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Political and Strategic Dimensions of the Relations between the EU and South Korea

Abstract

The political and strategic dimensions of the relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea fall within the category of a more complex interaction namely economic and cultural. In this perspective, economic relations seem to prevail. However, the political and strategic dimension is growing very quickly, paradoxically also due to the fast-advancing economic cooperation, especially since the 2010 Free Trade Agreement (FTA). From that point forward, both parties have considered each other strategic partners. In the current situation in the East Asia: the growing military power of China, the possible changes in political alliances and security issues on the Korean Peninsula and Japan's departure from a pacifist stance, the political and strategic dimension of the relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea are likely to gain in significance. Although the interaction between Europe and Korea boasts a long history, strict EU-Korea relations have been varied. Bilateral relations between Korea and some EU member states are at a different level of advancement than overall EU-Korea interactions. Despite the cultural differences and often competing interests and threats, relations between the EU and Korea are still important for both sides.

Key words: Korea, European Union, political cooperation, bilateral agreements, political summits

The origins of political relations

The early encounters between the Europeans and Koreans go back to the 19th century. The then state of Choson was known as “the hermit kingdom” due to its isolationist approach, which strongly curbed the influence of foreign powers¹. The Korean people were very reluctant to establish political and cultural relations with the Western world, a telling example of which was the murder of the French missionary, Father Pierre-Henri Dorie in 1866. France retaliated by sending in its armada

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¹ The exception was China, which had very strong influence to Korea.

commanded by Admiral Pierre-Gustave Roze². Ultimately, the French forces withdrew after the lost battle on Ganghwado Island³. The isolationism of Choson lasted until 1910 when Korea was annexed by Japan⁴.

At the Cairo Conference in 1943, in the heat of the Second World War, the world powers decided that some of the Asiatic nations (including Korea) would regain independence⁵. Koreans had long been waiting for this to materialise, yet no later than in 1945, during the Moscow Conference, further division of the Korean Peninsula was decreed⁶. It became evident that the Soviet Union and the United States were on the way to making the Korean Peninsula a theatre of conflict revolving around spheres of interests. Korea was artificially divided into two states. Since then the Republic of Korea (RoK) has established diplomatic relations with over 170 states, including 47 European states and the Holy See⁷. In contrast, North Korea (DPRK) has established diplomatic relations with only 38 European states; besides Europe, the diplomatic representatives of the DPRK reside in 25 other countries⁸.

It seems that the RoK is anything but the most important partner for the EU and vice-versa. The RoK looks much more towards the powers involved politically in the peninsula, i.e. China, the USA, Japan and Russia, the latter to an increasingly lesser extent. However, it should be

² *French Campaign against Korea, 1866*. (2013, November 16). New World Encyclopedia, . Retrieved 11:06, November 23, 2016 from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=French_Campaign_against_Korea_1866&oldid=976158.

³ 오홍국, 大院君의 國防力 強化政策 研究, 연세대학교 교육대학원 2003, p. 6-8, 49.

⁴ See also. *Treaty of Annexation* (August 22, 1910), East Asian Studies Documents, USC-UCLA Joint East Asian Studies Center.

⁵ *Cairo Declaration of December 1, 1943* (China, United Kingdom, United States) [in:] Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea. A study of U. S. policy in the United Nations.*, New York 1956, p. 214.

⁶ L. M. Goodrich, *Korea. A Study of U. S. Policy in the United Nations*. Council on Foreign Relations. 58 East 68th Street, New York 1956, p. 214.

⁷ L. Buczek, *Polityczne, gospodarcze i kulturowe relacje Unii Europejskiej i Republiki Korei*, „Studia Polityczne” 45(2017), no 1, p. 180.

⁸ http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1767763; Open Source Center Report, North Korea 2010 Overseas Diplomatic Directory for Europe and Central Asia, UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO, 29 XII 2010.

stressed that the EU-RoK relations are specific and are developing slowly, yet steadily⁹.

