



2027 EUROPE-ASIA FORUM

*Institut d'études européennes,
Université libre de Bruxelles
March 9-10, 2027
Brussels, Belgium*





CALL FOR PROPOSALS (PANELS AND PAPERS)

2027 EUROPE-ASIA FORUM

**BACK TO THE FUTURE?
NEW CHALLENGES AND/OR HISTORICAL CONTINUITIES
IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS.
A COMPARISON EUROPE/ASIA.**

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Organised by IEE-ULB

Political, economic and cultural discourses in contemporary Europe and Asia are dominated by the assumption that societies are facing unprecedented changes. Meanwhile, references to the past are multiplying as resources to come to terms with or resist ongoing transformations. The invocations of 'golden ages' or traumatic pasts (wars, colonialisms, totalitarianisms, genocides, extractivisms) shape public debates, governance and relations both within and between societies.

The longing for lost national unity, prosperity, or ways of life is not only an emotional remembrance of what has disappeared or is under threat. It can also trigger projections into the future. Nostalgia and anticipation are two faces of the same coin in the business of uncertainty. This highlights the complex relations between change, resistance and adaptation.

The resilience of the past as a factor in political (de)legitimation calls into question the novelty of ongoing changes and how they should be accommodated. Contrasting different periods and regions raises the question of whether the current state of affairs is utterly unique. The Forum aims to study the comparisons and interactions between European and Asian societies and states. Contributions focusing on Asian countries that are comparable to European ones in terms of

their political, economic, social, cultural and/or technological development are especially welcome, with a particular focus on Japan and Korea. Special attention is given to transnational dynamics between states and societies that come into play in internal and external affairs. Regional integration in Europe and Asia is a key form of these transnational dynamics in reference to the institutions, politics and policies of intergovernmental organisations (e.g., European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

Contributions combining theoretical ambition with an innovative data-driven methodology from a multidisciplinary and multilevel perspective are especially welcomed. Relying on past experiences, panels that develop teamwork between specialists of European and Asian countries joining their expertise to elaborate a common framework of their respective case studies will be given priority.

CONCEPTUAL GUIDELINES

The topics for proposals of panels and papers include : 1/ The value of the past and the past of values: narratives, norms and policies in the (de-) legitimisation of power; 2/ The time dimensions in societal cleavages; 3/ Innovation, nostalgia and path dependence in state and market governance; 4/ Troubled pasts in external affairs and regional integration.

Topic 1/ The value of the past and the past of values: narratives, norms and policies in the (de-) legitimisation of political and cultural power

The comparative study of the justification and contest of power in European and Asian societies highlights both similarities and divergences in uses of the past. Narratives and symbols circulate transnationally and are meanwhile customised according to each national context. Such narratives are formulated in terms of, e.g., 'value politics' or 'culture wars' and analysed as for e.g. conflicts of memory, tension between "multiple modernities" or recombination between religion and secularism. Examples of such dynamics are the upsurge of civilisational perspectives. The controversial advocacy for 'European values' and 'European way of life' was a buzzword of EU legitimisation in the last three decades (Foret, 2025). The twin development of "value politics" in Europe and Asia with various purposes of political reassurance and competition for the reformulation of history and modernity is especially illustrative (Foret and Hino, 2021). The periodic recurrences of 'Asian values' since the 1990s (Bar, 2004) appear as an attempt to promote an alternative framework to Western modernity and human rights across Southeast and East Asia. The emphasis on collective harmony, traditional Confucian values and similarities of social structures across Asian countries did not however manage to structure a sustainable basis for a continental identity (Huang, 2024). This advocacy for Asian values partly aimed at legitimising authoritarian governments (e.g., Malaysia or Singapore) and the lead taken by China since the launch of the Silk Road project in 2013 has conflictualised this approach.

The weaponisation of values, culture and memory is not limited to a battle of narratives. It is constitutive of disputes on norms and policies. This is especially true regarding some issues framed as bones of contention along global, regional and/or national frontlines, such as, e.g., human rights, (Geeraerts, 2016; De Bary, 2000; Sen, 1997), tech and AI regulation (Koenig & Rone, 2026) or LGBTI (Lee, 2016, Radics, 2025, Ayoub & Stoeckl, 2024).

