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## Original Article

# Asian perspectives on the European experience of regionalism

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**Abstract** How have European state-makers managed to coordinate various key activities to the point where many of them see the European Union as providing a model for the rest of the world in general and Asia in particular? For example, most of Europe now shares a common market and a common currency. This was originally considered unthinkable. However, most European state-makers did surrender significant aspects of their sovereign power to make this happen. State-makers in the Asian region have not yet followed suit. This tells us something about their competing politico-strategic, economic and social concerns. Asian state-makers are nonetheless capable of sustaining their own form of regionalism. This tells us something about the different politico-cultural context in which they live. This context makes it possible to promote distinctly 'Asian' perspectives. It provides an Asian alternative to European regionalism and a way of compensating for the limits and distortions of the European Union.

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## Introduction

The story of European regionalism post-World War II is usually told in relation, firstly, to accounts of regional politico-strategic, economic and social affairs and, secondly, to accounts of the wider politico-cultural project that underpins all the states concerned. Parallel policy intentions plus a common regard for Enlightenment values are seen as having resulted in a singular attempt to foster coordinated economic growth and to pre-empt the prospect of France and Germany resorting once more to armed conflict. Moreover, this attempt is seen as having been singularly successful. Indeed, it has been so successful that European Unionists find themselves representing what is now



an international actor in its own right. This actor promotes Eurocentric notions of global governance, free trade and human responsibility. These notions tend to occlude stories of regionalism being enacted elsewhere in the world, however. In 'Asia', for example, competing politico-strategic, -economic and -social concerns have prevented a similar degree of integration. It is certainly possible, by the standards set by the European Union, to find Asian regionalism wanting in this regard. What is obscured by such a judgment, however, is the extent to which Asian state-makers have constructed their own form of regionalism. The point being that the politico-cultural context Asian state-makers articulate not only means they have been able to develop their own approaches to regionalism. They have also been able to develop their own perspectives on the European experience of regionalism. These perspectives are sufficiently distinctive to allow Asian state-makers to offer European state-makers Asian ideas about regionalism as well as Asian ideas about how to behave on the international stage.

### **The European Experience of Regionalism**

Over the last 500 years or so, a significant number of those who inhabit the subcontinent labeled 'Europe', as well as their offshoots (like the peoples who over this period forcibly colonized the Americas), have undergone a revolution in how they think and behave. This revolution is variously known as the Enlightenment, the modernist project or the rationalist project. It began as an elite phenomenon, for analytic reasons that remain in dispute. Regardless of what caused this revolution, however, it was clear from early on that it was going to re-define how the whole world worked. At its most fundamental, this revolution is one in how European peoples think about the sacral dimension to how they live. This has resulted in fundamental changes in how they behave with regard to the original power that sacralists see as making all life possible.

It remains a matter of some debate whether this revolution was materially determined or whether it occurred for reasons of a more mentalist kind, but regardless of the cause, the outcome is one where (most western) Europeans came to privilege reason as an end in itself. They came to place a high priority on the use of the human faculty for reason, a faculty they then turned upon their sense of the sacral, engendering in the process a secularist revolution that continues to be a feature of world affairs. They also turned this faculty upon their understanding of the natural universe and upon their own behavior and that of other human beings. The result was a scientific, and subsequently, a technological and industrial revolution, that continues to this day. In due



course they even turned this faculty back upon itself, engendering a key critical perspective upon the whole project.

A further result of the rationalist revolution was the priority Europeans came to place upon particular ways of organizing their affairs, that is, state-making, capitalism and individualism. When the empires that the Europeans built in the nineteenth century fell apart in the twentieth century after two huge wars that originated in their own sub-continental heartland, it was the sovereign-state way of organizing diplomatic and military relations, the capitalist way of organizing the world market and the individualist way of organizing the global civil society, that were left behind as the bases upon which Europeans and their one-time colonial subjects were obliged to build their politico-strategic, -economic and -social affairs. This was how European concepts of best practice regarding order, wealth and the self were successfully globalized.