The question to be addressed at this point is what kindled the EU's interest in the RoK. This case is far from unique (??). Initially, the small, war-torn and economically underdeveloped Korean state began to gain in importance on the international arena and, at some point, it earned the status of a so-called "Asian Tiger"¹⁰ due to its economic advancement. As early as in the 1960s, Korea started to work its way up as a political, military and economic player. The economic progress of the country falls beyond the subject of this article, so it will not be covered extensively. The RoK set out to strengthen its political position through various initiatives, including regional integration projects. The third Korean president, Park Chung Hee (1963-1979), masterminded the Asia and Pacific Council (ASPAC), an organisation bringing together representatives of independent Asian states. The fifth president, Chun Doo-hwan (1981-1988), proposed the establishment of the Pacific Summit, which was seen as a political forum for the major political and economic players of the region, convening on a fixed and regular basis¹¹. Also, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) initiative established in 1989 must not be overlooked. One of its major advocates was the RoK. The third APEC meeting was held in Seoul in 1991 during the term of President Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993). The most noteworthy achievement of the meeting was the adoption of the Seoul Declaration¹² on the economic cooperation framework binding the state parties. Moreover, the RoK declared its readiness to join the free trade zone within the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) endorsed by the prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, in 1990¹³. In 1993 the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) was launched, a regional forum for

⁹ Sung-Won Yoon, *Is FTA for 'Up Closer and Personal'? Reflections on Media and Public Views on the EU in Korea*, "Baltic Journal of European Studies" 3(2015), no 3, p. 38.

¹⁰ Asian Tigers is the term referring of group of fast developing high-growth economies: first Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, cf.: P. Morris, *Asia's Four Little Tigers: a comparison of the role of education in their development*, „Comparative Education" 32(1) 1996, p. 95.

¹¹ D. Hundt, J. Kim, *Competing Notions of Regionalism in South Korean Politics*, "Japanese Journal of Political Science" 12 (2011), no 2, p. 255.

¹² *Third Apec Ministerial Meeting Seoul*, Korea 12-14 November 1991 Joint Statement, <http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Annual-Ministerial-Meetings.aspx?year=1991> [access 18-10-2016].

¹³ D. Hundt, J. Kim, op. cit., p. 256.

dialogue on security matters¹⁴. The RoK joined this organisation as well as joining the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) – an NGO committed to enhancing security in the Asia-Pacific region through seeking dialogue and consensus among the members¹⁵.

The interaction between the RoK and Europe originally revolved around trade, which started to burgeon in the 1960s along with the first South Korean products arriving in the European Economic Community¹⁶. The RoK established its permanent representation to the EEC in 1969¹⁷. At that time, Korean goods were still considered low quality in Europe and the Korean state as impoverished and struggling with reconstruction after the Korean War. Along with the increase in the volume of sales, the first disputes arose. Between 1985 and 1990, the EEC and RoK were involved in 18 anti-dumping cases¹⁸. As a result, the economic exchange between the two partners and the number of Korean investment projects in Europe dwindled significantly¹⁹.

The legal grounds for mutual cooperation

The legal framework for mutual relations on the political, economic, and cultural levels has rested on several major bilateral and multilateral agreements and a number of industry-specific agreements covering some specialised pools of subjects.

The first document on mutual cooperation was the EU-Korea Strategy Paper, drawn up, as Sung-Hoon Park underlined, in 1993²⁰. This initiative made Korea stand out among other Asian countries that entered into similar arrangements with the European Community later²¹. Another

¹⁴ W. Katia, J. Huang, *East Asian Security Revisited in Light of the European Experience*, "Issues & Studies" no 46(1) 2010, p. 112.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

¹⁶ B. Bridges, *Western Europe and North Korea: New opening and old problems*, "East Asia", 20 (2003), no 3, p. 87-88.

