The EU through the Eyes of Asia

Mutual Perceptions
2011/12 Findings

Asia in the Eyes of Europe
### Project Partners

**Sponsorship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asia Research Partners</th>
<th>European Research Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tsinghua University</td>
<td>• Austrian Institute for</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fudan University</td>
<td>International Affairs</td>
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<td>• Vrije Universiteit Brussel</td>
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<td>of Singapore</td>
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<td>European-Asian Studies</td>
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<td>• University of Malaya</td>
<td>• London School of Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Jawaharlal Nehru University</td>
<td>and Political Science</td>
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</table>
2010/11: “Asia” in the eyes of Europe

2011/12: “EU” in the eyes of Asia
## Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU (8)</th>
<th>Media analysis</th>
<th>Public opinion</th>
<th>Elite interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 dailies + 1 TV News bulletin&lt;br&gt;Sept- Nov 2010</td>
<td>On-line panel&lt;br&gt;Feb 2011</td>
<td>April-July 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,770 news items</td>
<td>6,155 respondents</td>
<td>103 interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (7)</td>
<td>Media analysis</td>
<td>Public opinion</td>
<td>Elite interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 dailies + 1 TV News bulletin&lt;br&gt;Jan- June 2011</td>
<td>On-line panel&lt;br&gt;March 2012</td>
<td>May-Dec 2011</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,115 news items</td>
<td>7,040 respondents</td>
<td>198 interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Asia in the Eyes of Europe:
Images of a Rising Giant

Dr. Sebastian Bersick
Associate Professor Fudan University, Shanghai
ASiE Project Coordinator
Associate Fellow, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)
Perceptions matter as a foundation for understanding expectations, choices and decisions of others.

Research on perceptions wants to know how facts are observed, constructed and understood.

We want to know if and how the understanding of Asia in Europe goes beyond a traditional geographic definition of the region but also reflects contemporary regional political, economic, security, social, human and cultural dynamics within what has been called “a true pan-regional Asian system” of international relations (Shambaugh 2008, 3).

How does Europe perceive Asia’s rise?
European citizens see Asia’s increasing importance in the world foremost from economic and socio-cultural perspectives.

“Cultural co-operation”, “social welfare”, “energy and natural resources” and “development aid and assistance” were deemed as least important issues for engagement with Asia.

**Areas for co-operation with Asia**

(in percent)

- Trade: 34.6%
- Environmental protection: 15.6%
- Human rights and democracy: 16.1%
- Security and anti-terrorism: 12.3%
- Other: 21.4%
The volume of overall news citing Asian regional and inter-regional processes was remarkably low:

- 3.4% of news featured ASEM,
- 1.5% of news items featured ASEAN,
- 1.2% of news items featured APEC,
- EAS, SCO and ADB were cited only occasionally.

Interviewed journalists and editors explained that the diversity and fragmentation of Asia makes it difficult to portray a sense of political coherence or even that of regional entity.
Political Images of Asia (I)

- The analysis of the politically-framed news items referencing Asia revealed a number of most interesting discrepancies between the public views of significant political issues and the media coverage:

  - According to the public opinion survey, 16.1% of respondents viewed “environmental protection” as the most important issue for engagement with Asia;

  - In the news media analysis, only 3.5% of total news items (96 in total) portrayed Asia and its actors under this thematic base.
Political Images of Asia (II)

- The analysis also discovered numerous instances where the media imagery correlates positively with opinions expressed by the general public.

- **Media visibility** of individual Asian countries as political actors corresponded to the public view on future importance for engagement with individual Asian partners:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selected others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10.1. Most cited Asian countries in politically framed news**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Future Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Australia / Singapore</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10.2. Future importance of Asian countries – European average**
In the Shadow of China...
An interesting finding is the top ranking given to the USA (7.8) and North America (7.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia/Oceania</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.3. Future importance of regions – European average
Political Images of Asia (IV)

- **Spontaneous perceptions of the public:**
  - Images of Asia related to a sense of exoticism, geographic scale and economic progression enter the European consciousness more frequently than political roles of Asia.

