THE EU THROUGH THE EYES OF ASIA

Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand

Edited by
Martin Holland, Peter Ryan, Alojzy Z. Nowak and Natalia Chaban
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On behalf of the partners of the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network, namely, the Asia-Europe Foundation, the National Centre for Research on Europe, Ateneo de Manila University and the University of Warsaw, I have the honour of presenting this new publication entitled “The EU through the Eyes of Asia: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand”.

The volume is a milestone for the ESiA network in a major collaboration to measure the perceptions of the European Union (EU) in the Asian region. It represents a two-year collective endeavour among six prominent universities in five countries in Asia namely, Fudan University, Hong Kong Baptist University, Keio University, Korea University, the National University of Singapore and Chulalongkorn University.

The publication of this extensive study is timely given that 2007 marks the tenth anniversary of the Asia-Europe Foundation which was established to strengthen linkages and understanding between Asia and Europe. Thus far, we have implemented over 400 projects bringing together more than 14,000 participants, through conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the creation of web-based platforms. Most importantly, we have worked to forge permanent, bi-regional networks focused on issues pertinent to reinforcing Asia-Europe relations – the ESiA network and its valuable output being a good example of such bi-regional networks.

The publication is also particularly welcome coinciding as it does with the EU-ASEAN Summit that will be taking place in Singapore in November 2007.

As we look ambitiously toward expanding this successful partnership to include more Asian countries, it is my personal hope that this book will serve
to further the objectives of the ESiA network to provide an innovative platform for the exchange of ideas and approaches to the study of the European Union in Asia, and ultimately, to deepen the understanding between our two regions.

November 2007,

Ambassador Wonil Cho
Executive Director
Asia-Europe Foundation
The editors would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the “EU through the Eyes of Asia” project and in particular this publication.

First and foremost goes to the authors: Prof. Dai Bingran (Fudan University, China), Dr. Kenneth Chan (Hong Kong Baptist University, China), Mr. Bertrand Fort (Asia-Europe Foundation), Prof. Sunghoon Park (Korea University), Prof. Apirat Petchsiri (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand), Prof. Toshiro Tanaka (Keio University, Japan) and Assoc. Prof. Barnard Turner (National University of Singapore). This publication would have not been possible without your valuable contributions.

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Lastly, the editors would like to thank the European Commission (EC) and the French government for their support for the “EU through the Eyes of Asia” project through the EC Trust Fund for ASEF and the French Trust Fund for ASEF respectively.

Martin Holland,
Peter Ryan,
Alojzy Z. Nowak
and Natalia Chaban (Editors)
Prologue

Bertrand Fort*

The Strategic Importance of the ESiA Network in Reinforcing Asia-Europe Relations

Introduction

In 1996, a summit of the leaders of the European Union (EU), the European Commission (EC) and ten countries in East Asia marked a historic point in Asia’s relations with Europe. Then Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong initiated the holding of an Asia-Europe summit largely to promote trade and multilateralism, as well as for a perceived need for greater political and intellectual dialogue to forestall any ‘clash of civilisations’ between Asia and Europe.1 The early 1990s also marked a dramatic shift in France’s diplomatic strategy in Asia. Despite long-standing relations between France and Asia, in particular with Indochina since the nineteenth century, the region was deemed the ‘new frontier of French diplomacy’2. France had fallen behind and was not developing trade relations with the emerging economies of Asia quickly enough. Seizing on the Singaporean initiative, France convinced its fellow EU members to form this new political partnership between Asia and Europe.3 The first summit in Bangkok thus called for ‘the strengthening of cultural links between Asia and Europe, particularly the fostering of closer people-to-people contacts, which is indispensable to the promotion of greater awareness and understanding between the people of both regions.’4 This

* Bertrand Fort is the Deputy Executive Director of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). Special thanks go to Ira Martina Drupady and Sol Iglesias of ASEF for their editorial assistance and additional analysis of the data.

1 L. H. Yeo and A, Latif, (eds.) Asia and Europe: Essays and Speeches by Tommy Koh. Asia-Europe Foundation, 2000, 4-5.

2 Speech by President Jacques Chirac of France, 28 February 1996.


was how the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and subsequently, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) – the sole permanent institution of the ASEM process – were created.

Just over a decade in existence, ASEM continues to be a growing and dynamic partnership which has expanded to include the twenty-seven EU members, all ten member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, Korea, India, Pakistan and Mongolia, as well as the EC and the ASEAN Secretariat. The lack of knowledge of the other is gradually being replaced by an unprecedented era of better mutual understanding, consensus-building and value-sharing on various common issues, be it at the global or bi-regional levels. ASEF plays a key role in this process by reinforcing civil society input in all exchanges and intellectual debate.

As the inter-dependence between Asia and Europe grows, so does the demand for bi-regional policy-making. Parallel to all the efforts already made on the political front, strengthening academic networks for the development of Asian and European studies – including promoting Asian studies in Europe and European studies in Asia\textsuperscript{5} – is crucial to ensure ready access to reliable, structured and actionable sources of information for government officials and policy makers.

Perhaps due to the diversity of the region in terms of political structures, cultures, languages and people, there is no lack of interest in Asia as an area of studies. In both Asia and Europe and elsewhere, Asian studies centres, think-tanks and networks flourish, funding for teaching and research is arguably abundant, and research output is high in quality and volume. However, the same thing cannot be said of European studies, specifically in Asia. In a region that is still very much oriented toward the United States (US) and in more recent times, China, there is comparably less interest from Asian academics regarding the integration process in Europe. This is despite the EU’s position as an important political, economic and cultural partner for Asia; and also despite the fact that the desire to compare each other’s experiences in regional integration is one of the key elements that brought Asian and European governments closer together.

Realising that such an imbalance does not facilitate bi-regional policy dialogue and is in fact inimical to Asia-Europe understanding, ASEF initiated the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network to stimulate European studies in the Asian region. The pilot project ‘EU through the Eyes of Asia’ upon which this publication is based, is the centerpiece of the ESiA endeavour.

\textsuperscript{5} The Asia-Europe Foundation: \textit{A Concept Paper} (revised), 17 October 1996.
The EU and its Relations with Asia

The geopolitical changes that resulted from the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s brought about the emergence of a new global political structure with the US at the forefront. Along with that came a new set of challenges for nation-states such as changes in the distribution of political and economic power; an increasing pressure for economic liberalisation and democratising of political systems; and the intensification of competition due to accelerated economic and financial globalisation. Nation-states increasingly felt the need to integrate their economies in order to achieve rapid economic development, decrease conflict, and build mutual trust. Thus, initiatives pursuing regional integration as well as inter-regional co-operation have become the order of the day. Such is the case in both Europe and Asia.

Owing to its unique historical circumstances, however, regional integration was a much smoother process in Europe than it was in other regions in the world, including Asia. Set up at the end of World War II with a modest aim of centralising previously national coal and steel industries in European countries, the European Coal Steel Community (ECSC)⁶ quickly evolved into what is known today as the EU. In the span of half a century since its inception, the EU has integrated close to 500 million people, in 27 countries, which represents a nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of €11.6 trillion.⁷ EU institutions – the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union (the Council); the EC, the European Court of Justice (CoJ) and the European Court of Auditors – govern a vast range of sovereign matters such as trade, agriculture, industry, transport and the environment. Already the EU represents its member states at World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings and is an observer at G8 summits.⁸ Moreover, the recent consensus reached by EU countries in Lisbon, Portugal, regarding the ‘mini-treaty’ will further strengthen the EU’s role and visibility, particularly with the creation of a streamlined post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Countries in Asia are still far away from relinquishing sovereignty in the same manner, however, regional integration has taken off in a significant way in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. While it was a discourse that was initially limited to just the countries of East Asia, it presently also engages

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⁶ The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded by the Treaty of Paris (1951). Its members were France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands who pooled their steel and coal resources and create a common market for those products.


⁸ EU member states remain independent sovereign nations but they pool their sovereignty in order to gain a strength and world influence none of them could have on their own.
partners as diverse as Australia, New Zealand, India, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste on the one hand, and Russia, the US, Canada and the EU on the other. ASEAN has undoubtedly been the driving force in institutionalising this endeavour, serving as the legitimate chair for political processes such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN+3 and the East Asia Summit (EAS); as well as economic ones such as the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI). This is remarkable feat, considering that ASEAN was founded on the cardinal principle of non-interference between member states.

Given the level of political and economic integration that has been achieved in Europe thus far, the EU is a natural reference point for regional integration for Asia. A visit to Brussels by the Eminent Persons Group on the ASEAN Charter in 2006, for example, was important in the final stages of the drafting of the ASEAN Charter – the grouping’s proposed constitution. Certainly, ASEM has also played a role by providing a platform for both regions to deepen their understanding of each other’s integration processes. However, the EU’s elevated status as a reference point implying that there is an actual agreement amongst Europeans about what “Europe is for and where it is going” is misleading. A common criticism of the European project is that EU citizens themselves have a very vague understanding of what EU institutions are and what they do, despite efforts and procedures to counter this perception of opacity. The difficulties faced by the EU to project a positive image of itself to its stakeholders – be it opinion-makers or the ‘man in the street’ – have dominated public debate in Euroskeptic circles. Ultimately, however, it was the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe by France and the Netherlands in 2005 that affirmed the conjecture that European policy makers had over-estimated public support for the European integration process. If European citizens themselves continue to have only a dim

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9 The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) established in 1994 draws together 25 countries which have a bearing on the security of the Asia-Pacific region comprising the 10 ASEAN member states; the 10 ASEAN dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, China, the EU, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States); one ASEAN observer (PNG); as well as the North Korea, Mongolia and Pakistan. East Timor was admitted to the ARF in 2005.

10 ASEAN+3 is a forum that functions as a co-ordinator of co-operation between Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the three East Asian nations of China, Japan, and South Korea.

11 The East Asia Summit (EAS) is a pan-Asia forum held annually by the leaders of 16 countries in East Asia and the region, with ASEAN in a leadership position.

12 The Chiang Mai Initiative aims to create a network of bilateral swap arrangements (BSAs) among ASEAN+3 countries to address short-term liquidity difficulties in the region and to supplement the existing international financial arrangements.

13 Speech by Ong Keng Yong, ASEAN Secretary-General, 6 June 2007.

14 Speech by Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the EC, 28 June 2005.

perception of the various EU institutions governing their everyday life, one can only imagine the level of confusion and perplexity of the EU’s external stakeholders such as countries in Asia.

This lack of understanding between Europe and Asia is by no means a one-way affair. As revealed by this book, on the one hand, the EU still appears to many in Asia, even to its policy makers, as inward-looking and there is relatively little knowledge regarding the evolution of the integration process in Europe, let alone the EU’s strengths, strategies, policies and so forth. On the other, the fact that Asians actually have any sort of perception regarding European integration was not a well-known concept prior to ESiA’s ‘EU through the Eyes of Asia’ project. It is crucial that both Europe and Asia make further investments which are both multi-dimensional and all-encompassing, to address these problems.

On both the economic and political fronts, the EU and Asia already have cultivated a strong basis in which to increase their influence on each other. Over the years, bi-regional economic arrangements have increasingly mirrored the equivalent political arrangements as evident in processes such as the ASEM Economic Ministers Meeting (EMM) and Finance Ministers Meeting (FMM); the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF);16 and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that is currently being negotiated between the EU and ASEAN. Nevertheless, it is important that EU institution leaders as well as EU member state leaders also continue to engage with their Asian counterparts in strategic political dialogue in parallel. Although China’s increasing importance in the region is currently drawing the most attention, it would be a mistake for the EU not to continue to engage with other important regional powers, namely, Japan, Korea, India, Pakistan as well as ASEAN. However, what this chapter is concerned with specifically is the strategic importance of stimulating European studies in the Asian region as part of an over-arching effort to reinforce Asia-Europe relations and contribute toward bi-regional policy dialogue. This was the basic premise for ASEF to have set up the ESiA network.

The Creation of the ESiA Network

It is the assessment of academics and practitioners alike that in terms of funding for teaching and research, the mobility of researchers, network-building and so forth, there has been no dearth of Asian studies initiatives in either Asia or

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16 The Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) was launched as one of the first initiatives at the 1st ASEM Summit held in Bangkok in 1996. This Forum is aimed at not only facilitating dialogue between entrepreneurs in both regions but also enhancing the relations between business and the ASEM government sector.
Europe. European studies, on the other hand, while certainly well-established in its own back yard, has hitherto not generated significant interest from countries in Asia beyond limited funding opportunities provided to a select number of European studies centres by the EC. These centres were created either through bilateral arrangements such as the EU-China European Studies Centres Programme (ESCP)\(^\text{17}\) or through more complex frameworks such as the Jean Monet Programme\(^\text{18}\), Asia-Link\(^\text{19}\) and FP6\(^\text{20}\). Indeed, without support from the EC, European studies centres in most Asian countries have little or no means of maintaining a presence, let alone making any substantive input. Such is the intention of the EC to be directly involved in shaping the mission, content and structure of European studies centres in these countries.

However, once EC funding expires (and with it, usually other resources, such as research and teaching staff), there is usually not much incentive and little interest for host universities to continue the programme. Moreover, in the short time that they have existed, these highly competitive schemes have only benefited a very few number of European studies centres in Asia, typically those located in Northeast Asia. Similarly, despite all their valuable efforts, the few existing European studies networks operating in Asia, namely, the European Union Studies Association (EUSA)\(^\text{21}\) Asia-Pacific; the European Community Studies Association (ECSA); and Network of European Studies Centres in Asia (NESCA)\(^\text{22}\), have also largely focused on these few identified countries and have not meaningfully reached out to the rest of the countries in the region.

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\(^\text{17}\) EU-China European Studies Centres Programme (ESCP), a co-operation initiative between the EU and China, established in 2004, in the field of higher education built within the dynamic framework of continuously developing relations between the EU and China.

\(^\text{18}\) The objective of the Jean Monnet Programme is to promote knowledge on European integration in universities throughout the world.

\(^\text{19}\) The Asia-Link Programme is an initiative by the EC to promote regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in Europe and developing countries in Asia.

\(^\text{20}\) FP6 is the European Community Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration. It is a collection of the actions at EU level to fund and promote research, serving two main strategic objectives: Strengthening the scientific and technological bases of industry and encourage its international competitiveness while promoting research activities in support of other EU policies.

\(^\text{21}\) The European Union Studies Association (EUSA) is a scholarly and professional association focusing on the European Union, the ongoing integration process, and transatlantic relations.

\(^\text{22}\) The Macau-based Network of European Studies Centres in Asia (NESCA) is a European studies consortium consisting of 4 European and 6 Asian universities established to (1) to transfer and to disseminate latest research on issues relevant for Asia to Asia’s European studies community, politics, and public; (2) to transfer Asian research in European Studies in general and on EU-Asian co-operation in particular to the European research area; and (3) to promote sustainable co-operation between universities and research institutions in the European research area and Asia.
After several years of persistent lobbying, ASEF convinced ASEM partners that such a situation was not to be taken lightly. In 2005, ASEF received the imprimatur to set up a European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network to correct this ‘imbalance’ in a constructive way. The ESiA network was set up to address the need for a sustainable and all-inclusive platform to promote European studies in the Asian region. The strategy employed by ESiA was to strengthen existing links between academics, institutions and networks in the Asian region as well as create new synergies between counterparts in both Asia and Europe. As ESiA’s constituency also consists of promising new European studies centres in countries such as Indonesia, Laos the Philippines and Vietnam, as well as European studies centres in Europe, ESiA was in a position to complement the work of other networks. By creating more opportunities for academic debate, stimulating greater knowledge transfer and cross-cultural understanding through tangible co-operation between European studies centres in Asia and Europe based on their concrete needs, and disseminating information on curriculum, research and other activities, ESiA ultimately aims to serve the interests of the European studies community in all ASEM countries.

It was decided that a concrete collaboration on a strategic area for European studies involving European studies centres in Asia would be the centerpiece of the ESiA network. ESiA’s flagship project, ‘EU through the Eyes of Asia’ is an unprecedented mobilisation and partnership of six prominent universities in five major countries in Asia, namely, the People’s Republic of China and Hong Kong; Japan; Korea; Thailand; and Singapore. This two-year undertaking is the first scientific study on the media, public and elite perceptions of the EU in Asia that was carried out on such a large scale and with such academic rigour. It is hoped that its complete findings which can be found in this book, will impact bi-regional policy dialogue in a meaningful way by providing a more informed evaluation of initiatives from the EU and facilitating the emergence of discourse on the perceptions of the EU by Asian academics. As a large part of the work was carried out in 2006 – the year of ten years of the ASEM process – some data on the perceptions of the ASEM process in Asia were also collected around the time of the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki, Finland.23

Even before this book was published, preliminary findings of the media survey attracted attention from various stakeholders, most notably from the EC. A few findings confirmed some generally perceived conjectures, for example, the lack of visibility of EU institutions beyond a few symbols. Some other results have however been more unexpected, for example, Finland, who in the latter

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23 The ASEM 6 Summit held in Helsinki, Finland on the theme “10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges – Joint Responses” celebrated ten years of the ASEM process and reflected the importance that Asian and European partners gave to a multilateral approach in the context of addressing specific global challenges.
half of 2006 was simultaneously holding the EU and ASEM chairs, was the most visible ASEM country in Asia and the Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen was found to be the most prominent EU personality in the media.24

However, apart from these specific examples, the study reveals that currently the EU has almost an invisible presence in the Asian consciousness despite it being a dominant economic, political and cultural partner for many Asian countries. Certainly, any public misperception or ill-informed media representation is potentially detrimental for the EU’s influence in the region, particularly if it results in an overly simplified Asian view of the EU’s capabilities.

The fact that there is some perception of Europe, on the other hand, also marks the gradual awareness in Asia of a European identity, which is a significant shift from a perception of Europe for the past few decades that had been monopolised by countries of the EU25. Considering the Asian public’s strong interest in economic and trade matters, the fact that the EU represents its member countries in the WTO and other trade negotiations is probably one of the most important reasons for this change. A more assertive EU foreign policy has also made an appreciable impact on Asia’s view of Europe; for example, its visible role in the negotiations to stop Iran’s uranium enrichment programme or its role in the Middle-East peace process. However, it is the creation of the euro in 2002 that remains the strongest symbol of the EU although it is the currency of only thirteen of the twenty-seven EU countries.

ASEM in the Eyes of ESiA

In addition to the striking findings on the perceptions of the EU in Asia, ASEF also harnessed the study to extract some preliminary data on the perceptions of the ASEM process in Asia, specifically in the six assigned study sites26.

Not surprisingly, in the media, the ASEM process was mainly perceived as a political process (rather than economic or social) and the ASEM 6 Summit was found to be the most visible ASEM event. The second most visible event was the ASEM Financial Ministers’ Meeting held in April 2006 followed by ASEM news related to ASEAN, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO, indicating the importance of the economic relations between the countries in the ASEM process. The most visible Asian ASEM country is China followed closely

24 In the first half of 2006, Mr. Xavier Solana, the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and thus the personification of European foreign policy, was the most famous EU face in EU-related media stories.
25 The United Kingdom (UK), France and Germany.
26 The timing of the study was arranged to coincide with the period before, during and shortly after the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki, Finland.
by Japan. The pitch of the news predominantly focuses on ASEM in relation to other countries (such as the host of a summit, developments on the sidelines or links to domestic issues), rather than ASEM itself.

While ASEM is viewed neutrally in media reporting, interviews showed that among influential individuals that do follow ASEM affairs, there is a tendency to view the process positively, with political elites in China and Japan emphasising ASEM’s role as a venue to promote multi-polarity and multilateralism in world affairs. Most elites see little impact on their own domestic affairs, however, business elites in general, have little or no knowledge of ASEM. While media elites generally are aware of ASEM, they are quicker to criticise the process.

According to the public survey in these six study sites, ASEM actions have the highest importance in Korea, followed by Singapore, China (Shanghai) and Thailand. In Japan and mostly in Hong Kong, ASEM actions have a low profile. Interestingly, despite the findings that media coverage of ASEM was highest in Singapore and lowest in Korea, public awareness of ASEM was high in Korea27 but low in Singapore. Anecdotal indications might suggest that general recognition of ASEM stems from Korea’s hosting of the ASEM 3 Summit in 2000 underlining the difficulty for the grouping to make a strong impact on the public consciousness unless a large, well-publicised action takes place to ‘bring it home’.

Certainly, the ASEM findings are nowhere near as conclusive as the rest of the study, however, these initial facts will hopefully shed light on some attitudes and opinions that the media, the public and the elite have toward ASEM in these five Asian countries. Similar to the misconceptions of the EU, misperceptions of ASEM based on inadequate knowledge by leaders of public opinion from the public, private and media sectors can lead to inappropriate policy choices. Thus, it would be useful to eventually carry out a more extensive study on this topic including all ASEM countries.

**The Future of the ESiA Network**

The purpose of this chapter is not to summarise the conclusions of this already very comprehensive study on the perceptions of the EU in Asia as the analysis will be more elaborately discussed in subsequent chapters. However, there are a few points that need to be highlighted about this study in the context of the future of ESiA.

The high-level of interest from stakeholders regarding the preliminary results of the “EU through the Eyes of Asia” has created a somewhat early success

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27 The highest level of awareness was in China (Shanghai).
for the ESiA network. There is now a strong impetus amongst other European studies centres in both Asia and Europe to co-operate in an ESiA project. This is certainly consistent with ESiA’s *raison d’etre*. As far as the study is concerned, already plans are underway to expand it beyond its initial scope in 2008 to include new partners in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. It is the intention of the ESiA network to be able to include all Asian ASEM countries in this study by 2010, thus paving the way for the creation of a continual barometer to measure the perceptions of the EU in Asia within the framework of ASEM.

In terms of contributions toward bi-regional policy dialogue, it is hoped that this study will provide further insight for European policy makers not just regarding their visibility and influence in the Asian region; but also how to better identify and define Europe for itself. Moreover, as subsequent chapters in this volume will demonstrate, despite the lack of a “common narrative”\textsuperscript{28} on the actual nature of European integration from the part of the EU and limited knowledge of European institutions and processes from the part of Asia, the EU continues to be a reference point for regional integration for Asia. In this case, the ASEM process has certainly contributed in a major way to create opportunities for the two regions to share experiences and knowledge on the topic. As Asia continues to tackle the various unique hurdles in the process of forming its own Asian identity through frameworks such as ASEAN, ASEAN+3, EAS and so forth, it is hoped that this study will further contribute to that process by providing a more accurate picture of how exactly the EU could be a reference point for regional integration in Asia.

Ultimately, however, the partners of the ESiA network will continue to seek ways to deepen European studies in universities across Asia in the most cost-efficient ways for stakeholders. Through its projects, networking meetings and online platforms, the ESiA network will hopefully facilitate the shaping of a sustainable critical mass of Asian students and researchers in the field of European studies who will continue to perpetuate the network’s objectives going forward.

\textsuperscript{28} Speech by Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the EC, 28 June 2005.
PART I

Introduction
CHAPTER 1

Martin Holland, Peter Ryan, Alojzy Z. Nowak and Natalia Chaban

Introduction: The EU through the Eyes of Asia

Fifty years since the Treaty of Rome, the European Union (EU) continues to realise Jean Monnet’s vision for a unified Europe. Spanning twenty-seven countries with a combined population of close to 500 million and a nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of €11.6 trillion, is the EU primarily a successful example of economic and political integration? Or is it also, and perhaps most of all, a community of values? According to European Commissioner Margot Wallström in her 2005 ‘Plan D’ initiative, an obstacle between the EU and Europe’s citizens is a lack of any ‘common narrative’ about the nature of European integration. She noted ‘the real problem in Europe is that there is no agreement or understanding about what Europe is for and where it is going’.

This absence of an EU consensus on the final goal of European integration – be it among policy-makers or ordinary citizens – has also created a confused and perplexing image for those outside the borders of the twenty-seven member states of the EU. As a result, the EU’s international role often appears ambiguous both within and outside the EU.

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new debate regarding the identity and the future of Europe. In the aftermath of the negative outcome of the referenda in France and the Netherlands on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, EU leaders called for a period of reflection during which a dialogue should take place in all member countries. Meanwhile, the integration process in Europe is still ongoing. The current controversy surrounding talks to include Ukraine and even more importantly, Turkey, in the process, only consolidates the dilemma faced by the EU leaders. EU citizens are increasingly questioning the grounds for further enlargement and it is argued that further integration in the region should be

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1 International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2007 Edition.
determined directly the actual member states rather than the so-called EU bureaucracy. Is the postulate of further enlargement in Europe a realistic one?

It is clear that the EU needs to rethink how it is being perceived by its constituency and to make a greater effort to explain its actions. However, what should be equally as important is how the EU is understood and seen from beyond its borders. Such knowledge may help to more clearly identify and define Europe for itself in this period of reflection. This is in fact why understanding how the EU is viewed externally was listed by the European Commission (EC) as one of its recent priorities. This was further underlined in April 2007 when four members of the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network were invited to brief Commissioner Janez Potočnik on the research findings contained in this publication. From its launch in 2005, the ESiA network has embraced the Commission’s imperative and sought to better communicate the EU to its Asian audience. One mechanism utilised by ESiA to achieve this goal has been the development and successful execution of the ‘EU in the Eyes of Asia’ project that forms the substance of this publication. Indeed, this inaugural project has become emblematic of ESiA’s relevance to the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and contributed to the profile of EU studies in Asia more generally.

The choice of EU perceptions as a research theme reflects both practical and conceptual motivations. It first began in a modest way in 2002 with a study just of New Zealand; it then developed in 2004-2005 to cover Thailand, Korea and Australia, and since 2006 has progressively expanded to include Thailand, South Korea, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Japan. At a policy analysis level, the surprising reality is that little reliable prior knowledge exists on this important topic prior to this initiative. Where information does exist it tends to be impressionistic, haphazard, ill-informed and lacking scientific empirical evidence on how Asian citizens and the media see the EU. This deficit appears remarkable when the EU’s international involvement with Asia is considered, both through region-to-region agreements (such as ASEM and EU-ASEAN relations) as well as on a ‘country-to-country’ basis. For all of the locations examined in this publication, the EU is either a significant or the most significant, economic partner and increasingly is seen as a partner for political dialogue. Conceptually, a focus

3 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and co-operation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission.

4 See http://www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz/appp/pilot.shtml

5 See http://www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz/appp/
Introduction: The EU through the Eyes of Asia

on perceptions helps to inform us about the global importance of the EU and how this is being interpreted outside of Europe. As noted in an influential 2002 report for the Commission, ‘Europe does not exist without non-Europe’ and ‘Europe can only be realised in the mirror of Others’\(^6\). To understand the EU itself we need to have an external reflection in order to interpret its meaning.

The approach taken in this research project is innovative and original. While some other studies have considered the EU’s periphery, such as Turkey and the Ukraine, in terms of European perceptions, as well as within the EU itself through the Eurobarometer, studies so distant from the EU are rare. The methodology of this study is multi-disciplinary in focus involving social science and humanities disciplines and has been successfully tested in the previous studies cited above. The research ran for eighteen months (January 2006 – July 2007), and involved media analysis as well as public and elite opinion. Most importantly, the analysis embraced the local language in each region and was not restricted to an English language medium. The local research teams used materials in their original languages which were subsequently transposed, for comparative purposes, into an English language dataset. In this way we believe we have successfully accessed what is locally perceived and communicated across the six research locations – Thailand, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Japan.

The research design underpinning this project incorporated three phases. The first phase explores images in the media; the second phase involved an opinion survey about public perceptions of the EU, while the third involved a series of interviews with selected political, economic and media elites. It is assumed that newspapers are still a major source, indeed the major source for forming political ideas and information, in the regions we have examined. It can be debated whether the Internet is going to supersede traditional print, requiring a modified methodology in future, but in the cases examined in 2006, newspapers, and not the Internet, remained the dominant information medium for Asian civil society.

The content of this publication is empirically rich and the research has thrown up a series of fundamental questions relating to the EU’s international identity and global role. Are there cognitive and communication gaps between the EU and the external world? What are the implications for the EU’s negotiation effectiveness and perception? And, what conclusions for the media and public diplomacy emerge? The audience for this publication straddles academics, students, politicians, officials and the media and the goals and expected results intentionally combine academic concerns with those of policy. Rather than repeat the methodology common across each of the studies reported in Chapters 3-10, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive description of the methods used, criteria and

concepts that construct the datasets. In order to follow the arguments within each of the country and thematic chapters, readers are urged to first inform themselves with this short and jargon-free methodological section.

Subsequent chapters which form Part II are case-studies on the perceptions of the EU in the six selected locations, which is the main focus of the ‘EU through the Eyes of Asia’ project. Dai Bingran of Fudan University argues that the perceptible influence of the news media on the images of the EU in Chinese society has resulted in economic and trade issues clearly prioritised in all three public discourses. Indeed, since 2004, the EU has become China’s biggest trading partner, and China is now the EU’s second largest trading partner just behind the US. However, as Dai argues, the ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ between the EU and China is based much more than just a trade in goods alone. Considering the importance and volume of EU-China interactions, that there is perhaps room to raise other aspects in the EU’s profile in the country.

In Hong Kong, relations with the United Kingdom (UK) are currently particularly strong as a direct result of the one-and-a-half century colonial rule. However, the dynamics of its interactions with the EU is constantly changing, mainly due to the rapid economic growth in China as well as the recent EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007. Similar to Dai’s observation, Kenneth Chan of Hong Kong Baptist University discovered that the perceptions of Hong Kong citizens regarding the EU are also mainly economic. Indeed, the perceptions of the general public do differ from corresponding perceptions in the eyes of the elites, and the media possess certain correspondences and dis-correspondences with the perceptions of both the elites and the public. However, there are more similarities than differences. The EU frequently appeared in the images of all three sectors as an economic ‘giant,’ but with general doubt regarding the EU’s international political capacity.

During the twelve months of media analysis in Korea, again, trade and economic issues were among the leading topics in the news outlets observed by Sunghoon Park’s team at Korea University. The EU is considered an important market and investment zone for Korea and there is much interest in the on-going free trade agreement (FTA) negotiation between the two entities. Interestingly, the EU or its member states were frequently mentioned in news articles on North Korea even though the actual roles of the EU and its various components were not significant compared to those of the United States (US) or other Six-Party Talks members. This is perhaps why diplomatic relations is one area where Korean elites thought the EU could be an important partner in the future. Additionally, it was hoped by many that Korea’s foreign relations would become more diversified and balanced as the relationship between EU and Korea became closer.

Toshiro Tanaka of Keio University established that although the EU is a key economic partner and is growing in importance as a political counterpart, actions
of the EU in Japan, particularly in comparison with the US, and recently China, are not highly profiled. Indeed, the EU was seen as one of its ‘good’ partners; and there exists a broad range of perceptions about the EU within Japanese society which are often either positive or neutral. However, Tanaka argues that there is a tendency in Japan to undervalue the EU’s global role. This feeling of ‘indifference’ is the most pronounced in Japan compared to the other countries observed.

In the Singapore media, both EU political and economic news were given equal weight, with a number visible EU-related issues, notably, the Iranian nuclear development programme, interest rates, the Middle-East peace process, World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, the ‘Danish cartoon issue’, and avian flu. Barnard Turner of the National University of Singapore noted that while most reporting was found to be either neutral or positive for these categories, the EU’s image was more often assessed negatively in items relating to social affairs, Islamic issues and with regard to avian flu. Nevertheless, in terms of importance to Singapore, the EU ranked poorly, being ranked only sixth after China, the United States, Asia as a whole, Japan, and India. Turner argued that creating interest in EU topics may be a good starting point to shifting perceptions as the relationship between the EU and Singapore was viewed overwhelmingly positive by the Singapore public and the elite survey noted that Singaporeans are willing to increase their knowledge of European culture. He went on to suggest that perhaps there has been too much emphasis placed on the political and economic aspects of EU and too little on its social and cultural aspects which could be of more interest.

It is interesting to note that in Thailand, the EU is portrayed most prominently as an economic and political power. The EU’s growing importance in international trade as well as the strength of the euro compared to the US dollar is acknowledged as a topic of interest. However, current EU-Thailand relations seem to be undermined by suspicions regarding the EU’s request to formally monitor Thailand’s upcoming elections. Apirat Petchsiri of Chulalongkorn University argues that this demonstrates the relevance of the EU to Thailand as an international actor, albeit one that is disproportionately involved in its external relations. Petchsiri suggests that until a new democratic government is established in Thailand, the state of Thai-EU relations will remain uncertain.

Part III draws together a number of common comparative themes from the six case-studies discussed previously in this volume. In the first chapter, Martin Holland of National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) discusses the topic of whether the EU is perceived overall as a meaningful political and economic actor. Generally speaking, there was limited media coverage on the EU in the countries examined. However, when discussed, the EU was predominantly described and interpreted in both political and economic terms, with different countries offered differential balances and local emphases. Among the striking
findings was a common emerging view of the EU as a global political actor ‘somewhere else’ in the world and the recognition given to Javier Solana as the ‘face’ of the EU externally. Holland argued that the emergence of the EU as a global political actor in the Asian media is a welcome sign of multidimensionality in EU news reporting. However, the EU is primarily reported in a traditional sense, as an economic actor. Not surprisingly, the euro remains the strongest symbol of European identity and integration despite the fact that it is the currency of only thirteen out of twenty-seven EU member countries.

In the next chapter, Natalia Chaban of the NCRE analysed images of the EU as a social and environmental actor as constructed by the Asian public discourses in news media and the general public. Chaban observed that a peculiar media framing of EU social and environmental actions by the Asian newsmakers which was invisible and dispersed produces a rather distant, confusing and indifferent portrayal of the EU, which correlated to the general Asian public’s indifference of the EU’s social and environmental roles. Such imagery is argued to be counterproductive to an effective dialogue between the EU and Asia.

This publication is the latest in a series of research projects undertaken by ESiA partners. The findings reported here will help to develop a wider knowledge about the international perceptions of the EU: the external image of the EU constitutes a fundamental component of an ongoing process of EU identity linking the perception of ‘Others’ and self-perception. The analysis provides scientifically valid feedback that can better assist informed policy and suggests recommendations to the EU, third countries and the media, contributing to more effective public diplomacy. Misperception or ill-informed views of the EU’s global role puts the EU at risk of being overlooked or undervalued by third countries with whom the EU is a significant partner. Similarly, low awareness of the EU exposes third countries to the risk of slipping under the EU’s ‘radar’. Moreover, this publication is just one mechanism that will be used to disseminate the results of the research among academic communities and EU policy-makers. The dataset that has been collected will be available from ESiA for secondary analysis by academics and graduates alike throughout ASEM. Furthermore, complementary scholarly publications, media publications, seminars, conferences and workshops targeting young scholars, academics, political practitioners and media professionals will be organised in order to increase awareness and access to ESiA’s on-going research on EU perceptions in our region. Hopefully, the recommendations that emerge from this study will go some way in addressing these key questions and in demonstrating how the EU is understood and seen from third countries.

Looking ahead somewhat ambitiously, in 2008 this project will be extended to Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines and it is envisaged that eventually the research will cover all Asian ASEM partners. The complexity of such crossna-
tional studies, let alone securing the funding base, remains a constant challenge. The academic contributors to this volume collectively constitute some of the most significant and established international perceptions researchers and their individual research assistants have benefited greatly from their mentoring. In keeping with ESiA’s inclusive philosophy, participation in future phases of this research remains open to all eligible interested parties.
This short chapter provides the basic methodological techniques and guidelines that informed this multidisciplinary and cross-national research project. The difficulties associated with such ambitious multilingual research are considerable: however, the multiple methodologies employed here and the experience of conducting several earlier ‘EU Perceptions’ studies elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region provides a high level of confidence that can be placed on the empirical findings. The three methodological elements – media analysis, public opinion surveys and elite interviews are described below. Inevitably, all methodologies involve compromises largely derived from limited resources, and this study is no different. During the life of this two-year project the research has involved the employment of ten research assistants across the six study locations, engaged a similar number of supervisory academics and involved four regional workshops (in Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong and Manila). In addition, the public opinion survey was sub-contracted to a professional company. The budget, while generous from ASEF and participating ESiA institutions, was not inexhaustible: the resulting compromises in methodology are, we believe, comparatively minor and do not detract from the scientific value of this pioneering empirical analysis of EU perceptions within Asia.

Media Methodology

In the formation of public opinion about foreign issues, ordinary people are argued to be largely passive targets of political text or talk,¹ and often do not have the necessary knowledge and beliefs to challenge the discourses or information they are exposed to.² Thus, the structured knowledge about the media’s coverage of the EU in Asia provides an opportunity to assess how the international community approaches the processes of European integration and whether

it sees the EU as a political, economic, social and/or environmental power. The importance of assessing the images of international actors in the news media has been noted by Galtung and Ruge who claimed that, ‘the regularity, ubiquity and perseverance of news media will in any case make them first-rate competitors for the number-one position as international image-former’.3

The data for this study came from the daily monitoring of six prime-time television newscasts and eighteen reputable newspapers over the twelve months of 2006 in six locations in Asia. To identify the EU element in a news story and thus include it in the media database, the item had to reference the ‘EU’ (or ‘European Union’) at least once, even if only briefly. The research was explicitly EU focused; consequently, items that were about individual Member States without any EU reference were excluded from analysis. This research also assessed media visibility and framing of the concept ASEM (search terms in this case were ‘ASEM’ and ‘Asia-Europe Meeting’). The total number of items identified across all outlets in all locations (8,534) therefore provided a comprehensive and maximal assessment of the visibility of the EU and ASEM in the news media. The media outlets analysed were: CCTV–1, People’s Daily, China Daily and International Finance News (mainland China); TVB, Oriental Daily, South China Morning Post and HK Economic Journal (Hong Kong SAR); Channel 8, The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao and The Business Times (Singapore); TITV, Thai Rath, Bangkok Post and The Manager (Thailand); NHK, Yomiuri Shimbun, The Japan Times and Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Japan); and, KBS, Chosun Daily, Korea Herald and Maeil Business (South Korea). The research team who were responsible for gathering the data were formally trained during a pre-project training workshop (held at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok). A key methodological strength of the project was the inter-coder reliability that was established during the week-long training and, of course, that all primary analysis was conducted by native mother-tongue speakers in each location (although for the purposes of comparative analysis the Thai, Korean, Chinese and Japanese texts were subsequently coded in a lingua-franca, English). Joint workshops involving the research team were also undertaken on a regular basis to enhance comparability and consistency.

The year 2006 was a year which could be described as a ‘routine’ year for the EU internally. It did not feature any major EU initiatives or reforms – in contrast to ‘exceptional’ years such as 2004 which featured a higher share of domestic political events (enlargement, European Parliament elections and appointment of a new European Commission). EU coverage in a ‘routine’ year was assumed to not be heightened, and political reportages about internal developments were

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believed not to skew the balance from economic, social and environmental coverage of the EU. The only exception to this context related to an important event in the EU-Asia dialogue – the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki in September 2006. This event (and ASEM’s people-to-people mission) had the potential to raise the media visibility of the EU in the six Asian locations; however, while as such initiatives ‘can undoubtedly help to cast a more favourable and positive overall framework and environment, much will continue to be done – and indeed needs to be done – at the level of bilateralism, whether between individual European and Asia Pacific countries or between their companies and people.’

The media methodology for this project drew from that of the groundbreaking 1985 UNESCO comparative media study, as well as a series of pioneering investigations of EU visibility in the EU media, and of the EU’s imagery in the Asia-Pacific public discourses. This study adopted an overarching discourse

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4 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.


analysis approach, which hypothesised an EU external communication deficit and addressed the lack of a comprehensive account of EU and ASEM external imagery. Incorporating this aspect enabled the analysis to systematically survey the EU’s and ASEM’s images as created and disseminated by external – and in this case specifically Asian – public discourses. According to Samur, this:

constructivist approach to international relations is especially appropriate in the case of the EU, because the EU aspires to be more than an international society: a supranational one. This means that the EU needs to create its own norms, values and practices to a greater extent than any international society.⁹

This current study’s methodology involved quantitative and qualitative measures, and it is the combination of the two that added a particular sophistication to the analysis. Quantitative tools included the basic level of coverage of the EU and ASEM in the news media, the monthly distribution, type of media outlet, information sources, and the placement and length of articles. Two qualitative measures, namely, the notion of frames and the concept of evaluation, were employed in the analysis. The former notion – frames – is amongst the most numerous in its interpretations by communication scholars. Yet, in spite of its polysemic nature, 


this concept is a widely used operationalisation in current studies of the EU’s representations in the Union’s internal media discourses. This study followed the definition of framing suggested by Entman who claimed it to be the ‘selection of some aspects of perceived reality to make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendations.’

The notion of a frame was used in this study to categorise whether the EU was being presented (traditionally) as an economic actor, a political actor (something that is possibly emerging), a social actor (setting social norms, values, legislation, etc.) or perhaps being understood internationally now more as an environmental actor. All of the data generated by the project used these four frames to describe the media framing of the EU and thereby facilitated the analysis of how the various media in different countries interpret the EU and ASEM.

Media representations of the EU and ASEM as an actor were further analysed using the second qualitative measure – evaluation. This notion, while contentious and despite its ambiguity, is widely used in the related communication studies. The case studies presented in this volume involved the assessment and coding of the explicit judgment and/or tone of an article towards the EU and ASEM by native speaking coders. If the article was neutral towards the EU and ASEM in approach and style, it was coded 0; if it was negative, it was coded –1; and if it was positive, it was coded +1. Rigorous training and cross-coding assessments were undertaken to ensure the coding reliability of this variable.

Evaluation was considered to be a tool used to trigger emotional responses from news audiences and readers and thus is a key for ‘interpreting discursive representations’. The inclusion of evaluation as an important affective component in discourse analysis rests on the assumption formulated by Ross who addressed the notions of emotions and affects in international relations: ‘Whereas feelings are subjective ideas, affects cut across individual subjects and forge collective associations from socially induced habits and memories. Moreover, they are experienced by decision-makers and publics alike.’

The focus of centrality measured the visibility of the EU and ASEM in a particular article or report. Simply, how important was the EU/ASEM within that

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10 See, for example, Claes de Vreese, *Framing Europe*; Jochen Peter, et al., ‘EU Politics on Television News’.


article: was it the major focus of that article, was it secondary and/or comparative, or was it mentioned only in passing, and thus locating the EU/ASEM as a minor actor? This qualitative assessment was subsequently classified thus creating a quantitative reality. In a similar vein, the focus of domesticity assessed the context and relevance of the EU/ASEM within a given news item. Was the report about the EU and the locality in which the press was read (local domesticity in mainland China, SAR Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Thailand), was the news item about the EU itself (EU domesticity), or was it about the EU involved externally elsewhere in the world (third country domesticity)?

This comprehensive and internationally benchmarked methodology creates a high degree of confidence and reliability in the media analysis. Other methodological qualifications notwithstanding, the validity of this methodology is broadly acceptable and has been rigorously executed.

Public Opinion Survey Methodology

Previous studies of Asia-Pacific attitudes towards the EU have used CATI telephone survey methodology, however, recent research has indicated that professionally constructed on-line panels can provide an acceptably high level of accuracy in public opinion surveys. In general, online access panels are representative of the online population in each country, although not always wholly representative of the entire national population. For Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Japan, where the online penetration is greater than 60%, online survey results can be considered representative of the entire population as the behaviour of the online population is the same as that of the total population in non-technology product categories (especially where the validity of the sample is enhanced by using quotas on age, gender, internet usage and income, for example). For China and Thailand, where the internet penetration is around 35%, it cannot be as safely assumed that an online survey would be wholly comparable to a nationally representative telephone sample.

While a compromise in some ways, the level of internet penetration in the six locations was considered to be acceptably high: consequently, the chosen

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15 The degree of centrality of news used in this paper is similar to the definition used by Deirdre Kevin, *Europe in the Media*.

approach used an on-line household panel survey of 400 respondents in each location, with the fieldwork conducted in November 2006 (including a pilot phase prior to administering the survey between 14–20 November, 2006). The sample size was dictated by budgetary constraints and gave a ±4.9% degree of accuracy. Each sample was stratified by age (18–64) and gender for each local population. Identical questionnaires (comprising 16 questions plus demographics, with four open ended questions including transcribed verbatim) translated into local languages were used across all six locations to elicit public opinion. The questionnaire targeted the study of the perceptions of the concepts EU and ASEM in the six chosen Asian locations. An established Asia-Pacific survey company, TNS-Global.com, were contracted to administer the fieldwork and collect the data ensuring a very high level of methodological precision. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, while the extensive verbatim answers in the open-ended questions were assessed qualitatively. Box 1 provides two illustrations of the questions asked and the online format employed.

A number of concerns related to the Chinese data need to be acknowledged which may detract from the comparability of Chinese data to a certain degree. First, the fieldwork in mainland China was delayed by six weeks and one question was removed from the survey on the insistence of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Second, the Chinese online sample grossly over-represented those with higher education in comparison with the other locations: some 60% claimed university-level education. Third, age was skewed with one-third aged over forty-five. Fourth, 80% of respondents were ‘professionals’ with two-thirds earning at least Yuan 60,000 a year. Lastly, men were over-represented by a ratio of 52/48.

**Elite Interview Methodology**

Turning to the elite interview methodology, the sampling strategy, data collection methodology, and data analysis techniques were chosen to guarantee the ‘output of the rigorous and reliable data which could be used in providing evidence-based policy recommendations’, and would thereby ensure a reliable measure of the EU–Asia dialogue. These surveys of elite opinion of the EU and ASEM were conceived as a series of ‘snap-shots’ of perceptions across time as well as across diverse elite groups. This approach corresponded to the goals of

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17 The online respondents were drawn from TNS’s existing bank of panellists.
18 English for Singapore, Thai for Thailand, Korean for Korea, Japanese for Japan, Simplified Chinese for Shanghai, and traditional Chinese for Hong Kong.
the project – to identify the comprehensive range of perceptions of and attitudes towards the EU and ASEM that exist in Asian public discourse.

A target of thirty-two interviews in each location was set (eight for each elite sector – business, political, media and civil society). Information was collected through face-to-face interviews that lasted up to one hour in duration; this methodology leant towards qualitatively rich discursive comments and a wider utilisation of open-ended responses in contrast to the more structured online public opinion surveys. In practice only 154 interviews were completed by the end of September 2007 and the incomplete nature of the sample may detract somewhat from the broad conclusions that can be drawn (however, it should be noted that for five of the six locations a total of 149 out of a possible 160 interviews were completed).20 The exception was Thailand: as noted in the Thai case-study, the military coup in Thailand and the resulting media priorities and democratic constraints resulted in a greater reluctance by Thai elites to participate in the 2007 study. In contrast, an earlier study from 2005 was based on twenty Thai elite interviews, indicating that in normal times Thais are no less likely to participate in such EU perceptions research than any of their Asian neighbours.21

The sampling strategy for the elite interviews involved the selection of key informants in each location and across the four designated sectors. This approach allowed for a better categorisation and integration of the results and provided an insight into the nature of the current links that domestic elites had with the EU, as well as their personal knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards the EU and ASEM. The interviews took place in relevant political and economic centres – Bangkok, Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong – during July-September 2007. Interviewees were given the option of their comments either being anonymous or associated with them directly. The selected political elite individuals were identified from members of national parliaments or equivalents, representing different political views. Media elites were identified as the editors/news directors and lead reporters of the media outlets that were the leaders in the EU coverage (as identified in the project’s 2006 media analysis database). This database was also used to identify relevant civil society elite members, and finally, business elites were identified as the members of national business round tables and other official business networks.

20 Thirty-two interviews across the four elite sectors were conducted in each of three locations (Hong Kong, Singapore and China); twenty-seven were completed in S. Korea, twenty-six in Japan but only five in Thailand. The Thai figure was a consequence of the political turmoil created by the military coup during which period the interviews were to be conducted. Cumulatively, forty-two political elite interviews were conducted, thirty-eight media interviews while thirty-seven civil society and thirty-seven Business sector interviews were completed.

21 See, Martin Holland, et. al., EU in the Views of the Asia-Pacific Elites, NCRE Research Series No.5, 2005.
Individual face-to-face semi-structured on-record interviews were employed as the data collection technique.\textsuperscript{22} This technique has proven to be particularly effective for approaching ‘key informants’ – it is more personal, flexible, respects privacy and status, and can generate greater openness and trust between interviewer and interviewee.\textsuperscript{23} The study used two versions of the questionnaire – one for business, political and civil society elites, and another slightly modified for media elites. The question order rotated depending on the flow of conversation.

The study’s analysis utilised qualitative interpretative methodology capitalising on its strong insight and interpretation. To improve the reliability of this particular attitudinal research, the collected data was analysed using content analysis methodology incorporating cognitive semantics tools. The employed methodology revealed the categories that ‘mapped’ the concept ‘EU’ via re-construing mental ‘schemata’ of the concept.

Concluding Remarks

Rigorous and systematic methodologies employed in the three stages of this project – media analysis, general public survey and elite interview – ensured a thematic connection between the stages and built grounds for valid comparisons. This research showed that important and revealing comparisons are possible not only geographically, but also across time – two participants in this project were members of the previous ‘EU Perceptions’ studies in the Asia-Pacific, namely Thailand and South Korea. Unique longitudinal data on the dynamics of EU perceptions in these two Asian countries points to a need for more studies where the perceptions and images of the EU and ASEM are compared over time. A wider geographical base will further enhance the validity of the inquiry. By building a benchmark of ‘EU external perceptions’ studies in the world, this project advocates the relevancy and necessity of such research for both the EU and its international counterparts – and the changing roles of international actors in a rapidly globalizing environment demand that we see the \textit{Self} through the eyes of the \textit{World}.

\textsuperscript{22} This particular method of information gathering was preferred to focus group discussions (a method used by A.A.R.S. Progetti S.r.l. in a 2003 study of elite perceptions on the EU in South East Asia). Schedule flexibility in arranging face-to-face interviews, undivided attention to the interviewee by the researcher during the conversation, and more open atmosphere during the individual interviews decided for that particular method against the focus group option.

BOX 1

Q2
How important to (your country’s) future do you consider the following regions are, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important?
Please select one answer in each row

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmer: list has to be rotated</th>
<th>Not at all important 1</th>
<th>Very important 5</th>
<th>Don’t know (Hide)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia (excluding Japan and China)</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe (including UK)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>South America</td>
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<td>China</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q3
When thinking about the term ‘the European Union’, what three thoughts come to your mind?
Please enter one thought per box below

[Programmer: Probe once if ANY of the text boxes is left blank.]
You have not provided answer for all three thoughts. Please fill in the missing boxes accordingly.

1. ________________________________

2. ________________________________

3. ________________________________
PART II

COUNTRY STUDIES
CHAPTER 3

Dai Bingran and Zhang Shuangquan*

EU Perceptions in China

The speed and intensity of the contemporary EU-China dialogue is developing a prominent international profile. Intrigued by the growing importance and volume of EU-China interactions, this chapter aims to trace the dominant EU images existing in the Chinese news media, general public opinion and the views of Chinese elites. The results of the daily monitoring of the three most popular and reputable Chinese newspapers and one prime-time television news bulletin in their representations of the EU to the Chinese audience will be presented. The period of observation encompassed twelve months (January 1 – December 31 2006). Subsequently, the chapter presents selected findings of the public opinion survey, which took place in China in 2006. The sample included 400 respondents. Finally the results of interviews with a range of Chinese elite, which were carried out in China in 2007, will be reported.

Introduction

China is important to Europe and Europe is important to China. In 2004, the enlarged European Union (EU) became China’s biggest trading partner, and China is now the EU’s second largest trading partner just behind the US. Trade and economic co-operation are of course a fundamental part of the relationship, but the “comprehensive strategic partnership”1 – as it has become known – is based on much more than a trade in goods alone. Despite the extent of these

* Zhang Shuangquan is a PhD candidate of Fudan University in China, and a PhD candidate of Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, and is also affiliated with University of Shanghai Science and Technology. Dai Bingran is a Professor in the Centre for European Studies of Fudan University in China. Special thanks must also go to Dr. Natalia Chaban, Deputy Director, National Centre for Research on Europe for her assistance with the chapter.

relations, however, there is little information about how the EU is perceived in China. By investigating the leading images of the EU in the Chinese news media, among the general public and a variety of Chinese elites, this chapter aims to address this lack of insight.