¹⁷ Sung-Hoon Park, Sung-Won Yoon, *EU perceptions through the FTA lens: main results of interviews among the Korean "elites"*, "Asia Europe Journal" 8 (2010), no 2, p. 178.

¹⁸ Ch.M. Dent, *New Interdependencies in Korea-EU Trade Relations*, "Journal of Contemporary Asia" 28 (1998) no 3, p. 372.

¹⁹ Doo Jin Kim, *EU Trade Protectionism and Korean Overseas Investment: The Case of Asian Globalizing MNCs*, "The Korean Journal of International Relations" 43 (2003) no 5, p. 130.

²⁰ Sung-Hoon Park, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

²¹ Sung-Hoon Park, Heungchong Kim, *Asia Strategy of the European Union and Asia-EU Economic Relations*:

important step was the signature of the Towards a New Asia Strategy in 1994. This emphasised the importance of and Europe's interest in Asia (including Korea²²). The document recognised the fact that the region of Asia would be of strategic importance and identified four essential objectives: 1) to strengthen the Union's economic presence in Asia, 2) to contribute to stability in Asia by promoting international co-operation and understanding, 3) to promote the economic development of the less prosperous countries and regions in Asia and 4) to contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Asia.

To achieve these goals, the EU set itself the following priorities in Asia: "To continue to strengthen the Union's bilateral relations with individual countries and regions in Asia; to raise the profile of Europe in Asia; to support efforts by Asian countries to cooperate at the regional and subregional levels such as the ASEAN Regional Forum with a view to enhancing peace and security in the region and generally to strengthen the Union's relations with regional groups such as ASEAN or SAARC; to associate Asian countries in the management of international affairs and in particular to encourage them to play a more active role in multilateral actions with a view to maintaining international peace and security; to strengthen links with Asian countries in multilateral fora and further encourage Asian participation in multilateral organisations; to pursue all actions necessary to ensure open markets and a non-discriminatory business environment conducive to an expansion of Euro-Asian trade and investments; to integrate into the open, market-based world trading system those Asian countries which are moving from state controls to market-oriented economies; to contribute to sustainable development and to poverty alleviation in the least prosperous countries of Asia²³."

In this ground-breaking document, both Koreas are mentioned repeatedly. In the second part addressing the instruments of foreign policy and bilateral relations, it notes that the RoK requested formalising bilateral relations. The DPRK is already mentioned in the introduction as

Basic Concepts and New Developments, (scientific conference materials: "The EU-Asia Relations: Building Multilateralism?", Hong-Kong 2005), p. 1.

²² EU External Action Service,

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vietnam/eu_vietnam/tech_financial_cooperation/regional_cooperation/index_en.htm.

²³ *Towards a new Asia strategy*. (1994) Communication from the Commission to the Council. COM (94) 314 final, 13 July 1994. [EU Commission - COM Document], p. 4.

one of the fragile states, posing safety problems mainly through the possession and development of a nuclear capability. In the framework of multilateral contacts, the EU cooperates with Korea (like with Japan) within the framework of the OECD²⁴.

The first bilateral agreement that regulated political cooperation in a comprehensive manner was the Framework Agreement of 1996 (which became effective on 1 April 2001), and was later amended by the revised Framework Agreement drawn up in 2009²⁵. This document highlighted such cooperation aims as: the basis and scope of mutual cooperation, the strengthening of political dialogue, cooperation in regional and international organisations and the strengthening of cooperation in the area of sustainable development, which was particularly important for the EU²⁶.