After World War II in particular the reconstruction of Europe resulted in the consolidation of the sovereign state as the main actor in world affairs. It also resulted in the consolidation of the capitalist mode of production as the main approach to organizing economies and European accounts of civil society as the main approach to ideas about how the individual should be treated.

At the same time Europeans began experimenting with regional arrangements that compromised state sovereignty in order to achieve a range of common economic, political and social purposes. Designed originally to expedite the reconstruction of Europe's coal and steel industries and to ensure good relations between Germany and France, these arrangements were progressively extended horizontally and vertically until they resulted in a ravaged sub-continent becoming a global power-house. Currently encompassing 27 states that collectively include nearly half a billion people, the European Union constitutes a common market that is able to generate a quarter of the global domestic product and a fifth of the world's exports. Its common currency – the Euro – provides an alternative to the US dollar as the global denomination of choice. It also represents member states by endorsing significant global agreements made in its name while taking part in the work of a number of major world organizations. In the process it actively promotes Enlightenment values with regard to human rights and democratic governance.

It is the European Union's role as an economic participant in international politics that non-European state-makers, like those in the Asian region, understand best (Chaban and Holland, 2005; Lucarelli, 2007, p. 264). Since members of the European Union themselves continue to struggle to define what their common foreign policy might be, it is little wonder that those outside it find this confusing as well. Few outsiders consider the European Union a global power yet (Lucarelli, 2007, p. 261). The confusion of outsiders

is further exacerbated by the parochial character of the politico-cultural context in which Europeans live and work. Though globalized by (neo)imperial means, as mentioned already, this context has resulted at best in hybrid outcomes in regions like the Asian one. It has not resulted in states, economies and civil societies that are carbon copies of the European ones. Nor has it resulted in a regional organization that is a carbon copy of the European Union. What it has done is inspire the formation of a Union with its own characteristics. This applies not only to how order is kept, wealth is generated or society is structured. It also applies to the way constructing 'Asia major' works (Frost, 2008).

### **Asian Perspectives on the European Experience of Regionalism**

Asian perspectives on European regionalism are part of the globalization of the European experience. This is currently called globalization, though (soft) imperialism, or neo-imperialism, would be more accurate labels (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2005; Zielonka, 2008). Globalization (or 'soft' imperialism or neo-imperialism) took place in waves. It was not something that began with the invention of jumbo jets or the internet. Regardless of what wave we analyze, however, globalization (or 'soft' imperialism or neo-imperialism) involves making the parochial experience of (mostly Western) Europe into the ordering, wealth-making and self-aggrandizing practices that obtain worldwide. These practices are seen by (mostly Western) Europeans and their acolytes as being modernizing and civilizing ones. To non-Europeans they represent cultural impositions of a much more mixed kind.

As noted already, by the end of the twentieth century, the great land-based European empires were gone. They had self-destructed, thereby making possible national self-determination on an unprecedented scale. In their stead were internationalist and trans-nationalist practices, economically mercantilist and neo-colonizing practices, and individualist and collectivist practices, that sustained the sovereign states, liberal markets and individualist ideas about the self that nineteenth century European imperialism bequeathed the rest of the world. By this time there were active environmentalist, feminist and indigenous peoples movements as well, plus a much stronger sense that the Enlightenment project that underpins world affairs as a politico-cultural whole had reached a crisis point.

One result of the global experience with this European experience was to prompt societies elsewhere to define more closely what their identity might be. The creation of a concept of 'Asia', and the movement by societies in the so-called 'Asian' part of the world to come to terms with European regionalism, was part of this global response. 'Asians' were obliged to reflect upon



their commitment to sovereignty and non-intervention and how this made their own regionalist practices distinctive (Hidetaka, 2005; Tanaka, 2008). In the process they were obliged to reflect upon what regionalism meant to them.