**Media Analysis – Key Findings**

With a comparative aspect serving as a major organising principle of the project, the content analysis of the media production in the study had to involve a limited sample in order to guarantee the realistic execution of the research. Correspondently, three leading Chinese newspapers and one television newscast were chosen for the study. The choice of the newspapers was led by a consideration of the targeted readership, namely, a *popular* newspaper (one which is intended to be read by a wide audience and is distributed nationally), a *business* newspaper (one which is used by representatives of business community as a source of reliable current information), and an *English-language* newspaper (one which is read by an educated and cosmopolitan group of locals in order to improve their English language skills, as well as by foreigners learning about the internal Chinese matters from outside). The choice of the television newscast was ruled by its reputable status and national outreach. Respectively, the media sample for China included the *People’s Daily*, the most important official newspaper in China; the *International Finance News*, one of the most popular business newspapers in China; and the *China Daily*, China’s first and most popular English-language newspaper. China Central Television (CCTV-1) (and specifically its prime-time news bulletin) was chosen for television monitoring owing to the fact that this channel has the largest outreach in the country, drawing an average audience of 1.18 billion people.

The following section presents the leading trends in the Chinese media representations of the EU in terms of the volume of the EU coverage, the focus of EU images’ domestication, the intensity of the EU media representations, evaluations assigned to the EU and the leading topics in the framing of EU images.

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3 China Daily was established on June 1, 1981.
Volume of Coverage

The volume of news reporting the EU differed between the two media – newspapers and television. While the volume of the daily coverage of the EU fluctuated across twelve months in the three newspapers, the print media presented on average more news stories on the EU than television did (see Table 1). China’s most popular newspaper, People’s Daily, presented an average of fifty-seven news stories referencing the EU per month. The two other newspapers also presented comparatively high volumes of EU news coverage – fifty news stories per month on average in case of the English-language newspaper, China Daily, and forty-six in the business newspaper case. In contrast, the prime-time bulletin television news bulletin on CCTV-1 featured a more modest volume of EU news stories, with an average of only twelve new items per month.5

Table 1: Number of EU News in the Chinese News Media
(December 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<td>74</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int’l Finance News</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Daily</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV-1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus of Domesticity

While the number of news items in the various media outlets fluctuated from month to month, the distribution of the foci of domesticity in the EU representations remained fairly proportional (Figures 1 and 2). Once again, the two different media also displayed two different patterns in presenting the EU to their audiences. In the case of the three newspapers, the proportion of news items presenting the EU within the context of either a third country or the local domestic context were similar, both around 41%. In the case of television news coverage of the EU, on the other hand, the EU was consistently framed as an actor acting only in the context of the third party; a focus which accounted for almost 63% of all television news items. The EU focused news items and the news where the EU was localised within the Chinese context were comparable, accounting

5 However, this number in China was exceptionally high when compared with other locations in the study.
for 18% and 19% of the total coverage respectively. It shows that on television EU as an actor in the context of the third party is a dominant way to frame the EU, while in the newspapers it is more balance between the third party and the local domestic focus. In the both cases, news in which the EU itself is the focus accounted for the smallest percentage.

**Figure 1:** Focus of Reporting the EU in Chinese Newspapers

**Figure 2:** Focus of Reporting EU on Chinese Television News

![Figure 1](image1.png)

![Figure 2](image2.png)
Degree of Centrality

In contrast to both the volume and the focus of domesticity, in the degree of EU centrality to the news item, both media presented very similar patterns. News items which presented the EU as the primary focus of the news item were the least common, accounting for only around 18% of the total in both media. Instead, the EU as a minor focus dominated with 52%, followed by the EU as the secondary focus of the news item with around 30% (Figures 3 and 4).

**Figure 3: Centrality of the EU in Chinese Newspapers**

**Figure 4: Centrality of the EU on Chinese Television News**
Arguably, the low number of news stories presenting the EU as the leading focus of the news items indicates that much of the information on the EU in the Chinese news media has not featured very detailed reports on the EU, preferring instead to reference the EU in a more fleeting manner.

Evaluations

This study used three indexes for assessing the evaluations of the EU news; namely, positive, neutral, and negative. It was found that the EU’s news presentations in both news media were predominantly without evaluation, with neutral evaluations accounting for 83% of the total EU news in Chinese newspapers and 98% on Chinese television news (see Figures 5 and 6). There were no negative assessments found in the EU news on television. Such results arguably indicate that EU-China relationship perceived to be largely stable and cooperative, which is in line with EU-China’s comprehensive strategic partnership.6

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When framing the EU’s actions in the news during 2006, the two media were observed to put differing accents on their news presentations (Figures 7 and 8). The EU as an economic power was the dominant frame in the print media outlets (with 44%), while in the television news media, the EU as a political power led the framing, accounting for 61% of all EU news stories. The latter frame was the second most frequent in the newspapers, accounting for around 39% of all EU print news, and the EU as a social affairs actor was the least visible (comprising only 18% of the total print news volume). In television news, the EU as a social affairs actor was slightly more common than the EU as an economic power, with 22% and 17% for each frame respectively.

Within the frame ‘the EU as a political power’, both of the monitored media concentrated their attention on representing the EU as an audible voice in the international arena, rather than focusing their reporting on the EU’s internal political developments. In 2006, in the political affairs frame, 83% of the newspapers news stories presented the EU as an actor in external politics. Television news presented even a higher share of political affairs news with such a framing – 90%. Within the political affairs frame, the two most visible news themes were the EU’s negotiations towards an anti-nuclear deal with Iran and news coverage of the ongoing EU-China dialogue. Arguably, these particular media framings
shape an image of the EU as being an active international agent, who prefers negotiating techniques, as well as an important and respected interlocutor for China, with whom it is engaged in a comprehensive and strategic dialogue. It is suggested that the complex developments within the EU’s internal political landscape are too complicated and multilayered to be thoroughly presented for the international news consumer. Thus, the news representing such developments is afforded a reduced visibility by local news makers, and the more dynamic and arguably ‘high-profile’ international actions are instead prioritised.

In the frame ‘the EU as an economic power’, the most visible images of the EU in newspaper reports were the actions of the EU as a trade power (23% of all newspaper news within the economic affairs frame), followed by reports on the EU’s actions in the fields of industry, business, and finance (18% of the total economically-framed news for each theme). These same three themes were also the most prominent ones in the television news coverage. Yet in the television news coverage, the trade and industry themes led with 24% each, while business and finance topics occupied 20% of the news space. Within the economic news frame, the most frequently reported events were those relating to EU-China trading relations, as well as around the EU’s actions in the field of energy production. The priority given to the former theme is unsurprising as trade and economic cooperation are a fundamental part of the relationship between the two parties. In 2004, the enlarged EU became China’s biggest trading partner,
and China is now the EU’s second largest trading partner, second only to the United States (US).\textsuperscript{7}

In the social affairs frame (the least visible one out of the three in both monitored media), the most evident news themes were those addressing the developments in the EU social legislation. Those topics were followed by the news coverage of the EU’s dealings with health (specifically, the EU’s reaction to the avian flu epidemic), education and research enterprises, and the EU’s actions in areas of migration. Other themes (EU environmental policies, welfare, multiculturalism, crime, as well as entertainment and sports reports) were marginalised. This arguably shows that in the affairs beyond politics and economy, the Chinese media have a slightly higher interest in EU social legislation and health issues, and have less interest in environmental policies and sport events.

\textbf{Figure 8:} Information Inputs of EU News in Chinese Television News

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Public Opinion Survey – Key Findings}

In addition to examining how the EU is presented in the Chinese news media, it is helpful to assess the images of the EU that are identified in Chinese public opinion, so as to more fully account for the EU’s representations within Chinese

society. In 2006, a survey of 400 Chinese citizens was undertaken to assess the perceptions of the Chinese public towards EU. The subsequent section discusses the leading findings of this survey.

**China’s Most Important Partners**

Survey participants were asked, “Which overseas countries or regions do you think, are the most important partners for China?” Amongst them, 77.8% of the respondents considered the US to be the most important partner for China, followed by the EU, Russia and Asia in general (71.8%, 67.3% and 59.8% respectively). Figure 9 presents the detailed results of this question.

**Figure 9: The Current Most Important Partners to China**

**Figure 10: The most Important Partners to China in Future**
Following the previous question, respondents were asked to assess the comparative importance of the EU for China in the future, using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was not important at all and 5 was very important. In this regard Europe\(^8\) was ranked as the most important partner for China in the future with a score of 4.46, while North America (including the US) fell to third position, just after Russia. (Figure 10). The results illustrate that in Chinese public opinion, EU is arguably perceived as growing in importance.

The State of EU-China Relations

Survey respondents were asked how they would rate the current state of the relationship between the EU and China (Figure 11). Amongst them, 43.8% of respondents believed that the relationship was improving, while 47.8% respondents viewed it as being steady. Only three people out of 400 considered the relationship to be worsening. Such results indicate that in Chinese eyes at least, the EU-Chinese relationship is seen as positive and often promising, as consistent perhaps with the media results which presented a frequent picture of the EU and China as highly engaged partners.

\[^{8}\text{Here, Europe included the EU, UK and other European continent countries.}\]
The Impact of EU-Related Events

Figure 12 depicts to what extent respondents felt that specific EU issues impacted on China. Participants were asked, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no impact at all and 10 is a very large impact, how much impact do you think the following event/issue will have on China in the near future? The leading EU issues/events were perceived to be the EU’s dealings with China, the EU as a trading partner, and policies of the European Central Bank (ECB). Such results emphasize that in the perceptions of the Chinese public, the EU’s key areas of impact for China in the future are considered to be primarily economic matters.

![Figure 12: Perceived Impact of EU-Events/Issues](image)

Personal and Professional Links with EU Member States

The study accounted for the degree of individual interaction with people in the EU itself by asking respondents “which of the following 25 EU countries do have personal or professional connections/ties with?” Amongst them, 38.5% of respondents had personal or professional connections with the United Kingdom (UK), while Germany and France were the second and the third ones with 35.8% and 32% of respondents respectively. It shows the big EU countries have more individual interactions with the people in China.
Regularity of Access to Foreign News

Survey participants were asked how often they accessed the media for news on foreign affairs (Figure 14). Almost half of all respondents stated that they accessed the media for foreign news daily, while 38% respondents claimed to check it several times a week. The combination of these two is around 84%, indicating a high frequency among Chinese people for regularly accessing the media for foreign news. If EU wants to raise its profile, it is thus very important for EU to increase its exposure in the media.
The study was interested in which specific media the Chinese public use for accessing information on the EU, and Figure 15 shows the results of this enquiry. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the top three media accessed by the Chinese public for news on the EU were television news, newspapers, and the Internet. Other television programmes, magazine articles and radio news were the other main sources of EU news.

The ASEM 6 Summit in the News Media

To explore the public opinion regarding the Asia Europe Meeting\(^9\) (ASEM) 6 Summit which was held in Helsinki, Finland from the 10\(^{th}\) to the 11\(^{th}\) September 2006, respondents were asked: “The ASEM 6 Summit was held in Helsinki, Finland this year. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘not at all’ and 5 is ‘extensively’, to what extent did you follow the coverage of this meeting in the news media?” Figure 16 depicts the results of this question. As can be seen, 5.8% of respondents claimed to have paid no attention to the ASEM Summit, while 7% were not aware of it at all. Around 16% of respondents stated that they followed the meeting extensively, and more than 70% of respondents claimed that they received some information about the meeting through their preferred news media.

\(^9\) The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.
Spontaneous EU Images

In order to assess what images the Chinese public has of the EU, respondents were asked, “when thinking about the term ‘the European Union’, what three thoughts come to your mind?” Figure 17 depicts the results of this question, with the varied responses clustered into more general groupings. Overwhelmingly, the leading image for respondents was the euro, while EU enlargement and trading relations with China were the next most common. Broadly, the results of this particular enquiry indicate that the euro is a symbol of the EU for the Chinese public.
Elite Perceptions of the EU

The final aspect of the research was to investigate the leading perceptions of the Chinese elites towards the EU. In-depth interviews were conducted with thirty-two elites, distributed into four groups: political elites, business elites, civil society elites, and media elites, with eight elites within each group.

The EU as a Great Power

In order to assess how Chinese elites perceived the EU’s global influence, interviewees were asked, “Do you see the EU as a great power?” Twenty-nine out of the thirty-two interviewees stated that they perceived the EU to be a great power. Among those, six of the eight business elites said with no reservation that they considered the EU as a great power, while seven of the eight political elites concurred. All of the civil society and media elites believed the EU to be a great power. However, when interviewees were asked specifically about the EU’s political efficacy, and whether they perceived the EU to be a leader in international politics, seven of the eight business elites stated firmly that they did not think the EU was a leader in international politics, however they qualified their statements by saying that they did not see it as a political leader ‘yet’, indicating perhaps that they see it may become such a leader in the future. All but one of the political elites explicitly denied the EU being a leader in international politics, while six of the eight civil society elites acknowledged the EU as an important figure in the world political area, but denied its status specifically as a leader. Seven of the eight media elites did not believe the EU to be a leader in international politics. Such responses indicate that the majority of the elites in China perceive the EU to be a significant source of power and influence, but not necessarily as a leader in the global political arena. In this regard, the EU might be considered just one great power among many in the multi-polar world.

The Importance of the EU to China

Similarly to the public survey, interview respondents were asked to rank the importance of the EU to China compared to other regions of significance for their country. While many of the business elites felt unable to rank the EU’s importance for China, the majority felt that it was one of the most important partners for China. Of those business respondents who did rank the EU, only one felt that the EU was the most important partner for China, with the others preferring instead to see the US and Russia as China’s most significant counterparts.
In contrast with the rather lukewarm sentiments of the business elites, the Chinese political elites all acknowledged that the EU’s importance to China was undeniable. One respondent in particular noted the EU’s importance in terms of its peaceful history with China, although several others felt that in terms of Chinese national security and peaceful development, China’s neighbouring countries were more important than the EU. Two of the political interviewees perceived the US to be the most important partner for China, while two others perceived the EU to be important, but only one of several important partners for China.

The final group of elites that were asked to rank the EU’s importance for China were the civil society elites. Within this final group, all the interviewees placed the EU as one of the most important partners for China. Two of those specifically ranked it as being second to America, while three expressed their belief in a brighter future for the long-term EU-China relationship.

**The State of the Current EU-China Relationship**

Business, political and civil society elites were asked how they would describe the current state of relations between the EU and China. Among the business elites, almost all of the interviewees saw the relationship as or progressing, while one felt that it was stable, and another believed it to be wholly dependent on continuation of the current diplomatic approach but was hopeful for a bright future. The political elites appeared to view the relationship somewhat more cautiously, although with a sense of optimism for the future. Half of the political respondents considered the relationship to be improving, perhaps indicating that they had seen the relationship to be suffering in the past. Other political respondents considered EU-China relations to be stable, and one described them as worsening. All the interviewees within the civil society elites saw the Sino-EU relationship as progressing.

**Sino-EU Issues with the Most Perceived Impact on China**

The study was interested in assessing in which areas the Chinese elites perceived the EU to have the most impact on China. A range of responses were identified, and as might have been expected, within the business elites, the majority of responses were associated with primarily economic issues. Specifically EU-China trading issues were frequently identified, including anti-dumping legislation, and trading quotas. Issues associated with the EU’s pressure on the inflation of the Chinese currency, the China Yuan, were also mentioned by interviewees, as were other issues like high-tech cooperation between the EU and China. The
only non-economic issue to be mentioned by one business respondent was the issue of human rights, while two other interviewees stated that they did not think there were any issues of particular significance.

Interestingly, the responses of the Chinese political elites were mostly similar to those of the business respondents, with a preference for seeing issues of economic importance having the most impact on the relationship. Specifically, issues of economic friction like trading conflicts, China’s complete market status and the China Yuan’s inflation were outlined by the political elites. More politically-oriented responses included the EU’s ongoing enlargements, as well as the banning of arms sales to China. One of the interviewees stated that there had not been anything of special importance affecting the relations, while two others said that they did not pay much attention to EU-China issues.

Civil society elites may have been expected to identify more socially-oriented issues, but once again, the leading issues that were mentioned by this group of elites were economically oriented. Among the leading answers were the banning of arms sales to China, as well as the economic conflicts relating to anti-dumping. The changing leadership in key EU countries was identified by some within this group as an issue affecting the relationship, while the barriers to high-tech trade between the two partners were mentioned by others. Two interviewees believed the there had been no issues of particular importance recently.

While the media elite group did identify a number of the same issues as the previous cohorts did, there was a slightly greater diversity amongst this group’s responses. Economic conflicts such as anti-dumping rules and trade quotas were mentioned, as was the banning of arms sales to China. Others noted the issues relating to food security, and the 2010 Shanghai expo, while one media elite noted the important economic influence of the EU on Asia in general, and China specifically. China’s complete market economy status was noted by one interviewee, while one felt that there was no issue of particular influence on the relationship.

**China’s Elite and the EU’s Enlargement**

The elite respondents were asked how they perceived the issue of the EU’s enlargements. Figure 18 depicts the breakdown of this analysis for each of the elite groups. In the eyes of business elites, half of the interviewees viewed the expansion of the EU as an opportunity, one respondent thought it was a threat to China, one believed that it would have no direct effect on China and two thought that the impacts would be dictated by the specific countries that would accede to the EU. Political respondents viewed EU enlargement similarly to their business counterparts, with half viewing it as an opportunity for China and another three
respondents believing that the issue had no direct impact on China, although one of these elites added that this was contingent on the nature of the countries joining the EU. Two political respondents viewed EU expansion as an opportunity, while another two felt it was a risk, and one specifically viewed it as a risk to Chinese national security. The civil society elites were the most optimistic towards EU enlargement, with the vast majority believing such expansions to be opportunities for China.

![Figure 18: Opinions regarding EU's Enlargement](image)

**The Euro as an International Currency**

Since the majority of elite responses had indicated a focus on the economic aspects of the EU-China relationship, interviewees were also asked how they viewed the single European currency. Specifically, respondents were asked how they see the euro as an international currency vis-à-vis the US dollar.

Six of the eight business elites answered that compared to the US dollar, the euro has been more stable and strong recently, and that as a consequence, its importance in the world economy would continue to increase. The remaining business interviewees considered the euro to be another option that may counter-balance the importance of the US dollar, but the latter’s status as the most important world currency was still firmly asserted.

In contrast to the responses of the business elites, the Chinese political elites gave a variety of responses to this question. Two political elites felt that the US dollar was, and would remain, the most important international currency for quite some time, owing to a range of political and historic reasons. While two respondents noted the EU’s stability in recent times, two others perceived
that this might continue through to making the euro of more importance in the future. Other political elites contended that the currency’s future importance would depend wholly on the EU’s economic development more broadly, and another claimed that the inconsistency within the EU in general would reduce the euro’s influence to some extent.

The final group of elites that this question was posed to were those representing China’s civil society, five of whom saw the existence of both the euro and US dollar in the global market as providing more options for official reserves which therefore symbolised a more balanced international monetary system. Two others noted the euro’s higher market value compared to the US dollar, with one arguing that this was a positive, and the other seeing it more negatively for China. One believed that there were pros and cons to both currencies, with one having a much longer history, and the other with better recent performances.

ASEM Impact on EU-China Interactions

Elite respondents were asked how they felt the ASEM process impacted on interactions between China and the EU. Among the business elites, the majority of interviewees described the ASEM as having a positive impact upon mutual interaction, particularly for initiating a process of closer communications. One business elite felt that it was an example of cooperation between two great regional powers which would ultimately serve to balance the US’s superpower status, while another expressed concerns over the imbalanced status of the parties involved. For the Chinese political elites, a clear majority of interviewees assessed the ASEM process positively, stating that they saw it as a good platform for mutual communication between the two regions. Two other political elites noted ASEM’s influence in constructing a multi-polar world structure and one expressed hope for China to play a larger role in that process. The representatives of China’s civil society elites broadly concurred with their political and business counterparts, with six of the eight viewing ASEM as a positive event which provides a platform for mutual communication between the regions so as to remove misunderstanding and to enhance interaction. One other saw it as a gesture on the EU’s part to seek more cooperation with China, and only one civil society interviewee contended that the process had very little impact. In the eyes of media elites, the final group of elite respondents, three acknowledged the positive influence of ASEM on Sino-EU interaction while another three felt there was no substantial impact of ASEM on China. Two respondents acknowledged the certain impact of ASEM, yet stated that they were unfamiliar with the more specific features of the process, and yet another two interviewees believed the process to be little more than a ceremonial gesture.
ASEM 6 Summit

In the year of analysis, the ASEM 6 Summit was held in Helsinki, Finland. Elite respondents were asked to what extent they had followed the event and which issues in particular they felt were of prominence. Among the business elites, all but one interviewee stated that they had not paid much attention to the summit, although though three of these mentioned that environmental protection and energy issues were on the agenda, and another mentioned the discussion about terrorism and other conflicts.

The Chinese political elites were arguably slightly more interested in the ASEM 6 Summit than were their business counterparts, with only four of the eight political interviewees claiming to pay no special attention to that specific meeting. Four others noted the environmental protection and energy saving issues as being of importance to the process, and two respondents in particular claimed to have very great interest in the ASEM process generally.

None of the interviewed civil society elites mentioned any specific matters relating to the summit, although two mentioned the importance of the ongoing process in general, and one other emphasised the positive effects of ASEM as a whole. Finally, the interviewed media elites were overwhelmingly uninterested in the summit, with seven of the eight claiming that they could think of no particular aspects of the summit that were of importance. The remaining interviewee from this group mentioned both the issues pertaining to energy crisis and environmental protection, as well as high-tech cooperation between the EU and its Asian partners.

Access to Information on the EU

The study was interested in how the elite respondents gained their information on the EU, in terms of whether they used the popular new media or other sources of information. Among business elites, the majority noted the mass media, in particular television, the internet, newspapers and magazines, as well as radio as their leading sources of information on the EU. One other business respondent mentioned inter-personal communication with foreign friends, and yet another also noted the importance of gaining information from business contacts. For the political elites, all interviewees mentioned the mass media, and specifically newspapers and the internet, although some also mentioned television and radio. One also mentioned reading academic books, and another noted inter-personal communication as sources of information on the EU. All of the civil society elites noted their use of the mass media, mainly television, newspapers and internet, but also the radio to some extent, while three mentioned their inter-personal communication.
The Importance of the EU to China in the Present and in the Future

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the EU to China both now and in the future on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important. The results are presented in Figure 19. As can be seen, currently the importance of the EU to China was viewed the most highly among political elites, and the lowest in the media group, while in the future, Chinese business elites ranked the EU as the most important. Importantly, the EU’s importance for China in the future was seen to be increasing by all four elite groups.

![Figure 19: Importance of the EU to China in the Present and in the Future](image)

The Images of the EU

The final question asked of elite respondents aimed to reveal their spontaneous images of the EU. Interviewees were asked, “when thinking about the term ‘the European Union’, what three thoughts come to your mind?” The results are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elite Group</th>
<th>Images Mentioned by Interviewees</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Elite Group</th>
<th>Images Mentioned by Interviewees</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Euro</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An economic union</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>A great economic power</td>
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<td>More ambitious in the future</td>
<td>Old developed countries</td>
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<td>A military union</td>
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<td>A political union</td>
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<td>A economical union</td>
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<td>Money</td>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>Interior harmony</td>
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<td>Gleichschaltung</td>
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<td>Long term Sino-EU friendship</td>
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<td>East-West cultural communication</td>
<td>A historic glossary</td>
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<td>Ending of arm sales banning</td>
<td>A new strength</td>
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<td>Strong regional power</td>
<td>A new model for other countries.</td>
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Conclusion

This study investigated the leading EU representations within three reputable and highly circulated Chinese newspapers and one popular prime-time television news bulletin during 2006. Broadly, it was found that on Chinese television news, the EU was primarily presented as an actor in the context of the third party, while in the newspapers it was presented in a more balanced, either within the context of a third country or in the local domestic focus. In both cases, the EU focused news items are in the smallest percentage. Arguably, particularly in the case of the television coverage, this indicates an impaired access to an image of the EU as being relevant for local audiences. In addition to presenting the EU as being primarily active outside the local context, much of the information on the EU in the Chinese news media did not feature detailed reports on the Union, but instead referenced it in a fleeting manner. Despite this largely limited picture of the EU, however, the analysis found that there were no negative assessments of the EU within the Chinese television news bulletins, arguably indicating that the EU-China relationship is perceived positively by the Chinese newsmakers.

Examining the deeper level of EU news images, the study found that when framing the EU’s actions in the news media during 2006, the Chinese print news media preferred to prioritise an image of the EU as an economic power while in the television news media, an image of the EU as a political power was most frequently framed. EU as a social and environmental affairs actor was the least visible in the newspapers, while on television news, social framing was slightly more common. Within the most dominant frame then, the EU as an economic power, the most visible images of the EU were the actions of the EU as a trade power, followed by reports on the EU’s actions in the fields of industry, business, and finance. Specifically, within the economic frame, the most frequently reported events were those relating to EU-China trading relations, as well as around the EU’s actions in the field of energy production. The priority given to the former theme is unsurprising as trade and economic cooperation are a fundamental part of the relationship between China and EU. Within the politically-framed news, both of the monitored media concentrated their attention on representing the EU as an audible voice in the international arena, rather than focusing their reporting on the EU’s internal political developments. Finally, when presenting the EU as a social affairs’ actor, the Chinese news media tended to focus on the developments in the EU social legislation.

Among the Chinese public, this study found that the majority considered the EU to be the second most important partner for China at present, just after the US, however, they did feel that the Union would become the most important partner for China in the future. In the Chinese eyes, the EU-Chinese relationship was seen
as positive and often promising. Key issues perceived to define that relationship were the EU’s dealings with China, specifically with the EU as a trading partner, and the policies of the European Central Bank (ECB). Such results emphasise that in the perceptions of the Chinese public, the EU’s key areas of impact for China are considered to be economic in nature, arguably reflecting the findings of the media analysis which also prioritised an economic image of the Union. Indeed, television news and newspapers were identified by the general public sample as being the most important sources of information on the EU.

The majority of the Chinese elites who were interviewed as part of this project indicated that they do view the EU to be a great power, but they did not see it as a leader in the global political arena specifically. While the Chinese political and civil elites all acknowledged that the EU’s importance to China was undeniable, the business elites afforded the EU much less importance. Almost all the business as well as the civil society elites claimed that they saw the China-EU relationship progressing though, while the political elites appeared to view the relationship somewhat more cautiously. Similarly to the public opinion, all the interviewed elites believed that economic issues had the most impact on the China-EU relationship.

By examining the media portrayals of the EU together with the images of the EU existing among the general public and national elites, this systematic study provided a rather detailed picture of how the EU is perceived in China. Arguably, the connection between all three of these aspects indicates a perceptible influence of the news media on the images of the EU in the Chinese society. For example, EU economic issues were clearly prioritised by all three public discourses. While economic issues continue to be very important to the EU-China relationship, it is important for its future that dialogue is not limited solely to economic and trading affairs, and as such, there is perhaps room to raise other aspects in the EU’s profile in China.
CHAPTER 4

Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan and Cher Lai Suet-yi*

The EU in the Eyes of Hong Kong

The Hong Kong-European relationship has been a stable and harmonious one since the first Europeans landed on the city’s soil in 1513. Among the European countries, Hong Kong’s relations with the United Kingdom are particularly strong as a direct result of the one and a half century colonial rule. After the 1997 sovereign handover to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) together with the 2004 eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU), it was expected that Hong Kong-EU relations may have transformed. In addition, the rapid growth of economic prosperity and global significance of the PRC together with the numerous changes inside the EU, which has just celebrated its 50th anniversary, might have altered the Hong Kong-European relationship. As such, there is a need to understand the perceptions of the EU in contemporary Hong Kong. This multi-level research is aimed at revealing the leading EU perceptions among three levels of Hong Kong society: elites, the media and the public.

Thirty-one elites from different fields of society participated in the study, including political, business, media and civil society representatives. They were asked to describe their perceptions on the EU and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in detail. Moreover, questions about the Hong Kong-EU relationship were posed to reveal the views of the elites, who arguably are the key decision makers in their city’s relationship with the EU. The representations of the EU in the Hong Kong media were identified through a content analysis of the leading news media outlets in Hong Kong. In 2006, 2,170 EU news items were found in the four chosen news outlets: Oriental Daily (popular daily), Hong Kong Economic Journal (business daily), South China Morning Post (English-language daily), as well as prime-time news reports on TBV Jade. 99% of the news came from the printed media, in which the business newspaper contributed most. Finally, 400 Hong Kong people took part in the public opinion survey, also conducted during 2006. The survey revealed that the perception of the EU according to the general public does differ from

* Cher Lai is a PhD candidate of the NCRE of University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Lai was responsible for the data collection and analysis of the media analysis and elite interview components, under the supervision of Dr. Kenneth Chan Ka Lok. Lai also wrote the basic draft of the chapter while Dr. Chan provided guidance and supervision.
those corresponding perceptions in the eyes of the elites. Furthermore, findings from the media analysis possess certain correspondences and dis-correspondences with the perceptions of both the elites and the public.

Introduction: Hong Kong – EU Relations in General

A stable and growing Hong Kong-EU relation has been established for a long period of time. The relation includes different aspects namely cultural, economic, political and social. Among them, economic ties and cooperation is the most crucial and well-developed. The EU became Hong Kong’s second largest trading partner in 2006 after Mainland China. EU trade represents over 10% of Hong Kong’s total external trade every year since 2000. Between 2002 and 2006, the Hong Kong-EU bilateral trade has grown by 11% per annum. In addition, the EU became the largest supplier of goods to Hong Kong in 2006, accounting for 27% of imports. The EU is also the third largest source of external capital in Hong Kong at the end of 2005, and more than 390 EU companies have their regional headquarters in Hong Kong. On the other side, Hong Kong serves as an important middleman in the Sino-EU trade relations. In 2006, €7 billion of EU origin goods were re-exported through Hong Kong to Mainland China while €26 billion of Chinese-origin goods were re-exported via Hong Kong to EU countries.

The European Commission Delegation office was established in Hong Kong since 1993 and since then, the office has published annual reports on the Hong Kong-EU relationship and the political situation in Hong Kong since 1999. These annual reports together with special declarations demonstrate the EU’s concern with the political situation, particularly with the establishment of the ‘one country, two systems’ and the search for democracy in Hong Kong.

The EU and Hong Kong also cooperate in social and cultural aspects. The pair work together to promote human rights and intellectual property rights, and the fight against diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and avian flu. People-to-people exchanges are encouraged between the two partners and academic cooperation is also being fostered.

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The EU in the Hong Kong News Media

Hong Kong Media in General

Hong Kong citizens have long enjoyed the freedom of access to and the free flow of information. Hong Kong media practitioners use different means for collecting, organising and transmitting news and information, including press, television and radio broadcasts as well as the Internet. Most of these media practitioners are locally based. Moreover, the majority of the media corporations in Hong Kong are privately owned, thus helping to ensure, to a certain extent, the freedom of expression and credibility of the media in Hong Kong.

Selection of News Outlets for Monitoring

After considering the audience, credibility, linguistic diversity and style of the print news media in Hong Kong, three daily newspapers were selected for monitoring in this study. These were: Oriental Daily (OD), Hong Kong Economic Journal (HKEJ) and South China Morning Post (SCMP).

There are seventeen newspaper publishers in Hong Kong, most of which depend on advertisements, not readership. All of them, except the South China Morning Post and the Standard, are written in Chinese. Two regional English newspapers, China Daily Hong Kong Edition and The Wall Street Journal Asia, are also available in Hong Kong. Yet, with little competition, SCMP is the most popular English-language newspaper. Its credibility is also high and it is a well-known pro-democratic and serious voice in the city.

The Cantonese papers, on the other hand, have to compete heavily to obtain a market share. As a result, nowadays, most of them serve as a form of entertainment to attract readers, in addition to providing news and information. Against this background, the OD, Apple Daily, and Sun Daily have come out to be the three most popular newspapers among readers. All of them are comprehensive newspapers with high circulations which include most kinds of news from public affairs to economics, sports to leisure and so on. Among these three, OD was

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2 Article 27 of the Basic Law provides that Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication. Freedom of the press and publications are also protected by the International Covenant on Civil Rights (ICCRP) under Article 39 of the Basic Law.

3 Professor Clement So Y.K. and Joseph Chan, “Credibility of Hong Kong Media”, School of Journalism and Communication, Hong Kong Chinese University, 2006.

chosen because it has been the biggest-selling daily in Hong Kong for over twenty years.\textsuperscript{5} In addition, its publisher also publishes the third best-selling paper, the \textit{Sun Daily}, whose style is the same to OD. It is believed that the two newspapers share the same editorial strategy. Therefore, the contents of OD would likely reflect what a majority of Hong Kong households are reading every day.

This study wished to include a business-oriented newspaper in addition to a popular paper and an English-language daily. In making the selection-decisions for this business-oriented newspaper, \textit{Hong Kong Economic Times} is the biggest-selling. However, in regards to its credibility, according to independent surveys conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong,\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Hong Kong Economic Journal} and \textit{Ming Pao Daily News} (another comprehensive daily) are the most trusted papers by local readers, while businessmen tend prefer HKEJ, \textit{Economic Times} and SCMP. As such, HKEJ was chosen for monitoring because, although its readership is smaller than its rival the Hong Kong Economic Times, its credibility amongst the public is much higher.

The \textit{Television Broadcast Limited} (TVB) and the \textit{Asia Television Limited} (ATV) are the only two domestic free-to-air television programme service licencees in Hong Kong. Each of them screens two free-to-air television channels one of which is Cantonese and one is English-language. According to the Broadcasting Service Survey 2005 conducted by the Broadcasting Authority, the TVB Jade (Cantonese) is always the most popular channel with a 90\% audience share, while ATV Home (Cantonese) accounts for only 7.1\% of the audience share. The level of share for the English channels, TVB Pearl and ATV World, are 2.5\% and 0.4\% respectively. As the clearly preferred television network of the Hong Kong population, the evening news report of TVB Jade was chosen for monitoring. Thus, the four news media outlets chosen for monitoring, and their key characteristics are shown in Table 1.

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|l|}
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\textbf{News Outlets} & \textbf{Ownership} & \textbf{Circulation}\textsuperscript{7} & \textbf{Stance} & \textbf{Scope} \\
\hline
\textit{Hong Kong Economic Journal} & Family-owned & 30 000 & Pro-democracy Anti-government & Business-oriented Serious \\
\hline
\textit{Oriental Daily} & Oriental Press Group & 180 000 & Pro-Beijing Anti-government & Comprehensive Tabloid-style \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{News Outlets Selected for Monitoring}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{5} Oriental Press Group Limited.
\textsuperscript{6} Dr. Clement So, Survey conducted at School of Journalism and Communication, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001.
Results of Media Monitoring (between January 1st and December 31st 2006)

1. Coverage

A total of 2,170 news items which included the terms ‘European Union/EU’ were identified in the four selected news outlets during the monitored year. Yet, only 16 from the entire 2,170 were identified on the television news bulletin of the most popular television channel, thus showing a dramatic difference between the coverage of the EU in the print news media and in the broadcast media in Hong Kong. This vast difference in volume might be explained by the limitation of time and audiences’ interest in the television news reports. First, the prime-time evening news bulletin is only thirty minutes long, and two-thirds of that is devoted to local news. The other one-third must then be shared by international news as well as sports news. As a consequence, the EU has to ‘fight’ with other foreign organisations, countries, as well as sports events to make it on screen in Hong Kong. In addition, the chief news editors of both TVB and ATV said during interviews conducted as a part of this study that they believe the Hong Kong television news audience is only interested in local news. In addition, the television channel actually runs several programmes on finance every day. In these programmes it was noted anecdotally that the euro and European Central Bank (ECB) appeared frequently. However, since these financial programmes have a very specific audience and are generally not watched by ordinary Hong Kong citizens on a daily basis, they were not included in this sample, and as a consequence perhaps, it can be assumed that average Hong Kong citizens who may rely on the television news media will have very little detailed information on the EU.

In the distribution of the EU coverage across the four monitored outlets, the EU was most visible in the business paper (see Figure 1), HKEJ, with a total of 953 news items. The popular paper, OD, accounted for 746 EU news items followed by the English language paper SCMP, with 455 EU news items.
The high visibility of the EU and its institutions, especially the ECB in the business newspaper, could be explained by the nature of Hong Kong as an international financial centre.9 The EU is a huge economic market10 and has been Hong Kong’s second largest trade partner after Mainland China for many years.11 In addition, the EU and its member states are active in international trade and finance. These actions are major focus of the media as well as for the public in a financial hub like Hong Kong. It should also be noted that there were a high number of articles reporting monetary policies and the rate of the euro in the HKEJ. Figure 2 depicts the distribution of EU news across the 12 months of 2006.

As is evident in Figure 2, the visibility of the EU ‘peaked’ in September both in the newspaper and television news. This spike may be explained firstly by media interest towards the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) 6th Summit in Helsinki during that month.12 This event was closely followed by Hong Kong media, as

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9 According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Hong Kong is the eleventh largest trader in the world and, it is the largest source of foreign direct investment amongst Asian economies and the 7th largest in the world. Manufacturing makes up less than 5% of its GDP, with services making up around 85%.

10 European Union, www.europa.eu, Accessed 15 June 2007. According to the website, the European Union is now the world’s largest trading bloc, accounting for about one fifth of all world trade.


12 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia,
will be discussed at length subsequently, although the main focus in this coverage was given to Premier Wen Jiabao and China’s diplomacy rather than the summit itself. Secondly, the Hong Kong media, especially the financial editors and journalists, devoted a large amount of time and space during September to talk about whether the ECB would increase its interest rates that month. Thirdly, the discovery of contamination in some cosmetics and the increased concern in Hong Kong of its air pollution problem also boosted the appearance of EU in the media as the EU’s directives and guidelines regarding emissions were referred to frequently.

In addition to September, the visibility was also relatively high in July, October and November. In July, the additional reports were due to the focus on the ECB decision regarding interest rates as well as coverage of EU actions and reactions to the Israel-Lebanon war. In October, the high visibility was caused by the Sino-EU trade dispute as well as the Hong Kong government’s support of EU vehicle emission standards. In November, again, the media focused on the EU’s air pollution efforts, as well as on the ECB’s decision that month on euro zone interest rates.

There was a trough in coverage in June, as can be seen in Figure 2, and April marked the second lowest month of EU visibility. It was noted that the Football World Cup 2006 in Germany was given significant attention by the media.

Figure 2: Distribution of EU News Coverage across 2006
(three newspapers and one television channel)

In Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.
in Hong Kong, and as a result, the space for international news was always occupied by World Cup news instead of other foreign affairs like EU news. Additionally, news about local pro-democracy fighters’ campaigns together with the signature of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) between Mainland China and Hong Kong\textsuperscript{13} in the month before the 9\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong sovereignty occupied lots of time and space of the media during June, thus perhaps accounting for the limited visibility of the EU during that month.

Figure 3 shows the monthly distribution of the visibility of the EU across the four individual media outlets. With the exception of April and May, the visibility was higher in the business newspaper (HKEJ) than in the popular newspaper (OD). The pattern of distribution varied from outlet to outlet.

While the other print news outlets shared the similar pattern of distribution of visibility of the EU, the English-language newspaper, SCMP did not. Yet, it is notable that the coverage of EU in SCMP was actually the most stable with only minor deviations during the year.

Sources

The sourcing patterns of the Hong Kong news media when discussing the EU are shown in Figure 4.

As can be seen, the sourcing preferences of the Hong Kong news media were rather inward-looking, with local sources accounting for more than half of the total EU coverage. Local sources included reports by local reporters, columnists and also editorials. Yet, it was assumed that the large amount of news reports that were without any listed source were, in fact, a combination of information from different international wires and other news outlets but without reference to one specific news wire service. Using this assumption, the trend is much more balanced between the local Hong Kong sources and the international news wires.

In addition, owing to budget limitations for foreign news, maintaining news correspondents in Europe is not a usual practice among the Hong Kong media. Nevertheless, most of the four news outlets did have correspondents in the main cities of Mainland China, and the English-language newspaper, SCMP, also appeared to maintain its own foreign correspondents in other Asian countries. SCMP and TVB Jade did send their own reporters to Europe during the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki, although these were local reporters who followed the event, rather than foreign-based correspondents.

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14 According to interviews of eight media editors in Hong Kong done between May and July 2007.
Among a variety of international wires, Figure 5 shows that Project-Syndicate\textsuperscript{15} was the most frequently used foreign-news source. International Forum and Bloomberg came as the second and the third utilising sources respectively, although the use of these two ‘wires’ was exclusively by OD.

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\caption{Foreign News Wires Used by Hong Kong Media when Reporting EU}
\end{figure}

**Focus of Domesticity and Degree of Centrality**

The study was interested in determining to what extent news relating to the EU was concerned solely with EU matters, or whether it had an alternate focus, and additionally, how prominent the EU was within the news item. Two forms of analysis were undertaken to reveal these trends; firstly the focus of domesticity in the news items, and secondly the degree of centrality. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of the focus of domesticity in the four Hong Kong news outlets.

It is clear from Figure 6 that EU news with a third-party focus dominated. The EU was almost always discussed in the news items in relation to other international actors, countries or organisations, or news which included numerous actors, as for instance, in the reports on the international financial situation or global political situations. News items with a primary focus on China but with an EU presence were the most prominent of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} country news items, followed by those relating mostly to the US. Among the China-focused news, the EU was always present in relation to its trade disputes with China, such as anti-dum-

\textsuperscript{15} Project Syndicate is an international association of 327 newspapers in 132 countries, it was established in 1996. Project Syndicate is a not-for-profit institution. Financial contributions from member papers in developed countries support the services provided free by Project Syndicate to members in less advanced economies. Additional support comes from the Open Society Institute, Politiken Foundation and Die Zeit Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius Foundation. See: http://www.project-syndicate.org/.
ping duties on Chinese leather shoes. The EU military embargo on China was also included in a lot of reports. Among the US-focus news items, the majority discussed the US financial situation which occasionally also made reference to the EU’s financial institutions. On average, news focusing on the EU specifically was very limited, thus showing a relative disinterest by the Hong Kong media in EU-focused news.

Figure 6: Focus of Domesticity by News Outlet

![Figure 6: Focus of Domesticity by News Outlet](image)

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the degree of centrality across the twelve months of monitoring. As can be seen, the EU was usually reported as a minor actor in the news stories. These were stories where the EU’s actions were noted only once or twice, in a casual manner with little or no detail.

Figure 7: Degree of Centrality during Months of 2006

![Figure 7: Degree of Centrality during Months of 2006](image)
SCMP, among the four news outlets, mentioned the EU as a minor actor most often (86% of its total), while only about 20% of its news presented the EU as a major or secondary actor. HKEJ and TVB Jade presented the most EU news in which the EU was the major actor, and OD and SCMP instead leaned more towards the EU as a secondary actor.

**Media Framing in General**

To establish the areas in which the EU was seen to be acting, the news items were analysed according to their primary frame: whether the EU was seen acting in political affairs, economic affairs, social affairs or environmental affairs. Figure 8 shows the results of this analysis for Hong Kong.

![Figure 8: Framing of EU News in the three newspapers and one television channel](image)

Figure 8 shows that the EU was most frequently presented in the Hong Kong news media as an economic actor (52% of the total news items), and secondly as a political actor, with 26%. In another 15% of the total news items, the EU was perceived as a social affairs actor while only 7% of the total news items presented the EU as an environmental actor. In addition to this low level of EU environmental news, the majority of the 160 environmental news items presented the EU only as a minor actor with very brief mentions of different EU standards and directives.

Breaking the two leading frames down further, it is evident from Figure 9 that a large proportion of the EU’s economic actions were related to the ‘Finance’ sub-frame, which refers to news about financial markets and ECB decisions and actions. The majority of these finance news items though, were concentrated in the business and popular newspapers, and so were not broad ranging across Hong Kong’s media. The second largest group of economically-
framed news was ‘Trade’, which, as hinted by its name, referred to the EU’s trade relationship with other regions and countries. Over half of these news items concerned Sino-EU trade disputes. Within this trade sub-frame, the only two economic news items located on Hong Kong television news were also included. It is also important to note that ‘Trade’ occupied the greatest volume of the economically-framed news in the English-language newspaper. ‘State of Economy’ related news items comprised the third economic sub-frame, while the several items discussing competition, merging and investment issues were grouped as ‘Business’. News relating to ‘Agriculture’ was primarily concerned with subsidies in that industry, and ‘European Integration’ received the least coverage within the economic frame, and this sub-frame included items relating to the single currency.

**Figure 9: Economic Sub-frames of the EU in Hong Kong Media**

EU political affairs was broadly categorised into one of two groups: EU external political affairs, and EU internal political affairs. Figure 10 shows the breakdown of the political frame. As can be seen EU external political action were twice as visible as news pertaining to the EU’s internal political affairs. Within the external political sub-frame, EU dealings with Iran were the most
visible topic, while the EU’s negotiations with China were the next visible. The issues with Iran, and in particular its potential nuclear capabilities were seen as a threat to global security, hence the high attention given to this topic. The EU, and in particular the UK, France and Germany were the main global powers working to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Their negotiation progress and result were closely monitored by the Hong Kong media. In terms of the EU and China, 2006 brought several high-level visits between EU Member States and China which contributed to the high number of Sino-EU political news.

Figure 10: Political Affairs by Sub-Frame (Internal or External Political Affairs)

Framing in Different News Outlets

According to Figure 11, it is easy to see the great difference in framing distribution between the newspaper outlets and the television news reports. While all three newspapers mentioned the EU primarily as an economic actor, with 57% in business newspaper and 55% in popular newspaper, TVB prime-time news reports mentioned EU economic actions the least, instead preferring to feature the EU as a political actor. This particular focus might be explained by the fact that a little over a third of the EU television news items were covering the ASEM 6 Summit in September 2006. On the TVB prime-time news report, EU social affairs were the second most frequent frame, whereas this appeared the second least frequently in the three newspapers.

Over half of the printed media in both the business newspaper and popular newspaper covered EU economic actions. The nature of the business daily with its responsibility for providing readers the latest news and analysis of the international financial markets would serve as the most obvious reason for this. Perhaps owing to the close relations between economics and politics, the business daily also appeared to cover a relatively high volume of stories of the EU as a political actor. The popular daily also has a specific finance section in which there were frequent reports on the rate of the euro, or the growth rate of EU economy and ECB decisions on interest rates. Additionally, there was a very large volume of
news covering the Sino-EU trade dispute throughout the year which once again served to direct the media attention to EU economic actions. Arguably, since Hong Kong has become part of China the local attention on Sino-EU relations have become heightened also.

Conversely, the English-language newspaper presented EU political and economic actions in a much more balanced way. It also paid relatively high attention to EU environmental policies and actions and frequently cited terms like ‘Euro IV standard’ and ‘European Union standards on emissions (of vehicle exhaust gases)’. On the other hand, the business and popular newspapers presented very little news featuring the EU as an environmental protector. A particular point to be noted here is that EU environmental protection actions were presented frequently in the Hong Kong newspapers in the last quarter of 2006. This would arguably be a result of the local government’s efforts on promoting environmental protection cooperation with the EU.

**Evaluations**

Figure 12 depicts the results of the evaluation of EU news items across the four news outlets. As can be seen, the majority of news items were without explicit evaluations of the EU, preferring to depict the news items neutrally rather than taking sides. Although the media did sometimes contain positive and negative evaluations of the Union, the frequency of these was much lower than
that of the neutral evaluations. This broadly helped to generate a rather neutral image of the EU in the Hong Kong news media.

Moreover, with its political stance being different from its pro-democratic counterpart, *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, the pro-Beijing popular newspaper (OD) featured the EU from a predominantly neutral assessment. The pro-democratic English-language newspaper (SCMP) and the business newspaper were both relatively more critical in their reporting on the EU. Furthermore, representations of the EU carried the most visible negative colour in the English newspaper which included much less economic news. As a result, positively coloured news, such as the appearance of the good signs in the European economy, was not included in this paper generally. Similarly to the popular newspaper, the television prime-time news bulletin featured the EU with more positive colour, and its percentage of positive evaluation on the EU is the highest among the four news outlets.

![Figure 12: Evaluation of EU News](image)

It was therefore revealed that most EU news was written neutrally. More perceptible evaluations were occasionally detected in the editorials and news features. Despite this, however, the articles written as opinion or commentary in the Hong Kong media tended to talk about the EU neutrally. The fact that the EU was most frequently mentioned as a minor actor could be an explanation for this. Since the most attention in a news item was given to the major actors of the stories, references to the EU were short and plain, and as a result, perhaps, little emotional expression was found either for or against the EU.
Evaluation vs. Framing

Figure 13 looks at the relationship between framing and evaluation among the EU related news items. Once again, a neutral image of the EU dominated. Yet, it is also obvious from Figure 13 that the negative evaluations of the EU were concentrated within the economic frame. Many of these negative evaluations were formed due to the reports or predictions of bad economic situations inside the EU.

The increasingly important triadic relation among the EU, Mainland China and Hong Kong would serve as one reason for the high number of negatively evaluated EU news. The indivisibility between the Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese economies implies that any ‘trauma’ inflicted to the mainland’s economy will also cause great ‘pain’ to the Hong Kong’s one. Hence, trade disputes like the EU-imposed anti-dumping duties on the Chinese leather shoes and the EU levied quota on the Chinese textiles were viewed negatively by the Hong Kong media. Consequently, the pro-Beijing popular daily (OD) reported these trade disputes primarily with negative connotations of the EU. Additionally, many of the factories in Mainland China, especially in the Pearl River Delta, are owned by the Hong Kong businessmen. This means that the trade restrictions enforced by the EU on Chinese exports would also cause a direct loss to these Hong Kong businessmen and, as a result, to the Hong Kong economy.

![Figure 13: Evaluation of EU News According to Frame](image)

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On the other hand, evaluations in social and environmental frames were rather neutral, with a balanced distribution of positive and negative evaluations. In both frames the evaluations of the EU always emerge in relation to one-sentence mentions of EU standards and directives such as food safety standards, consumer goods standards and waste treatment directives. These were quoted as a reference for local legislators or when social or environmental problems broke out in Hong Kong. Moreover, the slightly higher number of negative evaluation in the social frame might be explained by the outbreak of bird flu in the first quarter of 2006.

For the political frame, a more positive image of the EU was found in the Hong Kong media. In the political stories, the EU was often noted as an international political mediator, as, for example, in its effort on stopping Iran’s nuclear development and in its promotion of human rights and democracy in less developed countries. In addition, European integration process was viewed as positive example for other regional groupings.

**Most Visible Actors**

![Figure 14: Most Visible Actors in EU News](image)

According to Figure 14, the ECB was the most visible EU institution while its president Jean-Claude Trichet was the most visible EU official. Together with the high visibility of the euro, this again demonstrated the priority assigned to
the economic actions of the EU by the Hong Kong news media. Among the enlargement candidates, Turkey emerged as the most visible.

The final point to note concerning the most visible actors is that the abbreviation ‘EU’ was more commonly used than ‘European Union’ in full, and this was the case both in English- and in Chinese-language media outlets. This indicates that the Hong Kong media expects its audience to have a good understanding of what ‘EU’ stands for. Other than European Union itself, some EU institutions were also represented by their abbreviations, such as ‘EC’ for the European Commission and ‘ECB’ for the European Central Bank. This, again, shows that the newsmakers believe that their audience has a basic knowledge of these EU institutions.

The EU in the Eyes of Hong Kong’s General Public

In addition to monitoring the Hong Kong news media for 12 months in 2006, this research was interested in understanding how the Hong Kong public perceived of the EU. As such, 400 Hong Kong citizens were each asked a range of questions about the EU. This section firstly examines questions on the perception of the degree of significance of the EU as well as other regions and countries to Hong Kong people.

