European Foreign Policy and the Asia-Europe Alliance
A Transregionalist Response*1*
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ABSTRACT

Current literature on regionalism looks at non state actors in governance such as Foundations as an adjunct to the state, or in isolation. This paper, from the perspective of New Regionalism, argues that the emergence of informal networks of governance, made all the more powerful because of globalisation, play a major part in the strengthening of democratic mores in the region. It looks at an example of one such governance network—the Asia Europe foundation, views the dynamic relationship between EU and Asia through the Asia Europe Foundation and argues that collaborations and cooperation that involve governmental as well other regional organizations on an informal basis are an emerging factor in governance systems in East Asia , though the state remains central to the region.

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INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of the European Union has been catapulted to the fore because of its increasing role as a global player. For decades, and in particular since the 1991 Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty), the EU has been trying to enhance its ability to act diplomatically and militarily abroad. One of the key goals of European Union foreign policy is the promotion of democracy, as declared in Article 11 of the EU Treaty. This ties in with recent trends by which support for democracy has become a key foreign policy goal for many existing democracies, and for the United States, a goal worth pursuing by force if necessary.2 However, in contrast to this, the EU is committed to pursuing the goal by peaceful means, with international organizations (IOs) playing a key role in achieving this goal.[3] The European Commission has affirmed that the European Union is well placed to promote democracy and human rights4, and despite tensions on how to go about this, has been broadly committed to the goal.5 Moreover, democracy is seen as desirable by a cross section of civil society as opposed to governments alone. As Michael McFaul points out, 'democracy promotion as a foreign policy goal has become increasingly acceptable throughout most of the international community… democracy promotion (is) an international norm embraced by…states, transnational organizations, and international networks' 6. Moreover, the promotion of democracy is not a mere altruistic goal but is seen as having tangible benefits for Europe too. For example, Christopher Hill opines, ' that the politics of foreign policy' is not just a matter, in Lasswellian[7] terms, of 'who gets what, when and how our of foreign policy actions', but it also involves our understanding of how to live in a world which is at once foreign and familiar, and of how to conduct democratic politics in that hybrid world8.

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2 National Security Doctrine of the United States 2001. In his inaugural address 2005 Bush explicitly committed the United States to the promotion of democracy. Jonathan Monten, 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy,' *International Security* - 29/4 (2005), pp. 112-156.

3 Christopher Warren, 'America's Leadership, America's Opportunity,' *Foreign Policy* 98, pp.6-27. Ian Shapiro; Casiano Hacker Cordon (eds) *Democracy's Value*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.23.

4 European Commission, *Towards a New Asia Strategy Commission of the European Communities*, COM (94) 314 final available at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/asiaitc/downloads/towards_a_new_asia_strategy.pdf (accessed April 1, 2007).

5 See for example, Jeffrey Kopstein, 'The Transatlantic Divide over Democracy Promotion,' *The Washington Quarterly* 29/2 (2006), pp.85-98.

6 Michael McFaul, 'Democracy Promotion as a World Value,' *The Washington Quarterly* 28/1 (2004-2005) , pp.147-163.

7 See Harold Laswell, *Politics: Who gets what, when, and how*? (New York: Whitlesey House, McGraw Hill, 1936).

8 Christopher Hill, *The Changing Dynamics of Foreign Policy,* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Key to the democracy promotion efforts of the European Union is an active involvement with transnational and regional organisations. Arguably the importance of international dimensions of democratization seems much clearer at the regional level than at the world-wide level of analysis,[9] and the EU has increasingly been leaning towards the creation of networks at the regional level. Political developments have helped this trend. In Asia, the dramatic changes in the international system that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s marked a turning point in its relations to the European Union. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the deepening of European integration within the framework of the EU and the "miraculous" economic growth of certain Asian countries were the key reasons behind Europe's new recognition of Asia.[10] Within Asia, deeper economic interactions are matched by the emergence of regional institutions and transnational processes that are quietly and incrementally changing the face of its international relations. All of this has led to a shift in interest in issues of governance from institutions and normative considerations to the less formal responses to issues of regional governance. This phenomenon has been termed "new regionalism."