- **Political linkages between Asia and Europe:**
  - ASEM’s visibility in the selected European news media featured under 3.7% (the UK featured no news on ASEM);
  - The public opinion survey demonstrated a low level of public knowledge of ASEM (5.7%);
Asked about ASEM’s “necessity in principle” for relations with Asia, a large proportion of respondents (81.7%) answered positively;

Yet, there is no drive in the media to capitalise on this positive preconception;

Many journalists and editors claimed to have only peripheral knowledge of ASEM;

Communication deficit exists
High visibility given to the USA as major global actor and political leader:

- Barack Obama’s visit to Asia featured in the selected news media across all sample countries (7.3% of all news items);

- His visit got more media attention than the ASEAN summit (Sep. 2010) (3.7%) or EU political figures (3.4%);

- NAFTA (6.74) and APEC (6.03) were considered more important to Europe than ASEAN (6.0).
Political perceptions are driven by the economic reality:

- Asian countries and most notably China have made tremendous effort to influence world news;

- European media respondents complain the lack of resources to have correspondents on the ground for in-depth and differentiated political news;

- The notion of a ‘rising China’ equals that of a ‘rising Asia’.
The most obvious images of Asia were of economic colouring:

- The public opinion data reflected “trade” (34.6%) as the most important issue for co-operation with Asia;

- China was regarded as most important for trade co-operation (followed by Japan and other countries including Russia and India);

- China is portrayed as the most significant actor within Asia and the rising global economic power eclipsing other major powers in terms of visibility and importance to Europeans;

- The descriptive category of the public opinion data showed the dominance of economic issues. Economic references were cited at least once by 25.7% of the respondents (followed by “social and cultural references”, “individual countries”, and “geographic references”).
Economic Images of Asia (II)

- The analytical categories of the public opinion data were less homogenous. Yet, a common theme emerged on “Asia as a giant”, “Asia as an emerging force”, references to heterogeneity, suffering, and to Asia as a civilisation;

- Also in the media analysis element, the majority of news items referencing Asia (40.7%) were focused on the economic sphere (business and finance, trade and the state of the economy);

- News reports portray Asia as a “potential market”, as a “competitor” and a region characterised by “economic growth”;

  - China is the dominant actor in the case of economy-themed news (41.8%):

    - Other economic partners are falling considerably behind: Japan (14.6%), India (12.9%) and South Korea (11.3%);
Economic Images of Asia (III)

- Research results from the public opinion, the media analyses and the media interviews explicated the dominant perception of a “rising Asia” consisting of economic powers:
  - Economic importance has impact on the perceptions of the public and the media. The more economically influential the country becomes, the stronger is the interest in it;
  - The idea of an “Asian century” further reinforces the perception of the major roles that Asian state actors will play.

- A gulf in perception of the actual and potential role played by Asian regional organisations and institutions displays a major knowledge gap:
  - Europe’s expectations toward Asian regional problem-solving capacity are crucially negative;
  - Due to the persistent perception of Asia through an economic gaze, it is never perceived in a united form, or regional actors working towards common goals.
Results of the descriptive categories of public opinion analysis show:

- The most cited responses fell under the theme of “social, culture, religion” and included references to food and religious or cultural reference to Asia (e.g. “Confucianism”, “orientalism, “Buddhism” and “exoticism”);

- The second significant category was the “geographic” reference to Asia (vastness, climate, landscapes);

- Reference focused on “people and population” was also reflected. It highlighted a vision of Asia through its large populations and diverse demographics.