The Importance of Different Regions to Hong Kong

Firstly, in response to the question ‘Which overseas countries or regions, you think, are the most important partners for Hong Kong’, over 90% of the respondents considered Mainland China to be the most important partner at present. Additionally, when considering the future, the Hong Kong public rated Mainland China’s importance to the city the highest, with 4.96 out of 5. Japan, Asia and North America were the next three most important regions in the eyes of the Hong Kong public. They received a rating of 3.97, 3.96 and 3.90 respectively. These scores reflect the unique and close relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong, not only at present but also in the future, particularly in the eyes of the Hong Kong public.

Nevertheless, as an international financial hub, Hong Kong does need other international partners. Therefore, 70% of respondents believed that the US was the city’s most important partner at present (after China). Asia and Japan were ranked the third and forth most important partners for Hong Kong while Europe/EU came fifth with 46.5% of the respondents considering it as an important partner to the city today. Concerning the future, the EU secured fifth place with a rate of 3.86 out of 5. Therefore, it can be observed that the EU appears to
remain constantly as the fifth most important partner for Hong Kong in the eyes of the Hong Kong public. These results correspond with the view of 71.8% respondent that the EU-Hong Kong relationship is a stable one (Figure 15).

Taking a step back into Hong Kong’s past, its former colonial ruler the UK was noted by 35% of the former colony’s citizens as a most important partner for Hong Kong at the moment. The UK itself was only rated as 6% less important than the whole of the EU was to Hong Kong in the future. Among the twenty-seven EU member states, the UK emerged as the country in which the largest number of Hong Kong people had personal or professional ties. The most common personal or professional connections with Britain were general knowledge about the UK, having friends living in the UK, experience of travel there, and having family/relatives in the UK. It seems that a shared half century history between the UK and Hong Kong is in the hearts of the Hong Kong public. Additionally, English is one of the official languages in the city populated with Chinese people. It is logical to suggest that the Hong Kong people consider they have a greater general knowledge about their former metropolitan ruler. After 1997, many Hong Kong people still see Britain an ideal place to send their children for study and also for travel.17 These factors clearly make the UK stand out among the twenty-seven EU Member States in the eyes of the Hong Kong public.

EU-Hong Kong Relations

Respondents were also asked about the specific issues which they felt impacted on the EU-Hong Kong relationship. Specifically the question asked was: ‘On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is of little impact and 10 is of great impact,

17 According to data from British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the UK was the top long-haul destination for Hong Kong travellers in 2005 with over 238 000 visits, and more Hong Kong residents visited the UK than all other European destinations put together.
how much impact you think the following EU related issues will have on Hong Kong in the near future?’ (see Figure 16). In addition and following from this, the participants were also asked which issues they felt should be kept in mind when Hong Kong is establishing its official policy towards the EU, and finally, respondents were asked which three thoughts immediately came to their minds when thinking about the term ‘the European Union’.

![Figure 16: Issues Impacting on the EU-Hong Kong Relationship](image)

Firstly, as mentioned in the previous section, Hong Kong counts heavily on Mainland China, its sovereign country since the handover in 1997. Consequently, the Hong Kong public believed, among all EU-related issues, the Sino-EU relationship would have the biggest influence on their future, with an average rate of 8.26 out of 10. Secondly, the public asserted that the EU trade partner role is very substantial to Hong Kong, scored at 7.89 out of 10. The reasons for this could be the great amount of European exported goods from telecommunication equipments to pearls or motorcars in the Hong Kong market as well as the large amount of manufactured goods and services exported to the European market every year from Hong Kong.\(^{18}\)

Thus, owing to its heavy dependence on the international financial and investment market,\(^ {19}\) the Hong Kong public perceived the ‘European Central Bank

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\(^{18}\) The European Union is Hong Kong’s third larger export market in 2006. It accounted for 14%, (US$ 44 billion) of Hong Kong total exports, while the growth rate was 5%. In 2006, Hong Kong’s import from the EU rose by 7% to US$ 24 billion. Source: Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

\(^{19}\) The percentage share to GDP of Financial services continues to increase, occupying 12.7% of the share to GDP in 2005. Financial services employs 5.4% of 3 538 100 Hong Kong labour force in 2005.
policies and influences on world financial markets’, the ‘rate of euro’ as well as the ‘EU anti-trust legislations’ as the issues which would be of great importance for their near future. The average rate on these issues was 7.54 out of 10. After these economic issues, the Hong Kong respondents rated political factors like EU enlargement and EU-ASEAN relations slightly lower, with an average of 7.25 out of 10.

When asked the second question, most Hong Kong respondents stated that ‘trade’ together with ‘economics’ should be kept in mind when the city is dealing with the EU. A strong financial orientation of the city’s relation with the EU is likely to be the reason for this response. On the other hand, ‘China’ was once again mentioned, along with issues of ‘Environment’ and ‘closer relations’.

The final question of this part of the survey asked respondents to name three thoughts which come to their mind when thinking about the term ‘the European Union’. The euro came to the Hong Kong public’s mind far more frequently than any other thoughts. Over half of the respondents saw the euro as a symbol of the EU. The word ‘trade’ was the second most popular thought, thus meaning that the two leading thoughts of the EU by Hong Kong people continued the image of the Union as a predominantly economic power.

In addition to economy, many other respondents mentioned different positive terms such as ‘good future’, and ‘good economy’. Furthermore, many respondents thought immediately of the EU Member States excluding the UK. Less than 10 people in the 400-people sample claimed that they would think of the UK when thinking about the EU. This could reflect an underlying perception of the Hong Kong public that the UK does not belong to the ‘European’ society, but instead enjoys a special relationship with Hong Kong.

Sources of News on the EU

Another aim of the survey was to find out the news sourcing habits of the Hong Kong general public when they seek information on the EU. The first question to this part of the survey asked the Hong Kong people how often they accessed the media for foreign news. 43% of respondents claimed to they that


According to the Trade Development Council’s data, by 1st June 2006, there were 390 EU companies base their regional headquarters in Hong Kong, while 712 had regional offices.

Referring to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, the EU is one of the major sources of foreign directive investment in Hong Kong. Its total stock of directive investment amounted to US$ 61.2 billions at the end of 2005.
every day, 29% said that they accessed it a few times a week, and only 4% answered ‘never’. Using these responses as the basis then, it seems that the Hong Kong public is relatively conscious and indeed interested in the outside world. Nevertheless, acquiring foreign news does not necessarily correspond to acquiring EU news.

Respondents were then asked which specific media sources they used for acquiring information on the EU. Almost 100% of respondents mentioned television news as their major source, whereas ‘newspaper news/articles’ followed with 97%. Internet appeared to be the third most popular source for EU information. It was followed by non-news television programmes, radio news and magazine articles, yet these particular media accounted for less than one third of the responses to television news or newspapers. In order to establish more complex patterns of media consumption, respondents were asked which specific newspapers and television news programmes they consult most often. The results are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers providing news about EU</th>
<th>TV news providing news about the EU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Oriental Daily</td>
<td>TVB Jade news report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Apple Daily</td>
<td>ATV Home news report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Hong Kong Economic Times</td>
<td>TVB Pearl news report (in English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; South China Morning Post</td>
<td>Cable News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Hong Kong Economic Journal</td>
<td>ATV World news report (in English)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The bolded news outlets are those monitored in the first phase of the study.

The ASEM Process

The third section of the survey focused specific on the ASEM process. Respondents were asked to what extent they followed the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki in September 2006. Only 1.5% respondents said that they followed the meeting extensively, while nearly 40%, on the other hand, said that they paid very little or even no attention at all. Even worse perhaps, 12.2% respondents were not aware of the meeting. The low interest of the Hong Kong public with international events, especially non-financial events, arguably accounts for this result. Additionally, as only a region of People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong did not have its own delegation sitting in ASEM, which may also have contributed to the detected low awareness and interest in the meeting.
EU in Everyday Conversation

Finally, respondents were asked to what extent they discuss the EU in their everyday conversations. As a foreign party, the EU received low attention among the Hong Kong people. 48% of respondents stated that they rarely discussed EU-related issues with their friends and family, and 22% claimed never to do that. Less than 2% respondents said that they often discussed EU-related issues with friends and family. Regarding conversation with colleagues at work, 43% and 28% answered that they rarely or never do, respectively. Less than 3% of respondents said that they discussed EU-related issues with their colleagues.

The EU in the Eyes of the Hong Kong Elites

The third phase of the research project sought to reveal the perceptions of the EU in the eyes of the Hong Kong elites. Thirty-one elites from different areas were interviewed – nine came from the civil society sector, eight from the media, seven from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Government, six from the business sector and two were from the broader political field. In addition to the general perceptions of these elites towards the EU, interviews with media elites also aimed to establish the leading editorial priorities of the newsmakers regarding the organisation of news on the EU.

The Importance of Different Regions to Hong Kong

Interviewees were asked to compare the importance of the EU to Hong Kong in relation to a range of other international countries and regions, and unanimously the respondents placed the EU’s importance for Hong Kong behind that of Mainland China. This is hardly surprising, since Hong Kong has been a China SAR since 1997, and as such Mainland China is not only the sovereign state but also the largest importer as well as exporter to the SAR. Following China, the majority of respondents considered the US to be the second most crucial partner for Hong Kong owing to its decades of global economic and political domination since the end of World War II. All nine elites from the Hong Kong civil society

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sector and 60% of the business elites ranked the two partners in this way. As Priscilla Lui responded, for example, “China[‘s influence] is certainly the most direct. Impacts from China and US are delicate, then EU comes next”\(^{23}\).

Some elites believed that Asia and Japan were much closer geographically and culturally to Hong Kong, so they are therefore more important to the city. Doctor Shih replied, “economically, [the EU] is important to Hong Kong, yet China and US are the most important. Countries who are closer such as Japan will be second most important. Next come the EU as it is too far away”\(^{24}\).

Yet, some of the interviewed elites did think that the EU is as prominent to Hong Kong as the US and in fact is more influential than Asia or Japan owing to the close trade relation and the fact that the UK, Hong Kong’s former colonial ruler, is in the EU ‘club’. Interestingly, this view came mostly from the governmental/political elites, particularly those whose duties were trade-related. Their justifications for this ranking were that the EU is now the second largest trading partner of Hong Kong and it accounted for 10.5% of Hong Kong’s external trade in the first quarter of 2007.\(^{25}\) Moreover, Hong Kong’s sovereign state, China, has established a healthy relationship with the EU. According to Margaret Ng, a legislator, “as China turns more to the EU, our attention on the EU will increase”.\(^{26}\)

**EU-Hong Kong Relations**

1. **State of Relations**

Business elites and half of the governmental/political elites saw the EU-Hong Kong relationship as a close one and one which was improving, as the trade figures keep increasing. In addition, the Sino-Hong Kong-EU triadic trade relations are also on the rise. In this relation, Hong Kong serves as a ‘springboard’ and ‘middleman’ for EU business to enter Mainland China market. These respondents believed that this improvement is not only in quantity, but also in quality. The other half of the governmental/political elites felt that the relationship is a steady one. Interestingly, they could not foresee any major issues which would strengthen or worsen the relationship. Indeed, this ‘lack-of-any-current-EU-Hong Kong-issue’ view was shared among other interviewees from different sectors as well. When they responded to the question ‘which issues in Hong Kong-EU current relations have the most impact on Hong Kong?’, a majority could not

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\(^{23}\) Priscilla Lui, Director of Against Child Abuse.
\(^{24}\) Dr. Shih Tai Cho, Louis, Vice-Chairman of Hong Kong Medical Association.
\(^{25}\) Figures provided by K.W. Leung, Assistant Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department.
\(^{26}\) Margaret Ng is one of the 60 legislators of HKSAR Legislative Council.
think of any of such issue. On the other hand, when asked to rate the importance of the EU both now and in the future, there was a unified increase in the rate of EU importance to Hong Kong as shown in Figure 17 for all respondents.

While the civil society elites rated the EU’s importance higher than elites from the other sectors did, some of them did criticise the EU-Hong Kong relations as being ‘only economical’. They thought that when looking at the areas of their particular concern, namely environmental protection and human rights promotion, they believed the EU has not established significant influence for Hong Kong, although they were sure the EU was capable of such influence. These respondents stated that they would like to see more cooperation and exchanges between the EU and the Hong Kong SAR government in areas beside economy.

Similarly, when speaking with interviewees about the European Commission Delegation Office in Hong Kong, the respondents, with exception of those who work for trade-related affairs of the government, either did not know about the existence of the Delegation or found themselves lacking any connections with it. Some did note that they received a newsletter from the Delegation, but many elites from the civil society like Priscilla Lui,27 K.K. Fung28 and Daniel R. Fung29 urged the Delegation to strengthen its role in reaching cooperation and understanding between the EU and Hong Kong in areas like child protection, environmental protection and people-to-people exchanges.

27 Priscilla Lui, Director of Against Child Abuse.
28 Ka Keung Fung, Campaign Manager of Greenpeace Hong Kong.
29 Daniel R. Fung, Vice-Chairman of Salzburg Seminar, a private, non-profit-seeking organisation based in Austria and is dedicated to promote international dialogue and cross-cultural understanding.
2. The Euro

As mentioned above, the image of EU in the eyes of Hong Kong elites clearly leaned towards the economic aspects of the relationship. Thus, it was predictable that the euro itself would also receive some limelight. The views of Hong Kong elites on the euro as an international currency vis-à-vis the US dollar can be categorised into three groups as shown in Figure 18.

![Figure 18: Perception of the euro Vis-à-vis the US Dollar](image)

As Figure 18 shows, half of the interviewed elites saw the co-existence of the two international currencies as healthy and desirable. The birth of the euro was seen as widening the choice for investment and as medium of trade as agreed by Ming Wong, “it counter-balances the US dollar, gives us one more option”.\(^{30}\) Two-fifths of the interviewees, however, believed that the euro is “less stable then the US is to Hong Kong as HK dollar pegs to US dollar but not the euro. As an international currency, US dollar enjoys a much longer history. Hence, the position of US dollar will be always higher than that of euro”, as one of the governmental elites\(^ {31}\) described. Another 10% of the elites believed that the euro stood a good chance of overtaking the US dollar as the EU and the euro zone is constantly enlarging while the US cannot, and also because of recent depreciation of the US dollar.

3. Impact of EU Enlargement

In light of the recent EU expansions, the interviewees were asked how they perceived these enlargements would impact on the EU--Hong Kong relationship,

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\(^{30}\) Ming Wong, Director of J & M Trading Company.

\(^{31}\) Anonymous Political Elite respondent.
and on Hong Kong more generally. The responses from the elites to this question could be divided into three groups (as displayed in Figure 19). The majority of elites, and those from the governmental sector in particular, thought that a larger EU, comprising a larger population and greater diversity, would mean a bigger market and greater travel convenience for Hong Kong.

Figure 19: Impact of EU Enlargements on Hong Kong

Yet, 43% of respondents insisted that the entry of the new countries into the EU would lead to no real impacts for Hong Kong. This view was particularly popular among the civil society respondents. The remainder deemed the enlargement as a force driving the EU more inward and creating more conflicts, which they believed would be bad for Hong Kong.

4. ‘An Economic Giant, but Political Dwarf?’

As the sub-heading to this section indicates, the EU is often described in many ways, stereotypically as an economic ‘giant’ and a political ‘dwarf’. Indeed, this was how the Hong Kong media largely framed the EU’s actions during 2006. This study asked the Hong Kong elites whether they deemed the EU to be a great power, and if so, in which areas it was seen to be powerful. 90% of Hong Kong elites deemed the EU to be a great power, and in general, its large population, prosperity and unity in economy contributed to this perception. Both Peter Tsang\(^{32}\) and Director-General M.H. Au noted that. The latter said “[a] collection of so many strong countries make EU a great power”\(^{33}\). Additionally, according to Sandra Lee, “[p]utting so many countries together, it (EU) is cer-

\(^{32}\) Peter Tsang, Deputy Controller of International Information of Hong Kong Economic Times.
\(^{33}\) M. H. Au, Director-General of HKSAR Telecommunications Authority.
tainly a regional great power economically… you can tell from the figures, its GDP, manpower and area…”34

Specifically speaking about the different aspects of the EU’s power and influence, the greatness of the EU’s economic power was most visible among respondents, with 21 out of the 31 interviewees emphasising this aspect. Most of the elites who perceived the EU as a great economic power were those from the business field and from the Hong Kong SAR government. A majority of elites believed that the huge size of the unified market earned the EU a strong say and influence in the global economic arena.

One reason for this emphasis would be the fact that economy does seem to occupy a huge portion of attention in Hong Kong among the media and the general public, and correspondingly then, the elites. Moreover, as a financial city, Hong Kong’s connections to the outside world are mainly economic rather than political or cultural, as an independent country might hope to establish. In addition, the EU is Hong Kong’s second largest trade partner, and it is therefore unsurprising that those from business field in particular, consider the EU as an ‘important trading partner’ and ‘huge and significant export market’ to Hong Kong.

In addition to these economic responses, nine respondents also believed that the EU is a great political power, while much fewer acknowledged the EU’s capacity in other fields like cultural power, normative influence or military power. Apart from confirming EU as an economic great power, one-fifth of the interviewed elites did bring up the ‘spill-over effect’ of the EU’s economic success. As two elites from the civil society sector argued, “There is no reason for their cooperation unless there are enough economic benefits”, and “[d]ue to its enormous market size that the EU is now able to take lead in environmental protection as manufactures must obey EU strict regulations so as to go into their market” told by Miss Hung35 and Miss Yeung36 respectively. In addition, Legislator Margaret NG claimed that “the economic advantages attract many countries to join, and these countries need to meet EU two basic requirements concerning democracy and human rights. Hence, EU achieve its political and normative influence”.

However, just as a coin bares two sides, so too K.W. Leung believed, “[p]olitically, with so many Member States of different backgrounds, and so many new comers from the East…it may not be united. For instance, their foreign policy towards China and US, towards Africa and Middle East vary”.37 Many

34 Sandra Lee, HKSAR Political Elite.
35 Jackie Hung, Project Officer of Justice and Peace Commission of the HK Catholic Diocese.
36 Frances Yeung, Campaigner of Greenpeace, Hong Kong.
37 K.W. Leung, Assistant Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department.
elites shared his view that the larger the union the more varied the interests and culture are, and thus the more difficult it is to politically integrate. When asked specifically whether they saw the EU as a leader in international politics, less than half of the interviewees gave their consent. Some interviewees, however, believed that the EU served as an ‘occasional’ international political leader, which provides a counter-balance to the US views, and which took the lead in areas in which the US was not doing a ‘good’ job or was uninterested in such issues as fighting global warming, food safety enforcement and the promotion of peace cooperation.

For those who disregarded the EU’s capacity as an international political leader, the absence of an independent and ‘ready to act’ army, the lack of a commander-in-chief to make final decisions and the vast number of different national interests and opinions were all seen to contribute to the inability of the EU to perform as a world political leader. In particular, many of these respondents recalled the division between different EU Member States, especially the EU’s big countries, on the US-led war in Iraq in 2003.

Respondents also frequently ranked the EU behind the US as an international political leader. The justification given for this was that the US acts as a single sovereign state under one government, representing the national interests of one country and with its own army, whereas the EU possesses none of these. EU power appeared to be the least recognised in its military capacity. Most elites denied the EU as a military power, and the majority claimed that they could think of no instances where the EU acted as such. For instance, Legislator Kwok Ka Ki said that “[m]ilitarily, EU is controlled by NATO, which is driven by the US. Hence, I can’t see EU as a great military independent organization.’ Mr. Andrew Work added “They have no ability to project military power, they don’t have coherence at that level like the NATO”.^38^  

Spontaneous Images of the EU

When asked to list their three spontaneous thoughts about the EU, elites from all fields mentioned the ‘euro’ most frequently, while the symbol of the ‘EU flag’ followed (see Table 3). These two images appeared far more frequently than any other images in the responses of the Hong Kong elites. Additionally, it was also observed that elites from the civil society sector assigned the most negative evaluations to terms like ‘over-regulated bureaucracy’, and ‘racial problem’. In contrast, governmental/political elites seldom gave negative responses.

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^38^ Andrew Work, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Lion Rock Institute.
### Table 3: Spontaneous Images of the EU Among Hong Kong Elites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Society</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Gov./Pol.</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EURO Flag</td>
<td>Flag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Integration/ Unification</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilisation</td>
<td>Political Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loose Political Front</td>
<td>Good terms about the place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good terms about the place</td>
<td>Good terms about the place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlargement</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Movement</td>
<td>Visa-free for HK Travellers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace can be brought through Trade</td>
<td>Inward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Problem</td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Prosperity</td>
<td>Economic Prosperity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sources of EU Information

Just as the participants of the public survey were asked to name their key sources of information on the EU, so too were the elite interviewees. Nearly all of the elites interviewed considered the Internet as their best and primary source of news on the EU. Internet here included the official website of the EU, www.europa.eu, as well as websites of various news companies. E-newsletters were also noted as popular among respondents. About one-third of elites claimed to be receiving regular e-newsletters from the European Commission Delegation Office in Hong Kong, and those who did, saw it as a leading source of EU information. The mass media was mentioned by only some elites.

Among the mass media sources cited by respondents as being sources of information on the EU, the internet was once again mentioned as the most popular source, particularly because many international news agencies, like the BBC, CNN, and The Economist, have very well-developed websites which feed the elites with international news. This reflects the response that the Hong Kong elites preferred to use the international media for EU news. In particular those outlets mentioned above as well as the London Times were the most mentioned. Some elites explained that they felt the coverage of the EU in the local media was too small.
The ASEM Process

Two ASEM-focus questions were asked of respondents to establish their perceptions of the effect of the ASEM process on EU-Hong Kong interactions, as well as the effects of the ASEM 6th Summit on Hong Kong specifically. The results of these questions, however, revealed that more than half of the interviewees did not know about the meeting. Six of the nine elites from the civil society sector confessed that they did not know about the existence of ASEM in more general terms. Fung, for example stated that “I must confess I did not know about it myself. So I think that it partly reflected the fact that insufficient publicity has been given to this process”.39

![Figure 20: Perceptions of ASEM among Hong Kong Elites](image)

The media elites on the other hand demonstrated a much greater knowledge of both the ASEM process generally, and the ASEM 6th Summit specifically. It could be argued that this awareness may relate to the news media’s responsibility for searching and preparing information about such a major international meeting and presenting it to their audience, thus educating the public.

Nevertheless, among the interviewees who commented on ASEM and its 6th meeting, a high percentage expressed frankly that they did not think that such a ‘high level meeting’ could bring any direct effect to Hong Kong. The fact that Hong Kong, as a city, would not have its delegation to the ASEM added to the perception of lack of influence on Hong Kong.

EU in Professional and Personal Life

The final group of general perception questions related to the direct contacts that the elites had with people in the EU. As can be seen in Figure 21, few civil society and governmental/political elites mentioned any professional involvement with the EU. In contrast, most business elites claimed that they were closely involved with the EU. For them the EU is their trade partner and export destination.

39 Daniel R. Fung, Vice-Chairman of Salzburg Seminar.
In their personal lives, over 90% of elites interviewed claimed to have some connection with the EU. ‘Travel’ and ‘Have family/friends there’ were the most common explanations of these contacts. Respondents felt that with such a long history and cultural atmosphere, Europe is always a good destination for travel. Among EU countries, France and Italy were claimed to be the most popular travelling destination for the interviewees.

Many other elites stated that their relatives had migrated to Europe, mostly to the UK. Some also noted that they had been educated in Europe, and as such had many friends there. Additionally, a few other elites stated that they send the-
ir children to Europe for study, once again to the UK. Among the thirty-two elites, those from the civil society sector appeared to have least personal connections with Europe.

How is EU News Prepared in the Hong Kong Media

The eight media elites interviewed in this study include two news editors from the two free television channels in the city, one editor from radio station, five newspaper people (one from an English-language newspaper, one from the city’s best selling business newspaper, one from a left-wing comprehensive newspaper, one from another right-wing comprehensive newspaper and one from a free-distributing tablets).

In addition to questions looking into their personal perceptions of the EU, the media respondents were asked a range of other questions aimed at determining the various editorial policies towards covering the EU. Firstly, when asked about how they gathered their EU news information, all media respondents mentioned their outlets’ subscriptions to the major international news agencies, in particular Agence France Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP) and Reuters. The media elites were in agreement that the news agencies’ service is quick and informative, so they felt that newsmakers seldom needed extra preparation when reporting on the EU. Moreover, while most outlets did have correspondents in the UK before 1997 to cover news in Europe, these were mostly only UK based, and, according to the elites, they do not usually keep correspondents in Europe now. A few outlets, instead, said that they have free-lance stringers submitting reports to them when ‘something happens’, and in the case of big events like the 2006 German Football World Cup, many of the news outlets would send staff to Europe for the duration of the event. Furthermore, many editors said that they surely would send staff to follow cases like the Chinese central government leaders visiting European countries. However, all the ‘big events’ named by the media elites as requiring additional local staffing were either news from a single European country or those with China involved, but not focused ‘EU’ stories in particular.

Most of the editors of the news outlets stated that they would monitor different international media as other sources of European news, but only those which are primarily written in English. The reason was that other European languages are not as widespread in Hong Kong. As Lo said, “[l]anguage is a problem as we only familiar with English. When the wire quotes from local newspaper, we want to read the original copy…but if it is outside English like Swedish, we really don’t know”. 40 Other problems the media elites claimed to encounter when

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40 Alan Lo, Publisher and Chief Editor of AM730.
covering EU news is that, “[w]hen we sell EU news, reader may not understand if it goes deep…and sometime what we think is very important doesn’t appear to be important in readers’ eyes”, according to Peter Tsang.\textsuperscript{41}

Conclusion

According to the interviewed media elites, the Hong Kong news outlets depend heavily on international news agencies and furthermore could be argued to take a rather passive role in reporting the EU, mainly due to their unfamiliarity with many European languages, the physical distance from Europe to Hong Kong and the perception of a lack of interest by the Hong Kong news audiences in EU news. Within this media context then, during 2006, 2,170 EU news items were found in the four monitored news outlets. 99% of the news came from the printed media, in which the business newspaper in particular contributed the most.

It was found that television news and newspapers were the most popular sources of EU information among the general public, yet, the elites considered the Internet to be the best and leading source of such information, with newsletters sent out by the European Commission Delegation serving as another popular source. Generally, the Hong Kong elites preferred to use international media to access EU news rather than the local sources preferred by the general public.

In the media analysis, the economic role of EU dominated the coverage (53%), while its political role followed (26%), social role came third (14%) and environmental actions were the least visible (7%). This ubiquitous economic framing in the media corresponded to the heavily economic image of the EU in the Hong Kong public’s eyes. The public was found to believe that among all the EU-related issues, the Sino-EU relationship would have the biggest influence on their future while the EU in its role as a trade partner followed. In addition, the ‘euro’ and ‘trade’ emerged as the two most common ideas to ‘pop up’ in people’s mind when thinking of the term ‘European Union’.

Although, the elites’ sources of information differ from that of the public, the elites also strongly endorsed the image of the EU as an economic power and questioned its political and military powers. From these responses, the EU appeared to occupy an important role for the city, however this was almost exclusively in an economic sense. Yet, EU prominence was also perceived as being behind that of Mainland China and either behind or as the same level as that of the US to Hong Kong. These persistent images of the EU as an actor of lesser

\textsuperscript{41} Peter Tsang, Deputy Controller of International Information of Hong Kong Economic Times.
importance for Hong Kong match the predominant ‘minor actors’ image of the EU in the news coverage.

The Hong Kong--EU relationship, though perhaps limited, was perceived as being stable in the minds of the general public, while the elites instead found it to be ‘improving’. The elites also saw few current EU--Hong Kong issues which would bring either positive or negative effects for Hong Kong, paralleling perhaps the largely balanced and neutral evaluation that was most visible in the media coverage in the four media outlets.

At a more personal level, almost all of the interviewed elites claimed to have some degree of connection with Europe. Travel and family or friends were the most common connections, although less than half of the elites claimed to be professionally involved with the EU. The UK was listed by both elites and the public as their main EU contact country, and, in general, among the individual EU member states the Hong Kong public saw the UK as the most related to them. Despite these connections, the majority of the Hong Kong public claimed that they seldom discussed the EU with their family or friends.

Although the UK was perceived to be more significant by the public and the elites in Hong Kong, in the news coverage it was Germany who appeared the most in 2006, while the UK came a close second. The ECB and Jean-Claude Trichet were the most visible EU institutions and officials respectively, and together with the high visibility of the ‘euro’, the focus of the EU’s economic capacity dominated the Hong Kong media. Interestingly, and following from this, the ‘euro’ was the most frequent spontaneous association of both the elites and the public when thinking about the EU.

Although the highest peak in the EU coverage was found in September and was thus connected to the coverage of the ASEM 6 Summit that month, the awareness and interest to the ASEM process was very low among both the general public and the elites. Additionally, the interviewed elites claimed that ASEM has either little or no impact on Hong Kong.

From the above, when comparing the perceptions of the EU among the Hong Kong media, general public and elites, there are more similarities than differences. The EU frequently appeared in the images of all three sectors as an economic ‘giant,’ with general doubt regarding the EU’s international political capacity. Certainly, the EU was seen as an economic might in the eyes of Hong Kong and was considered important, but politically, its power was seen as being limited.
CHAPTER 5

Toshiro Tanaka, Eijiro Fukui
and Jessica Bain*

Cast in America’s Shadow: Perceptions of the EU in Japan

The current relationship between Japan and the European Union (EU) is deeper and wider than it has ever been. However, little is known about how the Japanese people perceive the EU itself and the Japan-EU relations, despite these relations being formally established since the 1950s. The objective of this chapter is to address the perceptions and images of the EU in Japan, as seen in the news media, public opinion and elite opinion. For the news media analysis, this study monitored three news media outlets between July and December in 2006: the Yomiuri Shimbun as an example of a popular daily newspaper, Nihon Keizai Shimbun as the representative of a daily business newspaper and the Japan Times as an English-language newspaper. Secondly, the Japanese public opinion survey was explored through a nation-wide survey, and finally the perceptions of the Japanese elites towards the EU were evaluated. The interviewed elites were separated into four categories: politics, business, civil society and media. By incorporating all three of these aspects into the research, it was established that a broad range of perceptions about the EU exists within the Japanese society, but while these were often either positive or neutral, seldom was the EU perceived as being negative for Japan. In the Japanese view, the EU was seen as one of its ‘good’ partners, and the majority of the public and elite sectors think that the EU-Japan relationship is stable. However, actions of the EU in Japan, particularly in comparison with the US, and recently China, were not highly profiled.

Introduction

Japan began its relationship with the European institutions early in the process of European integration. In 1959, Japan’s Ambassador in Belgium was accredited

* Professor Toshiro Tanaka is Professor of European Integration, Keio University in Tokyo, and has been a Jean Monnet Chair Ad Personam since December 2003. Eijiro Fukui is PhD student in political science at the Graduate School of Law at Keio University in Japan. Jessica Bain is a recent PhD graduate of the National Centre for Research on Europe at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Fukui conducted the research for this report and wrote the preliminary draft. Bain and Tanaka provided guidance and assistance.
as Japan’s first Representative to the three European Communities (EC) and thus the official diplomatic relations between Japan and the then EC began. In the 1970s, Japan-EC relations were active, particularly after the EC was transferred competence for trade negotiations. The Japan-EC High-Level Consultation started in 1973, while the Delegation of the European Communities in Tokyo was founded in 1974, and in 1979, the Mission of Japan to the European Communities was separated from the Japanese Embassy in Belgium. During the 1970s and 1980s, the key areas of dissent in the Japan-EC relationship were related to problems concerning economy and trade, the latter extending to a period of ‘trade conflict’.

In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War and the birth of the European Union (EU) gave the EU-Japan relationship a new drive and added further areas of cooperation and framework to the relations. The first Japan-EC Summit was held in The Hague in 1991, and the Joint Declaration on relations between Japan and the EU and its Member States, known as the Hague Declaration, was signed. The agreement opened the doors to comprehensive relations between the two partners, including not only trade and economic relations, but also political and security cooperation. In the 21st century, the Japan-EU relations have matured. At the ninth Japan-EU Summit in 2000, Japan and the EU jointly declared a “Decade of Japan-Europe Co-operation” from 2001. They have affirmed their will to translate the Japan-EU partnership into coordinated policies and concrete actions and agreed on the need to issue a new political document based upon the 1991 Declaration taking into account evolutions since then. An “Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation: Shaping Our Common Future”, which gives a new impetus to bilateral relations by providing the foundations for both sides to build the decade of Japan-Europe cooperation, was adopted at the Tenth Japan-EU Summit in 2001. The Action Plan had four main objectives: promoting peace and security, strengthening the economic and trade partnership, coping with global and societal challenges, and bringing together people and cultures.

As can be seen then, the Japan-EU relationship has become deeper and more comprehensive since 1959. However, despite the extent of these relations, it is not clear how the Japanese people perceive the EU and the Japan-EU relationship. In fact, academia has thus far failed to pay attention to this aspect of the partnership. Addressing this lack of insight, this chapter examines the perceptions and images of the EU in Japan, as seen in the news media, public opinion and elite opinion. In keeping with the broader study, the methodology used in

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
the Japanese research was identical to that used in the other Asian locations. This chapter is structured by three sections: the EU in the eyes of the Japanese media, the EU in the eyes of the Japanese public opinion and the EU in the eyes of the Japanese elites.

Images of the EU in the Japanese News Media

This first section focuses on the images of the EU as presented in the Japanese news media during 2006. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen technical difficulties, the data for the television news on the EU in Japan is missing, and the monitored period for the newspaper sample is only between July and December in 2006. However, this six-month period of media analysis has produced a sample that is sufficient for comparison with the other Asian locations – 770 news items. The newspapers that were monitored during the media phase of the project were the Yomiuri Shimbun, a popular Japanese newspaper, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun, a Japanese business newspaper, and The Japan Times, a Japanese English-language newspaper.

Japanese Media Context

Many media companies operate in Japan, ranging from those which operate nation-wide to more locally-focused companies. Those outlets which operate nationally can be separated into three categories: newspapers, television networks and news agencies. Speaking about the first group, Japan could be considered as one of the few ‘paradises’ left for print media. As Figure 1 shows, the circulation of daily newspapers in Japan was the second largest in the world in 2000. The number of daily newspaper titles in Japan in 2000 was 110.5

There are currently five national newspapers in Japan: the Yomiuri Shimbun, the Asahi Shimbun, the Mainichi Shimbun, the Sankei Shimbun and the Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei Shimbun).6 In addition to a vibrant print media, Japan has six nation-wide television networks: Nihon Housou Kyokai (NHK), Nihon Television, Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS), Fuji Television, TV Asahi and TV Tokyo. NHK is a non-commercial broadcaster and the five others are fully commercial broadcasters. Finally, two news agencies are based in Japan: Jiji Press and Kyodo News.

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6 The names of six newspapers are based on Japanese pronunciation.
Selection of Media Outlets for Monitoring

Following the criteria of the broader Asian perceptions project under ESiA umbrella, three daily newspapers were selected for monitoring. These were the Yomiuri Shimbun (Yomiuri), the Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei) and the Japan Times (JT). Newspapers in Japan can be separated into two categories according to their language of publication: Japanese and English. Yomiuri was chosen as the representative of popular and general newspapers written in Japanese. Nikkei was selected for this survey because Nikkei is the main business newspaper in Japan, also written in Japanese. JT is the main independent English-language daily newspaper in Japan.

Yomiuri is the most popular newspaper in Japan (Table 1). Its circulation in 2006 was around 10 million, which is the largest circulation for a daily newspaper in Japan (and possibly in the world). Yomiuri, which first began publishing in 1874, also stands for a media conglomerate in Japan — its assets include Nihon TV and Chuo Koron (a book publisher). Our second choice, Nihon Keizai Shimbun is the main Japanese business oriented newspaper (it translates as ‘Japan Economy Times’). With a circulation of about 3 million copies in 2006 for its morning edition.
edition alone, *Nikkei* boasts the world’s largest circulation for a daily business newspaper.\textsuperscript{10} The paper belongs to the Nikkei Corporation, which is one of the largest media conglomerates in Japan, which dates back to as early as 1876.\textsuperscript{11} *Nikkei* publishes a broad range of paperbacks, magazines and four daily newspapers which are the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (general business), *The Nikkei Sangyo Shimbun* (industry specialised), the *Nikkei Marketing Journal* (distribution specialised) and the *Nikkei Kinyu Shimbun* (finance specialised). Finally, *JT* is the most popular daily newspaper written in English and has longer history than other two famous daily English-language newspapers (Table 1). Also, *JT* is an independent newspaper, so this ownership characteristic provided an additional layer of interest for this study. In contrast, two other popular English-language newspapers – *International Herald Tribune/The Asahi Shimbun* and *The Daily Yomiuri* – are closely connected to the Japanese-language outlets *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun* respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Initiation year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Yomiuri Shimbun</em></td>
<td>10,024,619</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Asahi Shimbun</em></td>
<td>8,087,996</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nikkei Shimbun</em></td>
<td>3,041,631</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mainichi Shimbun</em></td>
<td>3,966,962</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sankei Shimbun</em></td>
<td>2,190,714</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Japan Times</em></td>
<td>43,599</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>International Herald Tribune/The Asahi Shimbun</em></td>
<td>41,136</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Daily Yomiuri</em></td>
<td>38,619</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Circulation of Daily Newspapers in Japan**\textsuperscript{12}

**Results of Media Analysis**

1. **Coverage**

A total of 770 news items which referenced the terms ‘European Union’, ‘EU’ and ‘ASEM’ were identified in the three selected news outlets. The business newspaper, *Nikkei* accounted for the clear majority of these with 550 items, and the popular newspaper followed with 260 items. Finally, the English-language newspaper had only 95 items.

\textsuperscript{10} http://www.nikkei.co.jp/nikkeiinfo/company/graph.html, accessed on 10 July 2007.


\textsuperscript{12} The data for this table was drawn from: Media Research Center, *Zasshi Shimbun Sou Katarogu; 2007nenndo* [Japan’s periodicals in print; the 2007 edition], Tokyo: Media Research Center, 2007, 1338-1339, The figures are the average of morning edition of the papers between July and December in 2006.
Figure 2 depicts the monthly distribution of these news items across the six months of monitoring. As can be seen, July and September were the months with the highest peaks in the coverage. The monthly average in the three newspapers was 128 articles. The number of the EU news items in September was the largest with 176 (popular 60, business 97 and English-language 19) and in July, the number of those was the second largest with 166 (popular 48, business 97 and English-language 21). This trend with the two peaks was identified across the three newspapers. In July, the topics accounting for the peak related to the EU’s actions around Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Iran and North Korea, while in September, the Iran nuclear problem arose again, and the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)\textsuperscript{13} 6 Summit was also visible in the newspapers.

\textsuperscript{13} The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.
2. Sources

EU news items were assessed for their leading sources, whether this was a local reporter or an international news source (agencies and journalists). As Figure 3 depicts, the key sources of EU news in Japanese newspapers were local correspondents based abroad. News items produced by international wires and foreign correspondents accounted for only 5.5% of the total coverage.

![Figure 3: Sources of EU News](image)

Figure 3: Sources of EU News

![Figure 4: Sources of EU News by Newspaper](image)

Figure 4: Sources of EU News by Newspaper

Figure 4 depicts a further breakdown of this sourcing analysis according to the specific newspapers. As is apparent, there is a clear difference in sourcing EU news between the popular and business newspapers on the one hand and the English-lan-
guage newspaper on the other. The sources of EU news in the popular and business newspapers were mainly local correspondents abroad, and indeed it was easy to identify the names of local correspondents abroad in their articles within these newspapers. However, the English-language newspaper used international wires and foreign correspondents, as well as local sources. JT is different from Yomiuri and Nikkei in terms of the size and resources of the company, and as a consequence, JT cannot afford to maintain its own correspondents in Europe. In fact, the number of the sources from JT’s correspondents abroad was zero. Instead, JT used international wires and foreign correspondents as the sources of their articles.

Among the various international news wires used by the Japanese newspapers, Kyodo News, a Japanese news agency, was the most used source. JT also used the Associated Press as a source of EU news.

3. Focus of Domesticity and Degree of Centrality

Figure 5 depicts the analysis of the focus of domesticity in the EU news items. As can be seen, across all newspapers, the third party focus was the largest comprising 42.9% of the total. Following this, the local (Japanese) focus was the second with 30.6% and the EU focus was last with only 26.5%. Such a result indicates that for the Japanese media, the preference in representing the EU was in depicting its capacity as an actor in world affairs, where it was engaged with many international partners, arguably reflecting it multilateral approach to the EU’s foreign relationships.

![Figure 5: Focus of Domesticity of EU News](image-url)
Looking in greater detail at the approach of each newspaper, it can be seen in Figure 5 that in the popular and the business newspapers, the third party focus was dominant (Yomiuri, 47.5%; Nikkei, 40.2%), reflecting the broader trend across the whole coverage as a whole. The EU focus was marginally higher than the local focus, which was third. This result is interesting. It appears that the Japanese newspapers consider the EU’s actions important for the Japanese readers not because they are directly related to Japan per se, but because they are significant in and of themselves. In particular, 30% of all the EU news in Nikkei was EU focused.

Contrastingly, the English-language newspaper presented its EU news with a different focus. In the case of JT, the local focus was the largest, followed by news in the context of a third party and EU focused news accounted for only 9.6%. One reason for this difference in focus might be that JT is primarily a newspaper for English-speaking foreigners, and the key role of JT is to inform them of the Japanese news in English. In fact, in Japan, English-language newspapers published outside Japan (such as the Financial Times, the News York Times, and the Wall Street Journal) are widely available. When Japanese people, who are English speakers, want to get information about Europe, it is most likely that they will check English-language newspapers published abroad first, and not JT.

Figure 6: Degree of Centrality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Centrality</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 presents the breakdown of the degree of centrality across the total EU coverage in Japan, and as can be seen, the EU as a minor reference in the news items was the dominant representation, accounting for 60% of all EU articles. The secondary focus was the second largest, and major references were the least common. This pattern was identified across all three newspapers, and it is

14 According to the elite interview between May and August in 2006, some executives of Japanese media companies described the same opinion.
apparent then that the EU and its institutions were not the central focus of articles in which they were reported. In fact, the EU and its institutions were presented as the major focus only in items regarding the Doha Round of the WTO, issues of North Korea and Iran.

4. EU News Frames

The information inputs on the EU in the analysed news items were separated into four frames: political, economic, social and environmental activities. Figure 7 presents the breakdown of frames across the three newspapers.

As can be see, the results of the EU’s framing by the business paper were different from the other two newspapers. *Nikkei* presented the EU mainly as an economic actor (55.7% of all articles). Since *Nikkei* is a business oriented newspaper, it was expected that it would prioritise this frame. The number of items presenting the EU as a political actor in *Nikkei* was the second largest cluster, while in the popular newspaper and the English-language newspaper, in contrast, the EU was mainly featured as a political actor (*Yomiuri*, 61.2%; *JT*, 58.3%), and economic actions were less visible. In all three newspapers, the EU was very rarely featured as an environmental or social affairs actor.

Breaking these two leading frames ‘EU as a Political Actor’ and ‘EU as an Economic Actor’ down further helps to identify the more specific areas in which the EU was seen to be involved. Figure 8 presents the sub-frame analysis of the economic representations.
Six specific economic sub-frames were identified: finance/business, trade, industry, state of economy, agriculture and integration. As can be seen in Figure 8, finance/business accounted for the largest proportion of EU economic representations. The main issue discussed within the finance/business sub-framed news were topics relating to the euro and the European Central Bank (ECB). Trade was the second largest sub-frame within the economic frame. The EU’s trade relationships with other regions including Japan were of central interest. Industry was the third most common sub-frame covering varied topics such as fisheries and energy.

Figure 9: Political Sub-Frames

- Internal: 32%
- External: 68%
In the politically-oriented EU news, two sub-frames were identified; internal EU affairs and external political affairs. News pertaining to the external sub-frame occupied two thirds of the political coverage, while internal was only one third. Such a finding indicates that the EU was presented in the role of international political actor in the politically-themed articles. Within the external sub-frame, the most important topic was the Iranian issues, and, in particular, items relating to the EU’s negotiations with Iran over its nuclear developments. The next most visible topics were the EU’s role in the Middle East (particularly working towards peace in the region), as well as the EU and its interactions with Turkey. In all three of these topics, the EU was mainly presented as the mediator of international conflicts.

5. Evaluations of the EU

All news items reporting the EU were analysed to determine the evaluation of the EU that they contained. This could be either of three possible evaluations: neutral, positive or negative. Figure 10 presents the results of this analysis.

As can be seen, all three of the monitored newspapers evaluated the EU neutrally, with 88.2% of all EU news items containing no explicit evaluation of the Union. When an evaluation made however, was positive evaluations were the most common – 10%. This general lack of overt negativity towards the EU was common across all three newspapers.
6. Most Visible EU Actors

Figure 11 presents the analysis of the various EU actors that were visible in the identified news items. As can be seen, a range of different types of EU actors were found.

In terms of the various EU institutions that were visible, the ECB was the most visible, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the dominance of economic news in general. The second most visible institution was the European Commission, which was mentioned in articles about EU regulations and EU antitrust legislation. In terms of the specific EU representatives that appeared, Solana was the most visible with 60 appearances. Middle East, including the Iranian nuclear problem, was the main stage for Solana’s actions. Trichet, head of the ECB, was the second most visible, while Commission President Barroso was only third. In terms of the various EU Member States that were visible, the ‘big three’, Germany, France and the United Kingdom (UK), occupied the top three positions. Correspondingly, the three most visible leaders of the member states were also the leaders of these three countries, followed by the Finnish Prime Minister Vanhanen. Finland also appeared with relative frequency. The visibility of Finland and its leader were arguably heightened since that country held the EU presidency during the latter half of 2006 and hosted ASEM 6 Summit the time period when this media analysis was conducted.
The EU in the Eyes of the Japanese Public

The second phase of this research involved gauging the Japanese public opinion on the EU, and this section focuses on three particular aspects of that opinion: the general image of the EU held by the Japanese public, detailed attitudes towards the EU in terms of its relations with Japan and the public sources of information about the EU.

General Images of the EU in Japan

Firstly, respondents were asked to identify the importance of the EU to Japan at present and in the future as compared with other regions and countries. Secondly, the spontaneous associations of the EU amongst the Japanese public were identified followed by the perceived impact of various EU issues on Japan. Finally, frequency with which the Japanese public discuss the EU was addressed.

As can be seen from Figure 12, the Japanese public in general consider the EU to be a less important partner for Japan, both in the present and in the future, than the US, China and Asia in general. The US was clearly viewed as the most important partner for Japan, and the most significant region was perceived to be Asia. In addition to the US, countries such as China and Korea were also viewed as important.

![Figure 12: Most Important Partners for Japan in the Present](image)

In the future, most of the respondents assumed that this trend would remain unchanged. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of various regions and countries to Japan in the future on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important. As can be seen in Figure 13, North America was once again considered to be the most important region for Japan in the future followed by China and Asia. In this scale, the EU/Europe was ranked fourth.
The second question asked of respondents was what the first three thoughts that came to their minds were when they heard the words, ‘the European Union’. The answers were separated into eight categories: euro, European unity/European integration, tourism/culture/diversity, individual countries, problems of the EU, EU politics, and others, and they are shown in Figure 14. As can be seen, the most common image of the EU among the Japanese public was the euro, followed closely by European unity and integration. The image of European Power was also found to be popular among the respondents. Of course, the EU had not only positive images but also negative images – 70 out of the 400 respondents thought of ‘problems’ when thinking about the EU.
Following from these general perceptions, respondents were asked to rank the areas in which they felt the EU had the most impact on Japan. Figure 15 presents the results of this question. As can be seen, the Japanese public considered the largest impact of the EU on Japan to be in its role within the WTO Doha Round talks. This was followed by ‘ECB policies and their influences on world financial markets’, ‘EU dealings with China’, ‘EU dealing with USA’, ‘euro’, ‘EU reactions to international terrorism’ and the ‘ASEM’. It is interesting that the two leading areas of impact were perceived to be economic; arguably, echoing the prominence of the EU’s economic affairs in the Japanese print media.

Figure 15: Areas of Perceived Impact of the EU on Japan

Figure 16: Frequency of Discussion of EU with Family, Friends and Colleagues
Finally, in this group of questions, respondents were asked how often they discuss the EU in their everyday lives. Figure 16 presents the results of this question, and as can be seen, the majority of respondents seldom discussed the EU or related issues with their family and friends or their colleagues at work. Only about 10% of the sample claimed to often talk about the EU with their associates.

**Perceptions of the EU-Japan Relations**

This section deals with the Japanese attitudes towards the relationship with the EU from two perspectives: the relations between the EU and Japan, and the relationship between the EU and Asia more generally.

Firstly, respondents were asked about their perceptions of the EU-Japan relationship and how they evaluated its current state. As can be seen in Figure 17, the majority of people evaluated the relationship as ‘steady’, with this category accounting for 74.2% of responses. ‘Improving’ also accounted for 11.2%, which means that around 85% of the responses indicated a positive attitude towards the EU-Japan relationship at present.

![Figure 17: State of EU-Japan Relations](image)

The year of media analysis and survey also saw the ASEM 6 Summit held in Helsinki in September. This study was interested in assessing to what extent the Japanese public were aware of this event, and the results of this line of enquiry are shown in Figure 18.
As can be seen in Figure 18, the majority of the Japanese respondents claimed to have little interest in the ASEM 6 Summit. 21.8% of the sample stated that they were not aware of the meeting, and even among those who were aware of it, 27% claimed that they did not follow the event. Only 1% said that they observed the meeting ‘extensively’.

**Sources of Information**

Finally, respondents were asked about their preferred sources of information regarding the EU. Figure 19 depicts the frequency with which the respondents claimed to access the media for information on the EU. As can be seen, approximately two thirds of the Japanese respondents accessed the media for foreign news either every day or several times a week. However, 11.5% only checked the media for foreign news every fortnight and another 9.5% never accessed the media for foreign news.

In regards to the specific sources that the Japanese public preferred to access for their EU information, as can be seen from Figure 20, respondents claimed to primarily get their EU information from television news and programmes, newspapers and the Internet. It seems from these responses that television news programmes play a more significant role in providing Japanese with the news about the EU than do newspapers.
Figure 19: Frequency of Accessing Information on the EU

![Bar chart showing frequency of accessing information on the EU.

Every day: 31.0%
Several times a week: 36.2%
Once a week: 11.5%
Every couple of weeks: 4.8%
Once a month: 7.0%
Never: 9.5%]

Figure 20: Media Sources of Information on the EU

![Bar chart showing media sources of information on the EU.