This paper argues that the expansion and augmentation of foundations and other informal networks is a reflection of the emergence of this new mode of governance. While old regionalism was basically about government, by contrast, the new regionalism is about governance and involves combining private, nonprofits and public interests. Furthermore, it requires that the shared powers and talents of these sectors work strategically to bring change. This paper will closely look at an example of one such "new regionalist" response. It examines the Asia Europe Foundation, a non-profit transregionalist organization based in Singapore. The Asia Europe Foundation was established in 1997, a year after the initiation of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) process.

My claim is twofold: First, I argue that transregionalist entities are manifestations of increasing global interdependence and connectivity. Second, the rise of transregionalist networks involving non-state actors have great potential to become effective tools in democracy promotion. Certainly, they do not replace the state as a main actor but on the other hand they allow for venues for interaction on a social and cultural level which are not

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9 Laurence Whitehead, 'Democratic Regions. Ostracism, and Pariahs,' In Laurence Whitehead (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.395-412.
10 European Commission, COM (94) 314.

possible on a government to government plane. Such transnational foundations thus have the potential to emerge as potent tools in the promotion of democracy. The Asia Europe Foundation is taken as a case in point because, like the EU, its manner of creation and integration is of 'sui generis' nature. The Asia Europe Foundation was conceived in Bangkok, at the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), on March 1996. It can be remembered that ASEM 1 launched a new and comprehensive partnership between East Asia and the European Union embracing the three worlds of government, business and civil society. 11With the aim of uniting Asia and Europe, ASEM 1 envisioned this partnership to push for a multi-polar and culturally diverse world. Moreover, although a regional cooperation of states, its autonomous nature allows it to define itself as an international organization (IO).

At present, there is a dearth of studies that examine how transregional cooperations influence the promotion of democracy. Conversely, the question on the emergence of New Regionalism and its effects foreign policy has not been thoroughly examined. The relation between European foreign policy and new forms of governance is an issue of high priority for the possibility of building efficient and democratic institutions of governance at all levels of civil society. But how does a transregional institution such as the ASEF, if at all, influence foreign policy and the spread of democratic values? While the European Union whose very nature as a regional group influences its interactions with other entities in the international state system , the role of its informal alliances, such as the ASEF has not been closely examined.

This article will proceed in three sections: The first section reviews key theoretical perspectives of regional international politics, emphasizing the literature's traditional focus on collective security and economic integration at the expense of non-state actors such as interregional non-formal foras. It traces the emergence of New Regionalism, its potentialities as opposed to the older version of Regionalism and situates the ASEF in this framework. It will also touch on concepts of globalization and the rise of a global community. The second part discusses Europe as a regional integration and the uniqueness of its very nature as a regional alliance. The goal of this part is to show how an organization, considered exemplary, such as the EU has been open to the transformation of regionalism from the Old to the New. The third section provides an overview of the origins and development of the Europe – Asia relationship starting with the establishment of the Asia Europe Meeting which ultimately created the Asia Europe Foundation. This section provides an overview of the origins and

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11 Peggy Kek (ed.), ASEF: Connecting Asia and Europe 1997-2000, (Singapore: Asia Europe Foundation,2000),p.1

development of the ASEF with a special focus on three distinguishing features: its transregional and transnational nature, comprehensive development scope, and strong civil society framework. The Conclusion evaluates the transregional alliance under the backdrop of democracy and global governance.

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

The Region and Regionalism – Introductory Thoughts

The region has been defined in many ways and for various purposes. Regions have been seen as 'imagined communities' produced by region-building elites.12 The region is prominent among contemporary reconfigurations of international space, that have been termed multiple "transnational spatializations."13 For some, regions are ethnic and cultural units, for others, economic ones or geographical ones, and for yet others, they are simply political subdivisions of the nation-state. Hettne suggests that a number of qualities are needed for a region to be an effective actor and meaningful entity. He discusses that five degree of 'regionness' can be deduced:

i) Region as a geographical unit, delimited by more or less natural physical

barriers and marked by ecological characteristics

ii) Region as social system, which implies trans-local relations of varying nature

between human groups

iii) Region as organized cooperation in any of the cultural economic, political and

military fields

iv) Region as civil society, which takes shape when the organizational framework

promotes social communication and convergence of values throughout the

region

v) Region as acting subject with a distinct identity, actor capability, legitimacy

and structure of decision making.14

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12 Iver B. Neumann, 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe,' *Review of International Studies* 20 (1994): pp.53-74.

