

EU and ASEAN integration and the grassroots: parallels and divergences

Date: 30th July 2008 (Wednesday)
Time: 10.00 - 11.30am
Venue: Seminar Room 02-06, Block AS4
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, NUS
9 Arts Link, Singapore 117570
(Public parking is available at Car Park 15 along Kent Ridge Drive)

Speakers: H. E. Dr. Richard O'Brien, Ambassador of Ireland to Singapore
Dr. Christopher Roberts, Post-Doctoral Fellow, RSIS, NTU

This seminar aims to compare and contrast integration processes in both the EU and ASEAN with reference to their relation to and perceived importance by the "grassroots."

Ambassador O'Brien's contribution on "EU Integration – Expectations and Responsibilities" will address some of the challenges the European integration process faces as it enters a period of more demanding public debate on its direction and a more exacting internal and external advancement of its values and interests in an increasingly globalised international environment.

Dr. Roberts' contribution, 'Integration in Asia: The Challenge of Moving beyond the Divergent Interests of the Elite', will address the dynamics of integration in Southeast Asia. While both ASEAN and the EU have been depicted as elite-driven projects, the key difference with regard to ASEAN is that a 'convergence of interests' between the political elite has been primarily limited to economic cooperation and integration. A greater compatibility between the political systems, norms and values of the region will have to emerge for grassroots 'socio-cultural' integration for the process of deepening the level of integration in Asia.

Ambassador O'Brien is currently Ambassador to Singapore from where he is also accredited to Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, the Philippines and Timor Leste. His previous posting was in Egypt from where he was also appointed to Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Sudan. Earlier from 1995 to 2002, he served as Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand - his first Ambassadorship was to Poland in 1990 and a year later to Lithuania and Latvia. He began his career in the Irish Foreign Service in 1972 and served in both London and Washington before being appointed Spokesman at the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1985.

Christopher Roberts is a Post Doctoral Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore. He recently completed a PhD (with a dissertation on 'ASEAN's Security Community Project: Challenges and Opportunities in the Pursuit of Comprehensive Integration') through the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy. His publications have ranged from integration and cooperation in ASEAN to more specific issues such as poor governance in Myanmar. Most recently, two book proposals, on 'ASEAN's Myanmar Crisis' and on 'ASEAN Regionalism,' have been approved for publication by ISEAS and Routledge.

The seminar will be chaired by A/Prof Barnard E Turner, Senior Fellow, EU Centre and Academic Convenor, European Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, NUS. The EU Centre in Singapore was jointly established in April 2008 by NUS and NTU with support from the European Commission. The Centre aims to help develop a base of EU studies, increase awareness of the roles of EU institutions, policies and their impact, and foster better understanding of the role of the EU in the global and regional arena through outreach activities, publications and research. For contact details and information, please refer to our website at www.nus.edu.sg/euc

About the European Union (EU) Centre

The European Union (EU) Centre in Singapore was formally established on 16 April 2008 as a partnership between the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) with financial support from the European Commission.

The EU Centre aims to promote a better understanding of EU institutions, policies, and positions on regional and global issues in general and, more importantly, a greater appreciation of the EU's role in Southeast Asia and its engagement with Singapore. The EU is an important partner of Singapore, and EU ties with Singapore are growing from strength to strength. Singapore is the EU's number one trading partner in ASEAN and Singapore is a hub for over 2,200 European businesses in the Asia-Pacific region.

Within the region, the EU is also one of ASEAN's oldest dialogue partners and is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Economically, the EU is ASEAN's second largest overall trading partner and the biggest source of foreign direct investments (FDI). Talks are also underway to establish an EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The EU Centre in Singapore will strive to raise awareness of the longstanding and important partnership between the EU and Singapore, and the EU and ASEAN, and promote knowledge and visibility of the EU in Singapore through different outreach activities, education, research and publications. Specifically, the Centre will:

- Develop a series of outreach and public education programmes targeted at the general public, teachers, students, and the business community;
- Promote interest in European Studies at all levels working in particular with its partners, NUS and NTU;
- Carry out multi-disciplinary research and develop a wider and deeper knowledge of the EU, its institutions and its policies, primarily in the Southeast Asian context;
- Build and grow a network of people interested in EU policies and issues, create opportunities for them to meet and bring them together, leading to more discussion, reflection and policy learning.
- Facilitate exchange and expand academic linkages between NUS / NTU and universities in the EU; and
- Increase awareness of the EU through publications and engaging the media.

The EU Centre is open to all institutions and individuals who value the exchange of knowledge between the EU and Singapore. Through our activities, we hope to promote understanding, increase awareness, share insights and analysis into the role of the EU in regional and global affairs and its partnership with ASEAN and Singapore.

For more information about the EU Centre, please contact us at the address below.