TV news: 381
Newspaper news/articles: 312
Internet: 192
TV programs: 111
Travel guides: 37
Magazine articles: 31]
Perceptions of the EU Among the Japanese Elites\textsuperscript{15}

Selection of Interviewees

This following section explores the perceptions of the EU among Japanese elites. The interviewees selected for this research were chosen on the basis of four different backgrounds: political elites, business elites, civil society elites and media elites. Relations between the elite and their organisation and the EU was the most important factor leading to the selection of a specific elite for interviewing, and subsequently letters requesting an interview with the elites were sent. Interviews were conducted with thirty-two Japanese elites overall: eight political representatives, eight business elites, eight civil society elites and eight members of the media elite. An additional consideration ruled the study of elite perceptions in Japan, namely the intensity of elites’ dealings with the EU. The Japanese research team recognized three types of such intensity – strong (meaning that the elites are closely linked to and with European affairs); average (some professional relation with Europe was registered); and weak (no or very occasional links with Europe/EU were in place). The list of interviewed elites classified according to their sector and intensity of exposure to the EU/Europe are shown below in Tables 2-5.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
Name & Affiliation & Position & Relation \\
\hline
FUJISUE, Kenzo & Member of the House of Councillors, The Democratic Party of Japan. & **Next ‘Vice Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry’ & Average \\
\hline
FUKUYAMA, Tetsuro & Member of the House of Councillors, The Democratic Party of Japan. & **Next ‘Vice Minister of the Environment of the Next Cabinet’, Director, Committee on Environment & Average \\
\hline
GENBA, Koichiro & Member of the House of Representatives, The Democratic Party of Japan. & Director, Committee on Budget, Member, Special Committee for Research on the Constitution of Japan. & Average \\
\hline
NAGASHIMA, Akihisa & Member of the House of Representatives, The Democratic Party of Japan. & Director, Committee on Foreign Affairs & Average \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Political Elites and their Professional Affiliations}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{15} The objective of this survey was to clarify personal perceptions. The opinion and perception of interviewees does not represent those of their affiliation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAMURA, Kotaro</td>
<td>Member of the House of Representatives, Liberal Democratic Party of Japan.</td>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Economic and Fiscal Policy, Finance, Re-challenge and Decentralization Reform</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Former Senior Officer</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>European Affairs</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 3: Business Elites and their Professional Affiliations

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TSURUMI, Kunio/</td>
<td>***Sumitomo Shoji Research Institute</td>
<td>Manager, International Affairs Team</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIZUMI, Yoichi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Analyst, International Affairs Team</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A major auto company</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A major electric company</td>
<td>Former Executive Managing Director</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A major electric company</td>
<td>Former Executive Managing Director</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A major finance company</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A major petroleum company</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A major railroad company</td>
<td>Member of the Board of Directors</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>A job related to law</td>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Civil Society Elites and their Professional Affiliations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DANNO, Hisashige</td>
<td>***Japan Council of Metalworker’s Unions (IMF-JC)</td>
<td>General Secretary</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEMATSU, Ryota</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant General Secretary and International Affairs Bureau Director</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOSHIKAWA, Jun</td>
<td>Greenpeace Japan, and Translator</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWATAKE, Toshihiro</td>
<td>Japan Automobile manufactures Association</td>
<td>Vice President, International Affairs</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINBARA, Kazuyuki</td>
<td>Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)</td>
<td>Director, International Economic Affairs Bureau I</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOUDA, Ryosuke</td>
<td>Zen-Nou (Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, JA)</td>
<td>Section Chief, Management Division</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Media Elites and their Professional Affiliations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMAI, Yoshinori</td>
<td>Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK)</td>
<td>Executive Editor and Presenter</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATSUDA, Yozo</td>
<td>The Yomiuri Shimbun</td>
<td>Senior Writer</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NISHIKAWA, Megumi</td>
<td>The Mainichi Shimbun</td>
<td>Senior Editorial Staff Writer</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKABE, Naoaki</td>
<td>The Nihon Keizai Shimbun</td>
<td>Senior Executive Managing Officer and Senior Executive Editor</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAWAI, Wataru</td>
<td>***Jiji Press</td>
<td>Assistant Deputy Managing Editor</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASUDA, Hiroshi</td>
<td>**Jiji Press</td>
<td>Foreign Economic News Desk Editor</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMINAGA, Tadashi</td>
<td>The Asahi Shimbun</td>
<td>Editorial Writer</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAMAGATA, Yuichiro</td>
<td>Toyo Keizai</td>
<td>Executive Director and Former Chief Editor of Toyo-Keizai</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Private TV Station</td>
<td>Former Correspondent in Paris</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The organisational affiliations and the positions of the interviewees above are at the time of interview.
** The Democratic Party of Japan uses the term ‘the Next Cabinet’ instead of the ‘Shadow Cabinet’
*** Two persons were interviewed at the same time. Two persons are counted as one interviewee.

Results of the Japanese Elite Interviews

The questions posed to respondents were grouped into six different clusters: general perceptions, perceptions of the EU’s international roles, the EU’s relations with Japan, the perception of special issues shaping those relations, elites’ sources of information on the EU, and the perception of the overall importance of the EU to Japan.
1. **Spontaneous Associations**

The first question asked of respondents aimed at revealing their immediate images of the EU. Interviewees were asked to name the three thoughts that immediately came to their minds when they heard the words, ‘the European Union’. The results have been categorised and are presented in Figure 21.

![Figure 21: Spontaneous Images of the EU](image)

As can be seen in the above graph, the spontaneous images of the Japanese elites towards the EU were varied, ranging from political associations to economic ones. The two leading images however, ‘European politics/governance/policy’ and ‘European unity/integration’, were the most popular images. They were also images which had a distinctly political association, and perhaps more notably, had an association with the internal political context of the EU. ‘European politics/governance/policy’ was used by respondents as a means of imagining the concrete policies of the EU, such as its environmental policy. From an economic perspective, the image of the euro was also a frequent image associated with the EU by the Japanese elites.

2. **International Roles of the EU**

Interviewees were asked whether they perceived the EU to be a great power in the world. Figure 22 shows the results of this question. As can be seen, almost all of the interviewees agreed that the EU is a great power. Two political elites and one media elite disagreed. According to one political elite, the EU has limited authority, so it is possible only to answer this question for the policy area.
in which the EU has this authority. While this argument carries some weight, as can be seen from Figure 22, broadly the EU was perceived as having some degree of great power.

**Figure 22: Do you See the EU as a Great Power?**

Following from the previous question, and the clear evidence that the majority of the interviewed the Japanese elites did see the EU as a great global power, the next question asked of respondents was what type of great power specifically they perceived the EU to be. Figure 23 presents the result of this answer.

As can be seen in the below graph, the EU’s economic influence was the most popular image of the Union’s power for Japanese elites, and this response was fairly uniform across the elite categories. The EU’s capacity as a normative power was the second popular answer, and this category included references to the EU’s capability in standardising values to a concrete policy.

As the EU has evolved, so too have its capacities in the field of international politics, and it aims to take a more prominent role on the international political stage. As such, this survey of the Japanese elites asked whether they perceived the EU to be a leader in international political affairs. Figure 24 shows the results of this query. As can be seen, eighteen of the thirty-two elites considered the EU to be an international political leader, thus showing that in the minds of
the majority of the Japanese elites, the EU does possess such a leadership role globally. Additionally, as is evident in the below table, this trend was common across all four elite categories.

**Figure 23:** What Type of Great Power do you see the EU to be?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to the question of what type of great power the EU should be.](chart1.png)

**Figure 24:** Do you see the EU as a Leader in International Politics?

![Bar chart showing the proportion of total responses for each category.](chart2.png)
Those respondents who did not see the EU as a leader based their responses on what they perceived to be divisions within the EU. For these interviewees, the EU was not seen as a unified entity but rather a collection of very separate member states. Those areas in which the EU was seen to be an international political leader fell into two categories: ‘concrete’ areas and ‘abstract’ areas. The ‘concrete’ areas referred to when interviewees described concrete EU policy areas as the reason for its political leadership. These are polices related specifically to EU environmental and economic policies. The more abstract justifications related to the perception of the Japanese elites about the way in which the EU can influence global politics which they felt was the ability of the EU to set the global agenda and put such ideas into practical policy outcomes.

3. The EU and Japan

Interviewees were asked to indicate the perceived importance of the EU for Japan both now and in the future, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was not important at all and 5 was very important. Figure 25 presents the results of these questions.

Figure 25: Perceived Importance of the EU Currently and in the Future

As can be seen above, with the exception of the media elites, all of the interviewees felt that the importance of the EU to Japan would increase in the future. The respondents from the civil society group rated the EU most highly at present, with a ranking of 4.25 out of 5. The Japanese political elites, on the
other hand, evaluated the importance of the EU in the future more highly, with a ranking of 4.57. The media elites’ responses were different from the other three groups in that they showed evaluated the importance of the EU as decreasing in the future.

Following from this, respondents were asked to compare the importance of the EU to Japan to that of other important global regions and countries, notably Asia, China, the United States (US) and Russia. The results are shown in Figures 26–29.

**Figure 26:** The Importance of the EU Compared with the US

**Figure 27:** The Importance of the EU Compared with Asia
As is apparent, while the Japanese elites may consider the EU to be of global importance and have international power, when evaluating its importance for their own country, the EU was seen to be considerably less significant. Instead, the interviewees generally believed the EU to be far less important to Japan than Asia, the US and China, however, the EU was seen as more important than Russia. Specifically, Japanese elites stated that they saw the US as being of the utmost importance for Japan, particularly from the perspective of national security and geography. Japan’s foreign policy, which is centred on the Japan-US
alliance, is geographically located around the Asia Pacific, and as such, those two areas – the US and Asia – are considered to be far more important than the distant EU. However, at the same time, most of the respondents noted that the areas of significance of Asia and China for Japan were very different to those of the EU. For example, for Japan, Asia is an arena in which it plays a key role, while the EU is a foreign partner, and China is viewed as a competitor. For Japanese elites, while Russia is geographically close, it is ideologically and economically distant, and thus the EU was seen as being much more important than Russia.

Although the EU was not perceived as being the most important partner for Japan, it was interesting nonetheless to gauge how the Japanese elites viewed the current state of relations between their country and the EU. Figure 30 depicts the results of this question.

![Figure 30: State of EU-Japan Relations](image)

In the past, the relationship between Japan and the EU has been fraught by some tensions, particularly relating to trade frictions during the 1980s. Yet, currently the relationship is strong, and the results of this survey reflected that, with the clear majority of respondents viewing the relationship as stable. However, it may also be suggested that although the EU-Japan relationship is not considered problematic by respondents, it also was not seen as improving positively. Some respondents took this notion further and expressed their perception that the relationship was stagnating, however others believed that the relations were improving.
Given the stability that the relationship was generally perceived to have then, it was interesting to see which specific issues were seen to impact on the EU-Japan relations. Figure 31 shows the results of this question, with responses broadly categorised.

As can be seen, environmental and economic/financial issues were the two areas in which Japanese elites perceived the EU had a direct impact on their country. Environmental issues in particular caught the attention of many respondents, although the media interviewees instead viewed economic issues and, in particular, the state of the euro as being of the most importance. The environmental issues, which were mentioned by respondents, included concrete EU regulations such as Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHs) and the CO₂ emissions scheme. A number of elites though, and in particular those from the civil society group, stated that they believed there to be no real issues of importance in the relationship.

Bearing these responses in mind, the elites were asked what issues they felt should be kept in mind when the Japanese government was establishing its policy towards the EU in the future. Figure 32 shows the results of this.

The interviewed Japanese elites answered issues of ‘trade/economy/finance’ and ‘agriculture’. The issues of ‘trade/economy/finance’ contained reference to issues of interest both in the present and in the future. Specific reference was made to the customs barriers and market regulations of the EU. Also, the Japanese elites believed that agricultural issues between the two partners could arise
from the opening of the Japanese agricultural market. ‘Nothing special’ was the second almost prominent response to this question. Seven Japanese elites considered the EU-Japan relation would be stable in the future. ‘Third countries’ means the relationship between Japan and third countries, not the EU. Two respondents presented the possibilities of straining the relationship between Japan and the US, while two others felt that the EU-Japan relationship could worsen if the EU dropped its arms embargo against China.

The final question posed to respondents regarding their perception of the EU-Japan relationship specifically concerned their knowledge of the European Commission Delegation in Tokyo. Figure 33 shows the results of the question which asked whether interviewees were aware of the Delegation, and what mutually beneficial ways of cooperation could they envision with this EU representative in their own country.

As is evident from the above table, there was a range of responses to this question, depending on the category of elites. Respondents were split in their perceptions: 41.7% believing that the Delegation was ‘beneficial’ and another 41.7% seeing the institution as having no benefit for Japan. Four interviewees had not heard of the Delegation, while half of the political elites and civil society elites considered the Delegation to be beneficial for them and their organisations. However, only two of the business elites thought the Delegation was useful. Among the civil society elites, members of economic organisations think the Delegation is very important to connect with the EC/EU especially.
4. Perceptions of Special Issues

Respondents were asked to discuss their perceptions of the recent EU enlargements, particularly in 2004 with ten new member states acceding and in 2007 with Romania and Bulgaria also joining the Union. In particular, the elites were asked what types of risks or opportunities they saw for Japan with the accession of these new countries to the EU. Figure 34 depicts the results of this question.
As the table shows, responses to this enquiry were varied. None of the interviewees felt that there were only risks associated with the EU’s expansions, although some felt that there were risks, but these were balanced by opportunities. Perhaps indicating some of the indifference towards the EU that was discussed earlier, five of the interviewees felt that there were neither risks nor opportunities for Japan with the EU’s enlargements, thus indicating that they see developments in Europe as being of little consequence for their part of the world.

As was seen in the analysis above, the euro was one of the most symbolic images of the EU for the Japanese elites (Figure 21, above). Following from this, respondents were asked to compare the importance of the euro as an international currency, vis-à-vis the US dollar. Figure 35 presents the results of this question.

As can be seen in the above graph, the majority of the Japanese elites did not view the euro as a superior currency to the US dollar, but they did consider it to be an important international currency, and one which is becoming or will become one of key global currencies. All of the business elites agreed with the credibility of the euro as an international currency, and one business elite did also claim that the euro was superior to the US dollar in many areas. Contrastingly, one political elite pointed out that the euro was overvalued, and yet another political elite insisted that the euro was important just as a regional currency in Europe, but not as an international currency.
One of the key mechanisms for interaction between the EU and the countries of Asia is through the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. This study was interested in gauging to what extent the Japanese elites saw this process as being effective and indeed, how they saw it impacting the EU-Japan relationship generally. Figure 36 shows the results of this question.

**Figure 36: Impact of the ASEM Process on EU-Japan Interactions**

As Figure 36 makes apparent, most of the interviewees thought that the ASEM process had little impact on interactions between the EU and Japan. Firstly, the ASEM process is not highly profiled by business elites and civil society elites. Four business elites and two civil society elites had not heard of ASEM at all. In addition, of those who were aware of it, three business elites and two civil society respondents felt that they did not have enough information about ASEM to judge its impact on Japan. All of the political and media elites were aware of ASEM itself, but no media elites considered the process to impact on relations between the EU and Japan. The responses of political elites varied from the other elite groups in that all of them considered the impacts of ASEM to be either indirect or invisible.

In the latter part of 2006, the year prior to the interviews being conducted, the ASEM 6 Summit was held in Helsinki, Finland. Following up on the previous question, the study asked interviewees whether they were aware of this specific meeting, and if so, how they perceived it to impact on Japan. Figure 37 depicts the breakdown of responses to this question.
What is apparent from Figure 37 is that while there was a slight majority of respondents who were aware of the ASEM 6 Summit, none of them felt that this event had any bearing on Japan, or indeed on the EU-Japan relationship. Additionally, a large number of respondents, particularly business and civil society elites, were wholly unaware of the event. It can be inferred then that the ASEM process has very little visibility amongst Japanese elites; arguably those in positions of policy-making power. When ASEM is visible, however, the perception of a lack of direct local relevance indicates an even lower actual visibility.

5. Sources of Information on the EU

Since this project is concerned with the interaction of public, elite and media perceptions towards the EU, it was interesting to ask elites where they got their information on the EU; whether they relied on the popular news media or other sources, perhaps those connected to their professional organisations. This question was only asked of political, business and civil society respondents. Figure 38 depicts the results of this query.
Since the news media clearly play a key role in informing the Japanese elites on the EU, it was interesting to delve further into this and ask which specific media sources were used by the respondents. Figure 39 shows the results, broadly grouped into the print and broadcast media. Once again, this question was not posed to the media elites.

It is clear from Figure 39 that the print news media are more widely used by the Japanese elites than are the broadcast media, and in particular the local Japanese print news media. Of the foreign newspapers mentioned by respondents, the *Financial Times* from the UK was mentioned as a key source of EU news.

In the television sources, two types were identified: local Japanese television networks and the global cable and satellite television networks. The former specifically referred to local stations *NHK* and the *Fuji Television*, while the latter included the *BBC* and *CNN*. In addition to these two traditional sources of international news, popular magazines were also mentioned by respondents, particularly the local *Toyo-Keizai*\(^\text{17}\) and the Japanese edition of *The Economist*.

\(^{17}\) Toyo-Keizai is the weekly magazine for business leaders. Media Research Center, *Zasshi Shimbun Šou Katarogu; 2007nenndo*, 788.
Specific Questions for Media Elites

As has been argued previously in this book, the news media are argued to play a key role in influencing the perceptions of the public, and indeed a country’s elites, regarding foreign counterparts. This influence is often referred to as the ‘gatekeeping’ role of the news media, whereby they function to filter the range of information available daily and feed it to the public in a specific way. This study was interested in determining what editorial processes and policies might exist within the Japanese newsrooms that may impact on the framing of the EU within that local news media. As such, a specific range of questions were asked solely of the Japanese media elites, which addressed the specific approach to covering of the EU and European issues, their editorial approaches and their news selection criteria.

1. EU Coverage

First, it was considered important to understand how the coverage of the EU and European issues is organised. While all of the interviewed media outlets primarily relied on their own correspondents for creating their EU news, most
also relied on the international news agencies. Despite this use of the international wires, most of the interviewed news organisations maintain their own foreign bureaus within Member States of the EU. Table 6 shows the locations of those bureaus. *Toyo-Keizai* was the exceptional case as it had no European-based bureaus. In general, the scale of the Japanese publishers is small, so it is difficult to maintain bureaus in Europe. Instead, when *Toyo-Keizai*’s journalists wish to cover European issues, they may visit Europe personally on one-off trips, or they use the European based foreign news agencies.

**Table 6: Japanese News Bureaus within the EU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Bureau in Member States of the EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Sankei Shimbun</em></td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>London, Paris, Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nihon Hoso Kyokai</em></td>
<td>Broadcasting Station</td>
<td>London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>NHK</em></td>
<td>Broadcasting Station</td>
<td>London, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS)</em></td>
<td>Broadcasting Station</td>
<td>London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fuji Television</em></td>
<td>Broadcasting Station</td>
<td>London, Paris, Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TV Asahi</em></td>
<td>Broadcasting Station</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TV Tokyo</em></td>
<td>Broadcasting Station</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, whether special preparations are made in advance of covering EU issues was questioned. With the exception of *NHK* and *Toyo-Keizai*, the other media companies did not conduct special preparations for European issues. In the case of *NHK* and *Toyo-Keizai*, the former has three types of news programmes: daily news, current affairs (special features in news programmes about current
affairs) and documentary programmes. In the current affairs and documentary programmes, NHK organises a special research team. Toyo-Keizai claims to maintain an issue-oriented approach, so that it always researches issues prior to publication.

Third, the Japanese media companies do not treat the EU as something special. Budget wise, except for Toyo-Keizai, the Japanese media companies do not allocate special funds to the EU coverage, yet, they do have several bureaus in Europe and continue to support and maintain them. NHK uses a special budget for current affairs and documentary programmes focusing on the EU and Europe. From the viewpoint of the allocation of human resource, all of the media companies neither assigned more staff, nor hired experts to cover specific EU issues. As mentioned above, the listed media companies already have a number of journalists working for their European bureaus, and thus, when a need arises to cover a specific ‘hot’ European issue, the media companies shift their staff from other European locations as a ‘support team’.

2. Editorial Approach

The editorial approach of a media outlet is another important point because it shows the stance of news makers in Japan towards the EU coverage. First, all media companies admitted that their official policy does not formulate anything special about covering foreign news. Instead, all companies depend on their correspondents’ intuition and expertise, though the editors are responsible for the final check and release of the articles. An EU news item is claimed to be treated as a typical foreign news item, yet Nikkei interviewees insisted their newspapers treats EU news in a different fashion – with the EU being a ‘trend setter’ in international relations, the paper focuses on the EU and reports the EU news in detail.

The media elites were also asked if their own company takes a proactive role or reactive role towards the coverage of the EU. Diverging opinions were elicited. NHK, Asahi and Jiji identified their role as reactive. Respondents from Asahi underlined that it is difficult for them to be a proactive in foreign news coverage, mainly due to the changing nature of news consumption -- many people who are interested in foreign news prefer to access news produced by media ‘news giants’, such as CNN or BBC. These news sources produce more and quicker information on any important event before Asahi journalists can write an article about it. Jiji, being a news agency, does not have its own outlet, thus considered its role as reactive too. In contrast, Nikkei respondents outlined a proactive role of their outlet in EU coverage and agreed that their newspaper actively sets the agenda. Mainichi answered it tries to be proactive, and Yomiuri interviewees
admitted that their newspapers may be an agenda setter even though it has no intention to be. As for the news gathering, the Japanese print media mostly rely on the local correspondents who write on various subjects (including the EU), yet they also use news wires occasionally.

The interviewees were also asked about their reactions towards the EU’s proactive stance in disseminating information about its actions and policies. The answers featured an array of attitudes. With exception of Asahi, the remaining media representatives did not oppose a possibility to consider EU news if it is presented to them by an EU person or body. A news item could be interesting, and thus it might be included in the paper (depending on time and space availability, as Yomiuri noted). In contrast, NHK and Jiji stressed the public relations mean the investment into the future, so the actions by EU bodies and officials are would be better be not connected with news writing, but with news making. Importantly, Jiji evaluated the journalists exchange programmes between Japan and the EU as a beneficial exercise for the Japanese journalists.

In general, most interviewed media elites optimistically agreed that foreign news coverage will increase in the future. However, the increase of the foreign news does not necessarily mean a bigger volume of EU news. In fact, only three media elites believed that EU news would increase in the future (Nikkei, Mainichi and Jiji).

3. News Selection Criteria

News selection criteria are useful to understand patterns, which media companies assign to a value of newsworthiness of their EU items. The answers of the media elites can be separated into two groups. The first one prioritises EU news if it touches on the relation between the EU and Japan. The second one focuses on the importance of the news in general. Unsurprisingly, the first criteria led. If the impact of an issue on Japan is perceived to be strong, then the reportage of that issue will occupy more space on the newspapers’ pages and more time in television programmes. Additionally, if EU news is seen as important (irrelevant of the EU’s involvement with Japan), the news will enter the bulletin. In contrast, the Nikkei respondents reported that their paper tries to focus on the EU as a major theme, because the EU is recognised as a ‘trend setter’ in the world. The Asahi interviewees stated that the EU features an extremely complicated internal organisation, which is difficult to understand for outsiders. They admitted that very often a piece of EU news focusing solely on the EU may need a supporting article, just to explain the Union’s complex arrangements.

Respondents stressed that it is difficult to ‘sell’ the EU news. All interviewees agreed, that the Japanese people are not interested in the EU, especially if
compared with Asia and the US, and it is not easy to attract audiences’ attention to the EU. One of the obvious ways is to relate EU news to Japan (a strategy used by NHK, a private television station, Yomiuri, Nikkei, Jiji and Toyo-Keizai). Also, it is important to explain to the audiences a detailed background of the EU actions and decision-making to facilitate understanding of the reportages on the EU (a strategy adopted by Mainichi).

Conclusion

As can be seen from this comprehensive discussion of the perceptions and representations of the EU within the Japanese media, public and elites, there are a range of perceptions of the EU within Japan, but although these might often be either positive or neutral, seldom was the EU perceived as being negative for Japan. In the Japanese view, the EU is seen as one of its ‘good’ partners, and the majority of the public and elite sectors think that the EU-Japan relationship is stable. However, actions of the EU in Japan, particularly in comparison with the US, and recently China, are not considered very high profile, and needless to say, the US has been the most important country for Japan since the World War Two. Because of this US-Japan alliance which has formed the basis of Japan’s security and foreign policy, the US has also been the important market for Japan. More recently, China has become an increasingly important country for Japan from both an economic and political perspective, and as a result of this rather high-profile competition, the EU has arguably been less represented within Japan’s society. Such a particular profile of the EU in the Japanese public discourses could induce a feeling of ‘indifference’, even though the EU is Japan’s key economic partner, and growing in importance as a political counterpart. Arguably, this tendency to undervalue the EU’s global role is the most pronounced in Japan; however, it is not unique to Japan and this theme is revisited frequently in other chapters that examine Asian perspectives this volume.
CHAPTER 6

Sunghoon Park and Yeo Jung Seo*

Impaired Vision?
The EU in the Eyes of Korea

During the twelve months of media analysis, three leading Korean newspapers and one national television channel news media reported 963 news items in relation to the European Union (EU), approximately half of which presented the EU engaged in economic affairs. Trade and economic situations were among the leading topics across the four media outlets, showing high interest in international markets and investment destinations. With the exception of the English-language newspaper, Korea Herald, EU political affairs did not feature highly and directly EU-related coverage was limited. Interestingly, when North Korea was reported, the EU or its Member States were frequently mentioned even though the actual roles of the EU and its various components were not significant compared to those of the United States (US) or other Six-Party Talks members. Most of the political issues, as well as the economic coverage, were reported in a neutral manner, although some of the news on the EU’s integration process was negatively depicted due in large part to a perceived confrontation between Christianity and Islam in the case of Turkey’s entry into the EU ‘club’.

The Korean public ranked the EU at the fourth place in terms of important overseas partners for Korea and indeed this was in line with Korean elites’ perception that the EU ranked fourth after the US, China and Japan. Those three countries most frequently mentioned by public and elites were perceived to be of paramount importance owing to economic relations, historical contacts and geopolitical strategies. Meanwhile, the EU, although located far away from Korea, was thought to be an important future partner in many aspects including economic and diplomatic relations. Since Koreans’ primary interests lie in the economic sectors, the EU was considered as an important market, as well as investment zone. Also many hoped that on-going free trade agreement (FTA) negotiation between the two entities would be a stepping stone for closer relations in future.

* Professor Park is Professor of Economics and International Trade at the Graduate School of International Studies at Korea University. Yeo Jung Seo is a Graduate Student at the School of International Studies at Korea University. Yeo Jung Seo undertook the research for this chapter and prepared the preliminary information while Professor Park provided guidance and assistance. This chapter is a result of their collaborative efforts.
In general, the EU was much less visible in the Korean media than it was in the other Asian countries involved in this study, but the images of the Union, as perceived by both the Korean public and elites were very positive. Bilateral relations between the EU and Korea were not thought to be very strong, but were seen to be developing. Many respondents from both the public and elite groups believed that the EU could be an important partner for Korea as its economic and diplomatic powers are great and Korea needs them. In addition, it was noted by many that Korea’s biased relations with the US should be balanced. Were Korea to move closer to the EU, Korea’s foreign relations would become more diversified and balanced. While the EU did not appear in the Korean news very often, Europe’s friendliness and long history and culture were on the minds of the Korean people.

Introduction

Following the common methodology adopted in this cross-national study of EU perceptions in Asia, three newspapers – Chosun Daily (popular daily), Maeil Business (business daily) and Korea Herald (English language newspaper) – were chosen as the selected South Korean press outlets and KBS (Korea Broadcast System) prime-time news (9 pm news) was selected to represent Korean television news. The results from the year-long research project are presented and analysed in this chapter together with perceptions on the EU drawn from both public and elite opinion.

Media Analysis

The four Korean news media outlets that were monitored on a daily basis throughout 2006 (Chosun Daily, Maeil Business, Korea Herald and KBS TV News) presented a total of 963 news items relating to the European Union (EU), a total which falls far short of the coverage in the other locations involved in this study. Figure 1 shows the distribution of this coverage across the twelve months of monitoring for each media outlet. In terms of numbers, Maeil Business recorded the highest coverage with 372 items, followed by Chosun Daily with 359 and Korean Herald at just 196. The EU-related news on television news was a mere 36 in total for the entire year, under one television news item a week.

Within this comparative low coverage a clear trend was evident: nearly half of all articles in question focused on economic issues (Chosun Daily 39%, Maeil Business 66%, Korea Herald 43% and KBS TV 48%), with around one-third of EU news coverage focused on political events. 18% of the total EU news analysis concerned EU social affairs and environmental issues took up only 2% in total (Figure 2). Reports about EU political events other than those linked to the
United States (US), Japan or China were rarely reported in detail, arguably indicating a concentration of interest on certain regions within the Korean media.

The small number of EU-related events reported in fact is due to the low level of overall international news coverage across the Korean news media. The Korean media, taken as a whole, do not report as much international news as in other countries; international news coverage in average accounts for 6 to 11% in a Korean medium that is usually less than three pages.\(^1\) As for KBS TV News, the time given to global news is only five to six minutes out of an hour.\(^2\) Also news media are highly dependant on such foreign wires as Reuters, Associated Press and Agence France Presse for overseas news reporting rather than their own overseas correspondents. The high level of dependency on foreign news agency actually limits in-depth analysis of international events from Korea’s own perspectives – it is more so when the news reported does not include Korea’s interest regions such as the US, North Korea,\(^3\) China and Japan. In this sense, international news coverage including the EU in the Korean media is very brief and strongly inclined toward certain regions.\(^4\)

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   International news coverage accounts for 9% in Chosun Daily, 11% in Joongang Daily, 8% in Dong-A Daily and 6% in Hankyoreh Daily.

2. Ibid. Additionally, there while there were a total of 17 overseas correspondents, this figure was comparative low when measured against other television channels.

3. North Korea was treated as a foreign country, thus as foreign news.

4. The strong region-biased views were also observed in public survey and elite interviews.
In terms of focus of domesticity, the four Korean media outlets mostly presented EU news in the context of a 3rd party, with this focus accounting for 45% of the total. In addition, 58% of the total news coverage reported the EU as only a minor actor, compared to 16% which presented the EU as the major actor in the item. The EU was frequently observed in the coverage in connection to the Middle East, for example in Iran’s nuclear conflicts and the ongoing Palestine issues. In addition, the EU was, more often than not, presented as being associated with the North Korean problems (human rights and nuclear crisis) and the Korea-EU FTA was increasingly reported towards the end of the year, but to a much lesser degree if compared with Korea-US FTA coverage.

The leading news frames which were used to discuss the EU’s activities during 2006 will now be discussed in greater detail, beginning with the frame which accounted for the majority of EU news in the Korean media; economic affairs.

**Figure 2: Primary Frames of EU News in Korea, 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Affairs</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic Issues**

Economic coverage was evenly distributed throughout the year and a total of 454 items were reported in the four media outlets. Of those items, over a third was allocated to *trade* issues and almost another quarter to the *state of economy*. Considering that Korea is highly dependent upon international trade for its economic growth, Korea tends to see major regions as Korea’s markets and emerging economies are viewed as investment destinations, thus perhaps accounting for the emphasis given to this particular frame in the EU news coverage.

The most notable sub-frame in the EU-related economic news, trade, included a variety of issues: trade conflicts between the EU and China; anti-dumping duties against Korean companies; Korean free trade agreements with the EU and the US; EU agricultural subsidies; and the Doha trade negotiation in the World Trade Organisations (WTO). While the Korea-EU trade deal was neutrally
reported, it captured less attention in the media than its American counterpart. When the regional bloc in East Asia including China and Japan was discussed, the EU was frequently mentioned as well. The EU, as the world’s most successful economic bloc, was cheerfully evaluated by statements saying that the EU is the global front-runner in terms of economic integration. The economic impact of issues like the environment, intellectual property rights and national/regional competitiveness changes were also occasionally noted. The connection between trade and environmental issues was made in some news items which noted that the poor environmental standards of many Korean companies would be an obstacle for their movement into European markets.

Among the EU member countries, Germany was most frequently mentioned in the coverage of EU economic affairs. Its economic reforms, economic development and future outlook were analysed in all the media outlets under consideration. To a lesser degree, the French and British economies were also addressed. Reflecting the heightened interest in emerging economies, the new EU member countries such as Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia also came into the Korean news media spotlight. The three Western European countries were viewed as great economic powers, as well as important economic partners for Korea, while the Eastern European countries were seen as new manufacturing facilities becoming major foreign direct investment destinations.

In the process of EU enlargement, economic changes and growth are significant features. Since the 2004 EU enlargement, there has been interest in how this expansion has affected the growth and stability of the European market. Correspondingly, liberalisation in the services industry, the free labour movement within the EU and the unemployment rate across the EU zone were featured in the Korean news coverage and quite positively depicted. But Eastern European people who moved to the West with a view to having a better job were presented in the Korean news media as being problematic, particularly when the imbalances between the old and the new members were discussed. All four media outlets reported the European Central Bank (ECB)’s interest rate policies on a regular basis. The newspapers looked into the strengthening euro and weakening US dollars in terms of changing international currency environment and, accordingly, Korea’s slowly shifting strategies to those developments.

The economic news provided by the four Korean media outlets presented only a snapshot picture of the EU economy while individual countries were instead discussed in greater detail, with the exception of the specific trade policies implemented by the supranational entity. It was clear, however, that the EU is viewed strongly as a unified and expanding market. The Korean news media did however create an invisible boundary or division in Europe by depicting Western Europe as advanced economies and places Korea could learn from, while the East was mostly presented as a strategic exporting base for the Western Europe.
Political Affairs

On the whole, the Korean media prefer to focus on the Korean domestic politics in detail. Consequently, this tendency impacts negatively on the coverage and emphasis placed on foreign politics including those of the EU. As a newspaper that is primarily read by non-nationals, the *Korea Herald* presented as much EU politics as economic issues, perhaps reflecting this more ‘international’ readership. The other newspapers however preferred to present EU economic affairs as their leading news focus. The English-language newspaper, however, did feature a much wider range of countries and locations in their external political news than did the other media outlets. In total, 302 political news items were introduced across the four media, among which eighty percent was external political affairs, thus indicating that the internal workings of the EU were far less visible in Korea in 2006. More than a dozen countries were featured in the external frame and North Korea, the US, Iran and the Middle East generally were the most frequently identified. In the internal political affairs, which accounted for a little over 19% of the total political coverage, enlargement, internal conflicts, elections and many other topics dominated. Among the member countries of the EU, Germany, France and Britain were the most visible actors, which is similar to the findings of the economy frame.

Under the sub-frame of external political affairs, the EU news discussed North Korea and the US most frequently. When the EU was associated with North Korea, the topics generally fell into three major issues: North Korean missile development, denuclearisation and human rights. Rather than seen as active players in the news, the EU and its Member States were instead presented as outsiders, not taking distinctive roles in the respective problems and usually mentioned alongside the ‘international society’ or ‘UN.’ It seems that the most immediate foreign policy circle of South Korea does not include the EU since it is not a participant in the Six-party Talks.5

When it appeared with the US in the coverage, the EU was involved in the Iranian nuclear problems, counter-terrorism, human rights or the Israel-Palestine conflicts. The Iranian nuclear talks exposed the three European negotiators, Britain, Germany and France, who were depicted as important partners of the US. As for terrorism, Hamas in the Middle East was presented as the source of problems for the EU. The EU in this Hamas-related coverage was taking a ‘soft’ approach to dealing with these problems, such as negotiations and diplomacy, while the US put much stronger options on the table. In line with this, the EU

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5 The Six-party Talks involve six countries: South and North Korea, the US, Japan, China and Russia and they aim to denuclearise the Korean Peninsula.
was presented as benign but adamant in terms of human rights; a slightly different presentation than that of its largest partner, the US.

The most visible issue among the internal political affairs coverage was the enlargement process. Turkey’s stagnated entry into the ‘club’ was negatively depicted by statements which described that its failure to accede was due in part to religious divisions between Christianity and Islam. The second major internal political issue, internal conflicts, was also negatively portrayed by the coverage focusing primarily on the difficulties within the Union of reaching agreement on various agenda. These inside policy-making problems were frequently portrayed, suggesting to the Korean news audiences that the EU has a long way to go for complete integration and that currently, its overall efforts are not wholly successful.

**Social Affairs**

Social events in the EU-related news accounted for 18% of the total Korean coverage and in *Chosun Daily*, social news in fact exceeded political coverage by 12%. EU social affairs news was identified not only as news which provided information, but also as entertainment, making it unique among the four news frames used in this analysis. Within this frame in particular were a range of topics which contained an element of human interest and among the most visible were: healthcare, human rights, culture, education, lifestyle, labour, travel and leisure, and immigration.

Healthcare accounted for 46% of the social affairs coverage and this was greatly influenced by attention to the avian flu outbreaks in Asia and Europe at the beginning of 2006. In the avian flu, or bird flu, news coverage, the EU was generally presented as the major actor in the news item and Europe was identified as a key location of the flu outbreaks. In the *KBS TV News* coverage, the troubling flu outbreaks accounted for 27% of the healthcare reports. Within the healthcare sub-frame, problems of plastic surgery, junk food and smoking were also presented, as was one article in particular which discussed the rather intriguing trend of Western Europeans who travelled to Hungary for cheap but apparently excellent dental treatment; a trend that was called the boom ‘dental care travel’.

Education, one of the Korea’s constant interests and research into stem cell transplants, one of the ‘hot’ topics in 2006, were also frequently noted in the social affairs coverage. The coverage of stem cell research routinely depicted the EU’s decision to continuously provide financial assistance for such research projects despite the opposition to this from some of its Member States. In addition, the Korean news media took a rather critical stands against the local
Korean education system and instead presented European education systems as advanced and well-functioning. The education sub-frame also included reviews of books and coverage of Koreans studying abroad within the EU, mentioning such well-known universities as Oxford, for example.

Environment

The final news frame that was analysed in this study was EU environmental coverage. Environmental issues accounted for the smallest portion of the total EU-related news coverage in Korea, comprising only 2% of the total. The television coverage in fact did not present any environmental news items during the monitored year. Within those items that did discuss environmental issues, a limited number of topics were identified, including environmental policy, air pollution, energy and climate change. The two most visible topics across the media outlets though, were the EU’s standards on car engines, as well as the Kyoto Protocol, although several other news items also discussed alternative energies and organic farming practices in Europe. Although the EU takes its global environmental role very seriously, it seems that such interest was not replicated in the Korean news media.

Public Perceptions of the EU in Korea

In addition to investigating the various media images of the EU that exist in Korea, this study was also interested in examining how the EU is perceived by the general Korean public. As such, a national survey was conducted at the end of 2006 which asked participants to discuss their perceptions of the EU in terms of its importance for Korea, its global importance, as well as a range of more personal images.

Korea and the World

The first question asked of survey respondents was to rank the importance of the EU to Korea as compared to a range of other important international counterparts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most important overseas partner chosen by the Korean public was the US, which accounted for close to 25% of responses, followed by China (22.1%), Japan (18.7%), followed then by the EU/Europe (12.6%) and Asia (10.8%, excluding Japan and China). The top three countries on the list accounted for 65%, arguably showing very strong regional concen-
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tration and it, will be seen subsequently, also corresponds to the Korean elite opinion on the EU (discussed below). Among the top seven countries or regions, Asia and Asian countries (China, Japan and India) accounted for 56%. Typically, Korea’s foreign relations seem to prioritise the US and Asia, at least in the perception of the Korean public.

Following this, respondents were also asked to rank the future importance of various regions for Korea using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important. Using this scale, the Korean public ranked China at the top with an average score of 4.73, much higher than the second-ranked country (Japan, 4.42) and the third (US, 4.14). The clear dominance of China over the US in the future importance for Korea arguably indicates the likely direction of future Korean foreign policy which will increasingly focus on matters within its own immediate region. In this future scale, the EU averaged a score of only 3.90, slightly higher than Asia (3.88, excluding Japan and China) and Russia (3.86). It is clear that the Korean public do not expect Korea’s ties with the EU to experience major shifts in the near future since once again it was ranked fourth behind the US, Japan and China.

Korea and the EU

As discussed above, the EU was ranked by the Korean public as Korea’s fourth most important overseas partner both now and in the future, indicating that there is little perception of change in the bilateral relationship in years to come. This trend was further emphasised when the majority of respondents also saw the relations between the two entities as being either steady or improving. 63% thought the relationship as steady, while 30% saw it to be improving. Only a very small fraction of respondents (2.8%) considered relations to be worsening. While most of these answers are quite positive, it also indicates perhaps that the Korean public does not put high hopes on the bilateral relationship and sees little possibility for deepening the connections.

However, despite this perception relations between the EU and Korea are seen to encompass a range of issues. This study was interested in seeing which issues specifically, the Korean public perceived to be of the greatest importance to the relationship, and thus respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no impact at all and 10 is a huge impact, the impact of various issues in the near future. Considering the importance of the US to Korea, survey participants picked the EU’s dealings with the US as the most important issue, scoring it an average of 7.87. Many respondents looked at the EU as a developing economic bloc and huge market with great potential and pointed out the importance of the EU as a trading partner for Korea, an issue which also
scored highly, 7.80. In line with this, EU’s role in the WTO Doha Round talks were considered important (average 7.74). Other prominent issues included the euro (7.76) and the ECB policies and their influence on world financial markets (7.66), indicating perhaps that the European single currency is gaining a prominent position as an international currency and that its marketability is impacting the bilateral relations between Korea and the EU. Interestingly, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process was thought be quite important (7.62), being ranked above the mean (7).^6

In addition to those issues presented to respondents which they had to then rank, survey participants were also asked whether there were any other issues which might affect EU-Korean relations either now or in the future. Within these responses, the EU’s huge market and economic relations were once again emphasised. Trade accounted for 25% of responses and economics 19%, respectively. Around 9% of the participants thought that the EU’s involvement in environment or energy could have a huge impact on Korea. A little more than 6% of respondents pointed out that politics were important to the relationship, while other answers included North Korea (11%), general EU issues (7%) and technology (3%). The answer of ‘North Korea’ signals that, although Europe is not a direct participant in Six-Party talks that aims at nuclear disarmament, the Korean public perhaps is hopeful that the EU may come to play a greater problem-solving role, as it often has in Middle East. Although the perception of relations is clearly disproportionately seen in economic terms, pragmatically, relations between the two must progress further in the future and perhaps the issue of North Korea may help to forge such developments.

Since the EU is of paramount importance to Korea given its vast economic capacity, a number of respondents stressed that Korea needs to develop trade policies in relation to the EU. Owing to the FTA deal between the two that is under negotiation, trade issues were noted by a third of respondents as the most important issue to be kept in mind when Korean leaders are dealing with the EU in the future. The second most frequently mentioned issue was economy/monetary measures (mentioned by one-in-seven), a closely related issue to trade. Around one-in-twelve pointed out that closer relations should be discussed; with a similar level believed that environment/standards should be kept in mind when Korea is developing government policy relating to the EU. Other issues spora-

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^6 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org. This finding contrasts with the results of Korean media analysis and elites interviews, in which ASEM’s importance was mostly ignored.
dically mentioned included culture/ethnicities/religion/differences, politics/US and Korea’s interests/citizens. While the general public in the other locations involved in this cross-country study seemed to give greater emphasis to their own countries’ interests in this question, Koreans instead appeared to see little national interest with the EU beyond economics and trade.

As discussed above, the ASEM process was ranked relatively prominent in the list of important issues shaping the EU-Korean relationship. Additionally, the Korean public appeared to follow the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki in 2006 relatively closely. Around 32% of respondents stated they moderately followed the news coverage of the meeting in and when asked to rate their own follow-up on that issue, 18% gave the issue 4 and 5 out of five, with 5 being the highest score. About 30% of respondents, however, confessed that they did not keep up with the issue very much, while 7% said they did not follow the ASEM 6 news coverage at all. Only 6% of respondents stated that they were not aware of the meeting.

Respondents were also asked whether they had any personal or professional contacts within the EU and of those, which specific EU Member States these were in. The top three answers to this question were the ‘big three’ of the EU: the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and France. The nature of these connections with the UK were identified as general knowledge (30%), friends living there (17%), travelling (15%), business ties (13%) and so on. Most of the respondents claimed to have heard of the UK through various media and other channels, as well as having personal relations with those living there. One reason that Koreans have these extensive personal connections with the UK may be that many Korean students study English or take higher education within the UK.

Finally, respondents were asked how often they discuss the EU or Europe in their everyday lives and it seems that in the normal course of their life, Koreans do not talk about the EU or Europe with their friends and family or co-workers. More than half of the respondents said that they rarely talk about the EU with family and friends and a similar number said they did not discuss it with their colleagues at work, perhaps indicating an impaired access to the relevance of the EU for their daily lives.

Sources of Information on the World

Since this study is interested in the interaction between the public, media and elites, it was interesting to assess which sources of information the Korean public use when seeking information on the EU. 32% of respondents claimed to have daily access to the news media for foreign news. Around 40% noted that they

7 China 7.09%, Hong Kong 9.78%, Japan 11.39%, Singapore 6.61% and Thailand 2.84%.
access the media several times a week to get informed on the world, including the EU, while 13% stated that they only access foreign news once a week.

Most of the respondents (31%) stated that television news was their primary media source for information on the EU. Since, as discussed above, the Korean television news media in fact report very little EU news, it can be assumed that these people have very limited knowledge or information on the EU. Television news was followed by newspaper/news articles (30%), Internet (22%), other television programmes (6%), magazines (5%) and word of mouth (5%). Among the newspapers that were mentioned by respondents as providing them with EU news, *Chosun Daily* ranked the number one, accounting for 28%. Another popular daily newspaper, *Joongang Daily*, was ranked second (25%), followed by *Maeil Business Newspaper* (18%) and *Donga* (16%). In the television news programmes, *KBS 9pm News* comprised the largest share with 29%. *MBC 9pm News* accounted for 24% and *SBS* 20%.

**Images of the EU**

The final question that was asked of survey participants was intended to provoke their spontaneous images of the EU. Respondents were asked to list the three thoughts that came to mind when they heard the words, ‘the European Union’. A variety of responses were generated by this question and many of these were related to the EU’s economic characteristics. The euro ranked at the top, while the European Community, an economic bloc and the image of developed nations were also frequently mentioned.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Image</th>
<th>Specific Images Mentioned</th>
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<td>Country / Place</td>
<td>France, UK, ASEAN, Turkey, Switzerland, Belgium, The Netherlands, US, Korea, Germany, Paris, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Euro, Economic bloc, Tariff alliance, EEC, Trade, Huge market, Free tariff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Large nation, Developed nations, United States, Order, Community, Conservative, Egoism, Exclusive, Selfish, Freedom, Multiracial and multicultural, Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>EU flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Eurorail pass, Alliance, Turkey’s EU membership, Travel, Caucasians, Nations trying hard to join the EU, Nations that do not want to join the EU, Nations which must be defeated, Indifference, Nations which are not very close, A good relationship, Birds of a feather flock together, Social security, IMF, Railroad connection in Europe, UN, Tax, Internal difficulties, A model for an Asian community, World unification, Environmental regulations, Tradition, No visa, Jealousy, Mark (Deutsch Mark), NATO, Soccer, Welfare, War, Superpower, Discrimination, OECD, Money, Peace, FTA Balancing power against the US</td>
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The EU in the View of the Korean Elites

The final component to this research involved the investigation of the Korean elite perceptions towards the EU. Elites are considered to be powerful in terms of the development of policy and in particular foreign policy and thus it was important to account for their perceptions in this study. Interviews were conducted with elites from the political, business, media and civil society sectors of Korea, with a total of 27 interviews conducted. Interestingly, the interviewees presented very similar responses irrespective of their field, gender or ages. With a very few exceptions, the immediate priority of the Korean elites’ perception in regard to the EU was economic relations. However, it was hoped by many that in the future, diplomatic and political connections between Korea and the EU will be further developed. To a varying degree, all but a few interviews claimed to have personal or professional contacts with the EU or with European Member States. Business elites rather predictably described the nature of their personal relations in terms of commercial reciprocal economic transactions encompassing most of the Member States while the other elites’ contacts were limited to a small number of countries such as Germany and the UK. Germany in particular seemed to have long-lasting non-commercial relationships with those in political and non-governmental organisation (NGO) sectors.

International Roles of the EU

Respondents were asked whether they perceived the EU to be a great power or not, and in response, the majority of respondents came up with very similar answers with the exception of a few variations. The EU, according to the Korean elites, is a great power in terms of economy, diplomacy and normative capacity, but it does not have great power in the case of its political and military capacities.

Elite interviewees noted that the EU, perceived as a united single market, constituted a potent influence through its vast purchasing power, large population, trade volumes and single currency, the euro. It was seen also as one of the three major trading blocs along with North America and Asia and of these only the EU has common trade policy against non-member countries. The Korean elites saw its economic power augmenting fast as the supranational organisation expands to the east and as a result it is seen to have a bigger say on the world stage. Since its motivation for the establishment was understood as economic integration, interviewed elites believed that its half-a-century history had contributed to cementing economic ties within the region with great success. Indeed, in the eyes of the Korean elites the EU is a great economic bloc.
Several of the political respondents stated that historically, the EU has been at the head of establishing international relations’ norms and its role in this sense was also perceived as extending to today’s world. After the Treaty of Westphalia, Europe has always been at the head of global diplomatic relations and has advocated world peace for a long time. The Korean elites expressed a very high opinion of the EU Member States’ efforts at improving global human rights. It is noteworthy, however, that Europe, taken as a whole, was not credited by respondents for its strong diplomatic power necessarily, but rather individual European countries (UK, France and Germany) were highlighted. 

Generally, Korean elites in the four groups did not perceive the EU as a political leader. Many stated that the EU has been facing problems in reaching political integration and its diversified cultures and interests, structural problems and low level of support for a single governmental organisation were perceived as further obstructing integration. According to Jin-Sik, Kim of Samsung Electronics, the multi-cultural and ethnically-diverse Europe does not speak in a single voice in, for example, its Middle East policies, which the interviewee felt showed a lack of unity and leadership and which he felt critically limited the EU’s capacity, particularly compared to the US, China and Russia. The respondents did not see great power in the EU that could be compared to the US, because of this perception of a weak solidarity within the Union. It was also noted by respondents that the EU has a limited influence in North East Asia; a region whose economic and geo-strategic importance is growing. However, some European countries (once again, the ‘big three’, UK, France and Germany) were viewed as individual political leaders, because they were perceived to act visibly and decidedly on the world stage. Many respondents however did feel that the EU’s political leadership could grow and in particular in the future, it was perceived as possibly able to take a balancing role to the US dominance.

The EU and Korea

Europe is geographically distant from Korea, and historically, militarily and politically, the two have had little interaction. Compared to the US, North East Asia (including China and Japan) and the rapidly developing countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs), the EU’s relative importance to Korea is lacking, many interviewees believed. Since Korea has greatly been influenced by the US, other western countries were relatively unknown to Koreans and their perception in the country was very weak. Korea’s relations with the US were of paramount importance in the past few decades, and as such, the country did not pay much attention to other countries. In this sense, Europe has been regarded as a region that did not have tight connections with Korea. In addition, the
growing importance of China currently seems to have required increased efforts by Korea, which may have, to some extent, resulted in a withdrawal of some resources from the US relationship and arguably even further limited resources for the EU relationship. Despite this, however, all of the elites across the four groups believed that the bilateral relationship between Korea and the EU was both stable and developing. Also, many contended that the two partners should definitely develop much deeper relations in the near future.

One elite in the business group rightly pointed out that the EU is the second biggest trading partner of Korea, and that Korea is the eighth most important for the EU. It is clear, therefore, that the EU is of great importance to Korea in terms of economy and is perceived as such by many of the Korean elites. In addition, it was expected that the two would have much stronger economic ties in the future owing to the Korea-EU FTA that is under negotiation.

As the EU has expanded in membership, so too its market size has been growing, which the Korean elites regarded as one of the most important reasons for increasing relations between the two partners. It is interesting that not only business elites but also those in political, civil and media circles prioritised economic interactions with the EU. The potential markets of an expanded EU should not be missed, it seems. Sae-Kyun Cheong, Leader of the Uri Party, also emphasised the economic importance of the EU by saying that the region is one of the biggest investors in Korea today. He added:

Since May, Korea has been negotiating a FTA with the EU. In future, the bilateral relations between the two shall be more close and friendly. Considering the fact that today’s Korea has a much bigger capacity than before, we could develop two-way relations in a way that Korea is not only helped by the EU but also help the EU in terms of investment and cooperation. In this way, the two can have deeper and more reciprocal relationship.

Many of the interviewees argued that even though the EU has fewer connections with Korea from the viewpoint of geopolitics and history, particularly in comparison to the US, China and Japan, Korea should still make further efforts to improve its relations with the EU. Woo-Sik Jung, Director of Buddhist Environmental Solidarity stated this as follows:

Let’s say there is a ship. If the ship is lopsided, there are high chances to be overturned. Like the lopsided ship, Korea is not balanced at all. The country is leaning towards the US simply too much. In this context, it is likely to be overturned. What we need is some balancing...The EU can be that.

By cooperating with a variety of countries, Korea should diversify its foreign relations, it was argued by many respondents. Interestingly, several elites also

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8 Korea’s first largest trading partner is China, followed by the EU, the US and Japan.
spoke about the future importance of the EU in relation to the North Korean problems. Today, the North Korean issues are addressed by six countries, namely the two Koreas, the US, China, Japan and Russia, and it was hoped that the EU could play an important role in solving the North Korean nuclear issues, as it has tried to do with Iran.

