

Andreas Schockenhoff: On the Necessity of Formulating Germany's Political Interests Vis-à-vis Asia – Options for Germany

Europe wants to extend its influence in Asia. In this context, however, the Europeans should ask themselves how they intend to meet the challenges presented by Asia and preserve their own interests at the same time. Germany similarly is called upon to formulate a corresponding strategy from its own point of view.

There can be no doubt that *formulating interests is necessary*.

Asia is the region with the highest economic growth rates worldwide, a fact that not only constitutes a challenge but also offers opportunities. However, Asia is more than just China and India. Japan, Korea, Indonesia, and other ASEAN states are also progressing and developing, showing considerable and impressive growth rates. Yet the economy alone is not all-important; to Europe, political stability is a matter of particular interest as well, given the immediate supraregional consequences of security-policy tensions in Asia itself. Beijing's attitude towards recent developments in Sudan, for instance, directly conflicts with European interests. At the moment, the Europeans' influence in the region still is too weak; they do not do enough, and they do not speak in one voice.

Yet what do *Germany's political interests vis-à-vis Asia* look like, and what *options* are there?

What should be named first in this context is the need for stronger economic participation. Germany and Europe must become more attractive to Asian investors, entrepreneurs, and students, for the countries in the region not only represent interesting markets but also fierce competitors who have to be met accordingly –by the Europeans acting in concert, for example.

Furthermore, it is important to secure the supply of energy. If Europe wants to be successful in the battle for its share against China and India, it will have to arrange for a joint foreign policy on energy. In this, the Europeans should insist on so-called codes of conduct, i.e. they should make sure that the hunger for energy of Asia's great powers does not threaten the progress achieved so far in establishing functioning state structures in developing countries.

Moreover, order-policy interests are of crucial importance. Asia must be brought closer to democratic, market-economy, and multilateral practice. What is more, the Asian democracies' endeavours to promote the rule of law and regionalism should be supported and not undermined by exclusive partnerships with the region's great powers. Finally, Europe should support Asia's efforts to upgrade the existing approaches to establish regional cooperation and intensify interregional collaboration between Asia and Europe.

To the people of Germany and Europe, it is also of great interest to sustain regional security. There are numerous conflicts – such as the Taiwan question, territorial conflicts in the China Sea and the South China Sea, and the tensions between South and North Korea – that do affect Europe and must not go unnoticed. In Asia, Europe is not able to play a role of its own in security policy. This is why it should support the role of the US, its most important ally in the region, thus laying the foundations for a contribution of its own. Furthermore, Europe should endeavour to establish its own network of like-minded allies with whom it may be possible to develop and pursue common political goals.

Finally, China itself must be integrated to a greater extent. The country has settled for a course of global interdependence and now has to meet related responsibilities which include, among

others, a substantial contribution towards solving global problems. Beijing should not only show an interest in regional and global stability but should also feel called upon to take a hand in building and maintaining it.