



European Alliance
for Asian Studies

The Role of Asian Studies in Supporting EU's Global Strategy

A Position Paper by the European Alliance for Asian Studies

In this position paper we address and suggest the following points:

1. The partnership between European and Asian knowledge actors is key in understanding and addressing European challenges in the world.
2. The current decrease of knowledge infrastructure and capacity in Asian Studies puts at risk European global influence.
3. Research and training activities on, in, and with Asian societies require sustained and consistent support, and should be based on enhanced collaboration and knowledge community building.
4. The EU should not only support mechanisms for the creation of alliances and networks between European institutions but also between European and Asian institutions to overcome Eurocentric perspectives.
5. A new strategic framework for European scholarship on Global Asia will play a crucial role in determining how Europe successfully engages with a multi-centered and interconnected world.
6. This framework needs to reflect an evolution from merely competitive to collaborative co-creation of knowledge.
7. The transdisciplinarity of Global Asian Studies in Europe is relevant beyond higher education.
8. The strategic expansion of Global Asian Studies institutions and their partnerships in the Global South requires an EU-wide coordinated policy.

Executive Summary

In an increasingly multipolar world, Europe's ability to engage effectively with Asian societies has become a strategic imperative. As geopolitical, economic, and cultural centers continue to shift, the European Union must build upon robust knowledge infrastructure to navigate this complex landscape. Global Asian Studies represents not merely an academic discipline, but a crucial policy resource that enables the EU to understand, anticipate, and respond to developments across the world's most dynamic region.

This position paper articulates the urgent need for enhanced support and strategic coordination of Global Asian Studies within the European framework. It addresses the current erosion of knowledge capacity, proposes a collaborative framework for scholarship, and outlines the tangible benefits that will accrue to EU policy-making through systematic integration of Global Asian Studies expertise.

Introduction

The European Union faces unprecedented challenges in maintaining its global influence and safeguarding its interests in an interconnected world. Asia's rise as an economic, political, and cultural powerhouse demands that Europe develop sophisticated capacities to understand and engage with diverse Asian societies. Yet at this critical juncture, European knowledge infrastructure for Asian Studies is experiencing concerning decline, threatening to undermine the EU's strategic positioning at precisely the moment when such expertise is most needed.

Global Asian Studies encompasses not only the study of Asian societies within their regional contexts, but also their expanding influence across the Global South and their deepening interconnections with European institutions, economies, and communities. The field's inherent trans-disciplinarity bridges humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and policy studies, positioning it as an essential resource for addressing multifaceted contemporary challenges.

This position paper presents a comprehensive vision for strengthening European capacity in Global Asian Studies through strategic investment, collaborative frameworks, and institutional integration with EU policy-making processes. It reflects the collective insights of the European Alliance for Asian Studies and its member institutions, who together represent the continent's leading expertise on Asian societies and their global engagement.

Key Points and Strategic Priorities

1. Partnerships Between European and Asian Knowledge Actors are Essential

Understanding and addressing European challenges in an interconnected world requires sustained partnership with Asian knowledge actors. These partnerships enable European institutions to access diverse perspectives, co-create knowledge that reflects multiple viewpoints, and develop policy responses informed by deep contextual understanding. European universities, research centers, and think tanks must forge institutional relationships with their

Asian counterparts, moving beyond transactional exchanges toward genuine collaborative frameworks that respect intellectual traditions and methodological pluralism.

2. Declining Knowledge Infrastructure Threatens European Global Influence

The current erosion of knowledge infrastructure and capacity in Asian Studies represents a strategic vulnerability for the European Union. University departments are closing, language programs are being discontinued, and area studies centers face budgetary pressures that compromise their sustainability. This decline occurs against the backdrop of Asia's growing global significance, creating a dangerous gap between Europe's knowledge needs and its analytical capabilities. Without intervention, Europe risks losing the expertise necessary to understand Asian political dynamics, economic developments, social transformations, and cultural innovations that increasingly shape global affairs.

