

# Globalization-Criticism in Asia

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## 1 Introduction

The process of globalization, with its numerous harmful or at least dubious social effects awakens the critical voices and movements against itself. In the past decade we have experienced the strengthening and spreading of the resistance and protest within the society both in the 'North' or 'West' and in the 'South' or – to a lesser extent – in the 'East'.

The resistance appears in the form of the so called 'anti-globalization' or 'globalization-critical' movements. The difference between the two expressions refers to the question if the whole process of globalization is wrong, including the socio-economic and cultural integration of the world and the increased possibility of the flow of and method for obtaining information or only the form in which all this happens to be rejected. As the mainstream of the resistance movement (i.e., excluding the extreme right, nationalistic, and demagogue ideologies) is far from being against the new technologies and information flow, we use these two expressions as synonyms in this paper.

## 2 Globalization-Critical Movements in the World and Asia

The most spectacular and symbolic event of globalization-criticism was the demonstration in Seattle at the WTO Summit on 30 November 1999. While the media's attention was focused on the violence, the novelty was the co-operation between distant movements like that of animal rights and lorry drivers and the numbers (tens of thousands). In fact, the movements and organisations expressing criticism toward globalization had already existed for several years (environmental movements, trade unions, human rights groups, peasant movements, single-issue movements, NGOs, etc.).

Although the Seattle event was international, in the subsequent years the globalization-critical movement was accused, by the activists themselves, of being dominated by the North (i.e., the developed countries). The participation by activists from the South has gained attention once again at the first World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre (Brazil, 2001). In 2004, the WSF was organised in Mumbai (India) proving that there are indeed many movements in Asia.

Asian movements and organisations were in many cases formed earlier than Northern ones. The democratisation process in East Asia from the late 1980s helped many movements to become legal and take actions catching the attention of the general public. The financial crisis of 1997-98 in the region drew attention to the dangers of international financial liberalisation and speculation processes closely associated with globalization.

Globalization develops in different forms, one of which is regional and intra-regional co-operation. For this, the ever growing and deepening contact between ASEAN and the European Union is one of the best examples. Hence, it is not surprising that grass roots movement, civil organizations, trade unions of the regions concerned want to make their voices heard. The most interesting initiation in this context is "Asia Europe People's Forum' (AEPF) with which we will deal in section 2.

To know more about Asian people's feeling about globalization, liberalization and their opinions about the developed world and international institutions, it is recommended that we take a glance to other movements, organisations and actions. (Section 3.) It can be interesting, what is more, instructive both for Europeans and researchers in Asia to know more about the opinions and goals of these types of entities of the Asian societies. For this reason, we turn our attention to this topic after AEPF, though the length of this paper is enough to give only examples rather than the whole picture. Themes of globalization-criticism (section 4.) and co-ordination between the movements (section 5.) are also discussed below.

## 3 Asia Europe People's Forum

In 1996, the year in which the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) was formed, a range of European and Asian civil society organizations established the Asia Europe (or: