of goods, people, information, and finance.

- 5) **Deepen partnerships with Asian democracies.** The EU should increase its engagement with other like-minded partners in the Asia-Pacific, such as Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea. It is not in Europe's interest that China dominate the Asia-Pacific region more than it does today. However, engagement with these partners should concern not only trade or the implications of the rise of China but also human rights and democracy promotion, for example in Burma/Myanmar.

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