Political relations were even intensified and elevated to the rank of “strategic partnership²⁷” after negotiating a new Framework Agreement signed on 10 May 2010 (which became effective on 1 June 2010²⁸). Its Article 43 reads that the Agreement updates and replaces that of 28 October 1996. The main priorities of cooperation are set out in Article 2: to strengthen partnership and develop joint political projects; to conduct regular political dialogue; to promote people-to-people contacts and understanding. The priorities of the political dialogue are set out in Title II of the agreement. They are, among others: to strengthen democracy, arms control, peaceful solutions to conflicts, consultations on important international issues, cooperation through consultation at the top official level, sectoral negotiations, exchange of delegations between the European Parliament and the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. Other important areas addressed in the agreement are: countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Article 4), combating illicit transfer and circulation of arms and organised crime (Article 5), combating terrorism (Article 7), cooperation in regional and international organisations (Article 8), customs (Article 13), competition policy (Article 14), science and technology (Article 16), energy, (Article 17),

²⁴ Commission Of The European Communities, *Toward a New Asia Strategy*, com (94) 314, Brussels 1994, p. 3-6.

²⁵ Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 177.

²⁶ EU-South Korea Framework Agreement, Luxembourg, October 28, 1996 r. European External Action Service online.

²⁷ http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m_30_60_70.

²⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/south-korea/>.

transport (Articles 18 and 19), health (Article 21), environment and natural resources (Article 23)²⁹.

No less important strategically was the EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement of 15 October 2009, the greatest achievement of the parties with regard to economic cooperation. Its strategic significance was reflected in the fact that the South Korean authorities had been seeking to strengthen the security and stability in the region and the Korean Peninsula for a number of years via a series of FTAs with various countries³⁰. The entry into force of the EU-Korea FTA also facilitated the parties' cooperation on the key global policy issues, such as the environmental policy and protection of human rights³¹.

Another strategically pivotal instrument is the 2014 Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea establishing a framework for the participation of the Republic of Korea in European Union crisis management operations³². This agreement regulates the participation of the RoK in EU-led operations under the so-called Petersberg tasks. The document is composed of four sections: I – general provisions, including the decisions on the participation, legal framework and status of the personnel of Korean armed forces during foreign missions and classified information; II – civilian operations (Articles 5-8); III – military missions (Articles 9-12), IV – final provisions (dispute resolution, entry into force, term and termination of the agreement).

The political and strategic dimensions of EU-ROK relations

July 1963 saw the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the European Community (EC) and the RoK³³. As mentioned earlier, South Korea set up its permanent representation to the EEC in

²⁹ *Framework Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, on the one part, and the Republic of Korea, on the other part*, May 10, 2010 („Official Journal” L 020, 23/01/2013 P. 0002 - 0024).

³⁰ W. Moon, *Whither East Asian economic integration? Korea's regionalization cum globalization strategy*, „Asia Europe Journal” 9 (2011), no. 1, p. 38-39.

³¹ Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 186.

³² *Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea establishing a framework for the participation of the Republic of Korea in European Union crisis management operations*, „Official Journal of the Europe-an Union”, L 166, vol 57, 5 June 2014.

³³ http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m_30_60_70 and Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 177.

1969. The European partner did this no earlier than January 1989³⁴. This shows that Korean resolve to do so was greater than that of the EC³⁵.

In 1994, the ASEM organisation was created as a less formal forum of political dialogue between Europe and Asia. Over time, the ASEM has grown to become an organisation exerting more and more influence on the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the two regions by attracting politicians, economists and experts in various fields. Some are eager to perceive it as a present-day Silk Road linking Europe and Asia³⁶. The EU works with Korea in this organisation through multilateral relations. The first of twelve³⁷ ASEM summit meetings held so far was organised in Bangkok in March 1996³⁸. From the Korean perspective, the 2000 summit meeting in Seoul was the most high-ranking. Its catchphrase read, “Partnership for stability and prosperity in the new millennium”³⁹.

The EU and Korea also work together within the G20 group⁴⁰ and often take common positions⁴¹. As the organiser of the G20 summit in Seoul in 2010, South Korea heavily contributed to the development of the global financial security network through reform of the International Monetary Fund⁴². The Seoul Development Consensus signed at the summit stimulated a common policy of economic development and replaced the existing Washington Consensus⁴³.

³⁴ Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 178.

³⁵ Later the European Union, since 1993.

