The Asian side of the world
Editorials on Asia and the Pacific 2002-2011

Jean-François Sabouret (ed.)
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Editorials on Asia and the Pacific
2002-2011
The objective of this collection *Études Imasie-Pacifique* is to publish the studies, round table discussions and the papers of researches and members of the Asia and Pacific Network (CNRS/FMSH).

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Foreword:
Réseau Asie (Asia Network),
a network of the future

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École des hautes études en sciences sociales

SEPTEMBER 2005

Réseau Asie, founded and created under the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (MSH) in June 2001, is now more than four years old. It will hold its second congress at the end of September 2005. This will be a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the initial ambitions of its founders, to evaluate how far it has come and the progress to be made, to clearly assess the difficulties encountered and to reflect on potential, possible or desirable directions in which the Network should take.

This small group was created in 2001 by Jean-François Sabouret, who brought together Jean-Luc Domenach, Alain Peyraube, and, from the MSH, Jean-Claude Thivolle, Gilles Tarabout, Jean-Luc Racine and myself, starting with a simple mission statement of setting out goals for the Network to attain.

Its statement highlighted the importance, quality and seniority of French (and, mainly, French-speaking) research on Asia on its dispersion and division. On the one hand, we have numerous researchers, research centres and specialised institutions established in France and Asia, old and very high-level scientific traditions, journals and book collections that are internationally reputed. On the other hand, we have an institutional dispersion and a division between the specialists of different countries or Asian regions. This has clouded the visibility of research, limited the
transversal, global or comparative approaches, and also restricted the possibilities of exchange and cooperation between well-known specialists of cultures, religions, languages, societies and political systems, and the non-specialists including lawyers, economists, social scientists, political scientists or historians on Asia. These group of people felt the need to include a continent in their system of reference, which they clearly knew would dominate the first half of the 21st century, and perhaps beyond, due to its economic and demographic weight.

The goals, which they were aiming for were a result of this statement. It was important to bring together the researchers interested in Asia in a network, making a list as exhaustive as possible, and creating conditions for working together. The purpose of which had to explore new directions of research in a non-competitive attitude that existing institutions in their current practices had not yet been able to do, and to, of course, participate in this with and for the researchers themselves.

The first stage was centred on creating an online directory of all French and French-speaking researchers (around 1,500 people).

The second stage was to organise a congress every two years that would consist of workshops based on the proposals received and which would be open to all, particularly, to young researchers.

The third stage included organising or assisting in the organisation of transversal meetings on common issues, in partnership with other institutions, bringing together scholars working on different Asian countries, or specialists and non-specialists of Asia.

The fourth stage opened this French-speaking Network to the world, promoting partnerships with similar networks that already exist or that will be set up in neighbouring European countries. Through its historical experience, Europe benefits from a long and rich tradition of Asian studies, which allow it to gather, capitalise and transform this experience in order to face the demands and challenges of the 21st century.

Finally, the fifth stage consisted of developing the international mobility of scholars, by inviting not only well-known specialists from Asia working in their own countries or in foreign universities, but also, young doctorate and post-doctorate candidates from Asian universities for long (academic) stays in France.

These five objectives were partially reached, but there is still much left for us to do. The creation of a directory is already well underway. It includes the references of more than 1,300 scholars and it will be directly accessible on the website. The Network’s second congress, two years after the first congress, in September 2003, will be held from 28th to 30th September 2005 at the Centre of International Conferences, and for its final session, in the large EHESS amphitheatre, 105 Boulevard Raspail. It will
be open to all and the programme can be consulted on the Network’s website: www.reseau-asie.com.

Initial contact was made with Casa Asia in Barcelona and its Director, Ambassador Ion de la Riva and with Professor Carlo G. Cereti of the University of Rome. A wider network is envisaged bringing together scholars from other European countries. The Hermes programme that was launched in 2005, under the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose management was entrusted to the MSH, and with the help of the Ministry of Research and CNRS, they will invite fourteen post-doctorates from China, India and Indonesia in autumn 2005, for a period of six months. They will be welcomed into a French research team, be they specialists or non-specialists of Asia. There still remains the task of coming up with initiatives to achieve the third stage: this will be one of the objectives of the next congress.