13 Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

14 Bjorn Hettne, 'Globalisation and the New Regionalism : The Second Great Transformation', in Bjorn Hettne; Andras Inotai; Osvaldo Sunkel, (eds), *Globalism and the New Regionalism* ,UNU/WIDER Study, Macmillan, London, 1999, pp 7-11.

The East Asian region falls into this framework, but without an emphasis on civil society. Specific to the East Asian region, strong authoritarian state structures, with weak civil societies led the way towards regional networks, with the intra region export import trade leading to financial integration followed by a semblance of political integration. These developments led to the creation of APEC (1989) and ASEAN (1992). However, the 90s have seen the phenomenon of financial globalisation as well as cultural globalisation[15] impacting the region. Moreover, globalisation has also changed the state-centric definition of civil society. The breakdown of national borders and the tremendous interaction of non state actors call for a move from traditional, state-bounded notions of civil society towards a transnational, transregional public sphere. In fact, some authors have even talked about the rise of 'global civil society,'[16] All of these trends of globalisation come together in the ASEF. From this point of view, as Tussie has put it, regionalization could be seen an institutionalization of multilateralism.[17]

In fact, the new regionalism goes hand in hand with globalisation rather than against it. Contrary to earlier conceptions of regionalism, which had a certain degree of inwardness, the New Regionalism does not mean a stress on the local or a turning away from wider global processes. Instead, in today's world, regionalism may be regarded as a chapter of globalization simultaneously contributing as well as challenging globalization.[18] In this new paradigm, regionalism moves beyond the mere coming together of nation states for economic or political purposes in pre determined ways. [19]Finally, the potentialities of regionalism have not been fully explored. It is too confining to see regionalism as being confined to mere political or economic ends. Strategies such as summitry, expert groups, networking, conferences, and exchanges, as well as techniques such as benchmarks, standard setting, 'best practice,' and performance indicators, which are integral to the processes of regionalism, also extend to the activities of foundations such as the ASEF. Together, this paper argues, these processes form an alternative mode of governance, informal, interactive, and effective. It is

15 Leslie Sklair, *Sociology of the Global System* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1995), David Howes, (ed.) *Cross Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities* (London: Routledge, 1996).

16 Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), and Jackie Smith, Ron Pagnucco, and Charles Chatfield, 'Social Movements and World Politics: A Theoretical Framework,' in Smith, Pagnucco, and Chatfield, eds., *Transnational Social Movements and World Politics: Solidarity beyond the State* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

17 Diana Tussie, 'Regionalism: providing a substance to multilateralism?', in Söderbaum and Shaw, eds, *Theories of new regionalism*, pp. 99–116.

18 James H. Mittelman, 'Rethinking the 'New Regionalism' in the Context of Globalisation', *Global Governance* 2 (1996), 189.

19 Dilip K Das, 'Structured regionalism in the Asia-Pacific: Slow but sure progress,' *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 45/ 2, August 2004.

claimed that this new 'inter-regionalism' emerged in the 1990s which is based on the promotion of good government and development through dialogue and the implementation of mutually agreed and negotiated policies between two geographically distinct regions20.

Currently, the majority of theoretical literature on international influences on democratization concentrates on regional organizations as opposed to larger, global organizations.[21] The claim is that because regional IOs tend to operate with small numbers and higher levels of interaction than global organizations, causal processes such as socialization, binding, monitoring and enforcement are more likely in regional organizations.22 Recently, regions are increasingly understood to offer a potential site for the democratization of globalizing processes.'23 Such alternative structures of democratic governance are all the more important given the prominence that has been given to the market since the end of the Cold War. The current trend of neoliberalism emphasizes the maximization of individual economic welfare and the need for markets to operate without undue interference from governments. It argues that in the international arena governments should actively foster free trade by eliminating any barriers to the international movement of goods and capital while encouraging other states to do the same.24 Neo-liberalism is the dominant economic paradigm today, imposed by powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. In contrast, Neo-functionalism on the other hand has been characterized by a strong normative undercurrent, associating world peace and welfare economics with growing regional functional interdependence.25 Neofunctionalists focus on region institutions and bureaucracies. Adjusting to globalization and global interdependence demands institutions that would further and enhance international cooperation. The rise of the Asia Pacific region as an economic powerhouse has made regional integration essential, though it remains to be seen is if an increase in density of interaction will lead to greater institutionalisation of the processes of decision making,