³⁶ Que Anh Dang, ASEM – the modern Silk Road: travelling ideas for education reforms and partnerships between Asia and Europe, “Comparative Education” 49(2013), p. 107.

³⁷ 1-Bangkok, 2-London, 3-Seoul, 4-Copenhagen, 5-Hanoi, 6-Helsinki, 7-Beijing, 8-Brussels, 9-Vientiane, 10-Milan and 11-Ulaanbaatar, see more at: <http://www.aseminfoboard.org/>.

³⁸ Ch. M. Dent, op. cit., p. 371.

³⁹ Ho Thi Thu Hoai, Heda Hansenova, *Globalisation of Trade and Transportation Between the ASEAN+3 Countries and the European Union*, “Romanian Journal of European Affairs”(2006)6, no 2, p. 54.

⁴⁰ The organisation was founded in 1999. The members are informally most developed countries of the world. A member of the G 20 is also the EU, although the 3 richest member states sending there their own separate delegations.

⁴¹ SERI Quarterly, *EU Ambassador Tomasz Kozłowski on the Korea-EU FTA and the Economic Outlook*, Seoul 2012, p. 73

⁴² W. Moon, *Whither East Asian economic integration? Korea's regionalization cum globalization strategy*, “Asia Europe Journal” 9 (2011), no. 1, p. 39.

⁴³ A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, *EU–Korea relations in a changing world project: main results and recommendations*, “Asia Europe Journal” 12 (2014), no 3, p. 240.

Both the EU and the RoK face similar challenges in the field of energy security. It is pointless to compare the energy policy of a state and an international organisation, but if the EU is heavily dependent on Russian gas⁴⁴, according to the statistics, South Korea imports up to 96.5% of energy fuels from abroad⁴⁵, including gas and other raw materials from Russia⁴⁶. The shortage of energy-generation resources also troubles the DPRK, since its nuclear reactors are used mainly for military purposes. To reverse this situation and, at the same time, freeze the North Korean nuclear programme and supply reactors and technology for non-military purposes, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO⁴⁷) was established. The EU's accession to the organisation in 1997 was a very important message for the international community⁴⁸. The EU is a member of the KEDO's Executive Board and its financial contribution totals EUR 115 million⁴⁹. Despite the failure to meet the goals of the KEDO, the EU clearly communicated that the Korean Peninsula was important for Europe from a strategic point of view, as demonstrated in the European Security Strategy of 2003⁵⁰. Similarly, the Common Foreign and Security Policy refers to North Korea as a state posing a threat to security⁵¹. Since 2004, i.e. the biggest EU enlargement so far, the EU's policy towards the DPRK has been focusing mainly on disarmament and regional stabilisation⁵².

With regard to security on the Korean peninsula, the EU has been endorsing individual South Korean policies towards its "northern neighbour." This was the case with "the sunshine policy" of Kim Dae

⁴⁴ M. Nowacki, *Prawne aspekty bezpieczeństwa energetycznego w UE*, Warszawa 2010, p. 178.

⁴⁵ J. Kim, *The Formulation of Korea's Resource Policy: Resource Diplomacy, Public-Private Consortium and International Agreements*, "Asian Journal of WTO & International Health Law and Policy" 9 (2014), no 1, p. 290.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 290 and p. 312.

⁴⁷ KEDO - Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In the framework of the KEDO, North Korea - in exchange for giving up the development of its nuclear programme - would receive two modern LWR (light water reactors).

⁴⁸ M. Lee, *The EU's Korea relationship: enlargement effects*, "Asia Europe Journal" 5 (2007), no 3, p. 376.

⁴⁹ H. Kim, *Inter-Korean relations and the roles of the US and of the EU*, "Asia Europe Journal" 1 (2003), no 4, p. 508.

⁵⁰ The European External Action Service, *EU-Asia Security Factsheet*, p. 1.

⁵¹ Jae-Seung Lee, *The Two Faces of EU-North Korea Relations*, "The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis", Vol. 17, No. 1, 2005, p. 47.