These deliberations worked back upon Europeans. They created in turn new ways of thinking about European regionalism. This retroactive process was not new. Morris-Suzuki describes how nineteenth century European imperialism not only impinged upon Asia but also how Asian perspectives came to impinge upon Europeans (Morris-Suzuki, 1996). European societies were exposed to an 'immense influx of new knowledge', she says. 'As colonization extended ... European explorers and scholars were confronted by a previously unimagined array of biological, geological, linguistic, social and artistic variety. Their reactions to this global diversity were often coloured by fear or disdain, but sometimes by a sense of delighted wonder ...'. Indeed, it was this 'overwhelming vision of global diversity and complexity' that actually 'inspired', she argues, the development of European science (Morris-Suzuki, 1996, p. 2). The general point being that the scientific industrialism that provided Europe with its imperial and neo-imperial power was not only the product of European innovation but also a product of civilizational borrowing. This borrowing was made from Asian societies and societies elsewhere in the world. The scientific and industrial revolutions at the heart of the European experience of world affairs, and in due course, at the heart of European regionalism, would not arguably have occurred without Asian cultural traditions, that is, without taking on board what these societies knew and were able to teach to Europeans. Asian societies felt the full brunt of European imperialism and neo-imperialism to be sure, but the traffic was not one-way. Asians helped facilitate intellectual breakthroughs that promoted the modernist project itself, and in due course imperialism and neo-imperialism.

Asian regionalism can be seen in a similar light. It is not only a consequence of what Europe has done to the world but it also provides lessons for the proponents of European regionalism. It is for this reason that we not only get analysts like Needham (1969) describing the influence on European science of Chinese science but we also get analysts like Dallmayr (2002) positing inter-civilizational dialogue as the world story. We should pause and ask what we mean when we talk about 'Asia', though? Like Europe, 'Asia' is a highly diverse politico-geographic region. Like Europe, too, 'Asia' is a European concept, though one that regional elites now apply to themselves. Originally conceived as a kind of Europe in reverse, Asia was constructed by European orientalists as a realm of radical difference, imbued with radically different values. Europeanized elites in Asia subsequently used the concept to repress local cultural practices and to create European-style states, markets and civil societies (Fort and Webber, 2006).



Before the imposition of European ways of thinking and living, few 'Asians' would have thought or lived in terms that extended much beyond their village. With the imposition of European ways, however, 'Asia' became a part of a world that was described in central, eastern, southeastern, southern and Pacific terms. A highly diverse mosaic of societies and cultures, religions and civilizations, some of them historically related but most of them not, were reduced to a handful of geographic constructs of questionable political meaning and even more dubious political cohesiveness. All Asians experienced European territorial imperialism though, as well as the neo-imperial aftermath of that imperialism. It was this experience that made of 'Asia' a key domain for European-style state-making, wealth-making and social construction.

'Asia' became a region where billions of people were obliged to share the experience of having more or less clearly defined territorial boundaries and more or less integrated national populations, with more or less functional capital cities and more or less legitimate central governments. These governments were more or less committed to not interfering in the affairs of other states as they learned to go about largely capitalist ways of producing, wage working, trading and consuming. The experience of European thought-forms became extremely pervasive. In the process, the values and norms that are most characteristic of European culture found widespread acceptance throughout the Asian region.

All of the above both exacerbated and mitigated 'Asian' gendering practices, and 'Asian' ways of treating the natural environment, indigenous peoples and the poor. For example, because of highly hierarchic local gendering practices, capitalist owners and managers were able to make industrial wage labor extremely cheap throughout most of the region. This made it possible to recruit and exploit women, for example, at extremely low wages, and to treat them extremely poorly with near impunity. The result was an ability to maximize short-term profits regardless of the human cost. Regional sentiments of a communalist kind also made it possible to marginalize or ignore what the reproduction of European industrialization practices does to the environment. A similar process obtained with regard to the cultural integrity of indigenous peoples.

Most radical of all, the 'Asian' region became one where Enlightenment rationalism became, if not hegemonic, then at least a meta-discourse of widespread politico-cultural relevance. This was largely because of the access this meta-discourse provided to industrial production methods, modernist medical and engineering sciences and technologies, modernist modes of communications and transport, modernist armaments, and modernist management techniques. There was no denying the scientific and technological success that Enlightenment rationalism made possible. Asians acknowledged this success by seeking to emulate it.



