

New challenges seen for Asia and Europe

The discussions during the first day of the Asia-Europe Press Forum 2004 yesterday were centered on how the roles of Asia and Europe in world affairs would evolve in the face of growing unilateralism in U.S. foreign policy. The following are excerpts from the discussions.

Questions for keynote speaker William Pfaff, syndicated and contributing columnist to the International Herald Tribune:

From Daniel Vernet, director of international relations, Le Monde (France).

You mentioned that Europe was unprepared for new challenges, but how do you assess progress made by EU in its security policy?

A: The enlargement is a fundamental change, making possible a highly integrated Europe of groups of the willing, interested in further integration as well as external manifestation of European power. There will be several attempts to produce military manifestation for Europe and a common foreign policy.

I am optimistic about Europe. But I think the future is much more difficult now to foresee. There will probably not be a European Constitution anytime soon because it seems that it will not be ratified until the 25 states have been integrated fully.

Mario Bettencourt Resendes, publisher of Lusomundo Media. (Portugal)

Many states in Europe have become democracies in the past few decades, and this political transformation was made possible by new European integration. What about new Asia?

A: In Europe, there were institutional changes that allowed this kind of change [political integration] to occur, which prove more enduring than simple democratization. In the case of Asia, there is no move towards institutional change.

Richard Lloyd Parry, Asia editor, The Times of London.

Because of its policy of unilateralism, the United States has lost international legitimacy. Will this void be filled by Asia and Europe?

And the mention of "inevitable engagement with history" — what kind of engagement does this mean? Will it be diplomatic, economic or cultural?

A: It's quite possible that there



Journalists from Asia and Europe discussing issues that included the rising role of China, shifting U.S. foreign policy and effect of Europe's recent enlargement. From left: Mario Bettencourt Resende of Portugal, Xavier Batalla Gracia of Spain, Luciano Montebusco of Luxembourg, Kim Young-hie of South Korea, Richard Lloyd Parry of Britain and Albrecht Rothacher, public affairs director of the Asia-Europe Foundation.

By Park Jong-keun

will continue to be a void for a certain time because there is great reluctance in Europe to pose a challenge [to the United States]. China and India, historically, seem to have no vocation for international relations.

China is preoccupied with peripheral states. China has never seen itself as master of the world. On the other hand, Western Europe has dynamic societies with a world vocation. In the long term, they will have an effect on the world.

Asia is inherently in a diffuse, unformulated political system at the present time.

Akira Kojima, special editorial adviser, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Nikkei (Japan)

I think Asian integration will come through the market, with increased in investment and mutual trade. "Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation" is an abstract term, a loose regional economic cooperation pact.

There is no real institutional integration in Asia, but now we are only beginning to discover the need for the creation of regional markets.

Jaifu Yu, senior editor, Xinhua News Agency (China)

We have to remember that there is new Russia, which is a very important part of global affairs. Russia can claim to be part of Asian countries or part of Europe. What role can we expect in the future?

A: Russia is in a period of recovery from the collapse of the Soviet Union. It will be some time before the nature of the recovery is clear.

Kim Young-Hie, editor at large, JoongAng Ilbo (South Korea)

You mentioned the "return to history." In Asia, there is no religious and cultural chemistry among nations and people. We can hardly expect any collective consciousness to emerge. If the Asian countries individually try to engage with history, or to remake history, will the relationships go sour and tense?

A: In the West, history is conceived as progression going from here to there, as in the Biblical chronicles. This has not been true in Asian culture. There is a static quality to human existence, not as passing through time from beginning to end.

The second session of the forum was devoted to Asian perspectives with keynote speaker Kavi Chongkittavorn, assistant group editor of *The Nation* in Bangkok, arguing for greater economic and political integration across Asia.

From Hans van der Lugt, Northeast Asia correspondent for NRC Handelsblad (Netherlands).

For more than half a century, the United States was said to have provided a security umbrella to Asia in order for its nations to develop economically. Can U.S. policy shift away from Asia?

A: Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has been a stabilizing factor in Asia. But with the new rise of China, the role of the U.S. in providing security will need to change.

The U.S. must accept China's interest in Asia. To have Asian countries getting together means you isolate the U.S. because the U.S. views itself as an Asia-Pacific country.

But Washington acquiesced to this "East Asian-ness," provided Japan strongly figures in this community, but Japan has not involved itself.