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20 Julie Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-Regionalism and the Asia -Europe Meeting.* Cheltenham, Edward Elgar: 2002.
21 See Geoffrey Pridham and Laurence Whitehead , *Encouraging Democracy: The International Context of Regime Transition in Southern Europe,* (New York: St. Martin's Press,1991). Laurence Whitehead, *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
22 See James McCormick 'Intergovernmental Organizations and Cooperation Among Nation,'*International Studies Quarter* 24 (I), 1980, pp. 75-98.
23 Norman Haworth, *Internationalisation and International Governance*, paper delivered
to a Symposium on Liberal Government, University of Auckland, June 2000.
24 Nicole Gallant; Richard Stubbs, 'APEC's Dilemmas: Institution-Building Around the Pacific Rim,' *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), pp. 204-205.
25 The most well-known scholars associated with the neo-functionalist viewpoint are Ernst Haas, L. Lindberg, S. Scheingold, Philippe Schmitter, and Joseph Nye.

epitomised by agreements that are enforced by institutional legislation.26 However, what has been ignored in the literature is the existence of parallel processes that are currently underway that are contributing to the creation of structures of democratic governance in a regional perspective. Regionalization, in this case especially focusing on non-state actors, provides an alternative to a unilateral world order, having gained in credibility as a result of challenges to the nation-state mounted by the political economy of neo-liberal globalization27.

Regionalism28,has only begun to emerge as a form of international government. In contrast to the state centred structure of the international system, regionalism represents a different mode of exercising authority across international space, and of integrating poorer populations into the world system**.** De Melo and Panagariya note that 'in a dramatic shift, developing countries are seeking partnerships with developed countries rather than solely with each other,'29, an assessment supported by Park who argues that 'the current trend towards regionalism involves North-South regional arrangements rather than South-South arrangements which were characteristic of the first wave' 30 Moreover, Europe, so we read with increasing frequency, has always been and remains 'very much a continent of regional identities.'31

At the same time, a constructivist view of regions has become an influential trend in regionalist literature, represented for instance in the collective security studies of Peter Katzenstein and colleagues. In their comparison of U.S. relations with Europe and Southeast Asia, Hemmer and Katzenstein argue that '[a]lthough often described in geographical terms, regions are political creations' and that '[l]ooking a specific instances in which such

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26 Ray Hudson, 'One Europe or Many? Reflections on becoming European,'*Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 25, pp.409-426.

27 Bjørn Hettne et al., eds, *Globalism and the new regionalism* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

28 It is important to recognize that there persists a terminological debate on regionalism. However, in harmony with accepted literature , 'regionalism' refers to the idea, vision and attempts at enhancing the significance of a regional dynamic; 'regionalization' refers to the empirical evidence that such a process goes on; and 'regional cooperation' refers to state-to-state relations in a given area.See Michael Schulz, Fredrik Söderbaum and Joakim Öjendal, eds, *Regionalization in a globalizing world: a comparative perspective on forms, actors and processes* (London: Zed, 2001

29 Jaime de Melo and Arvind Panagariya, 'The New Regionalism,' *Finance and Development*, 29/4 (1992), p. 37.

30 Jo Park, 'The New Regionalism and Third World Development," *Journal of Developing Societies*, 11/1 (1995), p. 23.

31 John Sallnow and Sarah Arlett, 'Regionalism in Europe,' *Geographical Magazine* 61 (September 1989),p.9.

constructions have occurred can tell us a great deal about the shape and the shaping of international politics.'[32]