This said, rationalism's intrinsic shortcomings elicited the same kind of criticisms in Asia as they did in Europe. Rationalism's secularizing propensities, for example, impinged directly upon Asian peoples' sacral practices. They directly impinged, for example, upon the Asian experience of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism and Animism. Those Asian rationalists who started from a non-sacral context learned, like many Europeans, to put the sacral at mind's length as an anti-rational part of the non-rational. Those who started from a sacral context of some kind located rationalism in the light of what they deemed to be a more comprehensive worldview. What was now a global debate became in the process one more instance of Asian perspectives on the European experience.

This applied in turn to Asian perspectives on the European experience of regionalism. When Asians of different spiritual persuasions were faced with European regionalism they tended to see it as a Christian project and not one that necessarily accounted for what they believed. It was no longer controversial, therefore, to ask what Muslim regionalism might entail, or Buddhist or Hindu or Confucian regionalism. Likewise, the ostensibly secular character of European regionalism was no longer sufficient to obscure its Christian heritage, or the consequences of that heritage as it impinged upon the European Union in the present day, or the missionary fervor of many of the Union's representatives (Gilson, 2002).

### **Asian Perspectives: The Product of 'Asian Values'?**

In short, the European experience of regionalism and the model this now provides for those peoples that Europeans think of as Asian is not an unmediated one. While Europeans seek to 'westernize' Asians, offering the European Union as a blueprint for how they should construct an international community in their part of the world, Asians now offer their own models as to how to 'easternize' European regionalist practices and how they should present themselves to the rest of the world. 'Asians' offer their own ideas not only as to what regionalism itself entails but also how a particular region should behave on the world stage.

This leaves one wondering: just how much has the European experience of regionalism been replicated in Asia? And to what extent might it be possible for the European experience of regionalism to be compromised by Asian experiences of regionalism? In the main, European modernists continue to see Asians as pre-modernists. They continue to see them as only partly modernized and industrialized, that is, as still imbued with a communalist and sacralist understanding of the world. Asians see themselves, however, and their societies and cultures, in less reductionist terms. They acknowledge the relative

superiority of early European science and industry, but they see themselves as civilized regardless.

In practice, this non-reductionist perspective takes a number of different forms. One of these is for Asians to turn their back on the European experience. As Hofman notes, for example:

The history of the ARF [the Asian Regional Forum], in which the EU is a member, is ... one of rejecting European models. From the very beginning, policy makers and academics in Southeast Asia ... fiercely resisted any attempts at developing the ARF along the lines of the 'Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe' (OSCE) or the 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization' (NATO). (von Hofmann, 2007, p. 189)

Another response is to embrace the European experience more or less uncritically. The most common response, however, is to effect a synthesis, that is, a hybrid outcome that gives Asians access to the military and industrial power that the European experience makes possible while continuing to foster their own perspectives. Those who embrace the European experience and try to effect a synthesis accept that Asian peoples were bequeathed the sovereign state as the dominant way to order their political affairs but seek to build regionally upon this bequest. They wear what is essentially a European diplomatic and strategic overcoat regardless of their preferred forms of politico-cultural attire and they try and keep this overcoat up-to-date in terms of the latest European fashions. This said they coordinate their regional affairs in a different way from the one European Unionists offer. They do not model what they do as closely as possible upon the European Union. They offer a form of regionalism more appropriate to Asian values and Asian modes of behavior instead.

What these values are will be discussed briefly below. Firstly, however, it is important to note an unanticipated and rarely documented outcome. As Europeans have learned to acknowledge the shortcomings of the civilization they have constructed, they have begun to look elsewhere for alternatives. In the process they have begun to take more seriously Asian critiques of European politico-cultural practices as well as Asian ideas about how to transcend the limits these practices create. Some of these Asian critiques are simply self-serving attempts by authoritarian leaders to bolster their own power. Others, however, go to the epistemological and ontological heart of European thought and life. They provide radically different perspectives on the kind of world that Europeans seek to make, a world that is arguably far from the best of all possible worlds and one Asian peoples have their own ideas about transforming and transcending.





