

## INTRODUCTION

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### *Aims, Structure and Organisation of this Book*

Sketching Asia, as one of the contributors to this volume rightly asserts, is by no means an easy task. Defining what 'Asia' or 'Europe' are, borders on the impossible. The contributors to this volume will, nevertheless, attempt to showcase and examine a number of aspects which form part of the rich tapestry of contemporary EU-Asia relations.

This collection of essays is divided into three main sections. The first one, *Foundations and Representations*, offers the wider picture, as it were, and opens up a number of pathways towards a better understanding of the East-West dialogue. The contributors to this part seek to address what may be called the unspoken rules of Asia-Europe dialogue. These could equally be termed the 'iceberg-issues' of intercontinental cooperation. We call them 'iceberg-issues', because in this area much is about views, stereotypes, perceptions, images. Those matters, in short, which are never at the surface of EU-Asia policies, but form the seventy per cent of the iceberg underneath the surface of relations. Those seventy per cent, which can lead to serious collisions of policies, values and assumptions if they are, wilfully or unintentionally, neglected. It should not be surprising then that matters such as historical legacies, underlying theories, intellectual baggage, language, representation, media images and perceptions form the principle concerns in this first part of the book.

The subsequent section, entitled *Policies and Patterns*, seeks to distil the very significant, but less tangible, findings of the first section into the more concrete facts and figures, policy prescriptions, dimensions

and dialogues of EU-Asia relations. Here, then is an overview of some of the 'bedrock' of EU-Asia interaction, in terms of business and trade, security and engagement, investment and inter-regionalism, foreign policy and 'people-to-people' involvement in East-West dialogue. What motivates the contributors to this part of the book, even unites them, to a certain degree, is a search for patterns, channels of communication, policy habits solidifying into good practice, method and institutionalisation. May the reader cast their eyes back occasionally, to the chapters on theory and image when digesting this part of the book; perhaps they will also be inclined to cast a glance forwards, curious, hopefully, about how EU policies towards Asia can work, what implications they may have, and, last, but not least, which areas and regions they can, and should, extend into. Where does the EU's concern with 'Asia' end, what should it comprise of?

These questions are, of course, very much at issue in the third part of this book, which is called *Issues, Regions and Partners*. Here, the choice of topics has been influenced by the need to make new contributions to EU-Asia Studies in hitherto sadly 'under-researched' corners, and by the desire to stretch intellectual and geographical boundaries and disciplines. This explains the inclusion of much original research on Central Asia and on Australia, and on Human Rights and Education, both relatively un-trodden avenues and alleyways of scrutiny in the Asia-Europe context.

The organisation of this book is such that a number of themes are 'woven' through its fabric. Those *leitmotifs* are part of the underlying dynamics of this collection. They appear in individual chapters and also link individual contributors with one another. They are, principally, embodied in the following notions: a concern with 'ideas' and 'identities' as drivers of Politics; an interest in 'norms' and 'human rights'; a belief in the power of education and exchange, shared learning experiences and joint practices; and a mindful remembrance of the legacies and stereotypes of the past. The inclusion of these themes stems from the need, shared by all contributors to this volume, that EU Asia policies need to be put on a more coherent footing, and that they need to be informed, to a much higher degree, by a new, and more inter-connected approach to Asia-Europe collaboration.

Arguably the best way to delineate this new method is to state that the EU's interaction *vis-à-vis* its interlocutors across Asia is in dire need