Interregionalism

Interregionalism is treated as a generic concept covering diverse dialogue formats. While the terminology is still contested, interregionalism may be subdivided into bilateral interregionalism, mainly referring to group-to-group dialogues such as the EU-Mercosur, ASEAN-EU etc., and transregionalism, referring to more diffuse membership patterns and including some limited degree of independent actorness. ASEM, like APEC or IOR-ARC, though difficult to classify, has been more precisely categorized by many scholars as a transregional forum.[33] Institution- building refers to the fact that interregionalism established a new layer of international interaction, spurs intra-regional institution-building through the formation of new coordination mechanisms and the creation of numerous subsidiary institutions addressing a broad range of agendas and policy issues.[34] Anssi Paasi's promotes a model of the institutionalisation of regions. Paasi offers a diachronic model, proposing that territories are categorized in four, overlapping stages.[35] They are named and given boundaries in the first stage, that of conceptual shaping. During the second, which he terms "symbolic shaping", symbols are attached to places. Thirdly, institutional shaping endows places with institutions. Finally, a territory takes its place in turn in the wider society's regional understanding, obtaining its status in a spatial categorization. At various points in this process narratives and discourses come into play. Thus for example, narratives of the region emerge during its symbolic shaping, while territorial discourses, perhaps having their origin in other places, are a constraining factor in the fourth stage. Paasi's model allows us to think through both the formation of regions as named, bounded territories and the meaning that

32 Christopher Michael Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein *Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism* International Organization - Volume 56, Number 3, Summer 2002, pp. 575.

33 For details on the terminological debate, see Heiner Hanggi, 'Interregionalism as a Multifaceted Phenomenon: In Search of a Typology' in Heiner Hanggi, Ralf Roloff and Jurgen Ruland (eds). *International Relations in International Politics* (RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2006), pp. 31-62; and Jurgen Ruland, 'Interregionalism: An Unfinished Agenda' in Hanggi, Roloff and Ruland , pp. 295-313.

34 Jurgen Ruland, 'Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant',*European Foreign Affairs Review* 2006, pp. 45-62.

35 Anssi Paasi, 'The Institutionalization of Regions: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the emergence Of Regions and the Constitution Of Regional Identity,' *Fennia* 164, no.1 (1986), 105-46 and 'Deconstructing Regions: Notes on the Scales of Spatial Life,' *Environment and Planning* A 23 (1991), pp. 239-56.

places have for people. It brings together issues of socio-economic power with narratives of place. 67

For the purposes of this paper, we focus on the emergence of interregional dialogue foras. The latter can be considered as novel layers of governance which can be traced back in their origins to the early 1970s with the EU and ASEAN building up hub-and-spoke systems of bilateral and consecutively also multilateral forms of interregionalism[36] Interregionalism is a product of the so-called 'new regionalism', a second wave of regional institution-building following a first wave in the 1950s and 1960s.[37] The new regionalism reflects that in view of the increasing number of policy issues with border-crossing consequences, regional organizations have begun to pool and share sovereignty and resources, develop certain - albeit greatly varying - actorness qualities,[38] and, as a logical consequence, establish direct communicative links to each other. The new regionalism forms part of a global structural transformation in which non-state actors are active and manifest themselves at several levels of the global system. It also pre-supposes the growth of a regional civil society, opting for regional solutions to some local, national and global problems. Under such circumstances not only economic, but also social and cultural networks are developing more quickly than the formal political cooperation at the regional level.
 (see Figure 1).

On the other hand, a constructivist view of regions has become an influential trend in regionalist literature, represented for instance in the collective security studies of Peter Katzenstein and colleagues. In their comparison of U.S. relations with Europe and Southeast Asia, Hemmer and Katzenstein argue that "[a]lthough often described in geographical terms, regions are political creations" and that "[l]ooking a specific instances in which such constructions have occurred can tell us a great deal about the shape and the shaping of international politics."39

36 Geoffey Edwards and Elfriede Regelsberger (eds), *Europe's Global Links* (Pinter Publishers, London, 1990); Christopher Piening, *Global Europe: The European Union in World Affairs* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1997).
37 Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics, Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995).
38 Mathew Doidge, '*East is East. . .': Inter- and Transregionalism and the EU-ASEAN Relationship,* PhD dissertation. University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 2004.
39 Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein. 2002. 'Why is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism', *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer): 575-607