It is apparent, for example, that wherever we look in the Asian region there are traditions of governance that are at odds with the politicking that Europeans now promote. For example, Asian traditions typically entail respect for authority and hierarchy and the avoidance of conflict and confrontation. These traditions are at odds with, and difficult to reconcile with, the European experience of liberal equality and *realpolitik*.

If we look at this in terms of the 27 states that currently constitute the European Union, we note that though they are very varied the level of conformity required of them is very high. The rationalist/liberalist values that define European regionalism are actively imposed upon those who want to join. They are also actively policed internally in terms of rigorous international and institutional expectations. By contrast, the eight states that currently constitute the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and the 11 states that currently constitute ASEAN Plus Three (the above plus Japan, China and South Korea), though equally if not more varied, are able to maintain a shared agenda by not requiring the same high level of conformity that the European Union does. The consensus values that define Asian regionalism are solidarist and communalist ones rather than legalist and institutionalist ones.

It must be said at once that the success of the European Union as a supra-statal confederation does require international consensus. It does require agreement. However, it is consensus of a different politico-cultural kind from that found in 'Asia'. It is consensus as Europeans understand it, not as 'Asians' understand it. Consensus between Asian state-makers has a more solidarist quality. It is about the respect paid internationally to politico-cultural communalism. It is not the detached coordination of pre-existing state interests, or the imposition of expectations of a rationalist/liberalist kind, that is found in the European Union. Is this difference sufficiently distinctive to posit an 'Asian way' and if so, is this way preferable to the putative European one? Is European-style regionalism being counter-colonized and rendered more civilized as a consequence? Or are the Asian mores that make this perspective possible simply more rudimentary than the European experience? Are they simply less reflexive?

Whatever conclusion one comes to, Asian perspectives upon the European experience of regionalism do present us with alternatives that any experience of the European Union alone does not present. They provide a model somewhat at odds with the European Union one and a model that European Unionists might arguably be able to learn from and apply on the world stage (Fukuyama and Calder, 2008).

Consider next the advent in 'Asia' of modernist European marketeering as well as the effect this marketeering has had on societies there. It can be said



that the competitive, instrumentalist mores of European-style capitalism have been well received throughout Asia, despite being corrosive of Asian traditions of familial or communal production and work. At the same time it can also be said that there has been a separate 'Asian' response to European-style capitalism and that this has been used to help sustain an Asian form of regionalism.

We might want to say, for example, that Asian capitalism tends to be more mercantilist than European capitalism. This tendency has important implications for trade in that it reminds Europeans of what is still possible despite their commitment to regimes that are formally more-free. Indeed, it helps justify the agricultural protectionism that is such a distinctive feature of the European Union as a common market. Are we seeing an earlier version of market-making being played out in the Asian region? Or are we seeing some kind of accommodation taking place whose outcome might well be superior to European practices as these are now promoted worldwide? So far it is not possible to say, but what we do know is that the experience of European style market-making is not viewed by Asians as culturally neutral. Even when the Asian response is to accept that experience in the hope of being able to emulate its success, there is still in practice a hybrid outcome. This hybridity provides in turn alternative models of growth and wealth-creation not only to Europeans but to other countries that are trying to foster their economic development (Robinson *et al*, 2000).

Consider, finally, the advent in 'Asia' of modernist European forms of civil society. Nationalism, democratic individualism, collectivism and the like are European notions of the self-in-society that are at odds with what still tends to prevail in Asian communities, namely, the self-that-acts-in-harmony-with-the-group. Asian communities tend to promote family relationships, filial piety and group conformity rather than modernist self-assertion and alienation (and hence nationalist or collectivist compensation). Some Asian societies, like Japan or the Philippines, have proven to be relatively receptive to rationalist/liberalist notions of personal emancipation, inter-personal reciprocity and human rights. There are now many Asian individuals who see rationalist/liberalism as relevant to, and quite capable of flowering in, their particular cultural context. This affects in turn how they see regionalism and how they see it being constructed. It predisposes them, for example, towards a European mode of international cooperation.