Much has already been achieved, given the means that the Network had to begin with, but there is still much to do, considering the size of the task. That which was accomplished was only possible with the close collaboration of the three main forces. From the very beginning, this ambitious project enjoyed the complicity and support of the Network with which it joined forces and enabled the project to proceed. The institutional support of the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Research and the Ministry of External Affairs has made it possible to have the staff and the financial means to carry out the work. Finally, it is thanks to Jean-François Sabouret’s relentless dedication, constant enthusiasm and organisation of a small team that the Network has come this far.

The work of the Réseau Asie meets a growing need. From the beginning, it was welcomed and supported by the MSH whose mission is to provide a framework for such projects, which in order to succeed, require the scientific independence of researchers and total neutrality of the institution that they choose as a framework for their collective work. This means that the Réseau Asie could even one day branch off from the MSH if other institutions prove to be capable of taking over in the same attitude, without necessarily wanting to claim ownership of it.

The Réseau Asie is everyone’s network and should remain that way. It needs the support of one and all to succeed.
Introduction:
Asia going from strength to strength or is the world on the verge of a new era?

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JUNE 2011

Asia does not exist and nevertheless it is increasingly present in the international arena. Asia is a controversial concept, just like the fact that “Eastern World” is inaccurate and is often used to describe anything “in the East”, which is not the Western world. What is more different than Tashkent or Ashgabat in Central Asia and Tokyo or Seoul in North-East Asia? Europe and Asia cohabit on the same tectonic plate. So be it, we shall use this term and refer to Asia as the non-Western world whose global dynamism attracts our attention daily.

From the mid-19th century, Japan openly embarked on rapid Westernisation to be able to fend off Western appetites in North-East Asia. The Japanese were perfectly aware of the Opium War in China (1839-1842) and of its outcome: the defeat of China against the British gunboats. It did not take them long to understand that Japan was not able to defend itself. Many foreign ships had been cruising off the Japanese coasts for some years, and the relatively controlled exchanges with Holland via the Dejima access lock in Nagasaki, which had been going on for more than two centuries, were probably on their last legs. Shogunal power and the political changes brought about by the Meiji period in 1868 generated a similar thought, that of modernising by all means and as quickly as possible’ building “a rich country” with “a strong military”. One of the other major debates at the time in Japan was Westernisation, while preserving its Japanese soul, according to the motto of the Meiji era, “Japanese mind, Western knowledge” (wakon-yōsaî).
One cannot fail to notice that the student of the Western world – Japan at the time – has successfully emulated its teachers in terms of military aggression and colonisation: Taiwan (1895), Korea (1905), Manchuria (1937). It took some thirty years for Japan to modernise and to become one of the main powers in the region through war, defeat, American occupation, economic rebirth that was partially due to external warfare: Korean War (1950-1953), Vietnam War (1954-1975) and a profitable strategy in research and development. In 1965, Japan became the third economic power in the world and then the second at the beginning of the 1980s. At one time, Japan was even considered to become the world leader, “Japan as number one”. Unfortunately, the land bubble and the downturn surfaced in the 1990s, but Japan had, however, managed to remain the second largest until 2010. Today, it ranks third, overtaken by China. Will the events, which took place in Tôhoku in the northeast on 11th March (earthquake, tsunami and nuclear threat) make Japan drop even further down the ranks or enable it, on the contrary, to embark on large-scale projects in promising sectors such as renewable energy?

In any case, Japan has clearly answered the question as to whether modernisation was possible without Westernisation. All the countries of the “Asian Region” have realised that Asia is decidedly going from strength to strength today.