3. Research and Training Require Sustained Investment and Collaboration

Research and training activities on, in, and with Asian societies demand sustained and consistent support that transcends short-term funding cycles. Developing genuine expertise requires long-term commitment to language acquisition, extended fieldwork, cultivation of research networks, and continuous engagement with evolving scholarly debates. These activities must be based on enhanced collaboration and knowledge community building, both within Europe and between European and Asian institutions. Creating sustainable structures for knowledge production and transmission will ensure continuity of expertise across generations of scholars and practitioners.

4. Supporting Alliances Between European and Asian Institutions

The EU should not only support mechanisms for the creation of alliances and networks between European institutions but also between European and Asian institutions to overcome Eurocentric perspectives. Genuine understanding of Asian societies requires moving beyond Western analytical frameworks and engaging with indigenous knowledge systems, local scholarly traditions, and Asian perspectives on global challenges. Institutional partnerships that facilitate extended exchanges, joint research projects, collaborative training programs, and mutual learning will produce more balanced and nuanced scholarship. These alliances will challenge assumptions, reveal blind spots in European thinking, and generate insights that emerge from dialogue rather than observation alone.

5. A New Strategic Framework for European Scholarship on Global Asia

Developing a strategic framework for European scholarship on Global Asia will prove crucial in determining how Europe successfully engages with a multi-centered and interconnected world. This framework must articulate clear priorities, establish coordinated funding mechanisms, support institutional development, and create pathways for knowledge to inform policy. It should recognize the specificity of different Asian contexts while acknowledging their interconnections, support methodological innovation while preserving deep

area expertise, and facilitate dialogue between academic research and policy application.

6. Evolution from Competition to Collaborative Co-Creation

The strategic framework must reflect an evolution from merely competitive toward collaborative co-creation of knowledge. While academic excellence thrives on rigorous debate and peer competition, the scale and complexity of contemporary challenges demand that European institutions pool resources, share expertise, and develop complementary specializations. Collaborative approaches enable more comprehensive coverage of Asian societies, more robust research designs, more effective training programs, and stronger engagement with policy communities. This shift requires rethinking evaluation metrics, funding structures, and institutional cultures to reward cooperation alongside individual achievement.

7. Transdisciplinarity Beyond Higher Education

The transdisciplinarity inherent in Global Asian Studies in Europe proves relevant far beyond higher education. Understanding contemporary Asian societies requires integrating insights from political science, economics, anthropology, history, linguistics, religious studies, environmental sciences, technology studies, and numerous other fields. This integrative approach equips scholars and practitioners to address complex real-world challenges that resist disciplinary boundaries, from climate change adaptation to digital governance, from public health responses to sustainable development. The capacity to synthesize diverse knowledge streams makes Global Asian Studies particularly valuable for policy development, business strategy, cultural diplomacy, and civil society engagement.

8. Strategic Expansion in the Global South Requires EU-Wide Coordination

The strategic expansion of Asian Studies institutions and their partnerships in the Global South requires an EU-wide coordinated policy. Asian powers increasingly shape development trajectories, infrastructure investments, trade patterns, and governance models across Africa, Latin America, and other regions where Europe has historically maintained significant influence. Understanding these dynamics demands dedicated research capacity and systematic institutional partnerships that span continents. European Global Asian Studies institutions must develop collaborative networks with counterparts in the Global South to analyze how Asian engagement transforms regional dynamics, creates new opportunities and challenges, and affects European interests and values in these contexts.

Expected Outcomes and Benefits

The integration of Global Asian Studies expertise into EU policy-making processes will generate tangible benefits across multiple dimensions. These outcomes justify strategic investment in knowledge infrastructure and demonstrate the practical value of area studies scholarship for European interests.