⁵² M. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

Jung⁵³, “the peace and prosperity” of Lee Myung-bak, “trust building process on the Korean Peninsula” advocated by President Park Geun-hye⁵⁴ and the current “Berlin speech” policy of President Moon Jae-in⁵⁵. The EU has also framed its own policy towards the DPRK: on the one hand, it exerts diplomatic pressure on the government in connection with nuclear weapons, on the other, it promotes humanitarian aid to the civilian population⁵⁶. A good example of such initiatives was the humanitarian aid of USD 450 million in 1995 when the North Korean people were suffering from flood and famine⁵⁷. Also, various inter-Korean economic initiatives, such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex, are supported by the EU. According to experts (for example Christoph Bluth), this helps stabilise the Korean Peninsula and build mutual trust⁵⁸.

It is also true that the EU’s position voiced on international fora regarding sanctions imposed on the DPRK is not as firm as that of the United States, although after the recent nuclear and missile tests, the EU has tightened its position visibly towards North Korea and joined the group of states calling for sanctions to remain⁵⁹. Some analysts underline that diplomatic support is the only form of assistance that the EU can offer South Korea in the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula; the military presence of European countries in this part of Asia is a thing of the past. If this should be the case, South Korea will rely on its own armed force and the military alliance with the USA; for this reason, Seoul keeps increasing its annual military budget⁶⁰.

It goes without saying that, strategically speaking, the RoK faces a number of national security issues that need to be dealt with. These are

⁵³ B. Bridges, Western Europe and North Korea: New openings and old problems, „East Asia” 2003, vol. 20, Issue 3, p. 91.

⁵⁴ See also Moosung Lee, *The EU, regional cooperation, and the North Korean nuclear crisis*, “Asia Europe Journal”, 2016, vol. 14, Issue 4, p. 411.

⁵⁵ <https://piie.com/blogs/north-korea-witness-transformation/moon-jae-ins-berlin-speech>. Although this policy in current political context is fading to black and term “Berlin Speech” is no longer used.

⁵⁶ Por. A. Berkofsky, *EU-North Korea Relations - Engagement Course on Hold*, „International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs”, issue: 02(2008), p. 63.

⁵⁷ M. Lee, op. cit., p. 374.

⁵⁸ A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 242.

⁵⁹ D. Wituszyński, *Seul: Korea Południowa i Unia Europejska uzyskują konsensus w sprawie Korei Północnej*, <http://www.polska-azja.pl/2016/02/15/seul-korea-poludniowa-i-unia-europejska-uzyskują-konsensus-w-sprawie-korei-polnocnej/> [access 23-02-2016].

⁶⁰ Jae Jung Suh, *Allied to Race? The U.S.-Korea Alliance and Arms Race*, “Asian Perspective” Vol. 33, No. 4, (2009), p. 101-104.

the military threat from North Korea, the growing presence of China in the region, Japan's departure from the doctrine of pacifism; from this perspective, the EU has no strategic goals in common with the RoK, considering its economic ties with China and Japan⁶¹.

A telling example illustrating the assessment of EU-Korean relations are sociological studies conducted among the business, political, and social elite of South Korea in 2010. As pointed out by Sung-Hoon Park, the majority of business groups, academics and the mass-media expressed the opinion that relations with the EU were and would be important, and that the EU was acknowledged as a global player and international political leader⁶². The enhanced perception of the EU was strongly influenced by the EU-South Korea FTA of 2010 and the new Framework Agreement. Interestingly, in 2004 the same studies found that only 3.5% of the respondents saw the EU as a key partner⁶³.

The EU-Republic of Korea summit as the key instrument of political cooperation

Summit meetings between the leaders of both partners play a role as an important instrument of political cooperation. They used to be held irregularly in different locations: first in Copenhagen in 2002, next in Hanoi in 2004, in Helsinki in 2006, in Seoul in 2009, 2012, 2015 and in Brussels in 2010 and 2013⁶⁴. Some of these early meetings were held as ASEMs, but from the sixth meeting on, held in Seoul on 28 March 2012, the EU and Korea have decided to maintain closer contacts through regular political meetings⁶⁵.