Moving away from economic and political relations, cultural, educational, technical and environmental interchanges were also mentioned by the interviewees as areas of the relationship to be improved. Europe’s long history and cultural heritage are highly valued, and the two partners need to improve their cultural and educational exchanges for years to come, many interviewees argued. A number of the political elites stressed that the two entities should increase cooperation in technology and that Korea must learn of advanced financial and services industries in Europe.

Korea needs to strengthen bilateral ties with the EU. That should not be limited to traditional political and economic cooperation, but should include environment, development, military and so on encompassing all the global issues.9

When asked to rate the importance of the EU to Korea in the present (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important), all the elites in the four groups ranged their responses between 3 and 4. Most agreed that the EU is important for Korea, but to a much lesser degree than the US, China and Japan. The reasons of the importance converged on economic potential of Europe with no exception. As for future, the rating was slightly higher than in the present and three of the respondents in fact gave the highest rating of 5 for the EU in the future. None of the respondents rated the importance of the EU to Korea in the future as being lower than that in the present, thus indicating a positive outlook for the future. The reasons for the increased importance of the EU were described as being more than just economy. Naturally, economic issues were discussed, but it was also argued by many that Korea must diversify its foreign relations by moving closer toward Europe in other areas. One interviewee stated that Korea needs to cooperate with the EU in terms of technology, science and climate changes.

It is true that influences of the US, Japan, China and Russia are great. Korea needs to make friendly forces to solve North Korean problems it faces. In this context, it would be helpful to have deeper relations with the EU. Korea is a divided country. The most economically powerful country in the EU, Germany, has the same historical experiences. And the country was successfully unified. There are lots of things we can learn from that [unification] process.10

In relation to the EU Commission Delegation, over half of the interviewees expressed scepticism about its efficacy and around a third of those respondents

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9 Anonymous Political Elite respondent.
10 Byung-Ok An, Secretary General, Korean Federation for Environment Movement.
were not aware of the Delegation at all. Many elites said that they did not have any connection with the Delegation and nor did they think that it would be useful for them in the future. Most indicated that if they required specific information, they would be more likely to contact an individual EU Member State embassy rather than the Delegation. Despite these somewhat negative views, several elites in the business and political groups forecast that the Delegation would be of great use to them in the case of seeking information: how to set up a business in the EU?; what are the latest changes in tariffs, taxation and business regulations?; or where to invest in the region? In addition, one political respondent in particular highly evaluated the Delegation by saying that its active roles in order to improve Korea-EU were worthy of high praise. A number of other elites also expressed their belief in the Delegations’ potential usefulness in terms of networking between the EU Member States and Korea.

The European Union Chamber of Commerce in Korea represents the EU’s economic interests. The EU Delegation can play the role of window [for Koreans], providing a unified ‘contact point,’ which should lead to smooth communication between the two.11

**Perception of Special Issues**

In addition to the general EU-Korea relationship and the role of the EU in the world, this project was also interested in the perception of Korean elites to a number of specific EU issues, in particular the impacts of the EU’s ongoing enlargement, the euro and their awareness of the ASEM process.

Since the EU enlargement was mostly understood by interviewees as economic integration and as such, the associated risks and opportunities of the expansion for Korea that were discussed by participants logically fell under the category of economy. Some felt that Korea might face increased competition in the EU market as the new countries join and new countries’ rising labour costs might negatively impact on the Korean investors, while others noted that the manufacturing facilities with their apparently cheap labour in the East could serve as an access for Korean companies to sell more widely in the expanded EU market. Generally, the ‘Eastern Europe’ factor could be seen as a huge risk, but the very risk might also pay large rewards at the same time. The risks and opportunities stated included reduced costs and time owing to unified rules and regulations and the EU’s increasing negotiating capacity that might be transformed into hegemonic power just like the US.

When it gets stronger and starts to press its luck too much, it might exert an evil influence. With worst-case scenario, the EU might exercise hegemonic power like the

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11 Bon-Sang Koo, Seoul Metropolitan Government.
US...Any community should be directed to where everyone wants to go. But this would not happen without hard work. No hard work might let capitalism out of control, which could solely be worked for mechanism of development, growth and power. . . . [The EU] might have to work harder.  

One of the important enlargement processes, in the perception of the Korean elites, would be the circulation of the single currency. Around 60% of the interviewees positively evaluated the euro as an international currency vis-à-vis the US dollar. Half of the remaining respondents expressed scepticism about the euro’s influence, while the others cautiously forecasted its increased position compared to the US dollar in the future (although this group did not see the euro as being strong enough to be an international currency today). One of the positively-inclined respondents stated that the euro’s position as a key international currency is on the move upward, being as important as the US dollar. Another respondent from the civil society circle stated that “…money is valued by the countries or regions that print and use the currency. In this sense, the euro has a lot of potential to grow since the EU’s influences are growing”. Some praised what they saw as the consistent and prudent policies of the ECB, which would make the currency more valued in the world market.

It seems that the Korean elites are quite well informed of economic issues. But when it came to their knowledge and opinions on non-economic events, it seemed that they had little interest. When asked about the impact of the ASEM process on interactions between the EU and the Korea and effect of 2006 ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki, most of the elite respondents did not know how ASEM contributed the bilateral or multilateral relations with member countries or indeed what happened in Helsinki, a perception in line with the media analysis which saw ASEM being generally ignored by the Korean news media. Generally, ASEM was treated by respondents as just one of a number of international gatherings that fail to establish tangible results. One politician termed this image as “a venue for diplomacy” or “a representative conference”. Even though ASEM was interpreted to be lacking substantial influence, many agreed that it is a good venue for interchanges and cooperation between the two regions (including discussions on economic and North Korean issues).

Sources of Information on the EU

As with the survey of the Korean public opinion, the study was interested in the sources of information of the Korean elites on the EU. Newspapers (a few

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12 Woo-Sik Jung, Secretary General, Buddhist Environmental Solidarity.
13 Ibid.
number of elites included international newspapers and Korean newspapers printed in Europe), television news and the Internet were claimed as the leading sources of information about the EU by most of elites across the four sectors. Newspapers were the most frequently mentioned, ranking the number one position. Some respondents also included their personal contacts within the EU, such as friends, relatives and company branches in the region. The other noted sources of EU information were periodicals, books and printed materials from embassies.

**Images of the EU**

The final question asked of the elite respondents mirrored that asked of the public survey participants: when thinking about the EU, what three images come to your mind? Images of the EU that came to the minds of the Korean elites were very positive with one exception that was mentioned by one business elite – confrontation between Britain and France. In general however, the elites produced a variety of answers and the euro was most frequently mentioned, followed by tradition/history, the EU flag and an economic bloc. One of the business elites mentioned Turkey, although he failed to elaborate on this image. It seems that Turkey’s difficulties in entering into the EU were somehow imprinted on his consciousness.

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<td>Products</td>
<td>BMW, Luxury cars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>EU flag</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Napoleon, Confrontation between Britain and France, Windmill, Diplomatic power, Football league, Advanced welfare system, No visa entry (freedom of travel)</td>
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**Media Elites**

Although the media elites were asked many of the same questions regarding their overall perception of the EU, they were also asked a separate group of questions intended to explore the editorial policies towards covering the EU
in their news outlets. As such, this section separately addresses many of those media questions. All of the media respondents noted the fact that Korea does not report as much international news as in other countries in general.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, the media representatives all stated that they did not have officially formulated policies on covering foreign news. In the very long term, it was perceived that the space allocated to international news might increase, but in the short term this was seen as highly unlikely. One editor-in-chief stated that:

The demand [for international news and EU news in particular] is very little. So to speak, if we write bunch of EU news, you might think that people would read it even though they do not have much interests in the EU. A lot of people including those in government think so. But, that is totally mistaken. That is not that because we do not write so people do not know, but because people do not read so we do not write.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition to the lack of international coverage in the Korean media, many media participants thought that it is a little more difficult to ‘sell’ an EU story, and, in line with this, most believed that the best selling foreign story would be about the US, followed by China and Japan. The EU would rank a fourth at best, a finding reflecting the general elite perception of the importance of the EU.

Budgeting for overseas news was described as being allocated quite spontaneously without careful plans devised at the beginning of each year. Accordingly, the Korean news reporting was described by respondents as being generally reactive rather than proactive and is selected by matter of prominent concerns or of local interests. However, there were special reports that are prepared for months and which analyse a particular theme in depth, although it was noted by respondents that these special reports are topic-based and not region-based:

From time to time as the need arises, we decide our course of actions. Most advanced countries plan and prepare some news reports a year or so before. But we don’t do that. At best it is two or three months before we start to prepare our story. It is not that we report this in the current year and that next year.\textsuperscript{16}

In brief, the Korean audience might have to use less conservative and more global media sources, which are alternative to newspapers and television news, in order to be better informed on the EU. As discussed above, the mainstream Korean media seem to be disinclined to adequately budget for the EU coverage in a near future.

\textsuperscript{14} One study pointed out that the lack of international news were due in large part to short of overseas correspondents. http://weekly.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2006/02/28/2006022877026.html. Accessed 12 April 2007.
\textsuperscript{15} Anonymous respondent.
\textsuperscript{16} Anonymous respondent.
To conclude, most of the elites interviewed stated that they had some form and level of relations with certain European countries. This was especially so for members of the business elite who often had close economic connections with Europe. Since the EU was perceived primarily as an economic power rather than as a political one, the EU was characterised as an economic entity that has great potential – and greater growth could mean that more power in the world stage. In this sense, many elites thought that Korea should have closer relations with the EU, given the Union’s vast purchasing power, as well as increasing number of its member countries. Even though the EU is important to Korea, its importance to the country is not that significant if compared with the US, China, or Japan. Some interviewed elites mentioned that Korea should diversify its foreign relations – and that the EU should be the first choice.

Conclusion

The project addresses central questions about how the European Union is perceived in South Korea. As witnessed through the media analysis, Korea’s view of the EU primarily focused on economic issues, a preference that was confirmed by the public opinion data and elite interviews. On the whole, the EU’s importance to Korea seems unlikely to significantly change in the future. It is noteworthy, however, that the EU is perceived as a benign international actor in comparison to the United States. Since the Korean media does not report a significant level of EU-related news on a daily basis, Korean people are less exposed to EU news compared with Korea’s main areas of media interest (the US, China and Japan) and any information they have is very limited. The future success of the bilateral relations between the two entities will require expanded efforts in aspects other than economic interests and include a focus on the EU’s political, cultural, educational and civil sectors. Without this redirection, the Korean perceptions of the EU will remain unbalanced and shallow to the general detriment of the bilateral relationship.
CHAPTER 7

Barnard Turner and Ma Shaohua*

Seeing the EU in Singapore: Media, Public and Elite Representations

During 2006, 2,422 items were located in the Singapore media (print and television) in which the EU was mentioned. Of that EU coverage, The Straits Times, Singapore’s leading English-language daily, displayed a considerably higher proportion, accounting for around 40% of the articles. The EU coverage in Lianhe Zaobao and The Business Times lagged somewhat behind the Straits Times, but not markedly, while the coverage of television news appeared quite limited, with only 16 EU items appearing on Channel 8’s prime-time news of the channel. A comparative decline in the EU coverage during April and July contrasted with high peaks in February, May and September and a relatively high percentage of the analysed news items reported the EU as a peripheral actor rather than the leading one. The most visible news issues were found to be the EU’s handling of the Iranian nuclear development programme, interest rates, the EU’s actions in the Middle East peace process, World Trade Organisation negotiations, the ‘Danish cartoon issue’ and avian flu. Generally, both EU political and economic news was given equal weight in the news items, and while most reporting was found to be either neutral or positive, the EU’s image was more often assessed negatively in items relating to social affairs, Islamic issues and with regard to avian flu.

In the survey assessing the Singaporean public opinion towards the EU, it was found that the EU was afforded low importance, being ranked only the sixth most important partner for Singapore, after China, the United States, Asia as a whole, Japan and India and this ranking was considered to be unlikely to change in the future. However, the state of the relationship between the EU and Singapore was overwhelmingly viewed positively by respondents, even though the Union was often perceived as a generic and often abstract actor. Economically-oriented responses were the most frequent associations that Singaporeans had with the EU.

* Ma Shaohua is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at the National University of Singapore (NUS); Barnard Turner is Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature and Academic Convenor for European Studies, also at NUS. Ma conducted the research for this report, including the elite interviews (for which we take this opportunity to thank the kind participants) and wrote the preliminary draft; Turner worked on the analysis, presentation and conclusions.
This economic focus was also found amongst many Singaporean elites who viewed the EU as an economic power, but not a global leader in international politics. Trade and the environment were considered by the elites to be the most important issues shaping the EU-Singapore relationship both now and in the future, and while the interviewees viewed the current relationship between the EU and Singapore as stable and improving, the EU was considered less important to Singapore than other regions. To most respondents, a stronger EU was regarded as good for Singapore, as it provided greater opportunities for trade and incentives for ASEAN integration and more than half the respondents believed the euro to be a possible alternative to the US dollar. Both the interviewed elites and the surveyed public generally did not closely follow the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process.

Introduction

Singapore’s status as a trade and transportation hub strategically located between Europe, Northeast Asia and Australia makes it a crossroads of many influences and has, of course, historically been a factor in composing its population (around 4.5 million) and ethnic composition. Of these influences, Europe continues to play a role and the European Union (EU) is arguably of particular contemporary pertinence. The EU and Singapore maintain good relations both regionally (EU-ASEAN) and bilaterally, as for example in the agreement for consultations between the EU and Singapore undertaken in 2000 and the establishment of an European Commission Delegation in 2002 in Singapore. These formal linkages enable high-level dialogue on a range of issues. The visibility of the EU in Singapore is enhanced by such means as the generally well-attended annual EU Film Festival and various other initiatives of the Commission Delegation. The EU is one of Singapore’s largest trading partners, being second only to Malaysia in 2005, with total trade balance of some 40 billion euros. Most recently, the relationship has been moving towards the notion of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the two actors. Despite these extensive connections, however, the visibility of the EU in Singapore is relatively low and trade issues tend to dominate at the expense of others.

The data discussed below were gleaned during 2006 from three leading newspapers in Singapore: The Straits Times (an English-language daily with a circu-
lation of close to 400,000); Lianhe Zaobao (a Chinese-language newspaper with a circulation of almost 200,000) and The Business Times (Singapore’s financial daily newspaper in English and with a circulation of close to 30,000). These newspapers are owned by the Singapore Press Holdings group, which publishes more than a dozen newspapers in the country and is a Singapore Exchange listed company. In addition, television coverage of the EU on Singapore’s Channel 8 (Mandarin), Singapore’s most-watched television channel with a 34% market share in 2004, was also monitored. A nationally-representative public opinion survey of 400 respondents was conducted in November 2006 and 32 leading figures from Singaporean politics, the media, business and civil society were interviewed for the elite survey which forms the final section of the data.

**Mass Media Coverage of the EU: Leading Findings**

As will become evident in the following discussion, the selection of EU news for the Singaporean news media is largely determined by that news’ impact on Asia and its relevance to Singaporean readers. One might predict that the balance of foreign reporting will shift to Asia, especially China and India, in the foreseeable future, although domestic US-related news still seems to be foregrounded.

Figure 1 presents the overall findings for 2006 across the three newspapers and the one television channel. A total of 2,422 articles or news reports in which the EU was mentioned was identified (Figure 1).

As can be seen above, The Straits Times presented a considerably high level of EU coverage, with 1,021 items distributed over the twelve months of monitoring. The EU coverage in Lianhe Zaobao and The Business Times was at comparatively similar levels (around 700 items), while the coverage in the Singaporean television news was quite limited, with only 16 items on the EU appearing on prime-time television news of Channel 8 through the entire year. Since newspapers remain an important information source of international news, it might therefore be argued that the EU has a presence in Singapore. However, if the Singaporean public prefer to watch just the Mandarin television news bulletin on Channel 8 for international news, then the EU is virtually invisible. Arguably, in a largely bilingual society such as Singapore, certain areas of international news coverage are delegated to specific news media sources, rather than being broadly accessible.

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4 Ibid., 183.
5 Ibid., 182.
6 Ibid., 186.
Figure 1: Monthly Distribution (Number of Articles per Month)

Newspapers

Allowing for the higher volume in The Straits Times, both it and Lianhe Zaobao can be seen to have comparable monthly distribution trends which appear to provide consistent levels of EU coverage throughout the year. Both newspapers demonstrated a comparative decline in EU coverage in April and July and comparatively high peaks in February, May and September.

The first peak in February is mainly due to the Danish ‘cartoon issue’ and the outbreak of avian flu in Europe. The ‘cartoon issue’ refers to the decision by a Danish newspaper to publish a number of cartoon images depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad in a manner which was considered blasphemous by Muslims around the world. The controversy heightened when newspapers in many other countries also printed the images. This cartoon ‘row’ was widely discussed within the Singaporean news media and was widely presented as a “clash of civilisations”. The second peak in EU coverage was found in May when the EU provided a package of incentives and sanctions aimed at encouraging Iran

7 17 out of 60 news items that mentioned EU-related cartoon issues portrayed this incident as the “clash of civilizations”. This idea, linked to the eponymous book by American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, opines that people’s cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. See Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
to halt its efforts in uranium enrichment, a programme which was generally viewed by the international community as an effort by Iran to develop nuclear weaponry. These efforts served to present the EU as one of the major international players in this issue. Singapore’s Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew’s visits to China, Japan and Korea also contributed to the greater news coverage in May, as, during these visits, he commented on the possibilities for Asia to take EU integration as a model of regional integration and thus these became topics of interest in Singapore’s news media. The third peak in these two newspapers was found in September when the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) 6 Summit was held in Helsinki. However, the focus in these news items was rarely the EU itself, as the local media apparently considered the event as an opportunity for highlighting Asian issues.

As its name suggests, *The Business Times* differs from the other two newspapers, as its reporting focuses on economic issues. The coverage of EU news reached peaks in April, July and September, with a significant decline in August. The significant issue in July was, as might be expected, trade. The EU, with other major players, was thought not to have provided leadership for trade liberalization talks related to the Doha round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The dramatic increase in news coverage in September is explained by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) meetings in Singapore during that month. The EU’s changing role in the IMF and its further strategy were reported and discussed during September.

With so many European newspapers now online, European newspapers (including a version of the London *Financial Times*) are readily available in Singapore and not only the BBC but also Sky News, German and French stations are also accessible on cable television, arguably the local media rationalise their reporting accordingly. With widespread English and pervasive internet access, that percentage of the population which needs or desires more European coverage can find it through these sources.

International wires and foreign correspondents provide a great proportion of the stories for Singapore’s print media: The overall sources percentage distribution for print media was international sources (64%); domestic sources (33%);

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8 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.

9 It might be noted here that while August is a traditional holiday month in the northern hemisphere (and thus a “slow time” for business news), the month is not so important as a “time off” period in tropical Singapore.
and those undefined (3%). Western news agencies provide local print media with immediate news reports and foreign correspondents provide in-depth analyses and opinions. Among the world-renowned news agencies, Reuters (based in London) contributed more than others, partly because of historical connections. There were 448 stories from Reuters, far outweighing the others main sources: Agence France Presse (359); Associated Press (320) and Bloomberg (173).

Figure 2 depicts the degree to which EU news in the three Singaporean newspapers was domesticised; that is, whether EU news was focused on the EU itself, on Singapore, or on a 3rd country. As can be seen, the Singapore newspapers featured a relatively high percentage of news that reports the EU in the context of third agents, that is, in the context of others, neither the EU nor Singapore. Unlike the two English-language newspapers, Lianhe Zaobao was found to present a much greater proportion of EU news with a local focus, corroborating the point made above that a local angle was found to be important in the construction of the EU news coverage.

Generally, within the identified news items, the EU itself was found to be peripheral. All three monitored newspapers reported the EU primarily from a minor perspective (Figure 3). The distributions of the degrees of centrality from the two English-language newspapers are roughly comparable, with just over 60% minor focus and around 10% major focus for the stories. Lianhe Zaobao however showed the least interest in reporting the EU as the major focus, as would be consistent with the point above about the focus of domesticity.

Most reporting on the EU was found to be neutral (around 80%) as can be seen in Figure 4. Lianhe Zaobao offered a slightly more positive appraisal of the EU than did The Straits Times; this may be taken together with the slightly different context of the stories, as just mentioned, with a stronger local focus and fewer stories which take up a major stance to the Union itself, as would be expected of a report in which it was the major focus. This may reflect again perceptions of the level of existing knowledge and degree of interest in the EU among the intended readers.

Javier Solana was found to be the most visible EU actor in the Singapore print news media, but even he was only mentioned in around 5% of the reports. Since, as mentioned above, trade and economic issues were emphasised in the reporting, it was not surprising that Peter Mandelson, European Commissioner for Trade, was the second most visible figure in the press.10 The dominant EU body was the European Commission, followed by the European Central Bank

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10 EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana appeared in 107 news items; EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson in 97; ECB Chief Jean-Claude Trichet, 62. Some way behind were the European Commission President José Manuel Barroso (31); EU Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini (16); and EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner (16).
Barnard Turner and Ma Shaohua

(ECB). Since so many of the items referred, explicitly or implicitly, to the ‘EU-3’ – the three states of France, Germany and the United Kingdom were often found to represent the EU as a whole in many reports.

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11 The European Commission appeared in 288 news items reports (barely a tenth of the total); the European Central Bank (204); European Parliament (80); and European Court of Justice (19).

12 Numbers of news items mentioning the key EU states and EU state officials: the UK (448); France (445); Germany (371); UK Prime Minister Tony Blair (74); French President Jacques Chirac (74); and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (71).
Each of the 2,406 articles in the print media has been categorised according to the dominant information frame, that is, in general, the EU as a political, economic, social or environmental actor. During the analysis it was found that there was some overlap between the categories, while the last of the four could usually also fit into any of the other three. Not surprisingly, *The Business Times* predominantly represented the EU as an economic actor;\(^{13}\) while on the other hand, *The Straits Times* and *Lianhe Zaobao* portrayed it instead as a primarily political actor.\(^{14}\) The most visible issues were the EU’s handling of Iran’s nuclear development programme (185 news items), EU decisions on interest rates (160), EU actions in the Middle East peace process\(^{15}\) (148), in WTO talks (129), the ‘cartoon issue’ (60) and avian flu (46).

**The EU as an Economic Actor**

The Singapore print media as a whole were found to marginally favour depicting the EU in economic terms. However, this did not necessarily mean that the EU was always construed as ‘an economic giant and political dwarf’.

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\(^{13}\) The framing percentage distribution for the *Business Times* was economic (79%); political (13%); social affairs (5%); and environment (3%).

\(^{14}\) The framing percentage distribution for *The Straits Times* was political (50%); economic (29%); social affairs (18%); and environment (3%). The framing percentage distribution for *Lianhe Zaobao* was political (45%); economic (34%); social affairs (17%); and environment (4%).

\(^{15}\) The Middle East peace process refers to the ongoing negotiation and related issues between Palestine and Israel.
The economics-oriented *Business Times* had the effect of skewing the findings in favour of economic news and as such, business news remained an undercurrent in the overall EU reporting in Singapore when there was no prominent political issue to report. As such, the *Business Times* was found to have a greater volume of EU articles for the first half of the year, which in turn has impacts on the percentage distribution of the dominant information framing. With respect to the economics frame, the image of the EU was generally neutral, with more positive news than negative.\(^{16}\) The dominant issues were the EU decision on interest rates and EU in WTO talks.

1. The EU’s Interest Rates: A ‘Time Bomb’?\(^ {17}\)

As a regional financial hub, Singapore attracts much foreign investment that accounts for 40% of EU foreign direct investment in the region.\(^{18}\) Not surprisingly, therefore, the local media were interested in reporting the ECB’s increase in interest rates in December 2005, for the first time since 2000, especially since euro zone interest rates were subsequently raised five times in 2006, reaching their highest point in five years. The reasons for and implications of ECB policy were intensively discussed from January 2006. The media reports on this issue were generally neutral, but with more negative news than positive.\(^ {19}\)

This neutral-negative profile can be seen in a sample of the reports. ECB interest rates hikes “were a vote of confidence in the European economy”\(^ {20}\). However, the strong economy increased inflationary pressures that “force[d]” the EU to raise interest rates.\(^ {21}\) ECB policy had caused controversies among

\(^{16}\) The evaluation percentage distribution for the economic news was neutral (67%); positive (19%); and negative (14%).


\(^{19}\) The evaluation percentage distribution for the print media was neutral (86%); negative (8%); and positive (6%).


European leaders and some European politicians “vigorously protested” ECB policies of hiking interest rates,22 because they believed that the threat of inflation had been “overestimated.”23 The ECB’s five interest rate increases in 2006 were credited with prudence in that they could “progressively” help obtain a rate of growth in the euro area.24 European inflation was also “clearly under control”.25 The ECB’s efforts, together with the policies of the United States Federal Reserve and the Bank of Japan, “would signal that an era of cheap money around the world is ending, raising the risk of volatility in global financial markets”.26 However, the interest rates might be “too high to combat a perceived threat from inflation”27 and thus may “exacerbate underlying economic differences in the 12-nation region”.28 The reporting also questioned the easy availability of funds, as this might “caus[e] global bond and commodity prices to fall and [would] driv[e] down Asian currencies”.29 “Concerns” were therefore raised about future demand for Asian goods; more generally, the policy might “hurt” the global and regional economy.30

The reporting of the ECB decision on interest rates also targeted local investors interested in currencies and gold. Monthly updated news provided them with important references to help build up a positive image of the EU among them. For example, the ECB policy was reported to have led to a “stronger euro”31 and a rise in the gold market.32

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22 “It will not be easy to do without easy credit,” The Business Times, January 6, 2006.
23 Ibid.
27 “Hedge funds pull out $13.7b from emerging markets, Asia,” The Straits Times, June 15, 2006;
“German economy kicking into gear,” The Straits Times, June 23, 2006.
29 “Japan’s capitalists unlikely to descend on Asia in a hurry,” The Straits Times, March 11, 2006;
“Central banks calm fears over effects of BOJ policy change,” The Straits Times, March 14, 2006;
“Global rate shift won’t derail growth: bankers,” The Business Times, March 15, 2006;
“Central banks need to work more closely on fiscal policy,” The Business Times, March 16, 2006.
30 “South Korea raises rates to three-year high to curb prices,” The Straits Times, June 9, 2006;
“Rapid rate rises may hurt global economy,” The Business Times, April 10, 2006;
“Global rate rises healthy, but watch inflation: IMF chief,” The Business Times, May 25, 2006;
“Selling tide pushes Asian stocks to 6-month lows,” The Business Times, June 14, 2006;
31 “Economy may grow at 5.3% this year: DBS,” The Business Times, January 13, 2006;
2. The EU in WTO Talks

As one of the world’s leading trading nations, Singapore is a strong sup-
porter of the WTO and has been closely attentive to the successful outcome of
the Doha round, now perhaps stalled after the Geneva talks of July 2006. The
EU, a key actor during the talks, appeared repeatedly in the Singaporean news
media discussing this topic. Its image was generally neutral, with however more
negative news than positive news.33

The failure of the Doha Round was seen to be mainly caused by an impasse
over farm subsidies among six key players – the EU, India, the United States
(US), Australia, Japan and Brazil.34 Differences between the US and the EU over
agriculture were at the core of the failure to reach the agreement.35 As the US
and the EU had kept trading “accusations” of each other’s inflexibility,36 both
had what were called “negative roles” in the negotiations.37

The EU faced demands for deeper tariff cuts to open up its highly protected
farm market. Some commentary saw this as a sign that it bore particular responsi-
bility for ending the deadlock.38 However, EU countries were considered to have
been united on the position of “no new farm move without more on the table for
Europe.”39 They remained “stubbornly unrelenting” on the issue of farm subsi-
dies.40 They had been sticking to their “self-interests” and “indifference” to poor people
in developing countries.41 Their decision had “distorted” the terms of trade and
caused great distress to the global economy.42 The EU was also thought to be too

33 The evaluation percentage distribution for the print media was neutral (67%); negative
(25%); and positive (8%).
34 “Bilateral deals work for open economies like S’pore: Lamy,” The Straits Times, May 11,
2006.
36 “Talks doomed if US fails to renew mandate : Lamy,” The Straits Times, July 31, 2006;
Deadlock demands strong political will,” The Straits Times, November 3, 2006; “APEC将发声明
促恢复多哈回合谈判,” (APEC will state to help resume the Doha Round of WTO talks) Lianhe
Zaobao, November 14, 1996; “APEC must act on trade talks: PM Lee,” The Straits Times, November
37 “Time for a Plan B to rescue the WTO talks,” The Straits Times, June 24, 2006.
38 “Little to show but words after high-level visits to WTO,” The Business Times, May 8, 2006;
40 “The Doha Round in danger;” The Business Times, July 5, 2006; “Free trade of insults in
42 “Trade talks hampered by concessions, roadblocks,” The Business Times, August 1, 2006;
“分析师：世贸多哈回合谈判破裂美欧富国消费者成输家,” (Analyst: Consumers of Rich Coun-
tries from America and Europe are the losers of the Failed Trade Talks) Lianhe Zaobao, August 1,
adamant in preserving its “cosy way of life” by keeping entry barriers high. Their farmers were “fattened on handouts” and “every cow in Europe could fly business class around the world every year on the value of the farm support given”. The EU image was even worse when it was judged by the WTO to have broken international trade rules by stopping imports of genetically modified foods.

However, the EU’s later flexibility on curbing its extensive farm subsidy programme was welcomed by local Singapore news media. For example, as reported, Brussels might be prepared to go beyond its existing offer of a 46% cut in agricultural tariffs, moving closer to the 54% cut proposed by the G-20.

The EU as a Political Actor

The EU’s image as a political actor was generally presented neutrally, with slightly more positive news than negative. The dominant issues were the EU’s negotiating role in the Iranian nuclear ‘crisis’ and the Union’s strategy with regard to the Middle East peace process.

1. The Iranian Nuclear Crisis

As discussed above, the EU has been involved in negotiations with Iran that are intended to stop its uranium enrichment programme. Singapore’s media generally featured a neutral image of the EU’s dealing with the Iranian nuclear crisis, with slightly more positive news than negative. The majority of those news items with negative tones were found in Lianhe Zaobao.

The EU’s image within this topic experienced a largely negative start to the monitored year, but had a gradual improvement through 2006 and its role became more and more influential during the talks to negotiate a cessation to Iran’s uranium enrichment programme. Perhaps because of the magnitude and complexity of the task, the EU initiative was said to have “predictably collapsed” in January. The EU had been trying for three years to get Teheran to curb

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46 “Race against time to seal Doha Round of WTO talks,” The Straits Times, July 3, 2006.
47 The evaluation percentage distribution for political news was neutral (80%); positive (13%); and negative (7%).
48 The evaluation percentage distribution for the print media was neutral (90%); positive (8%); and negative (2%).
49 “Defiant Iran: confrontation deepens as Teheran says it will resume nuclear research today,” The Straits Times, January 9, 2006.
its nuclear ambitions and although the Union generally found their experiences exasperating,\textsuperscript{50} even being “humiliated”,\textsuperscript{51} they had thus far “not abandoned hopes of constraining Iran’s nuclear ambitions through negotiations”.\textsuperscript{52} The resolution had been previously considered as a US-led drive, although backed by the EU.\textsuperscript{53} However, the EU’s consistent efforts, especially the Union-led offer of incentives in June 2006, were thought to have improved its image as a key political actor.\textsuperscript{54} Although the US had “lost confidence” in the ability of the EU to solve the crisis diplomatically,\textsuperscript{55} it was said to have no choice but to back the EU-3 talks.\textsuperscript{56}

2. The Middle East Peace Process

The EU is a member of the Middle East Quartet (this comprising of the United Nations, the US, the EU and Russia) which attempts to give impetus to the Middle East peace process, as consistent with United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and so forth and the general formula of “land for peace”. Singapore’s news media generally featured a neutral image of EU actions in the Middle East, with again more positive news than negative, although the percentages in these cases were very low on either side.\textsuperscript{57}

The coverage reported that the EU had been playing an increasingly central diplomatic role in the process. As once the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority,\textsuperscript{58} the EU’s help had been vital for Palestine’s survival and the Union’s decision on whether to suspend the direct funding to Hamas-led Palestinian Authority was significant to the whole peace process.\textsuperscript{59} However, different


\textsuperscript{51} “伊朗危机升级 中国可顺势而为,” (China can take advantage of the escalation of Iranian Nuclear Crisis) \textit{Lianhe Zaobao}, May 5, 2006.

\textsuperscript{52} “Iran’s moment of truth,” \textit{The Straits Times}, January 3, 2006.


\textsuperscript{55} “Military storm brewing in Gulf,” \textit{The Straits Times}, April 24, 2006.

\textsuperscript{56} “Key actors in nuclear saga,” \textit{The Straits Times}, January 12, 2006; “Perks, sanctions for Iran to stop nuclear work,” \textit{The Straits Times}, May 11, 2006; “欧洲三强提奖励伊朗方案赖斯全力支持切尼大力反对,” (EU-3’s package of incentives is supported by Rice but opposed by Cheney) \textit{Lianhe Zaobao}, May 25, 2006.

\textsuperscript{57} The evaluation percentage distribution for the print media was neutral (88%); positive (9%); and negative (3%).


\textsuperscript{59} “EU suspends funding to Palestinian Authority,” \textit{The Straits Times}, April 8, 2006.
voices, especially from *Lianhe Zaobao*, criticised the EU for its double standard of claiming democratic principles while essentially interposing in Palestinian’s democratic elections.60

Following the victory of Hamas, the EU froze its direct aid to Palestine, however, “fearing a catastrophe”, the EU agreed to restore some humanitarian aid as long as it was not handled by Hamas.61 The EU’s position on the Israel-Lebanon war, discussed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, was considered in the news items to have provided the Union with more credibility and presence in the region.62 European scholars even saw “Europe’s new commitment to the region could level out the influence of the US and its ally Israel.”63 A new era of EU influence in the region, it was mooted, would contribute to the peace process.

**The EU in Social Affairs**

The EU’s image in social affairs was generally neutral, if with slightly more negative overtones than positive.64 The dominant issues were the Danish cartoons and avian flu. The cartoon row drew public attention to European Muslim policy and led to intensive discussion in the local Singaporean news media. Islamic migrants and Turkey’s entry into the bloc also became seen as more complex issues.

1. The ‘Cartoon Issue’: A Clash of Civilisations?

As discussed above, in September 2005, a Danish newspaper first published the caricatures, which prompted dramatic international media coverage. Their publication provoked intimations of diplomatic sanctions, death threats and riots in some nations, while on the other hand, in some predominantly Western countries, the news media defended their publication in the name of press freedom. The tension surrounding the issue began to intensify early in 2006 and caused

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63 Ibid.

64 The evaluation percentage distribution for social news was neutral (57%); negative (26%); and positive (17%).
worldwide protests, predominantly in Muslim countries. News about the cartoon row in Europe triggered an extensive coverage over some period of time in Singapore’s newspapers.

Many religions are represented in Singapore and Muslims constitute about 15% of the population. Most are Malays and there is also a sizeable number of Muslims among the Indian population. Singapore’s Media Development Authority is generally charged with overseeing local media, so that they promote social values and maintain national unity, with the goal of preventing ethnic or religious strife. According to a recent censorship review by a government-appointed committee, local media should not publish content that “undermines public order and the nation’s security, denigrates race and religion, or erodes moral values”.

The reports in Singapore’s media mentioned sections of both the European media and the Muslim world as possible contributors to the intensity of the cartoon row. On the one hand, the Singaporean print media frequently noted that the editor of the Danish newspaper which printed the cartoons had apologised for irrefutably offending many Muslims. In response to the European defence of citing the freedom of expression, some articles in The Straits Times were more circumspect and one said:

…the governments of Denmark and Norway need to make a distinction between incitement and expressing an opinion responsibly. It was disingenuous of the Danish government to cast the incident as an issue of free speech. The newspapers were doing violence to the concept; the acts were calculatedly reckless and downright dangerous to the national interest…. The European Union as a whole should now take the approach that soft-pedalling acts insulting to Islam will encourage an anti-Islamic wave that can swamp the continent.

In such an opinion, the report seems to be conscious of the views expressed by Tony Blair and then British Foreign Secretary Jack [John Whitaker] Straw.

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69 “A Europe in caricature,” The Straits Times, February 2, 2006. For similar opinions, see for example, “Why European leaders were slow to react to protests,” The Straits Times, February 7, 2006; “Where there’s a will, there is a law,” The Straits Times, February 8, 2006.
The local Singaporean media also backed the statement by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) on February 2 that expressed unhappiness over the printing of caricatures. From a slightly different angle, two articles in early February that appeared in The Straits Times noted concern about the spreading protests around the world and wished for restraint. However, there seemed to be little severe criticism of the protests themselves, even if one report at least opined that some protestors may have been acting out of other feelings than religious outrage alone. Generally, the media foregrounded Singapore as a racially harmonious country and expressed happiness that Muslims in Singapore responded to the incident “very calmly”.

2. Avian Flu

Just as bird flight-paths were an early form of globalisation, the news of the ongoing avian flu outbreaks spread from one corner of the world to the other. Singapore works closely with other countries in the region and elsewhere to monitor and share outbreak information. The handling of the detection of the H5N1 virus in various European states was generally perceived negatively, in contrast perhaps to the effective, proactive handling of the SARS outbreak in Singapore.

Avian, or ‘bird flu’, reached the EU in February 2006 when the virus was first detected in Greece and Italy. According to reports, “panic began to take hold” in Europe and this prompted the European Commission to announce accelerated procedures to counter the threat. However, the “readiness across the 25-nation bloc was spotty.” As bird flu found its way across Europe, agricultural industries started to suffer. Japan banned all French poultry imports and thre-
atened similar action against the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{80} Singaporean news reports noted that bird flu’s expansion to Europe might not only batter the poultry industry but also worsen what was perceived as the region’s “sluggish” economy that in turn would “batter” the euro.\textsuperscript{81} Thus the environmental and social factors were at fundamentally considered in more economic terms.

However, the EU was reported to be active in fighting avian flu globally and was presented as an “international donor”. The EU was willing to help poor Asian countries prepare for a bird flu pandemic, focusing on improving animal health measures instead.\textsuperscript{82} It was conceded that the Union was one of the few donors that pledged their help and later fulfilled their responsibilities.\textsuperscript{83}

**The EU as an Environmental Actor**

The definition of what constitutes an “environmental” issue is increasingly complex, as many such issues also have social, economic and political aspects. However, using the term in its rather loose, general sense, the EU’s image as an environmental actor was generally neutral, with more positive news than negative.\textsuperscript{84} The EU is considered a pioneer in global environmental protection. It has exerted great efforts to regulate and enforce environmental rules on car emissions, aviation emissions, shipping, fishing, waste recycling and so on.

EU environmental news has perhaps never been reported as frequently as in 2005-2006, mainly because of the newly-set vehicular emission standard, Euro IV.\textsuperscript{85} These emission standards in the EU brought forward some orders for local commercial vehicles this year and this prompted keen interest in the Singapore newspapers.\textsuperscript{86} Besides vehicle emissions, other issues which received attention

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\textsuperscript{80} “EU tells partners not to overreact,” *The Straits Times*, February 27, 2006.

\textsuperscript{81} “Bird flu virus may batter euro, say traders,” *The Business Times*, February 27, 2006.

\textsuperscript{82} “EU won’t fund stockpiling of drugs,” *The Straits Times*, January 14, 2006.


\textsuperscript{84} The evaluation percentage distribution for environmental news was neutral (68%); positive (29%); and negative (3%).

\textsuperscript{85} Reports of Euro IV vehicular emission standard account for 33 percent of 79 environmental news items.

were that the EU had endorsed the idea of limiting airline carbon dioxide emissions to counter global warming,\(^\text{87}\) that it had expressed heightened concerns about air pollution from maritime transport,\(^\text{88}\) it had presented a viable and environment-friendly alternative to waste treatment,\(^\text{89}\) and had made the recycling of “e-waste” mandatory.\(^\text{90}\) The EU was also presented as one of the leading producers and consumers of biofuels and was expected to continue to be so in the decades ahead.\(^\text{91}\)

As countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol, the EU Member States were seen to have at least attempted to cut their carbon emissions, building a better image for themselves, in comparison perhaps with the non-signatory US.\(^\text{92}\) According to the data released in late April, several EU countries were polluting far less than they had thought.\(^\text{93}\) The EU was praised for helping integrate low-carbon technology into the developing ASEAN economies,\(^\text{94}\) however, EU officials were said to be “deaf” to repeated demands by developing countries. Missed European emissions cuts targets were said to perhaps discourage their Asian counterparts from signing the protocol.\(^\text{95}\)

**Television News**

Arguably, television is the most influential medium in terms of accessing information both domestic and foreign. Channel 8, the most-watched television channel in Singapore\(^\text{96}\) mainly targets a Chinese/Mandarin-speaking audience.\(^\text{97}\) As a profit-oriented medium, even when supported by licence fees, television has to be sensitive to audience interests while distributing political and financial news.


\(^{89}\) “Keppel wins $30m waste treatment deal,” *The Straits Times*, July 13, 2006.


\(^{91}\) “Oil consumers face risk of steep price rises, supply cuts,” *The Straits Times*, November 13, 2006.


\(^{94}\) “Asean must face an inconvenient truth,” *The Straits Times*, November 16, 2006.


\(^{96}\) Werner von Busch, *The Asia Media*, 182.

\(^{97}\) Channel 8 ceased its Tamil language programming in 1995.
that is mindful of the information needs, desires and curiosity of government and civil society and respectful of their interests. In this regard, it is normal to assume that EU news will be reported as and if it appears relevant to the local situation.

The findings were consistent with this hypothesis. Television constituted the smallest volume of EU coverage, less than 1% of the total sample. When the focus of domesticity was examined, evaluating how the EU was presented, the EU was predominantly reported in relation to a local focus.\textsuperscript{98} The clear preference on Singaporean television news was to describe the EU as a partner for Singapore, both economically and politically. To be more specific, when examining the focus of centrality, it was found that the EU, even if perceived as a partner, remained peripheral to the main focus of the story.\textsuperscript{99}

The findings for the focus of domesticity showed that more than half of all EU news described the EU in third party terms, while local news about the EU was the least popular way of reporting the Union. Similarly, the degree of centrality typically located the EU as of minor importance in roughly 60% of EU stories. Television news represented the comparative closeness of the distribution range for two of the three frames — politics, economics — while the third, social (difficult perhaps to construct with a local [Singaporean] focus), lagged somewhat behind.\textsuperscript{100} The proximity of the first two frames may imply that the EU is no longer presented as a monolithic bloc but different roles are beginning to be effectively perceived and managed by television news in the island nation.

\textbf{Section Summary}

Generally speaking, EU news occupied a relatively minor presence in the Singapore news media and while there is evidence of reasonable reliance on the international news wires for input, some local correspondents also provided coverage. Generally, most EU stories were related to local issues to enhance their interest factor. Political and economic news were the two leading ways of framing the EU in the Singapore news media reports. The monitored Singapore news media was generally friendly to the EU and most reporting was either neutral or positive. However, the EU image was negative in some social affairs, Islamic issues and also with regard to avian flu.

\textsuperscript{98} The sample’s focus of domesticity overall percentage distribution was: local (62.5%); third party (31.3%); and EU focus (6.2%).
\textsuperscript{99} The overall distribution for focus of centrality was: minor (62.5%) and secondary (37.5%).
\textsuperscript{100} The framing percentage distribution for television news was economic (37.5%); political (37.5%); and social affairs (25%).
Public Opinion

As discussed previously, the EU is a leading foreign investor in Singapore, and, in 2006 was the biggest export market and second largest trading partner for Singapore after Malaysia. These circumstances however do not seem to be reflected in the public opinion survey conducted in November 2006. The EU was given significantly less emphasis and importance by the Singaporean public than it might have been expected to command. It was ranked the sixth most important partner for Singapore (43%), after China (83%), the US (79%), Asia as a whole (71%), Japan (54%) and India (52%). Close behind the EU was Australia and the United Kingdom (UK), as distinct from the EU itself. The EU’s future importance for Singapore reflected a similar ranking. The EU as a region was ranked as the fifth most important to Singapore’s future, after China, Asia as whole, Japan and North America (India was not included in the question). In terms of relative importance, the EU is close behind North America, grouped also with the UK, all of which are around the 80 percentile, while China reached 95% and Asia as a whole 90%. While in 2006 China ranked fourth as a trading partner for Singapore (very closely behind the EU and the US), in terms of average growth of trade it outstrips these two, so that – with a little crystal-ball extrapolation – one could envisage that by 2009 or so it would indeed be the leading trading partner for the island nation, or at least would be perceived to be such by the public. Thus while Singaporeans may not instinctively think of the EU as a ‘most important’ partner, they are cognizant of its general importance in a context of globalised trade. Indeed, trade was considered the most important factor in determining relations with the EU. Politically, the EU’s dealings with China and EU-ASEAN relations were considered to be the most important issues. ECB policies and the EU’s role in the WTO were also found to feature in Singapore’s near future.

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102 “S’pore urges EU to forge free trade agreement” The Business Times, May 10, 2006.
103 The fieldwork survey was conducted from November 14th to 20th in 2006.
104 If Malaysia, the leading trading partner of Singapore, was included in the survey, the rank of the EU might be even lower.
105 Answers to the question “On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no impact at all and 10 is a huge impact, how much impact you think the following will have on Singapore in the near future?”: EU as a trading partner for Singapore (8.04); EU dealings with China (7.98); EU-ASEAN relations (7.95); ECB policies and their influences on world financial markets (7.76); EU role in the WTO Doha Round talks (7.58); EU reactions to international terrorism (7.56); and The bi-annual Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (7.42). The narrow range here (some 6% between the highest and the lowest) shows perhaps that no issue is dominant and that the EU has no strongly defined conceptual meaning in Singapore.
Although the Union was perceived as an ‘economic giant’ and closely relevant to Singapore’s development, it remained less important than other global powers. Factors leading to this general view are its distance from Singapore and its lack of perceptible political and military power with global interests, like that of the United States.\textsuperscript{106} It was also considered by respondents to lack potential for future success through high-figure growth (and therefore the potential for investment), which other countries like China and India do have.

The status of the relationship between Singapore and the EU was overwhelming viewed as positive by respondents, with a little over 89\% describing it in non-negative terms. Almost 22\% of the respondents viewed the relationship as ‘improving’ partly because the EU replaced the US as Singapore’s second last trade partner in early 2006. As Singapore’s economy had recovered from the Asian financial crisis, many Singaporeans had benefited from booming trade with the EU.

The survey identified that 68\% of the sampled Singaporeans accessed the media for foreign news frequently.\textsuperscript{107} Newspapers and television were the two leading choices for Singaporeans to get information about the EU,\textsuperscript{108} although the Internet was used almost ubiquitously in the island nation and more respondents cited it, rather than television, as a source of news. (Here one might think of accessing European newspapers online, especially those in the UK.) Among the newspapers, \textit{The Straits Times} and \textit{The Business Times} were cited as the most frequently referred sources of EU news.\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Lianhe Zaobao}, the most-read Chinese newspaper with the second-largest circulation in Singapore in 2006, was absent from respondents’ mind, perhaps because the survey was done in English (even though there was a category for the newspaper). Similarly, Channel 8 was ranked fourth rather than being the leading television source.\textsuperscript{110} However, the discrepancy between print media selection and the result of public opinion does not question the reliability of the data collection itself, as it refers of course to the recipient rather than the supplier/broadcaster of the news.

\textsuperscript{106} Here it might be noted in passing that the EU’s “soft power” positioning, in the term popularised by Joseph Nye, does not seem to have led to a commensurate rise in visibility in the survey.

\textsuperscript{107} The percentage distribution for “how often do you access media for foreign news?” was every day (46.5\%); several times a week (21.5\%); once a week (12.2\%); every couple of weeks (8.5\%); once a month (6.5\%); and never (4.8\%).

\textsuperscript{108} Numbers of answers to the question “which of the following ways do you get the most information about the EU?” were: Newspaper/articles (394); television news (392); Internet (235); television programmes (108), radio news (98); and magazine articles (95).

\textsuperscript{109} Numbers of answers to the question “which papers provide you with news about the EU?” were: \textit{The Straits Times} (351); \textit{The Business Times} (173); \textit{Today} (166); \textit{The New Paper} (80); \textit{The Financial Times} (67); and \textit{The International Herald Tribune} (65).

\textsuperscript{110} Numbers of answers to the question “Which television news programmes provide you with news about the EU?” were: Channel News Asia (301); Channel 5 (229); BBC World Channel 13 (141); Channel 8 (119); Channel News Asia (117); and CNN Channel 14 (110).
When the respondents were asked about the extent to which they followed the news of the ASEM 6 Summit held in Helsinki in September 2006, 43% expressed a lack of interest in it. It is interesting to compare the media reports and public opinion towards the ASEM 6 Summit across the six locations and regions within this study. While there was a relatively large coverage of ASEM news in Singapore (in comparison to the other countries in the survey), Singaporean public opinion demonstrated the second lowest level of interest in the ASEM process. If the media are conscious of the importance of ASEM, this interest does not seem to have affected public opinion.

The survey also asked respondents an open-ended question: “When thinking about the term ‘the European Union’, what three thoughts come to your mind?” The most frequent responses to this could be grouped as EU integration (some two-thirds of responses), the euro (just under half) and European economic power (about a third). This last response is interesting, given the relative rankings of important countries and regions mentioned above; the EU is perceived as a strong economic force, perhaps, but this alone does not make it seem relevant to Singapore’s future (as noted in another context above). Singaporeans are aware that European integration has produced a single market and, in the euro zone, a single currency which is generally rising against the US dollar and gaining world attention. Thus the euro (and the British pound sterling) have become noteworthy as good choices for personal investment. Could, in time, eastern Asian nations combine similarly? The strength of the euro is of interest as an offshoot of regional development and integration, that is in the context of a strengthening of ASEAN and its other partners.

EU integration is also significant in political terms. The idea of regional integration is attractive to those Singaporeans who are active in promoting ASEAN integration. ASEAN was founded as a means of preventing regional conflicts and solving regional problems and in this is similar to the motivations for the foundation of the EU. But caution should be taken in interpreting from the opinion poll (which asked what “came to mind,” rather than how it was evaluated) that the EU is considered to be a “model” for ASEAN. Indeed, only 1% of respondents thought of the EU in such terms.

The EU – or life in Europe – generally did not loom large in the minds of Singaporeans. Even in November 2006, only 3% of respondents thought of football as one of their “three thoughts,” and fewer than 10% thought of such points as tourism, the relation to Singapore, or the EU as a counterbalance to the US. About as many, in fact, thought of “far away” and “expensive” as one (or two) of their three thoughts.

111 22.8% of the respondents didn’t follow the coverage of ASEM at all, while 20.2% were not even aware that the meeting was taking place.
More than half of the respondents had no personal or professional connections with EU countries. Accordingly, 72% of the sample rarely or never discussed Europe/EU related issues with their family and friends. A very slight improvement was observed among professionals, as 67% of the sample rarely or never discussed Europe/EU related issues with their colleagues at work. The most mentioned EU country was the UK, most probably of course because of Singapore’s colonial past and the use of English, factors which sometimes combine into the perception of an old special friendship and partnership, particularly also when a centrist Labour government is in power in the UK, with its own special ties with the US. Singaporeans had much more knowledge about the UK than about other European countries. The UK remained the first destination in Europe for living and travelling. Respondents also knew people living in Singapore from the UK, as there is a large number of British (and indeed European) companies in the island nation.

Section Summary

The EU does not figure very largely in the day-to-day concerns of Singaporeans, as might be expected (after all, one may wonder how many Europeans concern themselves with ASEAN, for example). Yet Singaporeans have a rudimentary idea of contemporary, political Europe, as might be expected of a global and cosmopolitan city with extensive trading connections and with annual European film festivals (including individual festivals for certain European countries).