The most common trend in the analytical categories of the analysis describes Asia as an “imagined other”:

- Citations often refer to clichés that define Asia as an entity and are linked to tourism, people, food or cultural characteristics;
Asia of Peoples and Cultures (II)

- Asia was also regarded as a heterogeneous or disparate entity;
- Categories that appear to a lesser degree include: size (vastness, gigantism) misery (poverty, natural disasters, human rights, democratic violations, cheap labour, prostitutions, etc.) and peril (instability, growing economic competitiveness, crime, pollution);
- On average European have a positive impression of Asian people (48%), 6.6% negative, and 34.3% neutral (UK posted the most negative responses with 11.4% and 14.6% in Northern Ireland)

→ **Media reports** further emphasise the image of Asia as a disparate entity, rich in cultures but most certainly devoid of unity:
  - The social affairs reportage was the second most visible after economic news (35.6%);
  - Socially themed news covered issues such as culture, entertainment, health, lifestyle, migration, sport, tourism;
Key Findings (I)

- Findings suggest that Europeans expect Asia to play an increasingly prominent role throughout the 21st century.

- Europeans understand as ‘Asia’s rise’ the emergence of a global economic and demographic threat, societies that face severe difficulties and suffering from dictatorship to natural disasters.

- Politically Asia is perceived in only national but not regional terms.

- Europeans mainly perceive China and a handful of other countries as relevant actors with problem-solving capacity.

- China is used as a symbol and a proxy of a ‘rising Asia’. This over-representation of China’s role largely ignores the increasing relevance of other Asian countries’ and regional bodies’ for regional, inter-regional and global governance.
Key Findings (II)

- Europeans have low/no expectations as far as regional institutions’ problem-solving capacity is concerned.
- While the vast majority admits to knowing nothing about the ASEM process, their intuition is that the process of dialogue between Europe and Asia is probably crucial.
- Yet, Europeans believe that cooperation within a multilateral context is necessary.
- These findings contrast sharply with the quasi absence of reporting of ASEM affairs in the European media. The media is not interested in ASEM as such.
- European news media commonly limit their Asia coverage to the national level, whereas regional and inter-regional organisations or institutions are considered irrelevant for European news production.
Key Findings (III)

- Europe has a state-centric perception of Asian affairs.
- This image of Asia has important practical implications at the policy-making level. It underlines the weight given to bilateral ties and country-specific strategies — at the expense of policies that incorporate broader regional perspectives.
- European policy-making will find it difficult to adjust to Asia's increasingly regional dynamics.
- Yet, the more effective Asian regional co-operation and integration becomes and the more Asian regional institutions’ problem-solving capacity increases, the more important it will be for the EU and its member states to reach out to it.
- To a certain extent, Asia can thus be seen as a relatively hazy blind spot in Europe’s mental map of the world.
Key Recommendations (I)

- Launch Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy Initiative
- Facilitate Asia-Europe News Media Partnerships and Exchanges
- Market a Wider Asia
- Invest in Asia-Europe Knowledge Community
The EU in the Eyes of Asia
New Findings from 2011-12

Professor Martin Holland
EU External Perceptions: Global Project Geography
## Dataset: 28 Mainstream Media Outlets in Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>People’s Daily</td>
<td>International Finance</td>
<td>China Daily</td>
<td>CCTV1</td>
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<td>Yomiuri</td>
<td>Nikkei Shimbun</td>
<td>Japan Times</td>
<td>NHK</td>
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<td>South Korea</td>
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<td>Maeil Business</td>
<td>Korea Herald</td>
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<td>Lianhe Zaobao</td>
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<td>Business Times</td>
<td>channel 8</td>
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<td>Thai Rath</td>
<td>The Manager</td>
<td>Bangkok Post</td>
<td>ITV</td>
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<td>The Edge Financial Daily*</td>
<td>The Star</td>
<td>TV3</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Dainik Jagran</td>
<td>The Economic Times</td>
<td>Times of India</td>
<td>DD news</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Media (In)Visibility of the EU...
Media (In)Visibility by outlets

- **Japan**: Higher visibility across all outlets, particularly in TV and business daily.
- **China**: Moderate visibility with a significant portion in popular daily and business daily.
- **Singapore**: Moderate visibility similar to China, with a notable presence in business daily.
- **Malaysia**: Lower visibility compared to others, showing minimal presence in popular daily and TV.
- **Thailand**: Low visibility across all outlets, with a slight increase in business daily.
- **India**: Minimal visibility, with a slight increase in business daily.
- **South Korea**: Lowest visibility among the countries listed, with minimal coverage in all outlets.

