

PREFACE

Europe and Asia are connected by strong links based on historical ties as well as contemporary trade, cultural, educational, and political relations. The European Union has developed strategic partnerships with the major powers in Asia: India, China, Japan, and South Korea, and both EU institutions as well as individual Member States continue efforts to develop and strengthen the cooperation with Asia. Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) can be viewed as one of the examples of this long-lasting effort. Since 1996, ASEM has been maintaining dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Asian partners in order to face together the challenges of the contemporary world such as climate change and building up green economy, conflict prevention, and cooperation in the area of higher education. China, for years one of the most important EU's trading partners, has intensified cooperation with the Eastern European and South-European States. Initiatives such as 17+1 are supposed to strengthen not only economic but also cultural links.

Although the existing ties are mostly commercial, there is a growing effort to build up cooperation in the areas of culture and education. Such initiatives include for instance the EURASIA project financed by the European Commission and realised by the consortium of Universities from the EU (Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, UK and France) and Asia (India and China). This special issue of *Politeja* is rooted in the joint workshops and conferences organised within the EURASIA project in the last three years in Europe (Sofia, Krakow, and Catania), India (Pune, and New Delhi), and China (Beijing) as well as numerous virtual meetings we held in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is part of Erasmus+ Key Action dedicated to "capacity building in the field of higher education" and its main aim is to establish, update, and modernise curricula in European studies in a globalized world. Although the project is educational in nature, the multicultural and interdisciplinary environment allowed not only to discuss the curriculum development but also find a platform to exchange our academic research.

Hence, this special issue of *Politeja* is dedicated to the broad spectrum of political, cultural, and economic relations between Europe and Asia and approaches the theme from different perspectives. The contributions cover topics of political relations between Europe and Asia, focusing on the case studies of Serbia (Przemysław Ciborek, Natasza Styczyńska), but also implications of the relations between China and the United States for Central and Eastern Europe (Bartosz Kowalski). The cultural aspect is discussed in the case of Chinese cultural heritage politics (Joanna Wardęga) as well as through the prism of cultural studies discussing Polish-Indian relations represented in the communist-era reportages (Agnieszka Sadecka).

Several articles focus on the relation between the European Union and Asia, analysing China as the EU's "Significant Other" (Martin Milanov), cooperation in the field of higher education (Maria Stoicheva), climate change (Sujata Arya, Aparajita Mohanty, and Sayantan Bhattacharyya) as well as EU policy in Central Asia (Kamen Velichov). The EU Delegation in Saudi Arabia (Daniel Gołębiowski) is analyzed through the lens of the soft power, while another case study presents a historical overview of relations between Iran and Bulgaria (Angel Orbitsov). Last but not least, the issue offers an Asian perspective on the language policy in Italy and the Netherlands (Dong Dan and Tan Yuwei, and Zhang Jiachen). The closing remarks come from Prof. Maria Stoicheva, coordinator and *spiritus movens* of the project.

I sincerely hope that the cooperation that started with the EURASIA project is now based on solid foundations and will continue to strengthen in the years to come.

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