The arts are also a prominent battlefield. All aesthetic forms (e.g., literature, cinema, painting, photography, theatre and digital creations) are underpinned by tensions between the past

and the future and are objects of strategies that mobilise historical imaginaries and cultural representations in order to claim influence, public recognition and resources. Comparative studies of artistic productions in Europe and Asia, as well as of the circulations, transfers, and translations between these two universes, are highly topical.

Topic 2/ The time dimensions in societal cleavages

Successive waves of global history, world history, interconnected history and other variants (Douki and Minard, 2005) have strongly challenged assumptions of the uniqueness and homogeneity of values anchored in a specific territory and society. Scholars observe continuities and commonalities that draw the boundaries of communities of values but also emphasize their internal plurality and their multiple borrowings. A European ethos is characterized by different “traditions” (e.g., Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman, Medieval, Enlightenment) or “values” (e.g. rationality, freedom, self-accomplishment). These values are “verbally continuous but semantically discontinuous” (Schulz-Forberg and Stråth, 2010): they are consensual per se, but disagreements occur about their definition and political implementation. Postcolonial historiography has questioned the universality of European values, which often justified imperialist and extractivist enterprises (Chakrabraty, 2000). The Weberian vision of an exclusive set of European values (e.g., individualism, scientific rationality, faith in progress) paving the way towards modernity, capitalism and democracy has been increasingly nuanced, contested or even rejected as Eurocentric, if not potentially racist (Vanhaute, 2013: 107-109). Social scientists have argued about “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt, 2008: 41) reflecting various historical paths, societal frameworks and normative worldviews. The development of large-scale value surveys studying individual and collective representation as triggers to social and political change (Inglehart 1977; 1990; 1995; Inglehart and Abramson, 1997) updated the mapping of the evolution of and interactions between societies. In this new cartography of values, Japan presents more proximity with some European societies than with its geographic neighbours.

In Europe, scholarship suggests that the main traditional cleavages related to political conflicts state vs. church and centre vs. peripheries (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) are weakening but are not replaced with the same intensity by fresh frontlines. The “silent revolution” of post-materialism (Inglehart 1977) framing the transformation of individual values from materialist (emphasizing economic and physical security) to post-materialist (prioritizing autonomy and self-expression) does not describe the full picture. Research emphasize other cleavages such as ‘green-alternative-libertarian’ (GAL) vs. ‘traditional-authoritarian-nationalist’ (TAN) (Hooghe and Marks, 2008); or ‘communitarian’ vs. ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘particularistic’ vs.

‘universalistic’ values (cf. Díez-Medrano, Ciornei and Apaydin, 2019, p. 152). The comparative analysis of the temporalities, ranges, triggers and effects of these value cleavages in Europe and Asia across time, space, and issues can show patterns of convergence and divergence.

3/ Innovation, nostalgia and path dependence: nostalgic projections and policy futures in late-industrialized societies

Late-industrialized East Asian societies find themselves at a crossroads today. They have experienced rapid and dramatic change through accelerated modernization. In Japan this process started earlier, but the second half of the 20th century has brought dramatic economic growth and modernization to East Asia. The radical and profound changes modernizing societies have been through, from largely agricultural livelihoods and rural lifestyles to fast-paced post-modern and digitalized existences have often generated conflicts between newly emerging values and path-dependent behaviour, a series of contradictions that Chang Kyung-sup (1999) has explained through ‘compressed modernity’ in the Korean case. While the focus of much literature and policy has been on the economic success of late-industrialized East Asia, acute social limits have emerged and are now an increasing focus of cultural discourses and policies, (socio-economic precariousness, conflicts over social values, intense social competition, low fertility rates, high suicide rates, environmental destruction).

In parallel, expressions of nostalgia for the pre-developmental past have flourished in consumer practices and popular cultures in the region, ranging from renewed interest in architectural heritage, food products, calligraphy and traditional art and craft, clothing or music. In addition, following a movement initiated in post-growth Japan (Klien 2019) and already documented in Europe (on France, see Sallustio 2018), young Koreans and Chinese today increasingly return to the countryside to live neo-rural lifestyles. In contexts of accelerated social and political change, societies and their members often experience acute nostalgia, a longing for the past to escape the disorienting effects of modernity (Davis 1979, Turner 1987). In the post-Soviet world in particular (Block, 2005), nostalgia, is often expressed in terms of longing towards a pre-capitalist past. However, while nostalgia is often tied by political scientists to reactionary politics, it is rarely associated with future-oriented forms of political economic mobilisation, even though Bonnett (2010) or Strangleman (2023) have demonstrated, in mostly European cases, the mobilizing potential of nostalgia towards the making of political economic futures. The section aims to provide an encounter between European and East Asian theoretical literature and contemporary experiences of nostalgic mobilization (such as, but not limited to, slow food, slow work, transition town movements, communal labour arrangements).



Contributors are invited to reflect upon the potential of the past to serve as a repository of practices oriented towards the future, in particular to solve social challenges (sustainability, equality). Comparisons between European and East Asian experiences of nostalgic mobilization and foresight in tackling post-developmental social challenges are especially welcome.

Topic 4/ Troubled pasts in external affairs and regional integration

The era of triumphant multilateralism, regional integration and free trade is over. The comeback to ‘raw politics’ comes hand in hand with the reactivation of long-standing patterns of alliances and oppositions mixing interests, culture and memory.

Regarding Europe, a huge literature has addressed the analysis of the EU as a “normative” (Manners, 2002), “soft” (Nye, 2006) “moral” (Vasilyan, 2020), “transformative” (Grabbe, 2005) or “civilian” (Telò, 2006) power. The self-celebration of Europe as the native home of the Enlightenments clashed with its external perception as the “dark continent”, the cradle of the two world wars and of forms of modernity that are alien to many cultural traditions and that put the planet at risk. (Mazower, 1998). Scholars trying to bridge internal and external audiences of European narratives walk a thin line by combining the possibility of a two-faced model engaging both the post-colonial criticism of the EU with a framing of the later as a reference for the development of peaceful and democratic transnational politics (Lenz and Nicolaïdis, 2019). As far as Asia is concerned, heated political and intellectual debates discuss commonalities and differences in relations to an international liberal order (Bajpai & Lakshmana, 2023) and to concepts such as good Society, good Governance, human security and varieties of capitalism (Meyer and de Sales Marques, 2018). Strategies to face changes in US security policy, diplomacy and bilateral relations under the Trump administration are another litmus test.

Contributors are invited to propose papers that address these twin processes of alliances and oppositions and shifting combinations between the national, regional and global levels in – and between – Europe and Asia. Papers studying the various timelines, agendas, protagonists and issues of conflicts mobilising the past in current conflicts, and what is not or not so new in these patterns, are especially welcome.



PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

The 2027 Europe/Asia Forum brings together researchers in social sciences and humanities (e.g., political science, law, history, sociology, economics, European and Asian studies, architecture). It favours inclusivity, including but not limited to gender, career stage, nationality, affiliation and profile.

The Forum does not require the payment of fees for attendance. It does not offer travel or accommodation grants.

Potential contributors are invited to submit abstracts (600 words for a panel, 200 words for a single paper, with 3-6 keywords in both cases). Proposals of already constituted panels with relevant papers will be given priority. A 1.30 panel typically includes 4 papers. An abstract must be submitted for each paper included in a panel. Each panel must have one Chair and a Discussant (that may be the same person). Participants should ensure their availability for the entire duration of the Forum.

All submissions must be made online through the ConfTool submission platform, accessible via the following link:

<https://www.conftool.net/europe-asia-forum-2027/index.php?page=submissions&y=10.399999618530273>



Once registered, contributors can choose between two submission options: Individual Paper or Panel Proposal. Contributors should select the appropriate option and provide all the information requested in the relevant sections of the submission form.

For Panel Proposals, contributors must provide one general abstract for the panel (600 words) and a separate abstract for each individual paper included in the panel (200 words). Papers included in a panel do not need to be submitted separately as Individual Papers.

The **deadline for submission** is Monday 16 November 2026. **Notifications of acceptance** will be communicated Tuesday 1 December 2026, with draft papers expected to be submitted by Monday 1 March 2027.

Papers will be selected by the conference's scientific committee based on relevance and quality.



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