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112 Numbers of answers to the question “Which of the following 25 EU countries do have personal or professional connections/ties with (top 6)?” were: none of the above mentioned (225); UK (130); France (55); Italy (40); and Netherlands (32).

113 The percentage distribution of “How often do you discuss Europe/ EU related issues with your family and friends?” were: often (0.8%); occasionally (27.2%); rarely (49.8%); and never (22.2%).

114 The percentage distribution of “How often do you discuss Europe/ EU related issues with your colleagues at work?” were: often (2.5%); occasionally (30.5%); rarely (45.8%); and never (21.2%).


116 When the further question “What type of connection/link is this for the United Kingdom” was posed to the respondents, the answers were: knowledge about the country (108); friends living there (86); travelled there (72); know people living in Singapore from UK (56); family/relatives living there (48); professional/business (41); ancestors born there (10); other (6); and born there (3).
Elite Interviews

Some thirty-two elite (political, business, social and media) interviews – some in person, some by e-mail – were conducted in Singapore from April to July in 2007. The length of the face-to-face interviews was approximately 25 minutes on average. The questionnaires were sent to the interviewees in advance and the questions included a broad range targeted at general opinions across all elite groups, as well as some specifically intended for one elite group. In particular, the media elites were asked about the accumulation of EU news (which was found to be through a mixture of Europe-based correspondents and international wire reports), the importance of finding an angle that was engaging to Singaporeans (as mentioned above) and the ways in which Brussels is (or is not) proactive in disseminating news about what happens in Europe.\(^{117}\) Across the board, the EU was considered by the interviewed media elites, mirroring the findings of the public opinion survey, as of limited and perhaps slightly declining significance for Singapore, wavering between 3.5 and 4 on a 5 point scale (where 5 was insignificant).

The EU as an Economic and Cultural Power, but not a Political Power

Most interviewees agreed that the EU is an economic power. First of all, “in some industries, individual countries are world leaders”.\(^{118}\) Second, the accretion of wealthy countries in the Union created many opportunities for them and increased their bargaining power in global economic issues. Third, “they have made good strikes in the strengthening of the euro compared to the dollar”.\(^{119}\)

The EU was perceived as a cultural power mainly by media elites who, distinct from the other groups surveyed, believed that the EU’s power is attributable not only to its integrating economy but also to the strong cultural presence of its major countries like Britain, France and Germany, its so-called “soft power”.\(^{120}\) “The EU has cultural cachet,” even though this was sometimes seen as snobbism and Eurocentrism (Western orchestras in China, but relatively few Chinese orchestras in Europe).\(^{121}\)

\(^{117}\) Here of course the distinction between the EU as an entity/institution and Europe as a geographical and historical reality might be highlighted.

\(^{118}\) Respondents were given anonymity and thus subsequent quotations will be referenced accordingly – Business elite; Political elite; Civil society elite; Media elite. This quote: Political elite respondent.

\(^{119}\) Political Elite respondent.

\(^{120}\) Media Elite respondent.

\(^{121}\) Media Elite respondent.
The EU was not regarded as a global leader in international politics. Most respondents, excluding political elites, insisted that the EU lacks political power, or is “boxing well below its weight”. The most frequently stated reason for this was that it is difficult for the EU countries to speak out as one powerful voice because “it is too diverse to be a military power”, and should flex this power to enforce its view on others, like the US. In this regard, it was even thought by some that “the Iraq war showed up the shortcomings of the EU with certain countries not wanting to go to war”. Similarly, the EU’s dealing with the Balkan problems reflects its lack of unified leadership and will.

However, political elites did consider the EU strong in certain areas of international relations. The EU was considered to be a pioneer in peace making, conflict resolution, global warming and human rights issues. Its role was seen to be largely that of a “broker” rather than “change leader”. The EU was said to be “getting stronger”, even if it is not dominant “in terms of pushing issues with the USA or even Russia and China”. Moreover, it was considered by some that the EU could perhaps be a model for other countries, especially ASEAN, for their efforts towards greater integration.

Some interviewees did challenge the view of EU as a single entity: “There are so many countries involved so it is difficult to generalise about the EU as it is very diverse”. Such respondents saw the EU through the lens of individual countries, or a select few countries, instead of a supranational organisation.

### Singapore-EU Relations

The current relationship between the EU and Singapore was generally seen as stable and improving. However, the EU remains less important to Singapore than other prominent regions. The most important issues between the EU and Singapore at the present and in the future were perceived to be trade and environment. The use of the EU Commission Delegation in Singapore was expected to promote business and cultural exchanges and thus to mirror in some respect that of the Asia-Europe Foundation (whose headquarters are in Singapore), rather than focu-
Some respondents, however, saw the current relationship as stagnant, because they had not seen any new initiative from either party on trade or politics; here reference might be made to the prospects for an FTA.

Consistent with public opinion, the elites gave the EU significantly less emphasis and importance. It was ranked after the US, Japan, China, Asia as a whole, but seen as more important than Russia. Some of the political elites however, perceived the EU as having high importance, at the “same level as the other big countries/regions”.

Most interviewees agreed that economic issues in the current EU-Singapore relationship had the most impact on Singapore which was considered to give top priority to its economic survival. Investment by EU firms in Singapore, an EU approach to bilateral trade issues relating to both Singapore and ASEAN and the EU’s current policy, seen as protectionist, were all major concerns of Singaporean elites. Strikingly, environmental issues were widely credited, though these were not seen as significant as the economy: the EU was perceived as a very good leader in the environmental and the green area, as one respondent noted, “[t]hey take the Kyoto Protocol very seriously”. Environmental protection was considered to be a great area of collaboration. Other issues also mentioned included: sharing of counter-terrorism information, maritime security, technology exchange, disagreements on human right issues and Myanmar in ASEAN.

Looking to the future, the respondents urged the EU to loosen its protectionist regulations and try to establish an FTA with Singapore quickly. On the other hand, it was also seen that Singapore could learn more about the environmental concerns from the EU and deal with the climate change through collaborations.

The perception of the European Commission Delegation to Singapore reflected, not surprisingly, the differences between the roles among the elites surveyed. Business elites only cared about business issues and hoped the Delegation could “promote trade and common understanding of the rules and regulations and promoting the FTA in Singapore”. They also wished the Delegation could “promote Singapore as an ideal place to conduct business”. In contrast, political elites had more diverse interests. While they wondered if the Delegation could help the “local companies who wish to set up ventures in EU”.

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131 Civil Society respondents; Political Elite respondents.
132 Business Elite respondents; Political Elite respondents.
133 Political Elite respondent.
134 Political Elite respondent; Media Elite respondent; Business Elite respondents.
135 Business Elite respondent.
136 Civil Society respondent.
137 Business Elite respondent.
138 Business Elite respondent.
139 Political Elite respondent.
they thought also of it playing a role in promoting “people-to-people contacts through cultural exchanges”. In this regard, once again, respondents seemed often unable to distinguish between the Commission delegation and ASEF. One respondent noted that “the ‘EU in Schools’ programme is especially useful in the long term in raising the awareness of the EU among Singaporeans”. However, some respondents did not expect too much from the Delegation as it had a “quite low profile”.

Special Issues of the EU

Most respondents believed that the EU was getting stronger (as seen in more opportunities than problems when new countries joined the EU; strength of the euro — too strong) and they thought this was good for both Singapore and the rest of the world. The opportunities for Singapore were largely rooted in economic concerns. The EU enlargement was considered to make it easier for Singapore to enter European market and the European Commission Delegation should help more in Singapore, particularly with access to the newer members who may not have diplomatic representation in Singapore. From a political perspective, EU enlargement was considered likely to spur up ASEAN integration. The enlargement with the new members which have to commit to EU norms and standards “would offer a more predictable and less risky operating environment”. However, some interviewees saw the EU enlargement as irrelevant to Singapore. For example, one respondent felt that the enlargement “won’t affect us much because they are still a distance away. What really affects us…[is] not really EU but what happens in Asia”. Internal frictions, as side effects of the enlargement, were considered likely to divert EU attention and resources from important international and global considerations.

Regarding the euro as an international currency, more than half of the respondents saw it as an alternative to the US dollar. Some saw the euro as “amazingly strong” and “moving along far better than expectations”. As a reserve currency, the euro was considered to be very good for the world. However, alternate

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140 Political Elite respondent.
141 Political Elite respondent.
142 Civil Society respondent.
143 Civil Society respondent.
144 Political Elite respondent.
145 Civil Society Elite respondent.
146 Political Elite respondent.
147 Business Elite respondent.
148 Civil Society Elite respondent.
opinions were also prevalent. “At this point in time it is not important because the US dollar is still the almighty”.

As already noted in the results of the public opinion survey, the ASEM process was not generally followed. Among the respondents with some knowledge of ASEM, some negative feelings were perceivable. ASEM was considered by some to remain a “talk shop with few tangible results”, and “the Europeans aren’t taking it seriously”. On the other hand, positive attitudes were mainly related to overcoming trade issue concerns. The ASEM process was described as “important to continue to have a freer and to promote more trade between the two regions (EU and ASEAN)”. Besides, “ASEM helps in giving a forum for Singapore to meet with 25 countries at once and also ASEM is a structured way to look at where we can cooperate”.

Finally, the interviewees were asked, “what three thoughts come to your mind when thinking about the term ‘the European Union’?” The results for this were found to be consistent with the public opinion survey that “EU integration” and “EU as an economic power” were the most mentioned images (some one-third of all responses). However, one striking contrast was found in that the Singaporean elite also sees EU as diversified and as unable to replace individual countries. They see the EU still struggling to unify the bloc. A few countries, but not the group, always stand out very prominently: the UK, France and Germany. Besides this, the EU is also perceived as a great cultural centre with a long tradition.

Conclusion

In general, there appears to be a gap between the clear and growing importance of the EU as a trading partner for Singapore and reporting about it in the local news media and, as a consequence, public perception of it and as related to this, the ‘elite’ opinion. While interested observers can access European news on the internet and through cable television, this has several problems: it assumes an interest that first needs to be created; much of this is not in English (a ‘continental’ magazine in English comparable to Times or The Economist might be helpful here); and it is in any event biased to ‘news’ that is politics and current events, rather than incorporating social, cultural and even daily life. While the French TV5 channel is available on Singaporean cable television, of the majority

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149 Civil Society Elite respondent.
150 Media Elite respondent.
151 Media Elite respondent.
152 Civil Society Elite respondent.
153 Media Elite respondent.
of its programming is not in English, thus rendering it inaccessible to many Sin-
agoreans. As the elite survey noted, Singaporeans are willing to increase their
knowledge of European culture in a number of areas and this may be a good
starting point for shifting perceptions. Lastly, foregrounding the Union as an
institution is not engaging to an audience that is distant from the EU itself and its
main concerns; one might note here then that too much attention to economics,
finance and political integration curtails that which might and should be given
to culture, lifestyle and human interest.
This chapter presents the findings of an eighteen-month project concerning the perceptions of the European Union (EU) in Thailand, specifically in terms of media monitoring, public opinion and elite attitudes. During the media monitoring phase, three daily newspapers, namely, The Bangkok Post, Thai Rath and the Manager and one news channel, TiTV, were monitored for their daily coverage of the EU. The findings indicate that the EU is portrayed most prominently as a political and economic power, disproportionately involved in its external relations, arguably suggesting that the relevance of the EU to Thailand is as an international actor, albeit a minor actor. Its roles as a social and environmental actor were somewhat limited in term of media coverage. A public opinion study gathered the general Thai public’s perceptions of the EU and revealed the limited extent of the Thai’s public knowledge of the EU and a high tendency to associate the EU with specific Member States, most notably the United Kingdom (UK), France and Germany, which also happened to be the most visible Member States in terms of the news media coverage.

The Thai elite perceived the current Thai-EU relationship to be stable and likely to grow as the EU’s importance on the international stage, especially in terms of international trade and the strength and stability of the euro as compared to the US dollar, continued to grow. The EU was seen as important to Thailand in different ways by the different elite groups, but it was clear that the EU was prominently perceived to be an economic power. The implications of these findings on the EU-Thai relationship, particularly in light of the EU’s request to formally monitor the upcoming Thai elections, are also discussed. The findings seem to suggest that the EU-Thai relationship is undermined by the presence of suspicion of hidden EU agendas. It is suggested that until a new democratic government is established in Thailand, the state of Thai-EU relations will remain uncertain.

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1 Dr. Apirat Petchsiri is the Honorary Advisor to the Masters of Arts in European Studies, Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University and served as the advisor to Rachanirom Raveepaopong and Trip Kirtiputra, researchers at the Multidisciplinary Department of European Studies, Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University. Rachanirom Raveepaopong oversaw the research for 2006 (media monitoring and public opinion) and Trip Kirtiputra for 2007 (media monitoring and elite interviews). The result is this collaborative work.
Introduction

The Kingdom of Thailand is situated at a strategic point in mainland Southeast Asia and this combined with its relative prosperity in the region makes it an important portal to other countries in the region, namely Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. These characteristics make Thailand an ideal candidate from which the European Union (EU) and its Member States can establish operations and indeed, many do. Historically, the region has had numerous ties with Europe, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and France, who have colonial linkages to the region. In terms of Thailand’s connections to the EU, the situation is somewhat different because, relative to its Member States, the EU itself is a new actor in the region and much of the Union’s visibility is often associated with particular Member States rather than the Union.

This association with a particular Member State is not unusual, since the EU itself is only represented by a single Delegation office in Bangkok, whilst a significant number of its Member States have maintained regular and complex diplomatic, cultural and economic linkages with Thailand for decades, if not centuries. These long forged relationships result in bureaucrats and technocrats who are accustomed to working with local Thai authorities, easing efforts to carry out programmes and make an impact. This is especially true with development programmes, which are generally carried out by non-governmental organisations (NGO) from specific Member States and whose individual programmes are in turn sponsored by the EU, thus making these projects indirectly associated to the Union and consequently limiting its visibility to the public as compared to the specific Member State seen to be carrying out the programme.

The Union’s preference of dealing with groupings of nations has seen relations with Thailand and other Southeast Asian nations channelled through ASEAN. However, the nature of ASEAN is that it is a largely non-interventionist forum, therefore any ASEAN-EU initiatives will have limited direct impact on the specific countries in the region. Furthermore, the region’s varying governance styles share the characteristic of preferring bilateral relations with the EU rather than a multilateral relationship with the EU via ASEAN. This preference has limited the scope of EU-Thailand relations, although to a large extent, relations with the EU have shaped government and economic policies that have been designed to better facilitate relations between the two sides. This process often occurs without much public or media recognition and is carried out almost exclusively by government ministries and bureaucrats. Relations with the EU, whether political or economic, are more commonly associated with a particular Member State partner or firm, making most EU-Thailand relations indirect at best. The differentiation between Union affairs and Member State affairs is still rather unclear for the Thai public in general. The general public remain thus
largely unaware of the increasing importance and role the EU has on shaping Thai government policies.

According to the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board,² which essentially sets the direction for the Thai government’s policies, the EU serves as a model for Thailand in terms of its economic, social and environmental policies; areas in which the EU is seen as being a global leader and role model. The EU in its present form is seen as a series of accomplishments aimed at achieving the goal of peace and prosperity and those accomplishments have made it an entity to be admired. For instance, in the area of economic development, the EU’s common market and four freedoms – that is, the free movement of goods, people, services and capital – is seen as an achievable goal, with the EU as evidence of the vitality of the scheme that ASEAN can model its future economic developments after. Additionally, the measures and rules utilised by the EU to regulate goods within and coming into the Union also help to shape the development of the Thai market, especially in terms of meeting international standards and thus increasing the value of Thai goods that meet such standards.

The Union’s success in propagating and enforcing these policies make it an ideal model and the lessons learned in the process help the Board develop policies that try to incorporate those ideas, such as subsidiarity and proportionality, which not only benefits the Thai government, but also NGO operations in these areas as well. Socially, the EU which comprises of numerous ethnic groups, is an ideal example for dealing with multiculturalism, which not only ASEAN, but Thailand itself can adapt for use in dealing and opening channels of discussion between the ethnic minorities. The idea of subsidiarity and proportionality fits well with public and development policies. This is clearly seen in the areas of environmental policies, since the Union’s advances environmental laws and regulations serve as a standard for environmentally friendly legislation for Thailand, making the EU, via its Member State bodies operating in Thailand, an important partner. The economic, social and environmental importance of the EU as a model is expressed through its visibility in the country most often as a trading partner and a development model, giving it political and economic significance to the country regardless of public awareness.

The EU is undoubtedly present in Thailand in terms of its political and economic linkages with the Kingdom and on a wider scale with ASEAN, as a regional body similar to the EU, although vastly different in many respects to its European counterpart. Japan remains Thailand’s largest trading partner, followed by the United States (US) and although Europe (The EU) comes in at third, this is largely being eclipsed by the exponential increase in importance that China is having in Thailand, especially with the commencement of the China-

² Ampon Kittiampon interviewed by Trip Kirtiputra, 13 July 2007.
-Thailand Free Trade Agreement in 2003. As will be discussed subsequently, it was found that more often specific EU firms and EU Member States made news headlines in Thailand, rather than the EU itself. This is especially true over the last two years, with developments in Thai politics that have resulted in a media inclination to look inward and have diverted much attention away from external actors such as the EU.

The chapter will present and explore the findings from the eighteen-month project involving media analysis, public opinion and elite interviews in Thailand conducted as part of the ESiA project. The media analysis section will attempt to find trends in the presentation and coverage of EU news in Thai media, such as its domesticity, centrality and various frames, including politics, economic, social and environmental frames. The public opinion will present findings of the responses from the general public concerning their perceptions of the EU and possible find patterns and explanations corresponds with the media analysis trends and elite interviews. The elites’ section will present findings from interviews with Thai elites in non-governmental organisations, politics, business and the media.

**Media Analysis**

Media monitoring of the Thai print news media and broadcast media was conducted during 2006 and 2007, observing the visibility of the EU in prominent local media sources. These consisted of a popular print daily, an English-language newspaper, a business-oriented daily and an independent prime-time television news bulletin. The sources that were selected for monitoring were: Thai Rath (popular), The Manager (business-oriented), The Bangkok Post (English-language) and TITV (television network). Media monitoring of the Thai media for EU news items was first conducted in 2004 and the commentaries of each source is a continuation of the initial attempt.

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4 Beginning in 2005 and lasting until 2006, Thailand underwent a political crisis that saw the close of the political career of ousted Prime Minister and tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra and the fall of the Thai Rak Thai Party, which culminated in the *coup d’état* on September 19, 2006, which was condemned by a number of Western powers including the EU, who closed down all formal diplomatic ties with the Kingdom. After the coup, the interim government began the drafting of the new constitution and held the country’s first referendum on August 19, 2007 which accepted the new constitution, with elections planned for December 2007 or early 2008. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Politics_and_government_of_Thailand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Politics_and_government_of_Thailand). Accessed 26 September 2007.

5 The researcher was able to secure interviews with only six elites due to uncontrollable circumstances and the reluctance of elites to participate in the project at a critical moment in Thai politics.
Chosen Media Sources

*Thai Rath* is the biggest selling newspaper in Thailand with a daily circulation of 1,000,000 copies and a claimed readership of 25,000,000 which is 40% of the total population of Thailand. *Thai Rath* is largely characterised as a tabloid-style newspaper with brash headlines accompanied by gruesome photographs of crime and accident victims alongside pictures of television stars and politicians. The staff, however, is a mixture of tabloid journalists who are pre-occupied with crimes, sex and scandals and highly-educated writers with liberal political views who possess excellent contacts with academics and social activists.6 *Thai Rath*, then, should be regarded as a market-oriented newspaper with a socially engaged quality rather than simply a British-style tabloid. The newspaper is very influential in leading public opinions. The newspaper owner’s close connection with the political tier has made *Thai Rath* so powerful that it is sometimes referred to as a ‘second government’.7

*The Manager* is a relative newcomer to the printing business. Phujatkan or *Manager*, a business magazine, was founded in early 1980s by Sondhi Limthong-ku and is an unusual combination of a business newspaper and a partisan political one. The new, younger, urban generations seek greater control of information from the state-oriented society and look for a mixture of business information and sophisticated commentary on politics and society.8 *Manager* is regarded as a quality newspaper with a rather progressive and academic style of writing. It has a circulation of 100,000 copies daily, making it the second most popular quality newspaper and its website is the most popular Thai news website.9

*Bangkok Post* is one of only two English-language newspapers in Thailand, the other being The Nation. *Bangkok Post* has gained the upper hand between the two with a daily circulation of 80,000 copies.10 To a certain degree, the two newspapers are very much alike. Perhaps as a result of its large expatriate readership, *Bangkok Post* has substantially more international news than typical Thai-language newspapers.11 Nevertheless, international news seldom feature on the front

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page unless in the case of extraordinary events. The front page and the first five pages usually cover domestic and regional news. The newspaper employs local staff to report and make comments of domestic and Southeast Asian affairs. The news content of the Post is widely regarded as objective, responsible and reliable and also reports considerably more on the neighbouring countries of Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar than the international media in general. In addition, it also reports extensively about European and American sports news and has extensive business and feature sections. Established in 1946, Bangkok Post arguably has a long-established reputation of a better editorial quality, contributing to the fact that in the past, editors of the Bangkok Post were native-speakers, particularly British. At present, however, editors are local.

TITV, originally ITV, has undergone numerous changes over the years, but has prided itself on being Thailand’s first and only independent television network. The company was originally founded on May 9th, 1995 as the Siam Infotainment Company Limited with initially registered and paid-in capital of Baht 250 million, which was later paid up to Baht 1,000 million in the same year. In 1998, its name was changed to ITV Public Company Limited and later to TITV Public Company Limited. For the most part of the first half of 2007, the company has undergone numerous scandals and conflicts over the structural competence of the company and since February 2007, the station has essentially been under the control of the interim military-backed government. From the media monitoring, it can be summed that since the beginning of 2007 the structure of TITV’s evening news, starting from around 19.00 to 20.00 and beginning with royal news, is dominated by two sections dedicated to local affairs such as the situation in the South of Thailand, a second section dedicated almost entirely to the state of the new constitution and other political developments and also a short section on international news, which is separated into general international news and international news specific to China and the Mekong Community. This is then followed by entertainment news, sports, the weather and royal news.

EU Coverage

The Thai political developments in 2006 that eventually led to the coup in September, dominated the media during the year and EU coverage since then has seen a steady decline, as more and more attention has been diverted to covering

12 Ibid.
13 Wikipedia, “Bangkok Post”.
15 Wikipedia, “iTV (Thailand)”.
the situation inside the kingdom. The increased coverage relating to the EU due to the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)\textsuperscript{16} 6 Summit went largely unnoticed and had very little impact on the local political scene, such that its only true significance from the media standpoint was that the Thai Prime Minister took an extended tour in Europe after the ASEM 6 Summit, which was then the opportunity for coup leaders to seize power within Thailand. Along with the political tensions leading to the coup and after the coup, Thailand also faces the ongoing conflict in the south of the country, with almost daily bombings and killings that continue to receive coverage from the media. There was a dramatic decline in EU coverage after the September coup, to the end of the year and onwards to 2007, after which the media was overwhelmed with coverage of local political developments.

September 2006 onwards was marked by news concerning the various reforms underway, the most important of which was the drafting of a new constitution and corruption investigations involving the former prime minister’s assets. These issues dominated Thai media and have affected coverage of the EU (and other foreign partners for that matter) in most areas. The coup also disrupted Thai relations with the EU, in an official EU statement that “condemns the take over of power from the democratic government of Thailand by the Thai military forces”.\textsuperscript{17} Since the coup the EU has suspended formal diplomatic relations with Thailand and its Member States, although still maintaining diplomatic ties, have down played the extent of their relations with Thailand, in accordance with the common position issued by the EU. With elections yet to come at the time of writing this chapter and possible future delays to that process, EU-Thai relations will remain in a kind of limbo until a democratically elected government is restored to the country. The referendum, the first in Thai political history, planned for August 2007, along with ongoing protests, the role of the EU as an external actor is being pushed further away from public perceptions in general. The media has largely captured this fallout, with a decline in coverage concerning the EU and with most of the coverage concerning EU internal actions and external relations with third countries, which will be discussed subsequently.

\textsuperscript{16} The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://asemininfoboard.org.

Volume of Monthly Coverage

Relative to the other countries in the study, Thailand has a rather small volume of EU coverage, although it remained relatively consistent throughout the year. The notable change to this trend seems to occur in September with the coup and the suspension of formal EU relations with Thailand, which saw a dramatic drop in coverage, as seen most visibly in the English language daily’s coverage. Table 1 displays the totals for each news outlet during 2006.

The popular daily, Thai Rath, The Manager and TITV consistently displayed low EU coverage, averaging at around eight items a month. The exception to this trend existed in the form of the Bangkok Post, which averaged about fifty-eight items of EU news per month. However, since Thai Rath is the most widely distributed daily in the country, it is safe to assume that for the general public, the visibility of the EU in Thailand is marginal at best. Thai Rath averaged less than eight items of EU news a month and then only in relatively small articles. Even though the EU is a significant trading partner with Thailand, its visibility in the business daily The Manager remained rather small. One possible explanation for this is that although Thailand has extensive trade with the EU, much of these transactions are processed through individual Member State firms and therefore, the visibility of certain Member States, like the United Kingdom and Germany, which are Thailand’s largest trading partners in the Union18 and remain prominent in place of EU, even though the measure, regulations and laws that are involved were probably EU in origin.

In terms of monthly distribution (Table 1), a look at the mean indicates two common peaks in the coverage of EU news, namely in May and in September. In May the visibility of the EU came as part of its involvement with the Iranian nuclear crisis and developments in the Middle East and though in most of these the EU played a secondary role to, most notably, the US. The second noticeable peak came in September, with the ASEM 6 Summit; a high profile event that saw the departure of the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawat to participate in the process and which eventually escalated to the Thai coup the following month. This can be clearly be seen in the months following the September coup, when EU news coverage saw a steady and dramatic decline that continues to most of 2007.

Table 2 displays the trends of EU coverage during the first six months of 2007. The peak in EU coverage in May, was due largely to special insights and analysis to commemorate “Europe Day”, which in 2007 also commemorated the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the European integration project. As a result of this event, the Thai news media displayed an increase in EU-local news, as

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18 Bangkok Post, “Top 30 Trading Partners of Thailand”.
involved organisations expressed their opinions. However, the EU’s general visibility was more often connected to the political developments in Turkey and the Middle East, with events starting in April and continuing until June and in these instances the Union was seen to play a secondary or minor role.

Table 1: Volume of EU Coverage 2006

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POP = Thai Rath  BUS = The Manager [Includes entries from Manager Online]  ENG = Bangkok Post  TELEVISION = TITV

Table 2: Volume of EU Coverage 2007*

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</table>

PO  = Thai Rath  BUS = The Manager [Includes entries from Manager Online]  ENG = Bangkok Post  TV = TITV

*Figures from January to March were acquired via online archives

Figure 1: Overall Perspective of Volume of EU Coverage in Thai Media 2006-2007
Figure 2 displays the breakdown of EU coverage across the various news outlets that were monitored. The distribution of EU news in Thailand across these outlets presented a high disparity, with most of the news coverage being published by the Bangkok Post and with televised news items almost having no visibility at all. However, concerning the televised news, TITV has lost its credibility as an independent news network having been taken over by the government in February 2007. The coverage of the business daily is also notably in that the figures presented below this study, as a continuation of the 2006 study, also include news items that featured on The Manager’s online version, The Manager Online, which in certain circumstances, like May 2007 comprised of over half of the total EU news and therefore may distort the data in terms of the actual visibility and distribution of EU news from that outlet as a whole.

![Figure 2: Distribution of EU News by Outlet 2006-2007](image)

**Sources of EU News**

News items were assessed for their sourcing, whether this was from a local Thai journalist, an international source (such as an international news agency) or whether the source was unattributed. Figure 3 presents the results of this analysis.

It is clear from the above graph that the popular daily Thai Rath preferred not to name their sources of EU news items. Bangkok Post, on the other hand, has the highest total of news items and indeed a significant proportion of those came from international sources, including in particular, Agence France Presse, Associated Press and Reuters, just to name the most common. Although there exists a certain level of local journalism, such news items were observed to commonly address direct EU-Thailand relations, rather than explicitly EU-oriented news items which instead were identified as coming from ‘the wires’. The business daily tended to feature a combination of one or more foreign sources
in their news items concerning the EU, with almost an equal percentage which it was safe to assume that their local staff had drafted. Those news items that were unattributed may refer in the Thai case also to how news items have been modified from their original forms on the wire and therefore this figure does not indicate the original international sources. Thai newspapers, even powerful ones like Thai Rath, are simply not rich enough to staff local correspondence abroad and thus rely heavily on the international news agencies.

TITV reported a very small number of EU news and of those, no sources were ever cited clearly and therefore all news items were noted as coming from non-available sources. Once again it is likely that the footage screened in those few news items came from a source of some kind and most probably it can be hypothesised that this was an international news service, thus also bringing a ‘foreign flavour’ to Thai television news on the EU.

Focus of Domesticity

Figure 4, below, displays the degree of domesticity present in the EU news items in Thailand during the 18 months of analysis. Broadly, the pattern across the three newspapers was similar, with news items relating to events outside Thailand and outside the EU but with some EU involvement dominating. Arguably, this reflects a realistic impression of the EU, especially in terms of its visibility and role in Thailand. The EU is undoubtedly an important global player, hence its visibility in third countries, but its relations with Thailand remain relatively indirect and small and since the coup, are virtually non-existent and therefore a
majority of EU news featured for most of 2007 will be that of its role in third countries. The trend of EU coverage being third country was a pattern that both 2006 and 2007 coverage shared.

In terms of the intensity of the EU’s coverage, the relevant news items tended to feature the EU as a secondary or minor actor in the news item, rather than featuring it as the major actor (Figures 5 and 6). Once again this is reflective of the
EU’s visibility in Thailand, where for the most part it is viewed as a complimentary actor to other powers or to its own Member States. In addition, the preference for featuring the EU as a minor actor arguably reflects the EU’s own ‘soft’ power diplomacy approach which places it in most global events as a reactive, rather than proactive power and therefore it necessarily plays a more minor role in general.

Frames

In the media monitoring process, the EU was categorised into various frames which characterised it as either a political, economic, social or environmental actor. Once again, the televised news has been excluded from the data presentation due to the low number of instantiations during the screening process. Although for the purposes of the research, the EU has been placed in a particular frame, it is important to keep in mind that often times EU actions overlap each other in terms of framing, for instance, trade negotiations may also include environmental clauses. Figure 7 shows the frame in which the EU in the eighteen-month long media monitoring and as can be seen, the EU was portrayed most prominently as a political power.

1. The EU as a Political Power

Figure 8 shows the disproportionate visibility of EU external political activity, as compared to its internal politics, in the Thai printed media. The most visible topics in these instances involve EU activity centred on the Middle East,
most notably, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, a trend that was seen in both 2006 and 2007. 2006 also saw the ASEM Summit in Helsinki which dominated the media for a brief period. Due to this overwhelming visibility of external political activity, it is not surprising that the most visible actors were EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and the various presidencies of the EU. In terms of internal political activity, the trends are different between 2006 and 2007.

![Figure 7: Frames in Printed Media 2006–2007](image1)

![Figure 8: Political Subframe of EU News in Printed Media 2006–2007](image2)

In 2006, most of the EU internal political activity involved the oncoming wave of enlargement and in 2007 the most recurring topics of internal politics were of EU reforms, especially with significant shifts in power, like the French election that elected President Nicolas Sarkozy, or Tony Blair’s step down from power. It comes as no surprise that the most visible actors were Germany, which held the EU presidency for the first half of 2007, the UK and France. The visibility of these three countries may not be just coincidence, as will later be discus-
2. The EU as an Economic Power

As was seen in Figure 7, the portrayal of the EU as an economic power was not far behind its portrayal as a political power and the importance of the EU as market is undeniable, with 27 Member States. Figure 9 shows the prominence of trade and industry in the economic frame, but then again, these figures may be misleading due to the overlapping nature of EU activity, especially with agriculture.

Thailand is still a largely agricultural producer, with farmed goods like chicken, shrimp and tapioca remaining top export products and at times addressed in terms of foreign trade. The most visible actor in terms of trade is EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and the most visible countries correspond to the same countries most visible under the political frame, namely Germany, the UK and France (Germany and the UK being Thailand’s largest trading partner in the EU).\textsuperscript{19} Over 85\% of the economically framed news were neutral in evaluation, with an evenly dispersed percentage of positive and negative evaluations.

3. EU as a Social Power and Environmental Power

The final two frames together comprised less than 20\% of the total number of news items in the eighteen-month project and even if the EU may be a prominent social or environmental power elsewhere, in the Thai media, there is relatively little evidence to suggest that.

\textsuperscript{19} Bangkok Post, “Top 30 Trading Partners of Thailand”.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure9.png}
\caption{Economic Subframe of EU News in Printed Media 2006-2007}
\end{figure}
Figure 10: Social Affairs Frame of EU News in Printed Media 2006–2007

Figure 10 shows that healthcare was a topic that dominated EU social affairs coverage, but mostly on the secondary and minor levels, as over 90% of the healthcare news items, all in the first quarter of 2006, involved the bird flu breakout in Thailand which affected Thai chicken exports to the EU citing health concerns. This instantiation is a decent example of the overlap of the frames in the practical sense. In terms of visible actors, the European Commission was the most prominent EU actor, followed by its Member States, most notable of which were Germany, the UK and France, once again. In terms of evaluations, there were no negative evaluations within this frame and the trend continued to be prominently neutral.

Environment was the least represented of the all the frames in the Thai media and the coverage largely revolved around global warming and climate change. The repeated instantiations of the EU in terms of global efforts to curb carbon emissions indicates the dedication and commitment that the EU has for the environmental cause, despite the relatively low coverage in the Thai media. Aside from the European Commission, which was the most prominent actor, Finland and Germany were both important actors when they held the EU presidency and the UK, represented by Tony Blair also maintained visibility in the environmental frame. The EU’s efforts were thus evaluated on a neutral basis, with no instances of negative portrayal.

Public Opinion

The public opinion study conducted in 2006 provided some insight into the perceptions of average Thais concerning the EU and yielded interesting results. The general image of Thai public perception of the EU was a positive one and one which cited its economic strength and stability, vibrant culture and sophistication, advance technology and quality education. However, the average Thai
knowledge of the EU seemed to stem from everyday life situations that affect them directly, such as the EU in the context of WTO negotiations or trade barrier conflicts, rather than a more formalised and structured knowledge of the EU.

As shown in Figure 11, a disproportionate number of respondents perceived the EU via the individual countries which are part of the EU, with the UK, Germany and France as the most visible citations. This corresponds with the trends seen in the media as well, where these countries were relatively more visible than the other EU countries, or are represented with EU news.

Figure 12 shows Thai public opinion concerning Thailand’s most important overseas partners and with the rising importance of China as a regional, or even global, power, its importance to Thailand is undeniable. The top three partners, namely China, the US and Japan are also Thailand’s three largest trading partners, which suggest that respondents see Thai foreign relations and partnerships as based mainly on economic and trade relations. This also serves to explain the tendency of Thai public opinion to cite individual countries as well, since Germany and the UK are the two top EU trading partners with Thailand.

![Figure 11: Top Thai Public Opinion Responses](image1.png)

![Figure 12: Most Important Overseas Partners for Thailand](image2.png)
The EU was ranked fifth both in terms of its importance as an overseas partner, (Figure 12) and also when scaling its importance in comparison with other noteworthy countries and regions (Figure 13). It is interesting to note that the UK itself was among the ranked countries/regions revealing its noteworthy significance to the Thai public.

![Figure 13: Mean of Scale of Importance of Regions/Countries to Thailand](image)

The significance of the UK to public opinion should not be overlooked and upon close examination it can be seen that the its importance in part stems from the rather intimate relationship that Thais have with the country, as shown in Figure 14.

![Figure 14: Type of Connection to the United Kingdom](image)

Aside from the intimate relationship that the Thai public seem to share with the UK, over 75% of respondents had access to foreign news at least several times a week. However, the news outlet cited the most by respondents as the source of their EU news was televised news, which also happens to be the very news outlet in which the EU was almost invisible, as shown in the media monitoring.
The top newspapers respondents cited were the *Manager*, *Thai Rath* and the *Bangkok Post*, respectively and which were chosen for the media monitoring. Even though the *Bangkok Post* had the highest number of EU news, it was ranked third among the top newspapers by respondents.

Figure 16 shows the EU as part of the actual visibility in the public life of Thais. Respondents may have access to EU news, but the extent to which a topic is discussed publicly can serve as indicator as of the actual awareness and interest in a particular topic. Figure 16 compares the EU’s visibility between family and friends and colleagues at work. It is interesting to note that the two data sets show a very similar structure, with the highest figures indicating that Europe or EU related topics are rarely discussed.

An interesting part of Thai public opinion about the EU was as a destination for higher education. In terms of education, the EU has opportunities, albeit limited, for establishing further higher education links such as through the
Erasmus Mundus Programme. In 2006, the Erasmus Mundus programme accepted sixty-six Thai students into the five-year programme, but the importance of the EU in terms of education lies beyond EU initiatives such as these. Indeed, the EU serves as a potential destination for Thai students pursuing higher education and its unique characteristic of being a integrated area of higher education will increase its attractiveness, albeit the US, Australia and New Zealand remaining the most popular destinations for Thai scholars. This increasing importance of the EU for Thai scholars is also seen in the decline of US popularity as a destination dropping from 95% in 1997 to 49.5% in 2006. The EU accounts for around 22.2% of all Thai students abroad, but approximately 14.8% of those are located in the UK, however, through initiatives like the European Higher Education Fairs, there is potential growth for Europe as a destination.

When the public opinion study was conducted in 2006, the perception of the EU was a limited one. If a similar study was conducted in the after August 19, 2007, when the constitutional referendum took place, public opinions of the EU are likely to be different, with the EU having a marked increase in public and media discussions. However, this does not change the tendency for the Thai public’s knowledge of the EU to be those that directly affect their lives. The multi-national dimensions of the ESiA project revealed that relative to other countries in the project, the Thai public opinion indicated that Thais were the least knowledgeable about the EU.

Elite Attitudes

The uncertain atmosphere of Thai politics and economy has greatly affected the willingness of organisations and elites to participate in this study and so the investigations of Thai elite in particular were challenging. As such, the results presented here are from a smaller number of elite interviews than were conducted in the other participating countries. Despite this smaller sample, a total of six elites, however, a number of unique and intriguing trends were established from contacts with Thai elites and organisations, who, even though they declined to fully participate, have contributed to the research in general; a common reason cited for this involved an explanation that the prospective respondent felt the EU played no role whatsoever with the organisation and thus they expressed reluc-

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
tance due to a lack of adequate or useful knowledge concerning the EU (despite
the researcher reassurance that knowledge of the area was not a necessity).

Some generalisations can be made in terms of elite perceptions of the EU in
Thailand. The most important of these, which appeared to be shared unani-
mosly amongst the respondents, is the state of Thai-EU relations at present. Most
respondents characterised present Thai-EU relations as stable, in a sense that
current Thai foreign relations places other regions and foreign powers above
the EU, but does not deny the importance of the EU to Thailand. In a sense, the
EU’s relationship and importance to Thailand is eclipsed by other powers, as
well as domestic politics, however the relationship itself was considered stable.
This idea of a stable relationship is seen more in depth in terms of the political
affairs, as seen by the Thai Foreign Ministry’s efforts to maintain a particular
image of itself to the EU, as a functioning democratic state.

**NGOs**

There are numerous NGOs based or operating in Thailand, using the country
as a gateway into the rest of Southeast Asia. While the majority of UN orga-
nisations who were contacted for participation declined on the grounds that
they had no direct connections to the EU and thus felt their contribution to the
research would be limited, a number of representatives from non-UN NGOs
were interviewed. Their perceptions of the EU-Thai relationship were similar
to the overall trend, which viewed relations as positive but somewhat narrow.
For instance, Dr. James Klein of the US-based Asia Foundation commented that
the EU’s role with the organisation’s work was “limited at best”\(^\text{24}\) often to the
form of informal discussions concerning the situations in Southern Thailand,
Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Dr. Klein revealed that the EU is important to
Thailand in terms of its economic and social relations to Thailand, more specifi-
cally trade and education. Direct EU development assistance to Thailand ceased
in 1996, but development programmes continue to be operated albeit by other
organisations.

The Asian Partnership for Human Development (APHD) also participated
in the interview process of this study and it differed from the Asia Foundation
in that it is not an American-based organisation but a consortium of 22 national
Catholic organisations from around the world. The linkages between it and the
EU exist through its three participating EU Member States, notably the UK,
Belgium and France [and until recently Ireland]. The EU’s role in the develop-
ment work of the organisation comes mainly in the form of partial funding for

\(^{24}\) James Klein, interviewed by Trip Kirtiputra, 2 July 2007.
APHD, along with funding from Catholic organisations in the Member States themselves and governments. Teresita Suselo, executive secretary of the APHD, noted that receiving funding from the EU was “difficult…[because] you must be a consortium, which we fulfil”.25

Funding aside, however, the role of the EU in development work of APHD in Thailand is more conceptual. The EU is most visible in the organisation’s work in terms of the methodology it has adopted, notably the logical framework approach to project and programme development. This includes problem analysis, goal and objective settings, activities, result predictions. Originally an American idea, the organisation’s EU members have developed the strategies to incorporate results based management and is deemed an effective development tool. Mrs. Suselo noted that the “EU likes common standards and methodology…it’s very democratic” and the EU members try to promote EU ideas of partnership, which is effective but at times was noted by the respondent as being slow in yielding satisfactory results. It is clear from these comments that the visibility of the EU among Thai NGO representatives is filtered by its Member States and that there is no direct EU participation in development work.

**Political Elites**

The politically charged atmosphere of Thailand in 2007 has made access to political figures very difficult and with the EU banning formal diplomatic links with Thailand, the presence of the EU in Thai politics is limited. However, interviews with two key figures concerning Thailand’s relations with the European Union were conducted, notably with the Secretary-General of the National Economic and Social Development Board, Dr. Ampon Kittiampon and the Director-General of the Department of European Affairs at the Thai Foreign Ministry, Mr. Kulkumut Singhara na Ayudhya. These two figures are essentially the sources of news concerning the EU for Thai politicians and government bureaucrats. Mr. Singhara na Ayudhya and his department represent the government views of the EU, while Dr. Kittiampon is more closely linked with political movements and national policies.

Since the coup in September last year, the EU has closed formal diplomatic relations with Thailand and so the character of Thailand’s involvement with the EU has also been shaped in that framework. The Thai Foreign Ministry officially recognises the importance of the EU as a great global power, according to Mr. Singhara na Ayudhya and its main priority, the respondent noted, is to balance its relationships with those of other great powers such as the US, China and Japan.

as a kind of mechanism to “reduce risks”. Particularly in terms of economics and trade, such mechanisms were considered by the interviewee to be vitally important for “follow[ing] on changes to the codes and regulations” within the EU. However, Thai-EU relations have been greatly affected since the September 19, 2006 coup, the respondent noted, since “the group of nations that seemed to care deeply and was critical of the coup was the EU” and shortly after the coup demanded that Thailand proceeded with the “four benchmarks”, which included holding elections, returning power to the people, the drafting of the new constitution which must be transparent and the government must address and be responsible for the human rights violations that have occurred. In this way, Thai-EU relations in the last quarter of 2006 to 2007 has been characterised more by politics than economics, with Thailand constantly having to prove to the EU that political developments have been progressing according to a timeline in accordance with the four benchmarks. During this time, EU Member States have jointly declined to pursue formal political and diplomatic relations with Thailand. This constant pressure to appease the EU is perceived somewhat negatively by the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to the interviewee.

According to Mr. Singhara na Ayudhya, “the EU is the group of nations that like to impose their own standards on Thailand, while at the same time it has its own hidden agendas”. The interviewee claimed that this was done through diplomatic pressures, such as declining official visits to European states and offering aid for Southern Thailand which was called an “Instrument for Stability”; an instrument which in the past has been given to failing or failed states, which in turn implies that the EU perceives Thailand as such. This is a major problem for Thai-EU relations and Thailand, according to the respondent, must do what is in its power to protect its image so that it is not perceived as a failed state. This is a matter of image building and clarifying the facts to foreigners who may be unaware of the regions historical developments.

Economically, trade with between the EU and Thailand is still a significant prospect, according to the interviewee and has potential to grow much further, however this was perceived as limited because, “Thais are not yet very good traders”. The EU’s influence in Thailand moves beyond trade and politics however and it is also an equally important model for development, owing to its expertise in terms of its development and civic projects which are important to Thailand. The Secretary-General of the National Economic and Social Development Board

26 Singhara na Ayudhya, Kulkumut interviewed by Trip Kirtiputra, 13 July 2007.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
(NESDB), Dr. Ampon Kittiampon, whose organisation is responsible for setting and managing public policies, explained that there is no actual direct influence from the EU, however, in the modern globalised world, it is impossible to avoid external influence. The NESBD’s approach to the EU is similar to its analysis of other foreign powers, considering how the EU deals with issues in three dimensions, notably economic, social and environmental and in these areas, understanding the EU is a “necessity in drafting public and development strategy”.32 The EU, according to the interviewee, is one of the three main centres of power, which include the US, EU and ASEAN+3 and studying the strengths of the EU have aided policy makers in the past and the present and will even more so in the future as the world becomes increasingly globalised.

Economically, the interviewee claimed that the EU serves as an ideal example in that it is a diversified economy with an efficient welfare system, with abundant social programmes, which are ideal that Thailand should model after. Although the economic significance of the EU for Thailand is still less than that of the US, the appropriateness of the EU as a model of economic development, balancing economic gain and social benefits has made the EU a role model in the eyes of the interviewee. This also extends into the area of social affairs, where the EU, being a multicultural organisation has the advantage of foundational cultural strengths, a character that the EU shares with Asia and therefore encourages strong cultural interactions, unlike the US, described by the respondent as a “monocultural society”.

The last but most important dimension in terms of the EU as role model that was noted by the interviewee was the EU’s role in environmental awareness, often attaching environmental clauses with its trade agreements. However, the interviewee stressed that while the NESBD recognises the importance of the EU as a role model in developing policies for Thailand, this was not without criticism, particularly the EU’s tendency to include “grandfather clauses” in their foreign agreements, which essentially imposes standards on other countries, often times with activities that the EU had or continues to pursue and was seen by the respondent as sometimes being an unfair impediment to development.

Business and Media Elites

Economically, the EU as a bloc is an important trading partner for Thailand, however, it is not the most significant. The most important trading partners to Thailand include Japan, the US and China. The EU players most visible in terms

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32 Ampon Kittiampon.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
of trading volume with Thailand are Germany and the UK, but who are not included in the top 10 trading partners with Thailand. Thailand is still largely an agricultural producer with rice being one of its most important commodities.

Riceland International Ltd. is an exporter of quality brown parboiled rice to the EU to replace the EU market’s US rice which was found to be contaminated with genetically-modified organisms; a contamination which is counter to the EU’s policy. In terms of volume, the EU is still a small market for rice, however it is an upscale market and because of this emphasis on quality agricultural goods, Riceland International Ltd. Vice-President Ms. Linda Sriprasert commented that the most common conflicts between the EU and Thailand are economic in nature, particularly regarding non-tariff barriers like “subtle hygienic requirements”. The respondent noted that there is a need to develop a trade relationship between the two partners that is more “fair and even” and to try to minimise the disruptive consequences of trade barriers. The Thai-EU relationship at present may be stable, but on the global stage the perception is somewhat different.

The EU, via the euro was seen by the interviewee as infiltrating and “erosing” the importance of the US dollar and slowly taking its place along with other currencies, taking away some of the strength that the dollar used to have. However, this was noted by the interviewee to be a gradual process and thus it was not perceived to be likely that the euro would totally replace the US dollar, but instead would reduce the primary position that the US dollar has enjoyed for so long. This is an opinion that was shared by importers as well. Ms. Kay Trongwongsa, Marketing and Sales, S.A. Petrotech Co., Ltd explained that the euro is “a strong currency of increasing importance as an international currency compared to the US dollar. As US dollar fluctuates, the euro kept things in perspective”. S.A. Petrotech Co., Ltd imports heavy industrial products produced in the EU and sees the EU as a great power in terms of economics and technology. “Its cumulative know-how allows it to provide innovation and opportunities”. However, Ms. Trongwongsa felt that the EU’s role in international politics had been reduced due to internal conflicts “as participating members begin to have difference in opinion and act in inharmonious directions”. However, the more important impact of EU at present to importers like S.A. Petrotech Co., Ltd. was the enlargement of the EU, for there is “higher risk from lower product

35 Bangkok Post, “Top 30 Trading Partners of Thailand”.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
quality as product can be branded ‘Made in EU’ but actual physical stamina of a Romanian vs. Italian product is still different. So there is risk of how to ensure consistent quality across the EU members.”

Ms. Trongwongsa also commented about concerns in terms of Thailand’s future potential relationships with the EU emphasising that when developing trade or government policies involving the EU it is important to “develop for sustainable commercialism without debilitating our environment, like unplanned or uncontrolled touristy promotion.”

The general attitude of Thai-EU relations was best summed up by Ms. Sriprasert who commented that the relationship between Thailand and the European is “stable but not exciting.” However, in the post-referendum period, Thai-EU relations reached an unprecedented level of tension, which may affect elite perceptions in the future.

Conclusion

The historic linkages between Thailand and Europe are undeniable and thus only natural that the emergence of the European Union, as a culmination of European states, transition smoothly in terms of Thai-European relations. This research was conducted in part to evaluate the nature of this relationship via media monitoring of the top news outlets, public opinion analysis and elite attitudes of the EU. The study revealed interesting trends of Thai perceptions of the EU, which in general indicated that the visibility of the EU in the minds of the Thai public is still relatively limited, compared to such powers as China, Japan and the US.

Before summarising the empirical findings from this project, an important caveat is needed. The current domestic political context of Thailand differentiates this analysis from the other five case-studies presented in this volume and events in the second half of 2007 have brought a new and unique dimension to the EU’s international profile in the Kingdom. Shortly after the Thai government announced its intention to hold a general election on December 23, 2007, the EU requested permission to act as election observers for the election. This raised many questions about the nature of the observation and any hidden agendas it represented, especially in terms of its implication for Thai sovereignty and associations with the nature of the monitoring in such failed states as Timore Leste.

The observation of Thai elections has long been a right of foreign powers inc-

43 Ibid.
44 Kay Trongwongsa.
luding an option to ask for official status in order to observe the transparency of the elections. However, in the past an “absence of the EU’s shadow” has been evident including the absence of the EU in the infamous general elections of April 2, 2006 and in historical undemocratic past elections conducted under former military dictatorships.46

The EU’s insistence in September 2007 that Thailand sign an observation Memorandum of Understand (MOU) has proved to be controversial as some felt that the very nature of the MOU disguised a certain hidden objective. Part of the MOU required that Thailand be responsible for all the EU costs involved in the observation of the Thai elections. This was seen as peculiar to the extent that some Thai officials were suspicious that the offer of the MOU was designed so that Thailand would *not* sign it, so that the EU could use the incident as future leverage and bargaining power against Thailand, thereby begging the question of who benefits from the election observations.47 This controversial incident ended when the Election Commission decided not to sign the MOU with the EU. The longer-term consequences of the decision remain to be seen and until the general election is held and a new democratically elected government is inaugurated, the state of Thai-EU relation will remain uncertain. Whether the MOU offer has tarnished the relationship remains to be seen. Until then, the EU’s visibility has once again been eclipsed by political movements in the country as politicians struggle to establish new parties and plan for the coming up elections.

In terms of Thai-EU relations, 2008 will be a critical year, in which, hopefully with a democratic government in place, the EU will resume its official political ties with Thailand. The closure of the political crisis that began in 2005 and the end of the military backed government is crucial to the evolution of Thai foreign relations, including an appropriate and knowledgeable dialogue with the EU.

