ASECON Conference – Scientific Session 4
Impact of Covid19 on ASEM’s’ connectivity agenda

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ASEM DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

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Digital connectivity: the next great game
4th industrial revolution + shifting power balances = hardening US-China *trade-tech-data* conflict

Source: Okano-Heijmans, July 2019.
Digital connectivity: the next great game
Diverging approaches


US’ surveillance capitalism
vs. Chinese state surveillance
vs. EU & much of Asia
‘human-centered’ approach
Most ASEM members ‘crunched’
US & Chinese tech companies dominate global e-commerce
and related market/technical standards

“In the 21st century, those who control digital technologies are increasingly able to influence economic, societal and political outcomes.”
— EPSC, Rethinking Strategic Autonomy in the Digital Age, 2019

Source: TIAS.
...then came Covid19: the world’s **first digital pandemic** – in terms of origin and effect

Covid19 highlights key challenges for ASEM member countries:
How to shield from challenges coming with (too much) connectivity?
...diverging digital norms (internet freedom) & dependence on global supply chains
How to deal with the hardening US-China tech conflict?

- (new) partners, networked approach → invent new mechanisms, topics
- domestic preparedness → industrial policy 2.0 but prevent protectionism
  ...balancing efficiency and resilience, offensive and defensive policies
ASEM’s role in digital connectivity (1) facilitate dialogue… between governments, and govts with Big/small Tech

(Big) Tech companies: = online platforms / e-commerce companies
→ aim for market presence and market share in the digital economy

- ‘platform fairness’: a level-playing field, inclusiveness (rather than lock-in, dependency)
- personal and non-personal data regulation: open markets, transparency
- R&D and ‘ethical AI’: human-centered approach (rather than state interests or business interests first)
- standard-setting

→ ref. ASEM’s successful DG Customs dialogue!
ASEM’s role in digital connectivity (2) manage and steer ‘digital ODA’

Digital Official Development Assistance
= support to third countries on digital infrastructure; digital competence and the e-economy; regulatory frameworks; and cyber security & resilience
→ establish as a cornerstone in ASEM’s digital connectivity agenda
→ help deliver inclusive and sustainable growth in ASEM countries and beyond

Existing (competitive?) initiatives include:
✓ China’s Digital Silk Road (DSR)
✓ ROK’s Cybersecurity Alliance for Mutual Progress
✓ Japan’s Strategy for Cyber Security (SCS)
✓ EU’s Digital for Development (D4D)
✓ ASEAN–Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE)
✓ India’s Centre for Digital Financial Inclusion (CDFI)

Thank you for your attention!

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