After each meeting, a report is drawn up and published by the EU administration. The first summit meeting between President Kim Dae Jung and European Commission President Romano Prodi of 24 August

⁶¹ R.E. Kelly, *Korea-European Union relations: beyond the FTA?*, "International Relations of the Asia-Pacific" (2012) no. 12, p. 114.

⁶² Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 184.

⁶³ Sung-Won Yoon, op. cit., p. 44.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m_30_60_70 [28-02-2016].

⁶⁵ A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 233; 240.

2002 addressed the need for the deepening of mutual relations based on the EU-RoK Framework Agreement of April 2001⁶⁶.

The key conclusions of the second meeting of 9 October 2004 between President Roh Moo-hyun and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and others⁶⁷ concerned support for the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula; encouraging dialogue on counterterrorism; fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and emphasising the important role of cooperation under the Kyoto Protocol on climate changes⁶⁸.

Many different subjects were discussed at the third meeting convened on 9 August 2006 in Helsinki, Finland. The parties were represented by President Roh Moo-hyun, Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister of Finland in the capacity of the President of the European Council, and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso. The leaders discussed recent social and economic initiatives, including government innovation and reforms in the Republic of Korea, and shared views on the relevant European experience, including the implementation of the EU's Lisbon Strategy. The leaders emphasised their wish to see the Six-Party-Talks process resume as soon as possible⁶⁹.

During the fourth summit meeting in Seoul on 29 May 2009, with President Lee Myung-bak, Czech President Václav Klaus and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso participating, the leaders expressed their satisfaction with the advancing negotiations on the FTA and the new Framework Agreement which were intended to elevate the rank of mutual relations to the strategic level⁷⁰.

The main conclusion of the fifth summit meeting was the recognition of the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement and the new Framework Agreement as a real breakthrough and a powerful call to the world economies for the liberalisation of trade as a way to weather the global

⁶⁶ First Republic of Korea EU Summit, Copenhagen, September 24. 2002, Joint Communiqué, 12334/02 (Presse 286), p. 1.

⁶⁷ Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Bernard Bot.

⁶⁸ Republic of Korea EU Summit, Hanoi, October 9. 2004, Joint Press Statement, (Presse 11.10.04), p. 3.

⁶⁹ EU-Republic of Korea Summit, Helsinki, September 9. 2006, Joint Press Statement, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Seoul, May 23. 2009, Joint Press Statement, p. 1.

financial crisis. Besides the ceremonial signature of the Free Trade Agreement, the parties agreed that the agreement would enter into force on 1 July 2011⁷¹. The summit took place on 6 October 2010 in Brussels and the participating leaders were President Lee Myung-bak, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission⁷².

The sixth meeting was hosted by Seoul on 28 March 2012 and marked the beginning of regular political meetings. It was attended by the same representatives as at the 2010 meeting in Brussels. The decisions of the meeting were divided into several thematic groups: bilateral relations, regional issues and global issues. Among the major discussed issues, the leaders welcomed the expansion of bilateral trade after the provisional application of the Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement of 1 July 2011. The leaders also agreed to work together to strengthen global accountability on aid and development effectiveness through the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The Republic of Korea and the EU decided to reinforce existing cooperation within the framework of the Erasmus Mundus programme, bilateral education cooperation and joint initiatives under the EU and corresponding Korean research and innovation programmes, in particular in the areas of mobility of researchers, green energy, nanotechnology, basic technology, industrial technology, and ICT⁷³.

Another meeting of the leaders was held in Brussels on 8 November 2013. The parties were represented by: Mrs. President Park Geun-hye and, on the part of the EU, by Her-man Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. The decisions of the meeting were divided into three groups: 1) bilateral relations: working together for the greater prosperity and well-being of our people, 2) global challenges: working together for global welfare, 3) regional issues: stepping up cooperation on foreign policy and security issues⁷⁴.