It has been calculated that the gross domestic product of China and India at the end of the 18th century accounted for more than 40% of the world’s total. Colonisation, wars and many political events in the 19th and 20th century have put a dampener on Asia’s development as a whole. Today, Asia is making a brilliant comeback on the political scene, in terms of military, industry, research and development, creation and even philosophy. No sector exclusively belongs to the West anymore.

In the 1980s, before the awakening of Deng Xiaoping’s China, Asian countries accounted for approximately 14% of the world’s GDP and 38% for Europe. In 2010, Asia and the EU-27 are almost on an economic par with Asia producing 25% and Europe 28%. It may be assumed that in a few years Asia time, will overtake the European Union and North America (29% in 2010).

It is not easy to describe the dynamism in Asia and the Pacific region in time and space, unless one decides to draw large frescos, with mixed fortunes. Braudel is second to none! More humbly, for the past 10 years, the Asia and Pacific Network has been weaving a patient web, by patching together snapshots of the various fields of research and the different knowledge corpus of specialists and experts on Asia and the Pacific region.

The aim is to show the diversity and the wealth of French and French-speaking research. Researchers on Asia and the Pacific region amount to
more than 1,800 individuals, making France one of the countries of the EU with the highest number of researchers working on the region. However, the aim is also to express concern: there is a large number of researchers reaching retirement age (the “grandfather boom”). Future generations are coming forward and are rather talented, but when taking the relay, the State may be ill-advised to adopt a hands-off policy: research sectors might be cast aside just when this part of the world, which will probably seek to take over the world, needs to be understood.

Will this globalisation take place smoothly without armed confrontations? Will the Western world accept to reduce the span of its economic, industrial and military power and leave room for other emerging forces? Or, on the contrary, will it conversely seize this opportunity to try and fulfill the dreams of everlasting peace praised by Kant and integrate into the knowledge corpora, a representative proportion of all civilizations that history has all too often neglected, in terms of their wealth and contribution.

The world has turned upside down at the beginning of this century. Therefore, it is rather important to ponder the consequences on the future of the Western world and the lives of its inhabitants.

Around a hundred texts in French attest the quality and the vitality of research and knowledge of our country and French-speaking people; a number that is not so impressive considering the number of specialists and experts in Asia and the Pacific region. Far more would be necessary and we will continue along these lines by publishing a new text every month on the Asia Network website. Several reasons account for the decision to publish these texts in the traditional form of a book, which may be surprising as they have already appeared on the web. The first is to thank all the authors who have taken part in this smooth-running adventure, month after months for ten years, which has enabled us to piece together this corpus of knowledge. The second, the generation-related reason lies in the fact that information on the web is fragile and may be deleted with a single click; power and fragility are interlaced in a kind of technological oxymoron. The publishing value of books is still reliable, if not limited, but the intent is also to refer readers to the extensive and multifaceted works of the researchers.

Finally, I wish to thank whole-heartedly Maurice Aymard, Alain Peyraube, Jean-Luc Domenach, Jean-Luc Racine and the whole team of the Asia Network for standing by me throughout this long process in which there is still so much left to be achieved…
PART ONE

Regional dynamics and globalisation
The future of Taiwan: unification or “silent normalisation”?

Jean-Pierre Cabestan
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OCTOBER 2010

Since the election of President Ma Ying-Jeou, and the Kuomintang’s (KMT) return to power in 2008, both Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have entered a period of unprecedented detente. Official contact and meetings between the Taipei and Beijing authorities have increased; a dozen commercial and technical agreements have been signed, and in June 2010, an ambitious agreement regarding economic co-operation, the Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement (ECFA) was closed. This deepened Taiwanese economic dependence, which was already stimulated by the ever-increasing bilateral trade (worth over 120 million dollars). Tourism in Taiwan is developing very rapidly (with over a million Chinese people visiting the island since 2009), whilst a rapprochement is taking place between the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party, easing a reconciliation between the two parties that were once former arch-enemies during the Civil War and promoting its “Chineseness” again in an almost militant way, having discarded its “Taiwaneseness”; the current KMT government is becoming less and less willing to make decisions that may offend Beijing. Examples include the refusals to meet with the Dalai Lama and to issue a visa for Rebiya Kadeer. In other words, Taiwan is living more and more under the influence of the PRC.