1. Enhanced Policy Resource for EU External Actions

The European Union will benefit from a comprehensive and accessible pool of knowledge on Global Asia that shapes its external actions and serves as a valuable policy resource. This knowledge base will enable more informed diplomatic engagement, more effective trade negotiations, more nuanced development cooperation, and more strategic responses to regional conflicts and crises. Policy-makers will have access to expertise that illuminates historical contexts, explains political dynamics, anticipates emerging trends, and identifies potential partners and obstacles. This enhanced analytical capacity will strengthen European influence and protect European interests across Asian engagements.

2. Overcoming Fragmentation Through Collaborative Frameworks

New collaborative frameworks will enable Global Asian Studies to pool expertise and overcome the fragmentation that currently characterizes European knowledge institutions. Rather than duplicating efforts or leaving gaps in coverage, European institutions will develop complementary strengths and systematic knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Collaborative research projects will leverage distributed expertise, joint training programs will offer students access to diverse specializations, and shared databases will consolidate dispersed resources. This coordination will yield more comprehensive, rigorous, and policy-relevant scholarship than fragmented individual efforts.

3. Consolidating Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Within the Alliance

Increased collaboration between members of the Alliance will consolidate both the creation of knowledge and its dissemination. By working together more systematically, member institutions can develop shared research agendas, coordinate data collection efforts, establish common publication platforms, and create unified channels for communicating findings to policy-makers and the broader public. This consolidation will amplify the collective voice of European Global Asian Studies, enhance the visibility and impact of research outputs, and ensure that valuable insights reach relevant audiences efficiently. Coordinated dissemination strategies will maximize the influence of European scholarship on both academic debates and policy discussions.

4. Increased Funding Efficiency and Impact Through Network Building

Supporting network and institution-building strategies both among European institutions and between European and Asian institutions will significantly increase funding efficiency and impact. Coordinated investment will prevent redundancy, enable economies of scale, support sustainable institutional structures, and create critical mass for ambitious research programs. Stronger institutions will attract talented researchers, secure additional funding, and maintain continuity of expertise. Enhanced networks will facilitate rapid knowledge mobilization when policy needs arise, ensure diverse perspectives inform analysis, and enable European scholars to access resources and insights from Asian partners. Strategic support for institutional development will

yield long-term returns that far exceed the benefits of fragmented project-based funding.

5. Direct Communication Between Knowledge Producers and Stakeholders

The EU will establish a direct channel of communication between knowledge producers and other stakeholders, ensuring that expertise systematically informs policy development and implementation. This channel should facilitate regular consultation between scholars and policy-makers, enable rapid response to emerging issues, support secondment of researchers to policy positions, and create feedback mechanisms that allow policy experience to enrich academic research. Beyond formal EU institutions, this communication infrastructure should connect Global Asian Studies expertise with business leaders, civil society organizations, cultural institutions, and media professionals who shape European engagement with Asia. Systematic dialogue will bridge the gap between knowledge production and practical application, making scholarship more relevant and decision-making more informed.

Conclusion

The challenges and opportunities that Asia presents for the European Union require immediate and sustained attention. Europe cannot afford to allow its knowledge infrastructure on Asian societies to erode while Asia's global significance continues to expand. The investment required to strengthen Global Asian Studies represents not an academic luxury but a strategic necessity for European prosperity, security, and influence.

The European Alliance for Asian Studies stands ready to work with EU institutions, member state governments, funding agencies, and Asian partners to implement the vision articulated in this position paper. Together, we can build the knowledge capacity that Europe needs to engage successfully with a multi-centered world, protect European interests and values, and contribute to addressing shared global challenges.

The time for action is now. By investing in Global Asian Studies, supporting collaborative frameworks, and integrating expertise into policy-making, the European Union will position itself to navigate the complexities of the twenty-first century with confidence, capability, and vision.

Contact Information

For further information or to discuss collaboration opportunities, please contact the European Alliance for Asian Studies secretariat.

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