Returning to the main theme of this chapter and to data collected in this study, the media analysis indicated that the EU is most visibly portrayed as a political and economic actor. Coverage primarily involved the EU’s involvement in third countries, which suggests that the image of the EU portrayed by the Thai media is of an active international actor, however, because a significant portion of these news are of minor EU involvement, the significance and importance of the EU in the international arena may have been down played to a great extent. The general evaluation of the EU was neutral during the monitoring period included in this chapter, but trends are likely to be different in the post-referendum period with the EU involvement in the upcoming Thai general election in December. Additionally, the EU was almost invisible in terms of televised news, which from

46  "ฉัน! มหาสมุทรของอวิชชาติ"  เมษายน 2007, 2.
the public opinion survey was suggested as the most important source of foreign and EU news for the Thai public, followed closely by newspapers. In terms of newspapers, the *Bangkok Post*, with its limited readership, due to its English-language publication, covers nearly 70% of the EU news, where as the most widely circulated daily the *Thai Rath*, had the least amount of coverage amongst newspapers. This disproportionate and limited visibility arguably greatly affects the Thai public’s perception of the EU.

Thai public opinion of the EU in general focused on perhaps more superficial aspects, albeit positive ones, often citing the EU’s image of economic strength, stability, vibrant and sophisticated culture, as well as social and technological advances. The EU image in the public opinion seemed to stem from situations and events that affected the public respondents most directly, such as WTO negotiations or trade conflicts. There is also an overwhelming tendency to associate the EU with individual EU Member States, especially with the France, Germany and the UK. The UK was especially prominent, with a more intimate relationship with Thailand and at times the bilateral relationship with the UK or the individual EU Member State seemed to eclipse the importance of the EU in the region. Similarly, the importance of the EU was also eclipsed by non-European powers, such as China, Japan and the US, who are also Thailand’s largest trading partners at present. The public opinion data suggests that the significance of the EU eludes the public in general, as they remain unaware of the extent of the impact of the Thai-EU relations.

The significance of the EU may elude the general public, but the elites, whether civil society, business, or political elites were fully aware of the extent of the EU’s importance to Thailand, although most deemed the relationship to be stable at best. Civil society elites revealed that although the EU may be a significant aid donor internationally, its role is indirect, often operating through its various Member States and often serving more as a model to follow than an active player. Similarly, political elites saw the EU as a social-economic model of development that is valuable for Thailand to try to model itself after. However, the Thai elites were also aware of the currently sensitive nature of Thailand’s relations with the EU, with constant pressure from the EU for a quick return to a democratic government and where normality has yet to return to the relationship. In terms of the business elites, it is clear that there was a clear indication for the growing importance of the euro especially in comparison with the US dollar, with the euro representing a sense of stability while the dollar fluctuates. However, on a more general basis, taking into consideration the post-referendum political developments, these elite perceptions may have changed slightly and thus it is imperative that research on this issue is continued.
PART III

CROSS COUNTRY COMPARISONS
CHAPTER 9

Martin Holland

Assuming Superpower Status?
Evolving Asian Perceptions of the EU as a Political and Economic Actor

This chapter draws together a number of common comparative themes from the six case-studies discussed previously in this volume. A common finding was the overall limited media interest in the European Union throughout the regions examined, with South Korea and Thailand the most disinterested. With the exception of China, the EU is virtually invisible on Asian primetime news. However, when discussed, in all locations the EU was predominantly described and interpreted in both political and economic terms, although different Asian societies offered differential balances and local emphases. Among the striking findings was a common emerging view of the EU as a global political actor “somewhere else” in the world and the recognition given to Javier Solana as the “face” of the EU externally. The role of the euro has also emerged as a new pervasive symbol of European identity and integration, although the conflicting presence of key Member States and perceptions of diversity also colour and complicate Asia’s view of the EU.

“As the former German Foreign Minister suggests, the EU faces a global relevance challenge. Its unique attributes (consensus, soft-power, rule of law and regionalism) are often difficult for outsiders to interpret or value appro-

Joschka Fischer, 30th March 2007

1 The author would like to acknowledge the research assistance undertaken for this project by the following ESiA colleagues: (Dr. Natalia Chaban, Jessica Bain, Lai Suet Yi, Ma Shaohua, Chung Yoongu, Rachanirom Raveepaopong, Trip Kirtiputra, Zhang Shuangquan, Yeo-Jung Seo and Eijiro Fukui).
priately: too often these characteristics are seen to imply complexity, ineffec-
tiveness and delay. Only recently has Europe begun to ponder quite how it is 
viewed externally and what the consequences of its international image might 
be (both for domestic European reasons as well as for influencing international 
issues). A special issue of the journal *European Foreign Affairs Review* in 2007 
underlined the past missed opportunity to investigate “not just why and how the 
EU behaves differently because of its different configuration…” but “if such 
a distinctiveness is likely to feed back into the EU’s internal and international 
credibility, and possibly also into the self-identification of the Europeans as a po-
litical group”. The absence of any empirical evidence upon which to evaluate 
these ideas was also noted as was the unique exception of the “research team 
focusing on perceptions in the Asia-Pacific region”, many members of whom 
have authored the chapters in this volume.

And yet another recent report has suggested that EU citizens themselves 
support a stronger, single EU global role. In a poll conducted in June 2007 close 
to 90% of respondents called for the EU to take on greater responsibility on the 
world stage. In particular, 84% wanted a greater EU aid contribution to assist 
development initiatives, 74% called for the EU’s trade competences to be better 
used as a mechanism for influencing third country behaviour and 68% wanted 
to see higher levels of EU troops committed to international peacekeeping mis-
sions. These findings broadly confirmed what has been evident in *Eurobarometre* 
results over the last decade: European citizens value the EU’s global role and are 
often more progressive than the EU’s official intergovernmental position on key 
international issues by calling for “more Europe” not less.

This newly discovered interest in the EU’s global role among academics 
and practitioners is welcome albeit long overdue. The analysis presented in this 
ASEF publication is ground-breaking and constitutes a rare empirical assessment 
of how the EU is perceived in Asia and, as such, sets a baseline against which 
future studies may be measured. The individual country chapters in this volume 
have presented a rich array of empirical data, nuanced and specific to each geo-
ographical context, examining how the media represents the European Union 
and how this is translated into the images and perceptions held by citizens in 
Asia towards the EU. The aim of this chapter (and the following one by Natalia 
Chaban) is to highlight some of the broad themes that emerge through a com-
parative analysis. To what extent did the different Asian societies and media 
share similar perceptions of the EU? To what extent could regional differences

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3 Ibid., 258.
be identified? And, what factors helped differentiate “Asian” responses? The focus for comparison in this chapter is on two specific frames – the EU seen as a political actor and the EU seen as an economic actor. As the previous chapters have already hinted, the twentieth century belief that the EU was predominantly just a global economic player has to be modified: the EU’s twenty-first century political role is increasingly being reported and recognised and while not perhaps a “Giant”, Asia no longer disregards the EU for being a political “dwarf”.

Before turning to the findings, the EU’s economic and political development since the Maastricht Treaty needs to be explored in order to provide a relevant contextualisation for interpreting both the media and public perceptions. What, then, was the “reality” of the European Union’s formative years? First, while the European integration process celebrated turning fifty on the 25th March 2007, the European Union is a comparatively new construct as it was only legally recognised on 1st November 1993 with the final implementation of the Maastricht Treaty. Fifteen years is perhaps a short period to develop brand awareness, especially where the brand fails to convey a consistent image or gain wide audience appeal.

Maastricht – or to give it its official designation, the Treaty of European Union – does, however, mark substantive changes to Europe’s common economic and political competences even to the extent some may argue (and to the horror of the EU’s intergovernmentalist Member States) of laying the foundations for a future federal EU construction. The introduction of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) including the euro (building on the success of the Single European Market), the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the binding commitment to global development and poverty alleviation in the Treaty’s defining Articles all signalled a European ambition that went beyond past rhetoric and facilitated the emergence of a new enhanced EU global role. Matching these ambitions in some areas has been problematic, most notably in executing CFSP in the former-Yugoslavia and in Iraq, but these headline disappointments should not detract from the evident progress and impact the EU has come to exercise in foreign affairs. The EU together with the Member States provide over half of all development aid and the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals have now been incorporated into the EU’s own Development policy. The EU has matured from a state of political infancy into a recognised and needed political actor in the post-Soviet world. The fledgling euro has also confounded the early sceptics and within its first five years has appreciated some 30% against the US$ and is increasingly used as a foreign reserve currency (especially in Asia and the Middle-East). This new phenomenon coupled with the EU retaining its place as the world’s largest trader and finally addressing the vagaries of the Common Agricultural Policy for third countries, has consolidated the EU’s reputation as an economic powerhouse.
Developments since the turn of the millennium have further enhanced the EU’s international significance. First, the introduction of the “High Representative for CFSP” has considerably raised the EU’s external profile and the “single face” of Javier Solana has almost become emblematic of EU foreign policy. The launch of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has gone a long way to addressing the soft-power limitations of Europe’s previous foreign policy mechanism, European Political Cooperation. The ESDP mandate is to provide for autonomous action in both decision-making and in the means to act and as such appears to be at least a potential competitor with NATO. Within the first five years (2003-7) of operation, some sixteen ESDP missions have been deployed covering conflict and reconstruction missions as far afield as Aceh, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Palestinian Territories.\(^5\) The complementary developments of EU Battlegroups (currently numbering thirteen consisting of 1500 troops each), a common Defence Agency to enhance interoperability, a European Gendamerie, military policy-making structures the “2010 Headline Goals” as well as the EU’s formal Security Strategy Paper, have all considerably added to the EU’s international standing. While still bound by the rule of law, effective multilateralism and a respect for international institutions, the EU of the twenty-first century has developed into a credible international actor, albeit one that rejects unilateralism and seeks consensus and compromise rather than confrontation.

While it would be foolhardy to suggest that in any sense is the EU a military superpower, it can perhaps claim that moniker in terms of its development policy and trading prowess. Whether this new reality is reflected in the media or has penetrated public and elite opinion has been the focus of this volume. In the following section some of the comparative themes that are evident in the six individual case-studies discussed in Chapters 4–9 are highlighted and it is to this data that the chapter now turns.

### Comparative Results

#### The Media\(^6\)

First, the dataset involving the six media studies is presented in Table 1 listing the newspapers and television channels monitored in the analysis in this collected volume. The first item in each case is a popular newspaper with the largest public circulation; the second newspaper listed is the leading business

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\(^5\) For full details see: www.ISS.Europa.eu.

\(^6\) All the data presented in this collection is from the ESiA research project. The full datasets can be made available to ASEF partners on request.
newspaper; and the third item is an English language newspaper printed daily in each area (largely read by elites); and finally the most popular prime-time news broadcast television station in each country is given.

Table 1: 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2006 Press and Television News Monitored in Six Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>China</th>
<th>People’s Daily</th>
<th>International Finance News</th>
<th>China Daily</th>
<th>CCTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Oriental Daily</td>
<td>Hong Kong Economic Journal</td>
<td>South China Morning Post</td>
<td>TVB Jade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan*</td>
<td>Yomiuri Shim bun</td>
<td>Nihon Keizai Shim bun</td>
<td>The Japan Times</td>
<td>NHK News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Lienhe Zaobao</td>
<td>Business Times</td>
<td>Strait Times</td>
<td>Channel 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Chosun Daily</td>
<td>Maeil Business</td>
<td>Korea Herald</td>
<td>KBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Thai Rath</td>
<td>The Manager</td>
<td>Bangkok Post</td>
<td>ITV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 presents the overall findings for the twelve months of 2006 across five Asian locations: data presented here only covers the second half of 2006 for Japan. During this period there were a total 8,534 articles or news reports where the EU was mentioned either as a minor factor or major element. Given this figure represents a 365 day period multiplied by twenty-four media outlets, the extent of EU coverage appears remarkably limited overall. The most striking finding is given in column one, television. Less than one item a day involving the EU appeared on all of the six prime-time news broadcasts in 2006. Not only is the EU virtually invisible on the Asian television News, the data where it exits, is dominated by China with 148 News items –more than 60% of the sample and equivalent to the EU featuring on prime-time Chinese television roughly three times a week. Elsewhere on Asian prime-time television the EU was never mentioned more than three times month! The levels of EU coverage in the popular press were at comparatively similar, if low, levels for China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Japan, with under an average of two items a day appearing in these most widely read papers – People’s Daily, Oriental Daily, Lienhe Zaobao, Chosun Daily and Yomiuri Shim bun. In contrast, most notable in Thailand the popular press rarely covered the EU. Consequently, for citizens who rely predominantly on television news and the popular press across Thailand, Korea, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong, finding information on the EU is generally difficult with a significant number of people likely to have at best just a passing and obscure understanding of the importance of the EU internationally.

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7 The data for Japan only covers the printed media for the period 1st July – 31st December 2006. An asterisk (*) is used in all the following tables to denote this difference in the Japanese data.

8 The sample period for prime-time television news broadcasts only covered eleven months – from February to December 2006.
Table 2: Overall Distribution of EU News Items across Six Media Outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Popular</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>2170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan*</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>2422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we assume that each county’s influential elites are also likely to be high consumers of both English language and Business newspapers, then arguably a more reassuring conclusion may be drawn. However, the overwhelming level of EU reporting in Thailand’s English-language *The Bangkok Post* (representing 70.7% of all EU news in Thailand) also suggests that such readerships may well be expatriate rather than local in nature. Remarkably, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* reported more than half of all EU news in Japan (by far for greatest percentage of all EU stories reported for each location), followed by the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* with coverage in China and Singapore accounting for around one-quarter of all EU news in each country respectively. Overall, the modest level of reporting raises serious issues about the EU’s visibility and identity in Asia: if newspapers are still important for conveying international news images (and in technologically advanced societies this may not be the case for much longer), it is hard to be secure in concluding that the EU has an undisputed and transparent presence. Opaque may be a better description. However, if people prefer to access television for international news, the conclusion is even less sanguine with significant public diplomacy implications. Other than in China, not only was the EU rarely seen on prime-time news, press coverage was significantly lower (especially in the case of Thailand and South Korea).

The analysis in this chapter considers just two comparative aspects of this wider dataset – the presence of the EU as both a political and as an economic actor as presented in the media across the six locations. The following chapter focuses on the social and environmental nature of the EU’s actions. Together, such a focus can provide an initial estimate of the broad public exposure and awareness of the EU among Asian citizens. Table 3 provides the complete dataset from the six locations and all media outlets. The overwhelming description of the EU used in the Asian media surveyed characterises the EU in either economic (46%) or political (35%) terms, but with growing evidence of a more nuanced EU global role as both a social and environmental reference point. While the economic importance of the EU is hardly surprising, the emergence of the EU as
a recognised political actor is an interesting development: the traditional criticism of the EU suffering from an “expectations-capability gap” in its international relations may need to be rethought.9

Table 3: Overall Distribution of Frames across all Media Outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>1154</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>2161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan*</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3327</td>
<td>4368</td>
<td>1464</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>9502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                | 35%       | 46%      | 15%    | 4%          | 100%  |

1. The EU as a Political Actor

As shown in Table 3 depictions of the EU as a political actor were commonly found in all of the six locations, although Thailand was unique in this being the dominant frame (although these 431 news items were largely reflected through the English-language press as noted above); elsewhere the economic frame was the main focus of EU reporting. South Korea recorded the lowest level of political news both in absolute terms (213 items) and as a percentage of all EU news stories (22.8%).

A closer examination of those reports where Europe was presented as a political actor unearths a significant common perspective: around three-quarters of these news items related to an external view of the EU in the world compared with one-quarter focused on internal European questions. This emphasis was particular clear for China where 84% of reports involving the EU as a political actor were externally focussed (Table 4).

This similarity found across the different Asian contexts extended to the dominant EU international involvements that were reported. In general, while these topics obviously reflect the international events of 2006, it is noteworthy that the EU is now being presented in the Asian media as an international political actor. Some 57% all such external political news stories across the region concerned just three EU actions: the EU’s intervention in the Iran nuclear issue (686 items), involvement in the Middle-East (407) and EU-China relations (349

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stories). There was a clear pattern of priority among the media in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand as illustrated in Table 5. For Hong Kong, Thailand and China over 30% of their coverage of the EU’s external actions were related to items on Iran (with Singapore at 25%). For the Middle-East, coverage in Singapore (21%) and Thailand (23%) outstripped the others and not surprising EU-China relations were most frequently covered by the Chinese mainland and SAR media (26.4% and 15.5% respectively).

Table 4: The EU as a Political Actor: Internal and External Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Ratio %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan*</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>2521</td>
<td>3327</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South Korea, and Japan to a lesser degree, were exceptions to this topical consensus. Rather than Iran, South Korea’s nuclear concerns were understandably focused much closer to home and the EU’s mediation in this issue was the second most widely covered story involving EU foreign affairs. Interestingly, EU-China relations were a topic widely ignored by the Korean media (just 5 items out of 172 identified in the external political frame) while attention to EU policy towards the Middle-East was the most commonly cited news topic (34 items). South Korea and Japan shared a preference for discussing the EU in conjunction with the USA, a perspective largely missing elsewhere and reflective of their closer American foreign policy ties.

Turning to the smaller of the two political frames – those stories internal to the EU itself – the leading theme common to the six locations was EU enlargement (which represented one-in-five of the 806 intra-EU political news items analysed). There were two distinct groups camouflaged by this average figure: over one-third of the internal EU political news items in both South Korea and Singapore were about enlargement; coverage of this issue in Hong Kong, Thailand and Japan, however, was closer to just one-in-ten. And when the Asian media reported on enlargement, the focus was not on the 2004 process, or on Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, but generally about Turkey!

10 This data has been modified from that used in the chapter on Japan which recorded a 68%–32% internal/external split.
Table 5: Ranking of Leading External Political News Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>No. 1 (n)</th>
<th>No. 2</th>
<th>No. 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Iran (208)</td>
<td>EU-C (182)</td>
<td>M.E. (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Iran (107)</td>
<td>EU-C (53)</td>
<td>M.E. (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan*</td>
<td>Iran (68)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>EU-C (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Iran (186)</td>
<td>M.E. (153)</td>
<td>EU-C (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>M.E. (34)</td>
<td>N. Korea</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Iran (98)</td>
<td>M.E. (73)</td>
<td>China (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Leading topics</td>
<td>Iran 686</td>
<td>M.E. 407</td>
<td>China 349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In support of the media emphasis of the EU as a political actor in other parts of the world, it was not surprising (albeit a relief to those still trying to construct a single EU international personality) that in all regions the dominant political face of the EU was Javier Solana, the High Representative for CFSP: interestingly, the EU presidency rarely featured and in Japan it was the European Central Bank that was the most widely cited EU actor. More positively, the press is now comfortable in using the acronym EU without any explanation that this refers to the “European Union”, putting Europe on par with the commonly accepted substitution of “USA” for the United States of America, for example. This may sound like a trivial point, but the fact that the term “EU” has been accepted as a self-explicit acronym is indicative of a wide-spread public awareness. No longer is the EU confused with either trade unions or insurance unions! Interestingly too, in the media the term EU3 (France, UK and Germany) is often taken as synonymous with speaking for the EU (a reflection perhaps of the 2006 interaction with Iran, where it was the EU3, not the EU presidency Troika that lead).

However, this potentially reassuring response to Henry Kissinger’s now 35 year-old question “who speaks for Europe?” has to be somewhat moderated by the continuing presence of key Member States (the EU3) within news reports about the EU’s international political character. While theoretically it might be sustainable to argue that this Janus quality to the EU’s international image is an accurate reflection of institutional and treaty realities, it does nothing to clarify or promote the EU as a single actor in the eyes of the Asian media.

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11 The much cited reference to Henry Kissinger’s complaint about foreign policy under the European Political Cooperation procedure of the early 1970s remains a useful shorthand for criticising the EU’s multiple personalities in external political relations.
2. The EU as an Economic Actor

While the emergence of the EU as a global political actor in the Asian media is a welcome sign of multidimensionality in EU news reporting, as noted already, traditional perceptions have not waned totally, with the EU still presented as primarily an economic actor in almost half (46%) of all EU news reports in 2006. Table 3 provided the geographical breakdown revealing comparatively modest variations. While Japan (53.4%) and South Korea (51.7%) had the highest volume of EU economic stories, last placed Thailand still had a high level of coverage (39.6%) of the EU as an economic player in its EU news items. This general preoccupation with the EU as a mercantilist entity matches the trading realities for all our analysed locations. At worst, the EU is a country’s fourth most important trade partner (Thailand) and at best first (China) for both imports and exports. To what extent, then, do the Asian media reflect these general trends in its coverage of the EU?

First, an obvious but important observation: in each of the individual media studies (television, popular, English-language and business press), the business press recorded the highest volume of EU items with an economic focus. While this was most dramatically the case for Singapore and for China, the average for all six business papers was a remarkably high level of around 70%. Here the regional similarity ends, however: in three cases the English-language press are in second place (*China Daily*, *The Japan Times* and *Bangkok Post*), in Hong Kong it is the popular newspaper *Oriental Daily*, whereas television was the second most important source of EU economic news stories in South Korea and Singapore (albeit these two are based on a particularly small number of news bulletins).

Within the dataset two separate economic themes are clearly apparent: the EU as a trading partner and the EU in relation to business and finance (see Table 6 for details). These two topics combined accounted for around half (Korea) and over three-quarters (Thailand and Hong Kong) of all news stories on the EU as an economic actor. Under the heading of “Trade”, the issues discussed in relation to the EU covered bilateral trading issues, the WTO Doha Round, anti-dumping duties, Free Trade Areas and trade protection. For example, in Thailand the majority of all *Thai Rath* stories (the most widely read Thai popular daily paper) that framed Europe as an economic actor dealt with trade restrictions or anti-dumping measures that the European Union had imposed on Thai exports.

News reports on the euro, European interest rates, merger regulation and competition rules, foreign direct investment and taxation predominated the “Business and Finance” category. Within these topics there was a diversity of positive stories (trade surpluses, strong economy, economic cooperation) and negative ones (trade restrictions, lack of progress at Doha, energy crises, problems with the European economy) presented. From a European perspective what is quite
remarkable is the striking disinterest in the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a topic which is something of a media favourite (critically) within the European media. Even in Thailand which has experienced a series of agricultural disputes with the EU, this subject only accounted for 6% of the coverage of the EU as an economic player. In contrast to consistent Eurobaromètre findings on European attitudes, for Asia, the CAP seems no longer newsworthy.

**Table 6:** The EU as an Economic Actor – the Most Visible Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Business/Finance</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>State of Economy</th>
<th>Agri-culture</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The face of Europe in economic affairs was less clear-cut than that for the political arena where Mr. Solana – representing the Council – dominated. The media used both the Governor of the European Central Bank (ECB) (Jean-Claude Trichet) and the Commissioner for Trade (Peter Mandelson) to symbolise the EU as an economic entity (and thereby extended the institutional complexity and opaqueness of the EU). Consequently, both the ECB and DG Trade were the leading institutional bodies mentioned in these news reports, with the more usual addition of the European Parliament appearing through its Community budget oversight responsibilities. The terms “euro” and “euro-zone” were regularly used to complement EU brand awareness. However, once again these common EU symbols were in conflict with the ever-present Member State presence: just as found in the analysis of the political frame, France, the UK and Germany were frequently used to moderate the EU’s collective economic message.

The use of metaphors within the economic frame revealed different categories being used across the twenty-four media outlets and the five languages involved. Examples covered metaphors from the natural world, from transport and of movement. However, the most prevalent metaphor related to the human body, actions and emotions. The EU was typically described as either in “sickness”, “death” or paradoxically in “revival”; emotionally the EU was often seen to be disappointed, worrying or even in grief, although images of “pleasure” and “optimism” were also to be found. But in the area of human action metaphors, the dominant language was less ambivalent: in such metaphors the EU was general described as “at war”, “under pressure”, “challenged”, “tension” with the process
of economic and monetary integration viewed as a “game” and a “gamble”. Metaphors do matter when individuals are interpreting complex messages, but their appealing simplifications may deceive as well as illuminate.

To summarise, the media in the Asian region surveyed – the six television prime-time news broadcasts, the popular, business and English-language newspapers – published or broadcast 8,534 EU news items over one year demonstrating that coverage of the EU is unquestionably modest. Where the EU was reported, it was predominantly described as Europe as an economic global power and as an external actor elsewhere in the world and not as necessarily locally relevant to bilateral issues in the region. While the television and press marginally favoured describing the EU in economic terms, the comparative closeness of the findings for two frames (politics and economics) was striking and demonstrated that the EU is no longer presented as a monolithic bloc but its different roles are beginning to become effectively differentiated by the media. The EU’s economic prowess is still recognised, but this is now balanced by recognition of an active emerging political international role, even when that role is with a third country elsewhere. Against these common themes regional differentiations were also evident with mainland China the most noteworthy case given its distinctive coverage of the EU on the television media.

So, if the EU is largely peripheral in the media is that necessarily problematic? There are certainly risks that can be associated with inaccurate or inappropriate perceptions generated through the media. The data suggest that there is a potential expectations deficit: if the EU is not given prominence and its role in the region under-reported, reduced expectations of Europe’s involvement may be an inevitable consequence. A self-fulfilling logic – lower demands leading to reduced media interest leading to lower demands – could ensue. Given that the EU is a significant economic partner for all the regions covered in this research and has growing political and security relationships, misperceptions based on media choices pose significant policy challenges, such as a possible under-valuing of the EU-ASEAN/ASEM12 relationship and an over-valuing of say EU-MERCUSOR or EU-India relations.13 Any such downgrading runs the risk

12 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.

13 The ASEM process seems to have been largely ignored by the Asian media: of the 4300 EU stories identified in the survey’s media outlets over the first six months of 2006, there were only 21 items that mentioned ASEM specifically. This figure was boosted somewhat after the holding of the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki September 2006 (see chapter 10).
of missed opportunities for both the EU and Asia. While under-reported, the positive development unearthed by the findings is the emerging perception of an EU that is more economically and politically balanced: Europe’s image is no longer just that of Fortress Europe; rather the EU as an international, hopefully benign, international actor is being observed and reported more often and more accurately. Provided that this media trend continues (and the EU’s global role continues to expand) new opportunities for matching Asian needs and objectives with what the EU might be in a position to provide are possible.

So what then do the citizens of China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand think about the EU? Does the low level of EU coverage distort perceptions? How is the EU seen through the eyes of Asians – if seen at all?

Public Opinion

Cultural assumptions – especially those imported from Europe – are to be avoided when assessing public opinion: civil society, the ideal “civic culture” and democratic expectations taken for granted in Europe do not necessarily travel well. Indeed, the very notion of “public opinion” is a Western invention based around an informed, literate and globalised citizenship presumed to be an essential democratic attribute. In newly industrialised societies, democratic values are recent transplants and literacy levels while rising are still incomplete. Importantly, individuals in such Asian societies often tend to identify more strongly with their local identity and political context than with the State let alone the external world. From the Berlaymont Building on Rue de Loi in Brussels the EU may appear a Colossus striding the world: in Seoul, Bangkok or Shanghai public opinion might be more concerned with events closer to home. Consequently, participants were asked to give an indication of how often they accessed international news and their preferred media. Before examining these findings a methodological note is necessary: the relatively small sample size (total n=2,400) means that the survey results from this project need to be interpreted only as indicative of general trends and certainly no direct causality between media effects and public opinion are being drawn.

Bearing in mind that these 2,400 respondent all participated in the survey online and therefore would have an unimpaired technological access to foreign news, the results were quite surprising. In none of our target countries did half of the respondents access international news on a daily basis; when “daily” and “several times a week” were combined into a composite score then at least over

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14 The surveys used stratified online panels (n=400) conducted in November 2006. See the Methodology section for further details.

70% of surveyed mainland Chinese, South Koreans, Thais and those from Hong Kong achieved a reasonably regular level of awareness of foreign news. Conversely, 22% of our Japanese sample and 20% of those from Singapore admitted to virtually never accessing foreign news! The preferred news medium for accessing international news at least confirmed the methodological assumptions underpinning this research: namely that the television and newspapers remain the primary sources for individuals to learn about foreign affairs. A minimum of 95% of respondents across all six surveys listed prime-time television news with a similar response level in all areas with the exception of Japan where the figure fell to 78%. The data do reveal two unexpected findings: first, the continuing relative importance of radio for foreign news delivery (used by around one-in-four respondents in China, Hong Kong and Singapore); second, the growing use of the internet. These figures, however, may well over-represent this phenomenon given that the survey was itself conducted online through the internet and may therefore have biased the sample on this specific variable.

### Table 7: Regularity of Accessing Foreign News (% of Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Several days a week</th>
<th>Combined (&quot;regular&quot;)</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Rarely/Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: Preferred Media for Accessing Foreign News (% of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TV News</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>TV Programmes</th>
<th>Radio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turning to the perceptions of the EU held by the sample, an estimation of the actual importance of the EU to each country was investigated. As noted above, the EU is among the top four economic partners for all of our six selected areas. Table 9 provides the summation of perceptions of the EU’s comparative bilateral
importance. Remarkably, only respondents in China had an accurate perception of the importance of the EU to their own country with the Japanese and Singaporeans undervaluing the role of the EU the most dramatically (placing the EU as only the sixth most important partner). A possible explanation here is the comparatively high profile of the EU on CCTV1 influencing perceptions (as well as China’s official pro-EU policy). When current and future primary partners were investigated, Japan was the exceptional case: for Tokyo, the importance of the USA remained constant (ranked first now and in the future); in contrast, while mainland Chinese respondents also considered the USA China’s most important current partner, America was replaced by the EU in the future scenario. For all other locations in the survey, the growing importance of China was clearly visible in the respondent’s perception and expectations.

Table 9: Perceptions of the Most Important Foreign Partners: now/ in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Perception 1st Place</th>
<th>EU rank Perception</th>
<th>In Future 1st Place</th>
<th>EU rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting the accuracy of the respondent’s ranking of the EU to one side, when asked what were the most important issues to be kept in mind in bilateral official relations with the EU there was clear priority given to trade in the majority of areas with over half of Thai respondents identifying this as the priority with between one-quarter and one-third ranking trade similarly highly in China, Hong Kong and South Korea (Figure 1). Once again the odd-man-out was Japan with just one in ten regarding trade as Japan’s priority with the EU. This dichotomy was reinforced by the second most popular response to this question across all six locations ("the economy"): just one in ten Japanese respondents again rated this as an important aspect in relations with the EU, while between 15–22% of respondents gave priority to this bilateral issue in all other surveys. This exceptionalism, or at least the inverse finding, is further underlined in Figure 2: only Japanese respondents placed a significant priority in political aspect of the bilateral EU relationship confirming, perhaps, the often widely assumed self-image Japan conveys as being a privileged EU dialogue partner pre-dating the ASEM process. Conversely, for Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Thailand the EU relationship was clearly apolitical.
Irrespective of this perceptions and reality mismatch, a minimum of 85% of all survey respondents thought that their country’s relationship with the EU was positive (either “improving” or “steady”). Within this overall similarity there were some antagonistic trends displayed: in Japan (again) just 11% and in Hong Kong 14% described the relationship with the EU as “improving” while in Thailand 7% stated that bilateral ties were worsening (once again reflecting the agricultural trade embargoes imposed by the EU in 2006).

The measure of public perceptions that produced arguably the most interesting and distinctive comparative findings related to the mental images respon-
Assuming Superpower Status?

dents had to the notion or concept “the European Union”. As reported in the country-specific chapters four clear themes emerged (three positive towards the EU, one negative) when respondents were asked “When thinking about the European Union, what three images spring to mind?” As shown in Table 10, the common currency, the euro, has clearly stamped its identity on Asian citizens as the leading symbol representing the EU. It is, in a sense, the “face” of a single Europe. While no doubt the architects of Economic and Monetary Union will rejoice in this now wide-spread recognition of the euro, as an accurate image of the EU27 it is both confusing as well as indicative of a powerful cognitive impact. At the time of the survey the euro-zone consisted of just twelve of the then twenty-five Member States (although the Maastricht Treaty does make future participation obligatory for all members other than those with a 1992 negotiated “opt-out” clause). Thus the symbol of the collective EU27 in reality only represents less than half of the current member States. The power of this image, though, was significant and it was the most commonly cited “EU image” in China, Hong Kong and Japan, and the second most in South Korea and Singapore: only in Thailand was mention of the euro comparatively rare. The euro has undoubtedly helped to raise the profile of the EU and shape a benign international perception.

The second theme to emerge was also economic in nature: the role of the EU as a commercial power. This perspective was most evident in Thailand where “economic power” and “trade” were the second and third most used images. However, it is interesting to note the weaker association with Europe’s economic prowess compared with the dominance of the euro image and to underline that the old image of “Fortress Europe” was rarely in evidence.

A third image that emerged suggested a positive political perspective. In every case the values and virtues of the process of European integration – be that preventing war, creating multiculturalism or enhanced prosperity – were among the top three most cited EU images (and in Singapore and Korea this was the dominant image articulated). It is both insightful as well as sobering to reflect on this Asian perception of the contribution made by the integration process especially if one were to contrast this with the more stereotyped Eurobarometre Member State findings that too often emphasise the negative impact of the EU rather than extol its original ambitions and successes. It would appear that the EU looks much more successful and worthwhile from afar than it does from within.

The final theme draws us back to the split personality of the EU and the enduring impact of the nation state. Other than in China, respondents also conceptualised the image of the EU through individual countries with this mediating lens most pronounced in Thailand. If we combine Thailand’s three other economic-based images to this perspective, it would appear that Bangkok has the more pragmatic view of the EU and the least idealistic one. Looking at all
six locations, however, arguably, this combination of an awareness of “common” EU images as well as recognition of Europe as a conglomerate of individual countries is a realistic and balanced assessment of the current nature of European integration. Encouragingly, however, the positive common themes were more pronounced than those images that emphasised European diversity over unity.

**Table 10: Survey Respondents “Dominant Images” of the EU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>euro</td>
<td>Enlargement/ internal</td>
<td>European union, integration</td>
<td>Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>euro</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>European union, integration</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>euro</td>
<td>European union, integration</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
<td>Disparities/ unfairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>European union, integration</td>
<td>euro</td>
<td>Economic power</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>European union, integration</td>
<td>euro</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
<td>Exceptionalism/ problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
<td>Economic power</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>euro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Elites**

Generalisations are harder to delineate from the six different elite studies partly because the information was collected through face-to-face interviews that leant themselves to discursive comments and a wider utilisation of open-ended responses in contrast to the more structured online public opinion surveys. In addition, the size (a total of 154 interviews) and the selected nature of the sample only permits broad conclusions to be suggested given the local diversity of the political/ government, media, business and civil society elites questioned. The findings from the public opinion surveys as well as the focus on economic and political issues in the press would suggest that it is these issues – rather than social or environmental concerns – that would dominate across all of the selected Asian elite representatives. To what extent was this indeed the case?

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16 Thirty-two interviews across the four elite sectors were conducted in each of three locations (Hong Kong, Singapore and China); twenty-seven were completed in S. Korea, twenty-six in Japan but only five in Thailand. The Thai figure was a consequence of the political turmoil created by the military coup during which period the interviews were to be conducted. Cumulatively, forty-two political elite interviews were conducted, thirty-eight media interviews while thirty-seven civil society and thirty-seven business sector interviews were completed.
Distinguishing between the EU as an international economic presence and its global political role produced some clear patterns across our selected elites. In terms of Europe’s trade and economic relations, an Asian elite consensus was clear. Significant majorities of the Singaporean, South Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Hong Kong elite samples referred to the EU as a great economic power. In terms of bilateral priorities China’s business, civil, media and political elite were adamant that economic relations overshadowed all else: the topics cited were familiar – the ongoing arms ban, anti-dumping and the value of the Yuan. And in Japan only one interview disagreed with the view that the EU constituted an economic “great power”.

In contrast to this common view, Asian perspectives of Europe’s international relations were more nuanced. In Hong Kong, the new political authority of the EU was embraced by under one-quarter of those sampled, while in Singapore it was only the interviewed political elite who were sympathetic to this emerging international EU role. The data on Japan gives the most sophisticated interpretation: three-quarters of their elite affirmed that the EU played a political leadership role while distinguishing between the EU as a strong normative power with some diplomatic influence, yet with constrained military capacity. In general, when the issue of military capability and effective involvement in international relations was raised the EU compared poorly, especially when matched against the USA. As concluded earlier in this volume for the Hong Kong elite “EU economic power is strongly endorsed while its political and military powers are questioned”; Singapore’s elite insisted that the EU “lacks political power” and “is too diverse to be a military power” with the EU seen at best as a “broker” rather than a leader; for Koreans, the EU “is a great power in terms of economy, diplomacy, and norms but that is not the case in political and military terms”; and in China the EU was perceived “to be a significant source of power and influence, but not necessarily as a leader in the global political arena. In this regard, the EU might be considered just one great power among many in the multi-polar world.”

Following on from the consensus on the EU’s economic profile within Asia, the elite findings on the EU’s regional importance were all broadly similar and presented an overall perspective that saw the EU as one of many players impacting on their society (China, Russia, Japan and the USA were also mentioned), with Japan evaluating the relationship with the EU the lowest comparatively. There were differences, however, in assessments of the long-term relevance of the EU. While in Hong Kong all elites saw the EU modestly growing in importance (from 3.5 to 3.7 on a five-point scale) with the EU’s future role most highly ranked by government and civil society, in Singapore the EU was seen as diminishing in importance in the future: in Thailand the question was

17 Quotations taken from the volume’s individual country chapters.
clouded by the issue of the Kingdom’s own democratic prospects. However, the perceived economic dominance in the EU relationship was also criticised by Hong Kong elites who wanted greater cooperation and exchanges in areas beside economic. Conversely, Singapore’s elite were primarily focused around prospects for an EU free trade agreement (FTA). Interestingly, while China’s elites were less “starry-eyed” about the future importance of the EU to China than the public survey, the EU was clearly identified as an important long-term relationship. Further, all Chinese elite sectors saw this importance increasing in the future to very high levels not found in any other elite survey (ranging between 4.3 and 4.75 on a five-point scale). The position of South Korean elites was towards the extreme end of the multi-polar perspective and reflected the peninsula’s geo-strategic context, very low level of past engagement balanced against the on-going EU FTA discussions. The EU’s potential as a mediator with North Korea was cited as a unique aspect of the importance of Europe among South Korea’s elite. Like their Hong Kong counterparts, Korean elites also saw the EU relationship moderately strengthening in the future. Although the EU looks destined to remain an important player in Japan’s vision of their future interests, there was a paradoxical elite belief that while the major future issues related to economic and environmental concerns, these concerns were generally couched within mutually ambivalent disinterest.

Turning from the level of generality to specificity, a common element across the elite interviews concerned Europe’s public diplomacy and communication strategies. In a majority of locations, the role of the European Commission Delegation Office was assessed as widely unknown outside trade circles, a theme also found in other studies of the EU's external representation in the region. Asian elites remain fixated on national European embassies or Chambers of Commerce as the better points of contact. The commentary on Japan best describe the general analysis within the region: no Japanese elites “could envision, or indeed currently had, beneficial contact with the EU body. The business elites were even less constructive in their responses, as many of them had never heard of the Delegation, and those that had could see little scope for constructive interaction between their organisations and the Delegation”.19

The elites were also asked to comment on two specific EU topics: the Euro and the impact of EU enlargement. In Singapore and South Korea (and to a lesser degree in Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand), the euro was viewed as a significant international currency, although a large proportion still regarded the US$ as the stronger and preferred international currency. While there was some diversi-

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18 See for example, earlier studies of Australia and New Zealand undertaken by the National Centre for Research on Europe (www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz).
19 See Chapter 6 in this volume for a fuller discussion of this perspective.
Assuming Superpower Status?

Throughout the elite sectors in China, the overall view was again supportive of the euro’s international role and prospects. Remarkably, Chinese and Hong Kong elites were virtual unanimous in their belief that EU enlargement did not present any significant risks to their economies, even if the consequences of Eastern enlargement were seen very much as a two-edged sword both in political and economic terms. Elites in South Korea and Japan were perhaps more realistic in perceiving competitiveness risks as well as potential economic openings through enlargement. Given the major economic impact that both these issues potentially have – reforming the current international currency status quo and enhancing the EU’s position as the leading global trader – the phlegmatic approach of Asia’s elite was surprising. It will be interesting to revisit these perceptions say in a decade when some of the longer-term ramifications may have become more apparent.

To conclude this comparative overview of elite perceptions, the elites were asked the same question as that given in the public survey: what images come to mind when you think of the EU? The Chinese and Hong Kong elites paralleled to a degree their public’s perceptions by listing the euro and the example of positive integration as key mental reference points. In China there were also strong images related to the EU’s economic prowess. Korea also conformed to the dominance of the Euro, while those in Singapore departed from this otherwise pervasive image of the Euro found elsewhere (as well as differed from Singaporean public opinion in this respect): for them the EU was a balance between an example of integration and representing economic power and the recognition of national diversities undermining a single perspective. Uniquely in Hong Kong and South Korea, the EU flag was also mentioned (adding an interesting addendum to the controversial axing of this symbol from the revised Reform Treaty currently under debate in Europe).

The profile of elite opinion is in parts compatible with the public opinion findings, and in parts distinct. Broadly, the elites appear less enamoured with the EU’s political persona and more focused on economic realities. As such their opinions are to some extent inconsistent with the new media projection of the EU as a balanced political and economic power. But as acknowledged earlier in this chapter, the qualitative nature of these elite perceptions while rich, are not quantitatively significant and should be treated as highlighted themes rather than empirical proofs. Taken in conjunction with the media and public opinion evidence, cumulatively the comparative analyses presented here paint a compelling portrait of how Asia perceives and interprets the European Union in economic and political terms. While these are the dominant frames in all six studies, the broader analysis has also indicated that the EU is increasing being viewed as a more diverse and multi-faceted actor and it is this wider theme that the following chapter address in its analysis of Europe’s image as a social and environmental actor.
CHAPTER 10

Natalia Chaban

Connecting People and Saving the Planet?
Images of the EU as a Social and Environmental Actor in Asian Media and Public Discourses

This chapter analyses images of the European Union (EU) constructed by the Asian public discourses of news media and the general public. In particular, it focuses on the meanings assigned to the EU as an actor in the field of social affairs and environmental protection. News topics related to human interests (and social and environmental news is believed to belong to this category) are expected to appeal to audiences around the world. In addition, the EU's global reputation as an 'adopter' and a 'trendsetter' of progressive and sophisticated social agendas is likely to raise the EU's profile in Asian news. Yet, this analysis observed that a peculiar media framing of EU social and environmental actions by the Asian newsmakers produces a rather distant, confusing and indifferent portrayal of the EU. Such imagery is argued to be counterproductive to an effective dialogue between the EU and Asia. Indeed, an invisible and dispersed media framing was observed to correlate to the general Asian public’s visions of the EU’s social and environmental roles (both inside and outside its borders).

The data for this paper are drawn from the findings of the trans-national comparative project ‘The EU through the Eyes of Asia’ – an inaugural study within the framework “European Studies in Asia” supported by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). This two-year project (2006-2007) aims to identify, measure and raise public awareness and extend knowledge of the EU within the public discourse of six Asian locations – Mainland China, SAR Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Japan and South Korea. This chapter explores images of the EU as a social and environmental actor being shaped by daily news.

1 The author would like to express her sincere gratitude to Ma Shaohua, University of Singapore, and Christian Schneider, National Centre for Research on Europe, New Zealand. The author would like to acknowledge their contribution to the data analysis in this chapter – Ma Shaohua significantly contributed to the analysis of the social frame, and Christian Schneider worked with the public opinion data.

2 The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focused on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations. http://asef.org.
coverage in eighteen newspapers and six television prime-time newscasts over twelve months in 2006. It also provides several systematic insights into the public opinion in its reflections of the EU’s social and environmental roles. This study employs an interdisciplinary approach incorporating intertextual critical discourse analysis into the EU studies in general, and the EU identity debate in particular. This multidisciplinary insight is contextualised within the studies of international political communication – a key area of inquiry for increasingly global Europe and Asia.

The boom in information technology means that more information about Europe is available in the Asia Pacific and vice versa, but greater information per se does not automatically lead to greater understanding. The quality of the information, to which more focused exchanges among media personnel can contribute, and the interpretation of that information are crucial.3

Introduction

The European Union’s (EU) fiftieth anniversary in 2007 marked one of the most important events in world contemporary history – a jubilee event for an unprecedented political entity which is sometimes referred to as a “co-operative empire”4 of 27 countries and 490 million people. A global economic powerhouse with ambitious political goals, the EU is currently argued to face some major deficiencies in its legitimation (both internal and external), stemming from democratic and communication shortcomings while dealing with its own citizens. Hypothesising the EU’s external communication deficit and addressing a lack of the comprehensive accounts of the EU’s external imagery, this chapter systematically surveys the EU’s images created and disseminated by the Asian media discourses, as well as the EU’s public perceptions, partially influenced by the mass media. This study views Asia as one of the EU’s ‘significant Others’.

Contrary to the trivial notion that, “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”,5 a number of key events and trends in the recent years continue to bring the EU ever-closer to the three sub-regions in Asia (East, South and South-East). Since 2004 (the year in which the current European Commission was appointed), the EU provided significant aid to fight the consequences of a devastating Asian tsunami. In association with ASEAN, the EU sent its peacekeeping troops to the Indonesian province of Aceh and participated in the

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5 Rudyard Kipling, The Ballad of East and West.
human rights debates surrounding situation in Myanmar (Burma). The EU also stepped into the negotiation process on the Korean peninsula reacting to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in North Korea. Finally, the EU participated in the two ASEM meetings, which happened in Hanoi (2004) and in Helsinki (2006). The EU’s growing political involvement with Asia has been balanced by a steady and substantial development of EU-Asia trade relations. The EU-27 is one of Asia’s largest trading and investing partners and a major source of tourists in the region. Undeniably, this ‘balancing act’ requires careful attention to attitudes and views on both sides as a pre-requisite for a consistent and effective communication between the EU and Asia.

While political and economic interactions between the EU and Asia have always been in the centre of practitioners’ and scholars’ attention, social and environmental concerns in the dialogue have remained secondary and relatively peripheral. To address the deficit of studies exploring political communication between Asia and the EU on social and environmental matters, this chapter aims to investigate images of the EU as a social and environmental actor in the public discourses of six Asian locations – Mainland China, SAR Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea.

The EU in Social and Environmental Contexts

The EU’s achievements in the social field are among the major successes of the European integration project that area recognised globally. Indeed, EU citizens enjoy some of the world’s highest living and social standards (including social and health benefits); the freedom to move freely within a borderless Europe; the realistic prospects of employment and economic stability due to the creation of a single market; and the guarantees of justice and security based on common values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, freedom and equality. The major modern legacies of a multicultural and multilingual Europe (and of its political ‘twin’, the EU) are its democratic understanding of human rights and its emphasis on the social and economic rights of its citizens.  

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6 The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. See: http://aseminfoboard.org.

European Commission, and specifically, the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, cites its mission in the social field as “the development of a modern, innovative and sustainable European Social Model with more and better jobs in an inclusive society based on equal opportunities”\(^8\), in order “to make Europe the world most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.”\(^9\)

Predictably, the EU’s internal social policies and practices attract an intense international interest. The EU’s numerous initiatives and policies in such areas as education, science, research, healthcare, culture, linguistic developments, welfare, and social legislation are considered to be either successful examples to follow or provocative issues triggering national debates outside the EU’s borders. Consider, for example, the EU’s push to abolish the death penalty, a pan-European debate about an issue of Invocatio Dei in the European Constitution, a European stance on sexual rights and gender equality, the ongoing modernisation of the EU’s labour relations, a pending reform of immigration regulations and attempts to counter discrimination. In addition to a set of its internal actions, the Union’s external social roles, such as an international human rights advocate and a leading development aid donor are also the subjects of a critical global attention.

The EU formulates its strategic environmental vision coming from the assumption that “economic, social and environment policies are closely integrated”:\(^10\)

Protecting the environment is essential for the quality of life of current and future generations. The challenge is to combine this with continuing economic growth in a way which is sustainable over the long term. European Union environment policy is based on the belief that high environmental standards stimulate innovation and business opportunities.\(^11\)

Facing a grave threat to the global environment posed by human activities, the EU has developed a set of effective policies and legislations, implemented numerous measures, supported innovative research and raised awareness of environmental problems among its citizens. The catalogue of the EU’s diverse internal measures and policies includes among others protecting nature, wildlife and biodiversity on the European peninsula; combating the effects of pollution and hazardous substances; controlling food safety and genetically-modified organi-

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\(^9\) Ibid.


\(^11\) Ibid.
sms; managing natural resources and tackling waste; supporting the efforts of
industry and business in environmental protection; and funding environmental
care.\textsuperscript{12} The most recent scientific evidence of the climate change with its nu-
merous human, environmental and economic impacts is also seriously considered by
the EU. Unsurprisingly, this vast spectrum of EU activities serves as a collection
of reference points and examples to follow for many international actors. In par-
ticular, the EU’s approaches towards tackling climate change and reducing green-
house gas emissions are closely scrutinised around the world. The combined
push of the EU-27 for shared international actions to curb the emissions and meet
the targets of the Kyoto protocol reverberates globally, eliciting a wide range of
reactions – from very supportive and positive to critical and rejecting. Arguably,
these ambivalent attitudes towards the EU’s environmental policies and measures
illustrate the role of the Union as one of the most important and decisive actors
in the modern current environmental debate on a worldwide level.

The EU’s official rhetoric highlights its self-vision of a world ‘champion’
of social and environmental affairs. Relevant research also highlights the EU’s
foreign policy new international ‘appeal’ – priorities assigned by the Union to
environmental issues, social affairs and developmental aid in its external rela-
tions are argued to be turning the EU into a “metrosexual power” attracting
global supporters.\textsuperscript{13} Does this vision correspond to the images of the Union hold
outside its borders? It was assumed that the international media has a key role in
informing the international general public and foreign elites on the evolutions
of the EU. With the EU being a new and relatively complex polity to understand,
representations of the Union as an actor in the social and environmental spheres
(acting both inside and outside the EU) were hypothesised to have the potential
for raising the EU’s profile around the world due to an obvious appeal of topics
related to ‘human interests’. To test this hypothesis, this study researched the
news media discourses of six Asian locations in their daily coverage of the EU
in 2006 – Mainland China, SAR Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Japan and
South Korea; and compared the leading media images with the dominant public
perceptions of the EU. The data for this research came from a trans-national
comparative project “The EU through the Eyes of Asia” launched within the
framework of the “European Studies in Asia (ESiA)” programme\textsuperscript{14} by the ASEF
in association with the National Centre for Research on Europe, University of
Canterbury in New Zealand.

\textsuperscript{12} European Commission, “Choices for a Greener Future: The European Union and the Envi-

\textsuperscript{13} Parag Khanna, “The Metrosexual Superpower”, \textit{Foreign Policy}, July/August, (2004), 67.

\textsuperscript{14} For more information, please visit, “European Studies in Asia”, http://esia.asef.org.
The Interaction of the EU’s Social and Environmental Agenda With Asia

The very first challenge for a study examining the EU’s social and environmental images in Asian public discourses is that ‘Asia’ is a concept of a huge generalisation. There is tremendous diversity within this global region, within its sub-regions, and even within the countries that form those sub-regions. In this sense, the number of Asian locations studied in this chapter seems to be relatively small to make ‘region-scale’ conclusions. Nevertheless, the choice of these six locations presents a significant number of unique cleavages justifying the comparison and the size of the sample. It is suggested that colonial, economic and political lines guide the discourses of EU-Asia interactions, as well as the imagery of the EU’s social and environmental achievements within those discourses.