Nevertheless, does this change favour the peaceful reunification process that Beijing has been hoping for since 1979? Can it hasten Taiwan’s absorption or reintegration back into China?

It is clear that many factors appear to be forcing Taiwan to take this path.

First of all, Taiwan’s economic prosperity depends increasingly on its continued cooperation and economic integration with China. If the ECFA
is fully implemented, it is estimated that by 2020, Taiwan’s sales to China will represent 62% of its exports as opposed to 41% of its exports today. The island has been and will probably remain unable to rebalance exchanges abroad, especially with South-East Asia. Between one and two million Taiwanese citizens live in China, contributing to the moderation of minnan (a south Fujian-dominated Taiwanese identity). For a growing number of young Taiwanese people and citizens, their professional futures lie in, or are developed through mainland China. Although attracted to the democracy and freedom that exist in Taiwan, Chinese tourists continue to, however, remain attached to a nationalist approach to the Chinese nation that there is only China (the PRC), and Taiwan is a sacred and inalienable part of it.

Since 2005, the military situation in the Formosa Strait has been clearly detrimental to Taiwan. Although Taiwan continues to receive large quantities of weapons from the United States, it does not invest enough in defending itself (2.5% of the GDP is spent on defence, rather than 3% as promised by Ma). Whilst the threat of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is becoming increasingly realistic, Taiwan has decided to abolish the drafting system regarding military service, thus weakening the vital link between the army and the nation. As a consequence, the will of the Taiwanese soldiers to fight is a will that has been fading rapidly since the end of the Cold War, in a society that is profoundly hedonistic and post-modern.

Despite the diplomatic truce desired by Ma and tacitly accepted by Beijing, the international status of the Republic of China (ROC), Taiwan’s official name, has only marginally improved, as it now has a folding seat at the Assembly of the World Health Organisation and seeks comfort from its 23 diplomatic allies, mainly microstates without much international or territorial influence.

In other words, we are entitled to ask which side does the current detente in the Taiwan Strait stand to benefit the most? If the Chinese government has made trade concessions for Taiwan, when negotiating the ECFA in particular, then it has not budged an iota on the crucial issues. The government poses a threat to Taiwan with over 1,000 missiles, a naval fleet and an Air Force that is increasingly able to throw its weight over the Strait. Moreover, the PRC is increasingly flexing its muscles and asserting its power all over the continent, testing the US (for example, in the case of the US Impeccable incident in the South China Sea in March 2009) or Japan’s resistance to its ambitions. In Japan’s case, we can refer to the Chinese fishing boat incident in Diaoyu/Senkaku, September 2010). Under such circumstances, the ROC, Taiwan has little chance of joining the
international community again, even if it just wants to get a foot in the back door.

Nevertheless, the very limits of the *detente*, as well as its concrete outcomes, in terms of peace and security, may serve to strengthen Taiwan’s hold, as the island is protected by both democracy and the US. The US’ *de facto* support for Taiwan has helped to maintain a certain balance in the Strait.

It is evident that the KMT and the Taiwanese business community have decided to play the economic integration card. However, this integration will continue to be tightly controlled in a number of strategic sectors that stand to benefit Taiwan. Ma Ying-Jeou’s government is very much aware of this, and the island will only progressively and selectively open up its economy to Chinese investments, in order to avoid any trace of Hong Kong’s identity in its industry or financial sector.

