Speech, Speech!

In the Political Pillar, Tom Kuroda gave a speech on Security dimensions of Asia-Europe: Lessons from the past. The speakers’ nationality did notably influence the region they chose to focus on; in addressing the issue of “Security dimensions of Asia-Europe: Lessons from the past”, Tom Kuroda spoke mainly about the role of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asians), ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), and the conflict of the South China Sea in relation to the EU. The 3-stage agenda of the ARF of confidence building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution is realistic and, should it be effectively implemented, allow for highly advantageous interregional relations.

In his speech, Kuroda identified the functions of regional organisations in regional security, the historical baggage involved, and the divergence of interests between the East and the West. To conclude, he sought a balance, a compromise and coming together of Asia and Europe in “co-operative security”, based on “effective multilateralism”.

This topic garnered a lot of curiosity and interest in the participants, as they pelted the speaker with question after question, ranging from issues such as the principle of non-intervention of the ARF, the concept of sovereignty, to future actions of ASEAN.

To have culture under a cultural policy, obviously the cultural speech of the day was given by Jaime Reis. This was a highly interactive talk, in which Reis’ most common phrase was, “what do you think?”. Together, the speaker and the audience worked their way through the definitions of important phrases in the cultural sphere, such as “harmony”, “tradition”, “modernisation”, “globalisation” and, needless to say, “culture”. Participants watched videos of Portuguese traditional festivals, were cajoled into taking out their money (but only so that they could analyse the importance of the Euro in the establishment of the European identity) and evaluated the importance of Lady Gaga and other mainstream pop icons in the cultural scene. Without doubt, creativity and spontaneity were the defining characteristics of Reis’ talk. He also encouraged participants to think critically and to cultivate a spirit of criticism, questioning, “is it really what you think it is?” and putting a spin onto conventional issues, such as the statement “tradition as an invention of modernity”. The Daily Bread would, however, like to dispute the concept of reification Reis advocated: culture is not simply a people’s desire to tag a physical form to an abstract image, nor an individual liberty; individual choice.
lies in mobility, one’s ability to choose the location of dwelling and to both adapt to and adopt the local way of living. As the saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”.

How can Green Technologies contribute to economic growth and sustainable societies while curbing climate change? Jussi Tapio Lehmusvaara from Finland discussed this issue in the Economic Pillar. Firstly, he presented the economic impacts of global warming, notably greatest in the developing world. This was followed by the identification of the key issues in relation to energy conservation, green and clean technology, waste reduction and energy resources.

Denmark was cited as a model, in which “there is no contradiction between economic growth and ambitious climate policies”, to quote Carsten Staur. While 17% of Denmark’s energy consumption is met by renewable energy resources, the methods, mostly windpower, are specific to the country and cannot be used as a model for developing countries. Essentially, each country will need to find its own way towards a greener future.

According to Lehmusvaara, the main idea behind a green economy was meeting the needs of the people rather than living in the traditional supply and demand economy. We should thus cut consumption and focus on living sustainably without using more energy than is required for our well being.

There were no conclusive examples as to how developing countries would be able to achieve a high economic growth rate through green technology; however we must pose the question: which is more important, the quantity of the economic growth, or the quality?

Fécamp

The participants had their daily dosage of French culture at Fécamp. After enjoying the beauty of the white cliffs and pretending to be the main actors in the Titanic, the group visited the Bénédictine Palace, famous for the Bénédictine liqueur which was originally created as a medicine. However neither participants nor organisers were allowed to taste it since some members, in fact most members, of the group are indeed underage. However all was not lost since it is a lovely building with great charm, filled with a collection of artworks from the past centuries. Finally they enjoyed fine French cuisine, such as foie gras, frog legs and crème brûlée.

Quote of the day:

“There is no contradiction between economic growth and ambitious climate policies”.

James G. Watt.