Figure 1. Old Regionalism vs. New Regionalism

Old Regionalism	New Regionalism
Context: bipolar cold-war	Context: multi-polar world order
Only concerned relations between formally sovereign states	Increasingly other actors are the main proponents for regional integration
Clear objectives, some organization being security oriented and other being economically oriented	Often described as 'open; and thus compatible with an interdependent world economy
Economic integration was inward-oriented and protectionist	More comprehensive multi-dimensional process which includes trade and economic integration, environment, social policy,security and democracy, Issue of accountability and legitimacy.40

THE EU AND REGIONALISM

Europe's role in the proliferation of regionalism is strongly founded. The breakdown of the imperial order in the wake of the two world wars led to a coming together of the major powers - the United States, Britain, and Japan - to establish a post-imperial system of regional governance that was defined by the Washington treaties of 1921-1922. 41 In 1997, John Newhouse   stated in *Foreign Affairs* that "regionalism, whether within or across national borders, is Europe's current and future dynamic."42 This reduces the need for the traditional state apparatus and encourages a move towards new forms of rule visible in the search for new words to describe the process of governing, including 'governance', 'networks' and neo-institutionalism.

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40 Bjorn Hettne, et al, *Globalism and the New Regionalism.*
41 Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965).
42 John Newhouse, "Europe's Rising Regionalism," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (January–February 1997): 68.

European integration has undermined the old claim 43 that democracy can only function in nationally homogeneous territories, which provide the necessary common identity and trust. While the debate on democratizing the European Union has not concluded, it does raise the issue of democracy in a pluralistic order beyond the nation-state.

Europe's experience, as a consequence, inspired a large literature on the new regionalism44, embracing functional change, institution-building and new ways of conceptualizing territorial politics. The most important strand concerns the importance of local and regional levels for economic development and change, within global and European markets45 Much of this literature stresses also the social construction of the region and the role of norms, collective identities and shared memories in facilitating social co-operation and change46 This process has also involved institution-building in state and civil society. Interest groups and other elements of civil society have in turn adapted, to consolidate the territory as a social, economic and political system. This can be seen quite clearly in regional networks between Europe and Asia. As Samuel S. Kim points out, 'The literature on new regionalism stresses several key linkage factors as necessary conditions under which regionalism or regional integration can take place among a group of states, including linkage by geographical proximity and by various forms of shared political, economic, social, cultural, or institutional affinities. Regions are also defined by combinations of geographical, psychological, and behavioural characteristics.' 47 The dynamics of which allow the transfer of knowledge, culture, ideas and democratic values. This recognizes that ensuring the future quality of life and competitiveness of a region is a shared responsibility of all sectors. Furthermore, it requires that the shared powers and talents of these sectors work strategically to bring change. Europe's recognition of the importance of civil society is apparent even in its paperwork. A practical example is mentioned by Freise 48 from the EUR-Lex, which provides Internet-based access to European law, gives an impression of how the term civil society has entered the European stage : there is a green book discussing the role of organised civil society in European drug policy, several communiqués on how to involve citizens in new forms of

43 David Miller,*On Nationality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
44 Michael Keating,*The New Regionalism in Western Europe. Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1998).
45 Scott, Allen *Regions and the World Economy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
46Michael Keating,, John Loughlin and Kris Deschouwer *Culture, Institutions and Economic Development. A Study of Eight European Regions*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 2003).
47 Samual S. Kim, 'Regionalization and Regionalism in East Asia,' *Journal of East Asian Studies*, No. 4, January 2004, p.40.
48 Matthias Freise, 'The Civil Society Discourse in Brussels',Between Societal Grievances and Utopian Ideas, in Matthias Freise (ed.), *European Civil Society on the Road to Success?,* (Baden-Baden: Nomos,2008),p.25.

participative democracy, and strategic papers on options for supporting civil society groups in authoritarian countries such as Belarus in the EU's neighbourhood.