Appearances can be deceptive, however, since all Asian state-makers, regardless of the degree to which they seem to be Europeanized, continue to exhibit a sense of communalist respect that makes for a distinctive approach to the way regionalism is practised. They continue to be imbued with cultural sentiments, in other words, that predispose them to deal with international difference by non-confrontational means. This heightens their regard for



non-intervention while reinforcing the consensual perspective they have upon regional cooperation.

This not only makes it possible to include in a single organization states that differ very significantly from each other, like Japan and China in ASEAN Plus Three, or Myanmar versus the rest in ASEAN. It also offers Europeans a less legalistic and more communalistic model of how to practice regionalism among themselves and how to present the European Union on the world stage (Blondel and Inoguchi, 2006).

The idea of communalist Asian values and the idea that these might be deemed preferable to those that underpin European regionalism is not new. Japanese thinkers have been expounding such values for generations. They are clearly exemplified by Okakura's conclusion, drawn more than a century ago, to the effect that the diversity of Asian cultures, including the 'mighty' difference between the Chinese and Indian ones, does not preclude Asians sharing a common 'thought-inheritance' in their 'love for the Ultimate and Universal', a love that has enabled them to produce 'all the great religions of the world' and one that stands in stark contrast to the sentiments manifest by the 'maritime peoples' of the 'Mediterranean and the Baltic'. These peoples dwell, Okakura says, 'on the Particular', searching out the 'means' to life rather than its ultimate 'end' (Okakura, 1970 [1904], p. 1). Rather more recently, arguments like these were forcefully expounded by a director general of the Economic Affairs Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs who said that '[t]he big issue for Asia from now on will not be how to modernize itself further so much as how to achieve global solutions for the problems that have led Western-style modernization and industrialization to a dead end, since Western civilization may not be able to offer the key to the solution of these problems' (Ogura, 1993, p. 42). If we see European regionalism as one of the Western-style dead ends that Ogura refers to, then we can see in his statement an invitation to other Asians to develop a non-European way out of the impasse that European regionalism arguably represents.

Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad was well known for expounding the view that hierarchic authority and order are preferable to democracy and that the individualism that makes democracy possible is a distortion of human potential and not, as the European experience might suggest, its crowning achievement. More pertinent to the point being made here, he also argued for state economic autonomy of the kind that European regionalism eschews. This autonomy served Malaysia in good stead during the Asian financial crisis (so-called). It helped insulate Malaysia from some of the worst effects of that crisis. As a consequence, it provides another example for European Unionists to consider of an alternative way to relate to their regional and global peers (bin Mohamad, 2002). Similarly, Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, was well-known for making a similar



case. When he was in power he regularly cast democracy in terms of paternalism and trusteeship rather than in terms of popular plebiscite (Teik, 1998; Langlois, 2001, pp. 13–16, 21–24). He also saw regionalism not in terms of the promotion of human rights but in a more pragmatic light.

European critics tend to see politicians like these pedaling doctrines of convenience. They highlight the wrongs done by Asians to other Asians. Even when they are prepared to concede that neo-Confucianism, for example, promotes the welfare of the community as well as the rights of the individual, they tend to see so-called Asian values as an ideological attack on the many Asians who sought self-determination during imperial times and who resisted those authoritarian rulers who replaced the imperial ones. More specifically, they tend to see such values as a ‘grubby’ cover for ‘economic positioning for profit’ (Hein and Hammond, 1995, p. 12). European and European-style marxists are even more explicit about this. They argue that attempts to impose the European experience of regionalism in Asia have taken away human rights and impeded the progress of ‘real’ democracy there. They highlight the neo-imperial support Europeans have provided to comprador Asian elites and they highlight the use of the European-style sovereign state to construct forms of economic development that work to the near-exclusive advantage of local fractions of the global bourgeoisie and global corporations.