Although more moderate and pluralistic, the Taiwanese identity (and language) probably still has better days yet to come. The relationship between Taiwan and the democratic political entity, that is the ROC continuously feed this entity forcing all election candidates to factor this in and use it to their advantage. Taiwan’s democracy continues to gain strength, will remain on the best defences against any deal or agreement with China that might jeopardise the island’s sovereignty. In spite of their differences in how they both view their futures and the nature of their identities, the Taiwanese are united in considering their island as a nation-state, distinct and separate from the PRC as well as recognising their right to develop relations with an equal footing.

Interestingly since 2008, the increase in contact and visits between the Taiwanese and Chinese governments, has favoured what I am tempted to call a “creeping and silent normalisation” of relations between the two Chinas. It is clear that this “normalisation” has a strong chance of remaining unassumed and incomplete, as long as continental China stays authoritative. However, is it not this profound sense of “peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait”, which is dear to Hu Jintao?

The Beijing authorities no doubt knew this pretty well, and for this reason, have decided to keep a strong military hold on the island, which is nevertheless ruled by an accommodating KMT government. It is almost as if they did not fully trust the efficiency of their own seduction strategy, implemented through dependence, or as if they mistrusted the Taiwanese electorate, an electorate that democracy has made unpredictable. The possibility of the independence-supporting Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) returning to power cannot be easily ruled out (for today, the DPP
receives around 45% of the vote). It is almost as if the US’s interests were to encourage the division of China into two separate states, such as France’s interests to keep Germany divided for as long as possible.

However, whilst Japan may nourish this hope, it is not what the US is intending to happen, as the US has remained “agnostic” about Taiwan’s future, provided that the future is not decided under duress, but instead, is fully embraced by a clear Taiwanese majority. Herein lays the heart of the problem. What exactly do the Taiwanese want? We have already suggested that they wish to be fully reintegrated into the international community, a community in their view from which they were unfairly forced to leave in 1971. This occurred when the PRC replaced the ROC at the United Nations to maintain the status quo in the Strait and to postpone any decisions regarding their relations with mainland China until times were better. Of course if China were to be democratic tomorrow, then this political upheaval would constitute a real challenge for the Taiwanese, running the risk of dividing the population and forcing them to make a choice; the choice between the KMT and the “blue camp”, which would support unification, whilst the DPP and “green camp” would opt for independence de jure.

As we are all still waiting for this positive, but unlikely development, Taiwan will probably continue to require and receive military support from the US, and the Chinese are fully aware of this. This reality helps us to understand the PLA’s new ambitions better – to not only be able to destroy Taiwan’s key military facilities, but also, through adopting an asymmetrical strategy, to become powerful enough to neutralise any US aircraft carrier and carrier group dispatched to the area. It would be sensible to ask whether an armed conflict between the two nuclear powers is conceivable. However, we can, but observe that in both Beijing and Washington (as well as in Honolulu and Okinawa), military forces are preparing for the worst. This is in order to influence the best possible outcome more decisively, that is to say a solution achieved through negotiation.

Is the negotiation of a settlement feasible today? An agreement to signal the end of hostility, let alone an agreement of peace between the two states which hardly acknowledge each other, seems very difficult to achieve in the foreseeable future. This is particularly so, because the Taiwanese remain divided over the boundaries of the ROC, the entire Chinese nation (the blues) or Taiwan (the greens). Thus at this stage, all that we can hope for is to put in place realistic yet discreet military measures to build up confidence and continue the pursuit of this “rampant normalisation”. This is a process that, in spite of everything, has
contributed to keeping the prospect of war far away. However, it would be rather presumptuous to expect more than this from the current detente.

Yes, Taiwan is facing constraints under China’s growing influence, and is having to accommodate this factor. However, there are still options for the future and Taiwan’s intention to follow its own democratic path must take into account interests and responsibilities of the great powers of the Asia-Pacific region. This is a region where China’s power and presence is felt more and more each day, but where the other powers, in particular Japan, Russia and India, are far from surrendering. On the contrary, by asserting its power too rapidly and in a clumsy fashion at that, China has contributed not only to strengthening the US’s strategic role there, but has also encouraged most of its neighbours to join forces against it.