The European Union is increasingly becoming a force in globalisation in a sense that it has the ability to influence global affairs. Moreover, its exemplary nature as a new form of political formation invites new hopes into the resolution of old problems and although paradoxically it also prompts the discovery of new questions especially vis-a vis the traditional notions of foreign policy and democratic ideals. Today, the marriage of democracy and the nation-state is under pressure. Under the auspices of globalization, many theorists stress the need to rethink the modern notion of political community and to discuss among them the emergence of regional alliances and its possibilities to address the worlds' dilemmas. However, if the concept of globalisation is to be used as a point of departure in the creation of the EU and its workings in the modern world, then analyses need to recognise the myriad of faces and multiple perspectives of globalisation that exist as well as the complexity of the EU in and of itself. What is highly significant is that the EU imparts a distinctive instance where institution building has transformed a regional institution into a global player through accomplishments in regional integration by giving credit to the workings of its civil society.

It cannot be discounted then that the EU plays a pivotal role in the world and its promotion of democracy leaves more positive attributed than negative ones. The EU's reverence to civil society for example deserves emulation. The concept is used as an abstract but highly loaded panacea for improving both the efficiency and legitimacy of European governance[49]. The European Commission regards civil society actors as entities that perform a number of crucial tasks in modern societies[50] and this is a move in the right direction in a highly interconnected world.Yet, the paradox still intrigues us and should be addressed : the EU's role in a globalised world needs more than bits, blips and lists. It begs a revisitation of concepts and a broader understanding of political, social and economic interactions. However, the EU still features as the standard model for region-building, explicitly or implicitly providing benchmarks for the assessment of regionalism and regionalisation. Its experience and current

49 Stijn Smismans, 'Civil society and European Governance: From Concepts to Research Agenda'. In: Smismans, S. (ed.): Civil Society and Legitimate European Governance. London.

50 Zimmer, Annette/Birgit Sittermann (2005): Brussels Civil Society. Erscheint 2005 online in der ISTR Conference Working Papers Series: ▣ http://www.jhu.edu/~istr/pubs/.

operation propels not only regionalistic integration spilling out into other regions but the recognition of new forms of alliance beyond the nation-state.

ASEF: ASIA EUROPE ALLIANCE

Non-state actors have figured prominently on the research agenda of political scientists for more than three decades and scholars have studied in detail their role and function in agenda-setting, lobbying governments, and implementing international agreements[51] International institutions not only increase system effectiveness or output legitimacy but are also a normatively plausible response to the problems of democracy that are caused by globalization. On the other hand, these organisations have been studied either as representatives of the state, or at best, extensions of the state, or else as isolated and independent entities. In this perspective, the Asia Europe Foundation remains absent from the regionalism literature. It has been seen merely as an offshoot of the Asia Europe Meeting, even though New Regionalism started out with a decidedly open and expansive orientation.

This paper addresses this lacuna, arguing that the foundation is as important in inter regional networks as institutional networks. The Asia Europe foundation epitomises the informal governance networks that are both a result of and part of the process of globalisation, that are emerging as a key element in transnational governance structures. Not only is there a transregional mobilization of state and nonstate actors, there is also a trans sectoral exchange that has created new forms of expression for democratic legitimacy and accountability.

With regard to the ASEM, a background study has already been done by the University of Helsinki Network of European Studies. This evaluated the effectiveness of the ASEM network and its projects and argues that despite the achievements of the alliance on multidimensional dialogue which have gone beyond the organization's initial focus on economy and trade, and which influenced the rise of hundreds of wide-ranging collaborative initiatives between the two regions, ASEM does not seem to reflect the full potential of Asia-Europe relations. To quote, 'the reasons why ASEM was called to life ten years ago are very

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51 Margaret E. Keck, Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998).

different from the present global situation, but ASEM does not appear to have evolved to a great extent.' 52