⁷¹ A Wróbel, *Polityka handlowa Unii Europejskiej wobec państw Azji Wschodniej i Południowo Wschodniej*, „International Relations”, issue 2 (46)2012, p. 217.

⁷² EU-Republic of Korea Summit, Brussels October 6. 2010 Joint Press Statement, Council of the European Union, 14547/10 presse [266], p. 1.

⁷³ Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Joint Press Statement, Council Of The European Union Seoul, March 28. 2012, 8255/12 presse 140, p. 1-2.

⁷⁴ Council of the European Union, European Union -Republic of Korea summit, Joint Press Statement, Brussels, 8 November 2013, 15876/13 (OR. en) presse 463, p. 1-6.

The eighth meeting took place on 15 September 2015 in Seoul. All the decisions made at the meeting were divided into three groups: 1) taking the RoK-EU strategic partnership to the next level, 2) stepping up cooperation on foreign and security policy, 3) enhancing cooperation for global welfare and safer future. The leaders expressed their satisfaction with taking mutual relations to the next level, in particular owing to the agreements that entered into force, especially the FTA, and voiced their hope for the ratification of the new Agreement establishing a framework for the participation of Korea in the EU's crisis management operations. The participating leaders were President Park Geun-hye, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council and Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, representing the President of the European Commission⁷⁵.

Such summit meetings lay a sound foundation for new political initiatives and, although not always constructive, afford a good opportunity to look back at past achievements and discuss any existing issues and challenges.

Conclusions

The political and strategic aspects do not seem of key importance in mutual relations, yet their importance is anything but negligible and increases incrementally. Some experts point to several problems shared by the international community that the meeting parties intend to solve together. They are, but not only: to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, combating arms trafficking, combating terrorism, environmental policy, and climate change⁷⁶. It is worth noting that in 2008 South Korea was among the few states that adopted the so-called "Green Growth Strategy" as one of its leading domestic policies⁷⁷. The EU and Korea cooperate within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Although pursuing different political and technological agendas (EU has the ETS – the Emission Trading System, Korea has the TMS – the Target Management Scheme⁷⁸), both parties seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

⁷⁵ European Council, The President, Joint Press Statement, 8th Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Press release, Seoul September 15. 2015, p. 1.

⁷⁶ A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 232.

⁷⁷ E. Zelenovskaya, *Green Growth Policy in Korea: A case study*, International Center for Climate Governance, 2012, p. 5.

⁷⁸ A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 239.

Undoubtedly, even though the EU is not directly involved in the Korean Peninsula (it maintains no military bases and does not participate in the Six-Party Talks⁷⁹), its political prominence is increasing steadily. Closer political cooperation benefits both parties. For the RoK, it is primarily enhanced international prestige and dissemination of Korean culture in Europe; on the other hand, the EU is increasingly perceived in Asia as an important and consistent international player. From a small and insignificant state, the RoK became a member of the G20, and the EU, through closer cooperation, helps promote its status and rank as distinct from the image of the DPRK⁸⁰. South Korea sees the EU partner as a major actor on the international scene by emphasising the integrity of the community, of which the EU bureaucracy is highly appreciative. The EU hopes for the RoK to lead integration processes in Asia, yet being cognisant of Asian nationalisms and regionalism and Korean national pride and sense of separateness, South Korea will most probably not engage in any form of political integration that might cause the surrender of its sovereignty⁸¹. In the future, the parties will probably strive to make the political relations tighter, not only on the declaratory level, but also on the actual level, and in order to achieve that, they will look for new areas for fulfilling their common interests.

⁷⁹ See also Willem van der Geest., *Shaping factors of EU–East Asia relations*, “Asia Europe Journal”, 4 (2006), p. 143.

⁸⁰ R.J. Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 120-121.