European critics, aware of the peripheries that rationalism creates, also highlight the continued male dominance of Asian societies and the commensurate oppression of Asian women, as well as the continued repression of local ethnic groups and social castes, the use of family and kin networks to corrupt Asian states, and the greed and aggression that characterizes capitalism throughout the region. They highlight the prevalence of extreme poverty next to extreme affluence and the pervasiveness of people trafficking, resource exploitation, ecological insult and the radical perversion of all that Asian values are meant to represent.

This said there are Europeans prepared to note how in Asia there are many religious, philosophical and cultural perspectives and how these multiple perspectives are ‘not just different conceptual schemes with common behavioural consequences’. Langlois, for example, observes that there is ‘no single set of Asian values, just as there is no single set of Western values ...’; that ‘the sets of values held by social actors in Asia’ result in ‘areas of overlap’; and that Asian values are ‘significantly different ... to those commonly found in the West’ (Langlois, 2001, p. 48).

To analysts like these distinctly ‘Asian’ perspectives on the European experience of regionalism do exist. Indeed, it is these very same Asian perspectives that may well make it possible to compensate for the limits and distortions of European regionalism in concrete and creative ways. It is these very same perspectives, for example, that might heighten the European



awareness of the value of human duty and not just human rights, of the value of more social forms of capitalism, and of the value of more communalist forms of democracy. All of these values impinge directly upon what European regionalism might become. All of these values are so-called 'Asian' values. All of them could well be used to help ensure that European regionalism remains civilized and humane, both at home and abroad.

## Concluding Remarks

The impact upon 'Asia' of the European experience of world affairs in general and of European regionalism in particular continues to be profound. It is not unmediated, however, and neither is it one-way. Just as European Unionists offer their model of regionalism to Asian state-makers as the best way to foster international cooperation, the proponents of ASEAN Plus Three offer their model of regionalism to Europeans as promoting values that European Unionists may need to subscribe to if their organization is to remain viable in the long term.

Asians have responded in their own ways to the imposition of European forms of political order, wealth-creation, self-assertion, class and gender construction and environmental mal-protection. It is these responses that allow us to talk of 'Asian' perspectives on European regionalism and of 'Asian' alternatives to European regionalism. This can be seen most clearly in the concept of Asian values. Though mostly espoused by regional leaders of an authoritarian kind and arguably an exaggeration of the politico-cultural differences between Europeans and Asians, they remain a stubborn reality across the region. They articulate alternatives to European ways of living, knowing and being that we ignore only by doing violence to the cultures concerned.

The richness of Asian perspectives with regard to the European experience of regionalism is seen when we look more closely at particular Asian cultures. The Japanese, for example, embraced European influences in a determined bid not to be colonized by European powers. They succeeded without surrendering their own cultural values. This is apparent in the way they maintained their own conception of the past, that is, their own conception of what to conserve in terms of their cultural heritage as well as how to conserve it. It is also apparent in the way they were able to rival the power of European states and mount their own push for a regional empire.

One key result of the rich variety of Asian perspectives is a distinctive concept of regionalism focused less on cooperation in the modernist/detached/legalistic sense and more on international cooperation in the communalist/engaged/pragmatic sense. The latter is not only notably different from the

approach that informs the European one but it also provides a potent alternative to that approach. As such it provides Europeans with an alternative mode of practice and a potentially important one. The European Union tends to obscure that alternative. Asian regionalism provides other regions in the world with the same alternative. It provides not only Europeans with other ideas about how their much vaunted Union might best behave on the global stage but North, Central and South Americans and Africans as well.

Instead of behaving in the same modernist, legalist way in which Europeans built their regional institutions, that is, the Asian example suggests that other regions might well want to consider building their international associations in a more communalist, pragmatic and consensual way. It also suggests that they might well want to act collectively in the world in an 'Asian' way rather than a European one. And it suggests these things to Europeans too. In short, the story is a complex one. No single statement can summarize this story other than to draw our attention to its very complexity.

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