*Note: Monthly average of news items (all outlets together).*
Centrality of EU in Asian news reportages

- China
- India
- Japan
- S.Korea
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Thailand

Legend:
- Minor
- Secondary
- Major
Focus of EU News in Asian media (business dailies not included)

EU’s state of economy (debt crisis, exchange rate of euro); EU as a trade partner
Focus of EU News in Asian media
(business dailies not included)

- Positive: 14%
- Neutral: 75%
- Negative: 11%
The Lisbon Treaty Effect...?

Who speaks for the EU? (media)

- Malaysia
- Thailand
- Singapore
- S.Korea
- Japan
- India
- China

Graph showing comparisons among various countries and European figures.
How positively or negatively did Asian general publics perceive the EU?
How positively or negatively did Asian general publics perceive the EU?

**Is the EU aggressive?**
- Yes: 21%
- No: 26%
- Not sure: 53%

**Is the EU likeable?**
- No: 21%
- Not sure: 54%
- Yes: 25%

**Is the EU arrogant?**
- Yes: 25%
- No: 21%
- Not sure: 50%
Is the EU united?
- Yes: 34%
- No: 19%
- Not sure: 47%

Is the EU modern?
- Yes: 61%
- No: 7%
- Not sure: 32%

Is the EU efficient?
- Yes: 40%
- No: 14%
- Not sure: 46%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Asia/ Japan</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>EU</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>US</td>
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</tbody>
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**Asian Public Opinion - “Most Important Partners”**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1st</th>
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<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>France/Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>€/ UK</td>
<td></td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>“EU”</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.Korea</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>“EU”</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Europe</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>“EU”</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elite interviews: is EU a great power?

- China: Yes (80%), No (20%)
- India: Yes (60%), No (40%)
- Japan: Yes (70%), No (30%)
- S.Korea: Yes (60%), No (40%)
- Singapore: Yes (70%), No (30%)
- Thailand: Yes (80%), No (20%)
- Malaysia: Yes (70%), No (30%)
Elite interviews: is EU a great power?

EU is not the strong hegemon but is the most proficient leading power who respects values and norms. (Political elite, South Korea)

Economically yes ... a huge area for economic relationship. Politically I don’t think so, they don’t have a common voice.. The UK and Germany get more attention than the EU itself.. (Civil Society elite, Malaysia)

“No. It is artificial... is still country-based. There are two major nuclear powers, Britain and France. The economic power is Germany. As an entity, I don’t think you can look at the EU as a great power. (Political elite, India)
Elite interviews:

is EU a leader in international politics?

Europe, or the EU has always tried to become a leading force, but failed. The USA is still a monopoly in today's world, and Europe has to rely on the United States. (Business elite, China)

EU is not the superpower with unilateral force. (Media elite, South Korea)

No, because they are so different, they are so divided. (Civil society elite, Malaysia)

No, they have sufficient problems trying to coordinate themselves. (Business elite, Singapore)
Elite interviews: is EU a leader in international politics?

Europe, or the EU has always tried to become a leading force, but failed. The USA is still a monopoly in today's world, and Europe has to rely on the United States. (Business elite, China)

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No, they have sufficient problems trying to coordinate themselves. (Business elite, Singapore)

EU is not the superpower with unilateral force. (Media elite, South Korea)
## Elite interviews: Images

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>Integration/Unification</td>
<td>Economic/Trade</td>
<td>Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visual representation of EU in China (2011)