However, its offspring, the Asia Europe Foundation has the potential to usher in a more successful outcome. ASEF's 'sui generis' case is of interest to the question regionalism First, the ASEF's nature as a Foundation is unique in that it is a product of an interregional alliance – the Asia Europe Meeting. The foundation was established to promote exchanges of think tanks, peoples and cultural groups between Asia and Europe. The Foundation bases its activities on the 1992 Dublin Principles, which explain its goals to promote understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. ASEF is designed to act as a clearinghouse and a catalyst or facilitator of dialogue and cooperation. Second, it is the only non-profit organization which operates around two different and contrasting regions – Asia and Europe. It is the only institution developing Asia-European cooperation. How well the ASEF has been able to meet regional challenges is a matter for consideration. Third, ASEF provides a key venue to facilitate collaboration across the different sectors of academia, government, private sector and civil society to unofficial high-level meetings. Finally, the ASEF is transformative yet it is fragile. It is currently developing its role from a grant-giving institution to a network-building organization and this is crucial to an understanding of the capabilities of civil society. One can argue however that the potentialities of the Foundation are difficult to measure and its effectiveness questionable. However, the apparent exchange and interactions among regions and people cannot happen in passivity. As Foucault stresses   civil society is made up of 'a complex network of power relations, with power being exercised not only through individuals and institutions, but through disciplinary discourses and practices'.53 The dynamics proliferate impact and the outcomes generate a transfer of knowledge.

The Asia Europe Foundation was established in 1997, a year after the initiation of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. The latter is a cooperation forum for Asian and European countries. Its main goal was to achieve a new comprehensive "Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth" and to strengthen multidimensional cooperation. The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is the only institutionalized part of the ASEM process. ASEF cooperation

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52 Teija Tiilikainen and Dr Timo Kivimäki, ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward,University of Helsinki Network for European Studies,(March 2006), http://www.asem6.fi/news_and_documents/en_GB/1146143532159/ (accessed December 5, 2006).
53 Michel Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason,' *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*,Stanford University, October 10/16, 1979.

is conducted under the ASEM cultural pillar. The aim of the foundation is to promote understanding among the Asian and European people through intellectual, cultural and social interaction. In practice, this is achieved through seminars, lectures, student exchange programmes, festivals, exhibitions, art events and publications. So far, ASEF cooperation has generated 300 different projects.15

Despite a slow pace progress, one of the remarkable contributions of the ASEF has been the fact that it has been able to trigger off a whole range of activities outside the official ASEM forum. These activities in private sector, in non-governmental organisations and community level activities across the region, have in fact, withstood all kinds of political ups and downs. This new manifestation of regionalism is a reaction on democratic deficits that occurs as a result of the diminished power of the nation-state in the face of globalization. Globalization is accompanied by a general disenchantment with normal channels of politics. Specifically a gap has emerged between the system of representation through state institutions, and decision making that has retreated into technical and social networks. This leads to a divorce between `politics' and public policy which by implication can be filled by regional democracy. The advance of regional democracy then reflects a wider effort to reinvigorate democratic politics and civil society.54 This is the success of the Asia Europe Alliance.

CONCLUSION

The search for parallels between the development of institutional structures in the European Union and ASEAN may be ultimately misleading. The continued persistence of the state structure, issues of sovereignty and points of tension among the member states as well as the lack of a collective memory of war as in Europe all may hinder the creation of institutional frameworks of unity along the lines of the European model even if substantial regional integration is achieved. On the other hand, the emergence of informal networks of governance, made all the more powerful because of globalisation, play a major part in the strengthening of democratic mores in the region. The Asia Europe foundation, in this

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54 Antony Giddens, *The Third Way*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), also 'The European Nation-State And The Pressures Of Globalization,' *New Left Review*, No. 235, pp. 46-59, J.L. Cohen and A. Arato. *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,1992). Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1993).

perspective, can be seen as a manifestation of relations between Asia and Europe, but, unlike formal state networks, it is an example of informal governance systems. Regional cooperation, in contrast to a more dynamic and integrative regionalization, is likely to thrive, and only in a non-interventionist way.

The New Regionalism is about the creation of networked governance in which formal government arrangements are less important than collaborations and cooperation that involves governmental as well other regional organizations. The dynamic relationship between EU and Asia through the Asia Europe Foundation is a manifestation of this. As Habermas posits that 'civil society can acquire influence in the public sphere, have an effect on the parliamentary complex (and the courts) through its own public opinions, and compel the political system"55. As the essay suggests, a positivist look at regional networks that involve non-state actors is indispensable to usher in reform and democratic change in the global arena.

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55 Jürgen Habermas, 'Between Facts and Norms,' in *Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy: Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, trans. William Rehg (Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998).

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