Geo-politically, the EU’s dialogue with Asia follows three principle directions – its relations with East, South East and South Asia. Four of the locations in the sample of this study belong to the East Asian sub-region (Japan, South Korea, China and Hong Kong), and two to the South-East Asia (Singapore and Thailand). This geo-political positioning is important if we consider a pattern of European colonial legacies, which inevitably influence Asian (mis)perceptions of Europe (including its social and environmental practices). Historically, Japan and South Korea were never colonised by Europeans, and both featured prolonged periods of being insular from any foreign influence, including the European one. After World War II, both nations embarked on close and extensive relations with the USA, an interaction which has overshadowed the European presence in political, economic and even mass culture in the both countries ever since. In a different scenario, China was extensively exposed to European influences from the Middle Ages through trading contacts. With its coastal cities once being under European colonial rule and yet with the mainland remained mostly unaffected by the European presence, China is sometimes called a former “semi-colony”.¹⁵ In contrast, two city-state economies, Hong Kong and Singapore, were under the British colonial rule, thus featuring plenty of references in their everyday life to this peculiar link to Europe. Thailand seems to be a special case in the history of Europe’s presence in Asia. It was never colonised, but experienced significant influences by two European powers who ruled the neighbouring territories, namely, the British (who colonised Myanmar (Burma) and the French (who colonised Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia). Evidently, throughout the region, European colonial legacies can still be traced in “administrative and national boundaries, transport networks, parliamentary institutions, language and literature, science

¹⁵ Brian Bridges, *Europe and the Challenge of the Asia Pacific*. 
and technology and even sports and popular culture". A consideration for the European colonial legacies is argued to be crucial for any ‘EU perception’ studies in Asia. Insights into these legacies might explain some anti-European, Eurosceptic and nationalistic sentiments existing in the everyday Asian discourses. Undeniably, these sentiments partially affect the social and environmental images of the EU, which nowadays has become synonymous with ‘Europe’.

Economically, the six locations are different in terms of their economic prowess and might. Two of them, Japan and South Korea, are the members of the ‘wealthy club’ of the OECD, while the rest are not. Yet, despite some obvious disparities in the economic profiles, all six are sometimes seen to belong to a “conveyor belt of dynamic Asian economies”, representing several waves in Asia’s economic boom. Japan, an incontestable economic power, was the first Asian nation to become one of the world’s leaders in trading, investing and manufacturing. Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea were the fastest-growing economies in the region after the Japanese economy matured and slowed down on the border between the 1970s and 80s. The second wave of new ‘little dragons’ included, among others, Thailand in the early 1990s. The third generation included Mainland China in the first half of 1990s – currently, the world’s fastest growing economy. Spectacular economic growth of the six locations resulted in rapidly increasing standards of living for its citizens (see the leading demographic and macroeconomic indicators shown in Table 1). Arguably, there is a growing interest among the general public towards the European social and environmental practices and standards, which typically carry a label of being ‘developed’, ‘quality oriented’ and ‘wealthy’. It is suggested that with economic prosperity establishing in Asia, ‘rich’ Europe and the EU stop being only a remote point of reference in the Asian social and environmental discourses, and become a reality to which people in Asia can relate.

Undoubtedly, the waves of Asia’s economic developments influenced the EU’s visions in assigning priorities in its dealings with the region. Until 1990s, relations with Japan led the EU’s Asian strategy. But, most recently, the emphasis moved to the EU’s relations with China, now seen as “the mainspring of Europe’s Asia policy”. It is natural to suggest that these new accents in the EU’s economic dialogue with Asia will influence social and environmental themes in interactions between the two global regions.

17 Brian Bridges, Europe and the Challenge of the Asia Pacific, 49.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 92.
20 Ibid., 200.
Table 1: Macroeconomic Indicators for the Six Asian Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population*</th>
<th>Official per capita GDP, US Dollars**</th>
<th>GDP (official exchange rate):***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>127,433,494</td>
<td>$33,100</td>
<td>$4.883 trillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR Hong Kong</td>
<td>6,980,412</td>
<td>$37,300</td>
<td>$188.7 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>4,553,009</td>
<td>$31,400</td>
<td>$122.1 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>49,044,790</td>
<td>$24,500</td>
<td>$897.4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>65,068,149</td>
<td>$9,200</td>
<td>$197.7 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland China</td>
<td>1,321,851,888</td>
<td>$7,700</td>
<td>$2.518 trillion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* as of July 2007  
** as of 2006  
*** as of 2006

Politically, all six locations in this study feature varying political designs – a republic in South Korea, a constitutional monarchy in Japan and Thailand, a SAR in Hong Kong, an oligarchy in Singapore and a communist regime in Mainland China. Political affiliations and preferences undoubtedly shape the direction of the EU’s present day dialogue with these Asian localities. Several levels of political interaction include multilateral interactions inside international political and economic organisations (such as the United Nations or World Trade Organisation) and various international forums (dedicated to such issues as nuclear proliferation, security, human rights, environment, to name a few); interregional (e.g. ASEM or the EU dialogue with the ASEAN or ASEAN+3), bi-lateral (the EU dealings with the six Asian locations on an individual basis) and country-to-country level (EU Member States in their relations with individual Asian states).

At each level of official political dialogue there is a mutual effort to ensure that the social and environmental issues are addressed. A range of international agreements, stemming from the EU’s interactions with Asia in multilateral international organisations and forums, build a solid ground for interregional level of the dialogue. According to Gilson, these include the United Nations (UN) Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the 1993 Declaration of Vienna and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Eights, the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action for the fourth World Conference.

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on Women.\textsuperscript{22} The ASEM\textsuperscript{23} should be mentioned as a very special example of interregional dialogue. This informal dialogue process currently includes the European Commission, 25 EU Member States and 13 Asian countries. Its broad agenda includes an array of topics from “nuclear non-proliferations, the reform of the United Nations and environmental protection, to child welfare, alongside economic standardization and cultural exchanges.”\textsuperscript{24} Bi-lateral level features numerous activities of European Commission Delegations in each location from this study, such as an EU Day Festivals, EU Film Festivals, EU Journalistic Award, etc.). Finally, an interstate level gives numerous examples of the initiatives on behalf of the EU Member States’ embassies in the six Asian locations, as well as activities of the national cultural Institutes.\textsuperscript{25}

Political interactions also reveal the three key areas where the EU exercises the most of its influence in its interaction with Asia, namely, human rights, developmental aid and environmental protection. One of the most sensitive areas is the human rights dialogue. Indeed, traditionally seen as belonging to internal affair, an issue of human rights becomes particularly touchy when external interferences occur. Human rights issues are more prominent in the Sino-European political agenda, as well as in the EU dialogue with the ASEAN. In the former case, the EU’s images are undoubtedly influenced by two major events discussed by Bridges in his book – firstly, the EU’s reaction to the Tiananmen Square events; and secondly, a greater public interest on behalf of the Europeans in human rights after the collapse and democratisation of Eastern Europe,\textsuperscript{26} (with China belonging to the cohort of the socialist /communist states). According to Bridges, a current dialogue on human rights between the EU and China is led by the so-called ‘quiet diplomacy’ approach towards encouraging China to respect human rights norms. The latter case, which includes the EU’s human rights interactions with the ASEAN, specifically relates to Myanmar (Burma). The interactions with ASEAN (of which Thailand and Singapore are the members) are particularly sensitive, taking into account a conflict in the vision between the:

\textsuperscript{22} See Julie Gilson, \textit{Asia Meets Europe: Inter-Regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting}, Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, UK/Northampton, MA, USA, (2002), 109-110.
\textsuperscript{24} Julie Gilson, \textit{Asia Meets Europe}, 110.
\textsuperscript{25} For example, such organisations as the Goethe Institute, British Council, Alliance Frances, etc.
\textsuperscript{26} Julie Gilson, \textit{Asia Meets Europe}, 106-107, 170-171.
so-called ‘Asian’ view, with its emphasis on the ‘community’ and socio-economic development and social cohesion as the first priorities, in conflict with the ‘Western’ view, advocated by both the United States and Western Europe, which focuses on individual rights and liberal democracy.27

In the developmental field, out of the six Asian locations, only two are recipients of the EU’s developmental aid – China and Thailand. Developmental projects targeting China began in the mid 1980s and featured various projects of technical and financial assistance, yet still emphasising economic cooperation – human resources, economic and social reform, business and industrial reform and the environment.28 Among those, Bridges identified initiatives for cooperation in higher education (including promotion of European studies in China), managerial training programmes, and special seminars on intellectual property rights enforcement and village governance. In Thailand, the EU’s development aid came mostly in the form of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSPs) – a programme designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for targeted products.

Rapid economic progress in the six Asian locations in the second half of the 20th century have resulted not only in positive developments, such as an increase in the standards of living and national wealth growth, but also, regretfully, in numerous negative consequences for the environment, such as industrialisation, the extensive use of natural resources, urbanisations and increase in populations. These developments did not escape attention of the European environmental activists, whose ecological advocacy in the late 1980s-early 90s caused some tensions and conflicts between European and Asian counterparts.29 Bridges suggests that a modern-day constructive dialogue between the EU and the six Asian locations has been facilitated by an improved official dialogue (e.g. the EU’s Joint Declarations with Japan in 1991), by re-visiting development aid packages (e.g. introducing support to related to environment projects, such as saving the ASEAN region’s rain forests), and by joining efforts in a multinational treaty framework dealing with global warming and climate change.30 All locations in the study are signatories of the Kyoto protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a treaty which aims at tackling global warming, curbing greenhouse gas emissions and delaying climate changes. The European Commission, an individual entity on the list of signatories, commented on the Kyoto treaty, outlined the main lines of contact with its fellow signatories, including our six locations in Asia:

27 Ibid., 169
28 An interview with a European Commission official, June 1996, as cited in Brian Bridges, Europe and the Challenge of the Asia Pacific, 100.
29 Ibid., 179.
30 Ibid., 179-180.
The Protocol encourages governments to cooperate with one another, improve energy efficiency, reform the energy and transportation sectors, promote renewable forms of energy, phase out inappropriate fiscal measures and market imperfections, limit methane emissions from waste management and energy systems, and protect forests and other carbon ‘sinks’.\(^\text{31}\)

Even though each location in the study has its own unique set of environmental problems (e.g. Hong Kong suffers from air pollution, Japan grapples with aggressive urbanisation, etc.), their signature under the Kyoto international accord means that the six locations are aligned and communicating with the EU in an unprecedented network of international goodwill to save the planet.

This chapter aims to contribute to the visions of the EU’s dialogue with Asia, a dialogue which is argued to be one possible line of interactions within a ‘triangle’ of links between the three major global economies of North America/USA, EU/Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Unsurprisingly, ongoing interactions between Asia and Europe are currently led by economic themes (taking into account the plethora of economic powerhouses in the region of which Europe is increasingly aware of), followed by political topics. Yet, evidently, the EU’s social and environmental actions bring a growing share of content into this dialogue highlighting such themes as human rights, developmental aid and environment protection. In this light, what images of the EU’s social and environmental profile are seen as the most available to the Asian public via local mass media? What images surface in the general public opinion about the EU as a social and environmental actor? The EU’s efforts in areas of social justice, human rights, developmental aid and environment protection have sought the Union a world reputation of the ‘soft’, ‘normative’ power, able to exert global influence without ‘hard’ political means. When it comes to the EU’s social and environmental dialogue with Asia, how much of this vision is left in the images of the Union existing in the public discourses of the six Asian locations chosen for this study?

**Results**

This study argues that a peculiar framing of the EU as a social and environmental agent surfaced through the media reports in the twelve months of 2006 across the six Asian locations. Despite predictable differences between the individual cases in the fine-tuning of EU news content, eighteen reputable newspapers and five national television broadcasts monitored in this study presented a common specific vision of the EU in the field of social and environmental

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affairs, and this shared imagery of the EU brought forward some rather disconcerting results. The overall sample for this study accounted for 1,405 articles, which reported the EU in the social affairs context.\(^{32}\) 1,349 articles were located in the leading newspapers and fifty-six items were found on the prime-time television news. To enter the sample, the news story had to reference the ‘EU’ (or ‘European Union’) at least once, even briefly. The Asian news in the six locations featured the EU’s social and environmental actions as being relatively invisible and thus rather insignificant in the hierarchy of the EU’s activities; not focused; very often unrelated to the local Asian discourses and thus seemingly irrelevant; and, finally, not eliciting distinct emotions or attitudes from the local audiences. This study also observed that the views of the general public in the region de-emphasised and consistently overlooked the images of the EU as an ‘adopter’ and ‘influencer’ of one of the world’s most progressive and sophisticated social and environmental agendas. These conclusions are illustrated by the findings presented below.

Low Visibility of the Reports on the EU’s Social and Environmental Affairs

In 2006 – a so-called ‘regular’ year in life of the EU – the Asian news media in six locations devoted the majority of its attention to the EU as a significant economic power. Given strong trade links and the economic importance of the EU to the Asian region in general, such a result was unsurprising. News reports featuring the EU as an economic actor averaged 46% of the total EU coverage. It was more surprising, perhaps, that, proportionally, politically framed EU news did not lag significantly behind the economic coverage – accounting for around 38% of the total coverage on average across the six locations. This heightened visibility in the political domain could be partially attributed to the reportage of ASEM 6 Meeting in Helsinki in September 2006. In contrast to the economic and political frames, the EU’s representations as a social and environmental actor were significantly less visible for the regional news audiences – 14% on average in the former case and 3% on average in the latter (see Figure 1).

Proportionally-speaking, the South Korean news media paid the most attention to the EU’s representations as a social actor devoting 18% of its total coverage to social themes. Japan featured the least interest in the social topic with 6% of its total coverage. In the environmental frame, Hong Kong was a leader with a higher share of news representations – 7% of the reportage. News media in the other five locations devoted to this topic a meagre 2% or 3%.

\(^{32}\) The Japan sample included only six months of press monitoring (July-January 2006) and no television data.
Speaking in absolute numbers, Singapore, Hong Kong and Mainland China led the social news sample, featuring a higher number of news stories on a monthly average (Figure 2). Hong Kong and Singapore were the two leaders in the environmental coverage (Figure 3). While the Japanese news makers did not express a heightened interest in the social portrayals of the EU (neither in proportional nor absolute numbers), the EU actions in environmental field volume wise got more attention from them in terms of volume. South Korea and Thailand featured a lower average number of news items reporting the EU’s environmental activities. If it is considered that the average number of social and environmental news in each location was shared between the three leading newspapers and one prime-time television newscast, then it is obvious that the number of news pieces reporting EU’s social and environmental themes per outlet was minuscule in each case.

If the print media was more detailed and consistent in presenting the Union as an actor in social and environmental spheres, these areas of EU actions were practically invisible in the prime-time television news coverage. Television news items across the studied locations prioritised only a handful of social topics, such as social legislation (15 items) and avian flu (13 items). Yet, most of these came from Mainland China’s CCTV channel. In contrast, the topics of research and education that were popular in the Asian press topics of research and education, as well as Islamic issues, were almost invisible in the television news coverage. There were only two items on Thailand’s TITV channel, which reported the scandal surrounding the newspaper caricatures of the Islamic prophet Muham-
mad and the EU’s contribution to the debate on human rights and freedom of media. Coverage of the environmental topics was even less visible. The Singaporean, Thai and South Korean prime-time news bulletins did not feature even a single television news item reporting the EU’s environmental actions. Hong Kong aired only one such item, focusing on the issues of the air pollution, and Mainland China’s CCTV broadcasted two items, reporting the EU initiatives on the alternative vehicles and the UK’s statements on the global warming.

The centrality of the EU representation as a social actor was rather peripheral. In all six locations, most of the news items reported the EU’s social actions from a minor perspective, that is in a brief or even fleeting manner (Figure 4).
Yet, two slightly different patterns were observed in the distribution of the two other degrees of centrality, namely, major and secondary ones. The three media discourses with a higher volume of the EU social news per month (Singapore, Hong Kong and Mainland China) gave the second place to the representations of the EU from a major perspective and focused on the EU as a major theme of social affairs reportage. The three other locations with a smaller volume of the EU social news per month (South Korea, Japan and Thailand) gave a second place to a secondary focus in the EU representations. This focus framed the EU’s social actions on par with social actions of other actors (local or third ones).

**Figure 4:** Distribution of the Degree of Centrality in Social Reportages across Six Asian Locations

![Figure 4: Distribution of the Degree of Centrality in Social Reportages across Six Asian Locations](image)

Similarly to the social frame, the minor intensity of the EU’s representations was leading in the environmental frame, while the major degree of intensity was the least visible. In two locations, Mainland China and Thailand, the EU was assigned a major role in environmental actions more frequently than a secondary one (Figure 5).

It is worth noting that Mainland China was the only location which consistently assigned a heavier intensity to both the EU’s social and environmental media portrayals. Interestingly, the Hong Kong news, despite being among the leaders in terms of absolute numbers of coverage, framed the EU from a predominantly minor focus. Despite these fine-grained differences, news media in all locations chose to depict EU social and environmental actions from a dominant minor perspective, while the EU as a major theme was among the least visible. It is suggested that this particular visibility pattern (a lower volume in absolute numbers and a deficit of a major degree of centrality of the EU in the respective reportages) profiles the EU’s social and environmental affairs in the six locations in a highly marginal way.
Evidently, in 2006 the Asian news media in six locations devoted more of its attention to the EU as a significant economic power and a political actor growing in its importance, both internally and externally. At the same time, the media’s spotlight left the images of the EU as a social and environmental authority in the shade. A low volume of reportage and a minor intensity of the EU representations indicated a low visibility of any particular EU social and/or environmental issue in the Asian news media. In pragmatic terms, exposure conveys a subject’s importance to the audience. If it is important enough to be mentioned in the media, it is important for the public. The more frequently a subject is mentioned, the more importance it is accorded by the viewing public. Respectively, in terms of visibility, the EU’s social and environmental activities were not presented as the EU’s priorities (either internally or internationally).

The External (Unrelated and Seemingly Irrelevant?) – Grounding of the EU News on Social Affairs

In the distribution of the foci of *domesticity* of the EU social news, the angle external to the country of reportage angle prevailed (Figure 6).

EU environmental reportage featured a slightly different profile of the distribution of the foci of domesticity (Figure 7). The Hong Kong media, a leader in the volume of environmental coverage among the six locations, reported the EU’s environmental actions predominantly in the *local* context. The Japanese media featured a balanced split between the two foci of domestication of environmental
news. News media in the remaining four locations repeated the framing typical for EU social news, namely heavily grounding the EU’s environmental actions in the context *external* to the country of reportage context.

**Figure 6:** Distribution of the Focus of Domesticity in *Social News*

The prevalence of the external framing of the EU’s social and environmental actions may arguably be related to the profile of the news sources. Sources-wise, 26.6% of the total social sample was authored by attributed international sources, 42.8% the news originated from local authors and 30.6% of news was non-attributed. If we consider that local media outlets usually acknowledged local authors to strengthen an impression of its own expertise, then it is fair to suggest that
non-attributed news items could be news of international origin, translated and modified by local journalists, and then included into the newscasts (a practice admittedly widely used by media professionals in the region).\textsuperscript{33} If this suggestion is accepted, then the balance of sources in the EU’s social reportage will tip over to the international sources – 57.2% in a combined category vs. 42.8% of locally sourced news.

The environmental reportage seems to support this argument. The Hong Kong coverage, which featured a dominant \textit{local} grounding of the EU environmental actions, revealed a peculiar distribution of news sources, namely more than half of the news was locally sourced (56% was of local origin, 5% was of attributed international origin, and 39% was non-attributed). The Thai coverage, which displayed the highest share of externally grounded EU environmental news in the sample, featured 50% of internationally sourced news items in contrast to 25% sourced locally (25% was non-attributed).

The large-scale use of news agencies by media in developing countries (of which Thailand is in this study) is often attributed to the lack of resources to sustain larger numbers of foreign based correspondents. Most foreign news then comes from the international wires, which tend to report actions of the foreign actors in external (more universal), not local (more specific), discourses in order to sell such news to a wider global audience. In contrast, richer media organisations have more resources to support their own foreign bureaus and externally-based journalistic staff (both its own correspondents and ‘stringers’, or freelancers, working from abroad). The existence of such correspondents generally leads to far more accurate and voluminous reporting, with more obvious local links.

The \textit{external} focus of domesticity is compiled of two categories in this analysis – EU social news reported in the \textit{EU context} and the EU news reported in the \textit{context of a third party} (neither the EU, nor the country of reportage). Within this finer-grained analysis of the focus of domesticity of the EU social and environmental reportage, three different patterns were observed across six locations in the each frame (Figures 8 and 9).

In the social frame, Singapore and Mainland China prioritised visions of the EU as a social actor in \textit{the EU context}. In the environmental frame, Thailand stressed this particular vision. In these locations, the grounding of the EU in the \textit{local contexts} was the least visible. This particular framing usually presents a rather detailed Europe-focused reportage, intended, in a way, to educate the audiences about a foreign counterpart (the EU in our case). Yet, this focus lacks local ‘hooks’ and immediate grounding in local discourses, and, thus, portrays a foreign counterpart as being not immediately relevant to local interests.

\textsuperscript{33} From an interview with a Thai newsmaker who preferred to remain anonymous.
In contrast, in the social case the South Korean and Japanese news media featured an opposite pattern. They de-prioritised the EU social news in the EU context, instead making the local focus of news grounding the most visible. A similar distribution was observed in the environmental news in Hong Kong, Singapore, Mainland China and Japan. This particular angle of news domestication is known to raise the importance of the Others to the local audiences by
bringing ‘foreign’ closer to ‘home’. Yet, if this strategy dominates, it risks overlooking international developments that have no direct grounding in domestic discourses.

It is noteworthy that in the social frame, the Thai and Hong Kong media presented a unique pattern in ‘domesticating’ the EU – they reported the EU’s social affairs mostly in the context of a third party (neither the EU itself, nor the country of reportage). This particular framing may arguably indicate the vision of the EU as an active international performer in the field of social affairs, yet this angle is not intimately connecting the EU to the social interests of the country of reportage. A dominance of the 3rd Party focus was not observed in the case of environmental news. Intriguingly, the South Korean environmental reportage featured a perfect balance between the EU grounded and locally anchored news.

To conclude, the majority of the representations of EU actions in the area of social and environmental affairs were grounded in the contexts external to the country of reportage (environmental coverage in Hong Kong media being the only exception). In such framing, the EU’s social and environmental actions were not seen as directly affecting the citizens in the Asian countries. Yet, as the analysis below shows, it was those ‘domestically-grounded’ topics which got the most of media attention in individual locations.

**Random and Un-Focused Media Images of the EU’s Social Affairs**

Commenting on the dynamics of the EU’s social news (seen in Figure 9), a February peak in the news dynamics corresponded to the coverage of a scandal surrounding the cartoon of the Muslim prophet Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper. A smaller peak in May represented reporting of the EU’s actions in response to the devastating earthquake in Indonesia (after which the EU offered medical aid and emergency supplies to the suffering country) (Figure 10). It is suggested that the media visibility of the EU in the field of social affairs tended to be higher when the EU’s social actions were grounded locally (the cartoon issue was often interpreted in connection to the Muslim populations in the respective locations).

In contrast to the EU social coverage, which peaked in the first half of 2006, environmental news displayed more peaks in the second half of the year (Figure 11). In Hong Kong, a leader in the volume of coverage, the ‘peak’ represented a heightened media attention towards the subject of air pollution. Several different events raised the EU’s media visibility in other locations. Among those, there was the UN meeting on climate change in November, as well as a number of the EU’s actions and practices directed to solve the problems of CO₂ emis-
sions (e.g. the EU’s push for regulations in aviation, development of alternative vehicles, bio fuel, nuclear fusion power projects and support for the low-carbon industry, etc.)

Figure 10: Dynamics of the EU Social News in Six Asian Locations in 2006

Even though the frames presenting the EU’s social and environmental affairs were among the two least visible in the Asian news media, both were extremely diverse in terms of the topics appearing. Most of the diversity in the social topics was identified in the Singaporean media (primarily because Singapore was the leader in the overall volume of social news). Ten topics were featured
Connecting People and Saving the Planet?

in the ‘social’ coverage in more than one locality. Among these there were the EU’s research and education; reactions to the avian flu epidemic (in terms of social consequences both in Asia and in the EU); social legislation and regulations; matters of the multicultural existence of the EU (Islamic issues in particular); entertainment; immigration; people’s safety and security; crime; sports and demographic trends in Europe (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of the Most Visible Topics Representing the EU in the Field of Social Affairs

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Different locations prioritised different angles in the reporting. For Thailand, the coverage of the EU’s reactions to the avian, or bird flu was the most visible topic, mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, Thai poultry exports to Europe are important for the country’s economic well-being. The EU’s economic restrictions on potentially infected imports were seen as negatively influencing the well-being of the Thai people. Secondly, Thailand had a significant number of people affected with the disease, thus, the EU’s internal dealings with the epidemic in Europe were scrutinised. The EU’s activities in the field of research and education attracted more attention from Japanese and South Korean newsmakers. With many South Koreans preferring to educate their children in the US and European universities, this particular angle in media attention becomes self-explanatory. In Japan’s case, the country has the reputation of the land of the latest technological and industrial achievements, and a vigilant interest in the respective EU’s activities is predictable. Mainland China’s media prioritised reports of EU social legislation and regulations. Indeed, this socialist society traditionally stresses advantages of the communist system in the area of social legislation and norms. Unsurprisingly, the respective practices of the EU were at the centre of media attention in China. The Islamic issues in the present-day multicultural EU received more coverage in Thailand and Singapore (two coun-
ties in this study whose populations feature large Islamic minorities). Finally, the Singaporean and Japanese media discourses also featured a larger (comparative) share of news reporting the EU’s migration issues. This interest could be explained by the fact that these two societies are facing migration challenges, and thus they are motivated to learn about the relevant practices of others.

In the environmental frame, two sub-frames were identified – reportage of the EU’s actions in relation to industry functioning, and the EU’s actions and statements in relation to the development of the relevant policies (topics which were found in more than one country are presented in Table 3).

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The Hong Kong coverage of the environment frame (the leader in terms of the volume of coverage) was the most diverse. It prioritised reporting of the EU actions in conjunction with the air pollution issues – a major problem of this highly urbanised environment where the Hong Kong government attempts to achieve better air quality using the EU as a reference point. The Singaporean environmental news, the second in volume, focused its attention on the issues of the CO₂ emissions (for cars, planes and ships, as well as the Emission Trading Scheme). With Singapore being a major transport hub in Asia, this media attention is arguably expected. A similar CO₂ emissions focus in the EU reportage was traced in South Korea. Predictably, this heavily industrialised economy faces growing challenges when tackling the carbon emissions. The Japanese media extensively reported talks in Nairobi and the future of the Kyoto Protocol. In Mainland China, topics of climate change and ‘greenhouse effect’ received a substantial share of media attention. The Thai coverage, exceptionally low in numbers, did not feature any visibly recurring theme.
A low in volume and extremely diverse media coverage of the EU social and environmental activities is believed to be counterproductive to the creation of a cohesive picture of the EU. Admittedly, the EU is challenging to understand by the average news consumer due to its sheer complexity, novelty and constant evolution. Arguably, the random and non-focused news coverage of the EU’s social and environmental actions adds to the cognitive confusion when the Asian audiences attempt to understand and categorise the EU.

**Images that Do Not ‘Push the Buttons’ of Distinct Emotions**

The overall distribution of the evaluations across all social and environmental topics detected in the news featured a dominance of the neutral assessments of the EU’s actions (Figures 12 and 13).

Between the six locations, the Singaporean media featured the highest share of the negatively charged social news (25%). In contrast, Thailand and Mainland China had a significantly smaller share of the EU’s social news with negative evaluations – 4.6% and 2.9% respectively. In the environmental frame, South Korean and Hong Kong displayed a slightly higher share of negatively loaded news (9% and 8% respectively), while Singapore and Mainland China assigned the smallest shares of negativity (3% and 2% respectively). Uniquely, a six-month sample for Japan did not feature any negatively coloured news reporting EU social or environmental activities.

Social news featuring positive assessments of the EU led over the news with negative evaluations – 12% compared with 10% on average. A positive angle was even more visible in the environmental frame – 14% of positively assessed news compared with 5% of negatively assessed on average. The lowest share of negatively loaded news (after Japan, where it was completely absent) was found in Mainland China. It is suggested, that critical articles may well have been blocked from publication in China by government action due to the political priorities assigned to the Sino-European relations at the moment.

In this study, media’s evaluative preference to portray the EU from a predominantly neutral perspective could be dictated by specific cultural norms of the Asian societies, which prioritise the notion of ‘harmony’ and ‘politeness’. In this light, any expression of negativity is considered to be rude and antagonistic. Asian journalistic attitudes and practices are assumed to follow these cultural norms to a certain degree. The priorities of foreign policy could also be a contributing factor to a dominant neutral vision. For example, the priority of the Chinese foreign policy is to sustain its fast economic growth could contribute to the fact that the leading media undertake a politely-neutral or positive tone on seemingly ‘marginal’ issues, like the EU’s social or environmental affairs, and express more pronounced attitu-
des in assessments of the EU’s economic activities. The prevailing neutrality could also indicate a certain level of indifference on behalf of the Asian news makers and news consumers when it comes to the EU’s social and environmental affairs.

**Figure 12:** Distribution of Evaluations in the Overall Coverage of EU Social Actions

![Figure 12](image)

**Figure 13:** Distribution of Evaluations in the Overall Coverage of EU Environmental Actions

![Figure 13](image)

Nevertheless, in several sub-frames of the social frame discussed in a great detail below (such as the reports of EU actions towards the bird flu epidemic, or EU dealings with the issues surrounding the Islamic cartoon publication, and EU immigration policies and actions) negative imagery was more visible. Other sub-frames in the social frame (such as news about EU’s role in education and research, social legislation and entertainment) framed the EU from a more positive perspective. In environmental frame, some the consequences of the EU’s
Directive on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment\(^3^4\) (RoHS) were seen as seriously affecting Hong Kong electronic manufacturers, thus the EU’s actions were reported in a more negative light. Yet, in majority of representations in environmental frame, positive evaluations dominated.

This paper focuses its subsequent discourse analysis on the six topics leading the media coverage of the EU as a social actor and three most visible topics in the environmental reportage. The first set of six includes such topics as research and education, the avian flu epidemic, social legislation and regulations, Islamic issues, entertainment and immigration. The second set of three looks into such themes as Kyoto Protocol, climate change and CO\(_2\) emissions. In both sets the topics were found to be present across all six media discourses.

1. Education and Research

Cumulatively, the news coverage of the EU in the context of education and research was the most visible topic actors the six locations. Most of the locations in this study (Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong in particular) could be described, using the words of Bridges, as “densely populated and poorly endowed with natural resources”,\(^3^5\) thus there is a strong push towards “the best use of their human resources”.\(^3^6\) Bridges argues that education at these locations is seen as an “important tool in creating efficient and well-equipped labour-force”.\(^3^7\) Japan led in the coverage of the EU as an entity promoting research and education (30.8% of the total social coverage in Japan). South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong also assigned a significant proportion of their coverage to this social topic (15.4%, 11.3% and 11% respectively). The two developing countries, Mainland China and Thailand followed with a gap – 8.6% and 6.7% respectively.

Even though the neutrally coloured news prevailed in the reportage of this topic, the share of positively assessed representations (if compared with negative ones) was higher in each country’s case (except South Korea). Most of the neutrally coloured news items represented (or even advertised) the studies at universities located in the EU, as well as reported various joint research projects and programmes of the country of reportage with the EU. Positive depictions featured the EU as a place which opens a free space for scientific curiosity

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\(^3^5\) Brian Bridges, *Europe and the Challenge of the Asia Pacific*, 51.

\(^3^6\) Ibid.

\(^3^7\) Ibid.
and enables the unforeseeable outcomes that are characteristic of a cutting-edge research. In this context, well-known universities in the EU were presented as a desirable destination for the Asian students. Also, the news reportage mentioned a European history textbook co-written by historians from France and Germany. This joint intellectual production was brought as a reference point for the East Asian countries and was argued to be an instrumental example of how to overcome regional conflicts. The negative assessments were rare in the coverage of this topic with exception of South Korea. In the Korean media, the EU was mentioned as losing the battle to retain the world’s finest minds. With prestige and money at stake, many leading scholars and researchers are looking towards the US as their research ‘hub’, and the EU was reported as lagging behind in its efforts to develop a ‘cluster of brains’ in Europe. A general level of education was commented too – it was reported that more than a third of adults in the EU cannot perform basic computer tasks. It was also noted that the costs of education in Europe are prohibitive for the students studying there (the UK was mentioned in particular). European universities were depicted as being in a ‘race’ competing against each other in attempts to attract talented students from abroad. Given the value attached to the international education in the South Korean society, the negative assessments in this case become self-evident.

2. Avian Flu

EU actions relating to the avian (bird) flu epidemic and its social consequences construed the second most visible sub-frame across the six locations. The Thai media contribution to the topic was by far the most substantial (27.2% of the total social coverage). Mainland China (13.7%), Singapore (13%) and Hong Kong (11%) followed. South Korean share of the bird-flu news, in contrast to the other Asian locations, was the least visible (2.3%). Japanese sample did not feature any news on this topic.38

The majority of news in this topic represented the EU from a neutral position – the EU was reported as a participant in various international and internal meetings and talks discussing various measures to prevent the escalation of the epidemic. The positive evaluations surfaced when the EU was portrayed as a provider of a substantial global technical and financial support to stop the spread of the virus. The EU was often referenced in this context as an active assistant to the developing countries in their fight to combat the disease. The EU’s negative portrayals (more frequent than positive ones, but less frequent than neutral ones)

38 Media monitoring in Japan included only six months – July – December 2006. A full, twelve month sample, could have possibly featured this topic.
featured the EU’s citizens as being seized by fear and panic of the virus, and, as a result, pressing the EU administration to stop trading poultry with Asia.

3. Social Legislation

The largest share in the coverage of social legislation matters was observed in Mainland China media (27.5% of the total coverage of the social affairs). South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan followed with 15.4%, 14.7% and 10.3% respectively. The Singaporean media devoted 6.8% of its social coverage to this topic. Thai newsmakers were the least interested in the topics of the EU’s social legislation and regulations (1.7%).

Neutral tone led the coverage of the EU regulations concerning the amount of working hours in the EU countries, of the EU’s policies on equal job opportunities and the EU’s regulations establishing poverty minimum. The EU’s actions got perceptible positive evaluation when a new ‘services’ legislation was adopted in November 2006 (EU ministers agreed to open the bloc’s services market to cross-border competition effectively putting an end to the most disputed EU legislation in years). Not only companies, but EU individuals were seen to benefit from this legislation – from now on, it would make it easier for individuals from one EU nation to provide services in another EU state. According to the Asian newsmakers, this piece of EU legislation marked a significant step forward in forging the EU’s cohesiveness, which was seen as damaged after the failure of the EU’s Constitution referenda. Negative assessments were observed in the news items reporting the EU’s efforts to liberalise its state employment sector (the efforts which met a ‘dogged’ public resistance). In this context, the trade unions were described as ‘fuming’ at the European Commission.

4. Islamic Issues

The EU’s multicultural existence (most visible in the two South-East Asian countries of Singapore and Thailand) highlighted themes of religious diversity in the EU and related them to the problems of anti-Islamism in modern Europe. Notably, both countries have large Muslim communities. Singapore and Thailand dedicated 18.8% and 15.9% respectively of their total coverage of the social affairs to this particular issue. The other four locations did not pay the same level of attention to this theme in their news. Hong Kong featured 3%, South Korea 2.8%, and both Japan and Mainland China featured 1.4%.

Even though neutral evaluations prevailed in the descriptions of the EU’s actions on Islamic matters, in each country the share of negative assessments
was higher than the share of positive ones. One of the major issues reported was a situation surrounding the publications of offensive cartoons picturing the Muslim prophet Muhammad by a Danish newspaper. The neutral tone was detected in daily updates which reported the development of the events surrounding this scandal (including demonstrations of protest by Muslims around the world) in a factual, rather than evaluative tone. News items with positive assessments were relatively rare. Most such items reported actions and statements of the EU officials intended to bridge the ‘gulf’ between Muslims and Christians in the EU. Those actions and statements were classified as the EU’s struggling attempts to mend relations. Negatively coloured news presented the EU in the two major frames. Firstly, the EU’s citizens were reported as failing in distinguishing between extremist and moderate Islam. As a consequence, the EU citizens of Islamic descent were seen as suffering from unfair attitudes and prejudices inside the Union. Secondly, the EU’ relations with a wider Muslim world was seen to be deteriorating. Notably, the controversial theory of the ‘civilizational clash’39 was frequently cited by the Asian media.

5. Entertainment

Three locations – Mainland China, South Korea and Singapore – devoted some attention to the EU in the context of entertainment (6.9%, 6.8% and 6.5% of the total coverage of the social frame per country respectively), however, both Hong Kong and Thailand had a miniscule share of such news (0.5% both) and the Japanese sample did not feature news on this topic.

With the neutral assessments leading the depictions again, the share of positively assessed images of the EU tipped the balance across the six localities. Neutrally toned news reported news on the 16th EU Film Festival, which took place in South Korea in May, Hong Kong in September, Singapore in October and Thailand in November. Such news also covered the habits of the Europeans playing computer games or commented on EU-funded broadcasts. Positively coloured news presented the EU as a fantastic destination to travel to, with unique culture, traditions and history. Negatively coloured news items presented a bizarre story of an EU Commissioner who was caught literally with his pants down, sunbathing nude with his female companion.

6. Immigration

The challenge of how to guarantee a safe and secure society has been growing in importance over the past decade. Societal security, defined by Buzan as “the threats and vulnerabilities that effect patterns of communal identity and culture”, features immigration as a key component. There is a perceptible concern that inward migration (both in legal and illegal terms) can become a fundamental threat to the social and political stability of individual states. Two countries in the study – Japan and Singapore – devoted a heightened attention to the issues of the EU immigration. In Japan it was 8.8% of the total coverage of the social frame and in Singapore it was 8.2% per country. The other four locations did not prioritise this topic – Thailand and South Korea featured 4% of the social coverage each, Hong Kong almost 2% and China almost 1%. The evidenced media attention in the Japanese and Singaporean case could be explained firstly by an increased illegal labour mobility from poorer Asian countries to more prosperous ones (observed mostly in Japan), and, secondly, by refugees’ mobility from affected by wars in Indochina and devastated by Asian tsunami areas (observed mostly in Singapore).

Similar to the topic of “Islamic issues”, the representations of the EU in migration matters were predominantly neutral, yet featured a bigger share of the negative assessments, if compared with the positive angle. Positive modalities in this particular sub-frame were very rare. The neutrally coloured news reported in a factual manner various dynamics of the immigration to the EU. In news which registered positive evaluations, the EU’s internal migration was seen as an instrument to turn the EU into a ‘seamless economic dynamo’ that can compete with the United States and emerging Asian powers. Once poor EU countries, like Spain, have become wealthy enough to lure foreign workers rather than drive away its own jobless. The more numerous negative reports presented migration in the EU as a challenge to the EU and its people, mainly due to a growing anti-immigrant backlash among many EU citizens. A set of the EU citizens’ fears (as suggested by the Asian news media) included a fear of the social impact of globalisation and of enlargement in general, and of massive Turkish immigration in particular. Illegal migrants to the EU from Africa were also mentioned. The lack of a continent-wide policy in migration was argued to lead to social tensions which are fuelling the rise of xenophobia in the EU.

7. Kyoto Protocol/ CO₂ Emissions/Climate Change

Approaches towards tackling climate change and reducing greenhouse gases have triggered heated global discussions, of which the EU is a leading participant. In the catalogue of the EU’s environmental actions, the Union’s diverse internal measures and policies to curb the emissions and meet the targets of the Kyoto protocol occupy a special place. Indeed, the EU’s commitments to the Kyoto protocol are often expressed in the EU’s pressures to implement swift and ambitions actions produce both internal and external impacts. Respectively, three interconnected topics – the EU’s role in the Kyoto Protocol, the EU’s attitudes towards climate change and the EU’s actions to reduce the CO₂ emissions – appeared in the environmental frame across the six locations in our study.

Overall, the neutral assessment of the EU actions dominated in the reportage of those three topics, yet, identified positive assessments were more visible than negative ones. Positive evaluations were assigned to the EU images in reportages on the EU’s practices to guarantee the quality of air (Hong Kong); the EU’s search for alternative energy sources as well as saving energy measures (Singapore, Hong Kong); the EU’s standards in monitoring CO₂ emissions for various means of transportation (Singapore); the EU’s example in curbing greenhouse gases (Mainland China); the EU’s practices in eco-friendly agriculture (Japan) and the EU’s preference for organic farming (South Korea). The less frequent negative evaluations were traced in the coverage of the EU’s actions to endorse RoHS and the effects of these actions on local industry (Hong Kong). The media representations of the EU’s commitments to the Kyoto protocol, of the EU Emission Trading Scheme and of the Union’s contribution to developing an efficient global carbon market received predominantly neutral evaluations.

Public Opinion

The survey of public opinion on the EU across the six Asian societies in 2006 revealed that images of the EU as a social actor did not appear among the top four most frequently mentioned spontaneous images of the EU (the survey respondents in each location were asked to give three associations they have when they hear the words ‘the European Union’). Instead, economic and political images of the EU dominated, namely the euro; the Union’s integration into a bigger geo-political unity; the EU as a global economic power which poses a higher bargaining abilities due to its size; the EU’s trading capacities; and the EU as seen through the prism of its individual Members States (MS) (Table 4). This finding arguably indicates that a (stereo)typical image of the EU in the public opinion of the six Asian locations is not associated with such characteri-
stics as ‘social affairs champion’ or ‘environmental affairs trendsetter’. Priorities assigned in immediate interpretations of the EU by the general public thus seem to correlate to the priorities surfacing in the media coverage in each Asian location in this study, namely stressing economic and political representations, and de-emphasising social and environmental vision of the EU.

Table 4: Dominant Images of the EU (Spontaneous Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainland China</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>EU enlargement</td>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td>trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
<td>Exceptionalism/ problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
<td>Economic power</td>
<td>trade</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>trade</td>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>Economic power</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td>Individual countries</td>
<td>Disparities/ unfairness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were also asked what issues should be kept in mind when their governments were developing diplomatic ties with the EU. This time, the respondents did articulate issues of social and environmental affairs. These issues appeared on the list among the top eight most frequently mentioned recommendations on how to improve local governments’ agendas when dealing with the EU (Table 5).

Trade and more general economic issues were once again among the most frequent responses. Respondents also prioritised the importance to secure each location’s interests (economic and political) in the dialogue with the EU. Arguably, these findings prompt further evidence for the media guidance of the public opinion when it comes to foreign policy coverage. Encouragingly, even though economic and political associations were more prominent on the list of public recommendations to governments, social and environmental aspects entered this list too. For example, the need to stress cultural exchanges with the EU and to recognise Europe’s cultural differences and its current cultural challenges were voiced by respondents in Japan, South Korea and Singapore. The need for dialogue with the EU on human rights and democracy was stressed in the Chinese, Hong Kong, Singaporean and Thai surveys. A need to interact with the EU on environmental matters (and environmental standards in particular) was noted in the public responses in Japan, South Korean, Mainland China, Hong Kong and Thailand. Evidently, the public opinion in the six Asian locations profiles the EU as an important social and environmental actor worth being considered by officials formulating foreign policy agendas.
**Table 5: Issues to Keep in Mind when Local Governments Develop Diplomatic Ties with the EU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>Mainland China</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Politics/US</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Trade/ Anti-dumping</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Respect/ equality/ fairness</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Economy/Monetary</td>
<td>Mutual benefits/ Good politics/ Closer relations</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Culture/ Ethnicities/ Religion</td>
<td>Cultural exchanges</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>HK interests</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Japan’s interests</td>
<td>Closer relations with the EU</td>
<td>Arms embargo</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Cultural issues</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Trade</td>
<td>Environment/ Standards</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Environment/ Standards</td>
<td>Democracy/ Human rights</td>
<td>EU--Thailand relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Economy/ Monetary</td>
<td>Politics/US</td>
<td>Environment/ Energy</td>
<td>Closer relationship with the EU</td>
<td>Singapore’s interest</td>
<td>Thailand’s interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 EU internal developments</td>
<td>Korea’s interests</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>Human Rights/ Democracy/ Social affairs</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Environment/ Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Dealing with different EU MSs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with different EU MSs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion and Conclusions**

This study offered several systematic insights into the EU’s external imagery existing in the public discourses of six Asian localities – Japan, South Korea, Mainland China, SAR Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand. The results of this investigation are intended to strengthen EU-Asian relations at time when new global actors are vying for the roles of world superpowers, and when the priorities in international interactions are expected to shift. Despite the EU’s combined economic might, its intense economic contacts with Asia, its growing international importance, its globally recognised reputation as a human-rights advocate, a development aid donor and an environmental authority, the EU is seen ‘fading away behind the horizons’ for its Asian counterparts – the survey of the public opinion revealed the EU was not ranked as the leading present-day partner in terms of its importance in any Asian location in this study. Undoubtedly, the EU’s ambiguous political identity (neither a centralised federal state, nor a loose inter-government organisation) and its decision-making intricacy make the Union...
too complex an organisation for both the EU’s own citizens and the international public. Moreover, for the past 50 years, the EU has been constantly evolving – renaming itself (from EEC to EC and EU), enlarging, and structurally changing. Unsurprisingly, there is a concern that the EU is still profoundly misunderstood both inside\textsuperscript{42} and outside its borders.\textsuperscript{43}

It is suggested that the analysis of the images of the EU in public discourses of the six Asian locations provided several useful insights into how the EU is understood outside its borders. Firstly, it provided information about the state of the dialogue between the EU and its six Asian partners. Secondly, it offered a chance to look at the EU through the eyes of Others – this study managed to establish a set of meanings assigned by external public discourses to the concept “EU”. If “Europe does not exist without non-Europe” and if “Europe can only be realized in the mirror of Others”,\textsuperscript{44} then external images are crucial for the EU as an organisation grappling with its internal identity. Thirdly, it also exposed the current thinking of external opinion makers on the EU (Asian news producers in our case), which is argued to often influence opinions of the general public and of foreign policy makers. Finally, this study provided several insights into the international public opinion on the EU, which seem to prove an assumption that foreign news has a heightened ‘image forming’ capability with the public.

When it comes to the media coverage outside the Union’s borders, the EU’s global influence on social and environmental issues was initially expected to translate in media terms into the news values of “importance”, “significance” and “human interest”,\textsuperscript{45} and thus to be popular topics in international media representations of the EU. Indeed, many of the EU’s policies and measures in these two areas have an immediate economic and political impact on six locations in our study, often triggering controversial responses and critical re-evaluations.


\textsuperscript{43} Philip De Gouiveia and Hester Plumridge, \textit{European Infopolitik: Developing EU Public Strategy}.\textsuperscript{44} Bo Stråth, “A European Identity: To the Historical Limits of a Concept”, \textit{European Journal of Social Theory} 5, No. 4, (2002), 397.

Additionally, it was presumed that news audiences can more easily relate to social and environmental topics. With the EU’s political and economic existence is constantly changing and being extremely complex, human interest matters are readily transferable to the human existences of news audiences globally. However, it was observed that both newspapers and television news in the six locations did not prioritise the ‘human face’ of the EU. Across the six national media discourses, the media portrayals of the EU as an actor in the social and environmental fields were among the two least visible information inputs. This low visibility was echoed in the views of the general public in the six Asian locations – the most frequent stereotypical mental images of the EU excluded information on the EU’s social and environmental features.

Geographical and cultural distances are partially to ‘blame’ for the peculiar media and public profiling of the EU’s social and environmental affairs in the six Asian locations. The EU’s peaceful and integrationist presence is another reason why international media, which is often characterised by its “willingness to dig out scandals, falsehoods, and problems”, 46 may overlook the EU. The external under-representation of these two key areas of the EU’s existence is also a responsibility of the EU institutions that have arguably failed to communicate the social and environmental achievements of the EU’s integration process. Arguably, this failure deprives the EU of an additional mechanism to legitimise its international influences. Indeed, according to Bridges, economics has been the leading gateway for post-colonial Europe to re-enter Asia. 47 Such issues as business, trade, investment and technology have been overshadowing budding political interactions, leaving in cold social and environmental affairs. As a result, “the cultural, educations, and other links are still comparatively insubstantial”. 48

This study showed that the depictions of the EU as a capable actor and a source of inspiration in the areas of the social and environmental development were not prioritised in the public discourses of the news media and the general public in Asia, however a specific media framing of the EU as a social and environmental actor was discovered in those discourses. Images of the EU were low in presence (invisible?), random in topics covered (confusing?), neutral (politely-indifferent?), and not grounded domestically (irrelevant for local public?). This invisible and vague portrayal was argued to add to the cognitive confusion accompanying the EU’s understanding by the international general public and to give an unfair impression of a sphere of the EU’s activities where it is internationally recognised and acclaimed. When visible, portrayals of the EU’s social and

47 Brian Bridges, Europe and the Challenge of the Asia Pacific, 200.
48 Ibid., 201.
environmental activities in each individual location had a perceptible local ‘hook’. These ‘hooks’ did not necessarily support the EU’s own self-avowed vision as a ‘trendsetter’ in the social and environmental agendas around the globe (e.g. the dominance of the air pollution theme with a minor mentioning of the EU’s role in the environmental frame in Hong Kong or a coverage of the dealings with the avian flu in the social frame in Thailand). The resulting images were sometimes in dissonance, or even in a direct clash with the EU’s self-vision (for example, negative evaluations visible in the coverage of the RoHS scheme by Hong Kong news or of the Union’s educational practices by South Korean media).

Yet, this study discovered a tendency to assign more positive than negative evaluations to the EU’s social and environmental actions (with a neutral evaluation being still in the lead). Initially, an opposite trend – namely, a heavier share of negativity – was expected. Two factors shaped this expectation: first, the anti-European and nationalistic sentiments as a possible echo of the European imperialist and colonial presence in Asia in the past; and second, a tendency of the news to “distort, sensationalize, and focus on ‘negative’ aspects of the foreign counterparts.” It is suggested that a more perceptible positive assessment assigned to the EU’s imagery by the Asian newsmakers in these two fields are promising for and useful in raising the EU’s profile in Asia. Such evaluative preferences may indicate that the EU’s social and environmental activities add to the EU’s international image of a ‘soft’ and ‘normative’ power (even if those portrayals are infrequent and rather confusing). This evaluation may also indicate that the core issues in the EU-Asia dialogue, primarily focusing first on economics and then on politics, are seen as being increasingly intertwined with social and environmental topics. This positive profiling of the EU in the reputable news media is argued to contribute to the formation of the public opinion on what issues should be prioritised in the official dialogue with the EU. A need for social and environmental interactions entered this list, yet did not occupy leading positions.

While this study accepts that news audiences do not passively consume and accept meanings proposed by news discourses, certain forms of media discourse do have a stronger persuasive power than others, and foreign news is one of those forms. As foreign policymaking is a prerogative of a selected and limited group of national elites, and with foreign affairs being out of the immediate reach for the majority of population, foreign news is often an uncontested source of information for the general public. Foreign news representations in domestic discourses may therefore influence what people see as the most important information about foreign affairs and policy making, and thus influence people’s images of distant and close international partners. While Mainland China is a special case

study (its media is controlled by the government), the five other locations are societies which claim their media to be free. In such societies, there is a need for a well informed public able to execute control over and vocal feedback to the powerful elites (both in domestic and international affairs). Respectively, governments in such societies will draw heavily on the view of the EU available in their own reputable press and broadcasts. But even in those societies where the media is under stricter government supervision, the media images of the EU could be what Rubin calls a “prime indication”\(^{51}\) and even the “best source of evidence”\(^{52}\) of current official attitudes towards the EU. Rubin argues that in such societies “the press is used by such foreign governments both for diplomatic signalling and for shaping the ideas of their people. Even so, leaders may be more affected by the clichés of their own coverage that one might expect.”\(^{53}\)

In the increasingly globalising and interdependent world, the EU and its Asian counterparts need to critically re-evaluate the course and strength of their relationship. In promoting candid dialogue between Asia and Europe, it is crucial to identify points of mutual understanding and acknowledge divergent views on the level of perceptions and attitudes. As Siamak Movahedi argued, “images and perceptions of other nations provide the basic framework within which the conduct of international relations and conflict resolution takes place.”\(^{54}\) Indeed, though the belief is irrational, the impact of that belief is anything but unreal.\(^{55}\) This study is among the first that offer a valid start for a systematic and detailed account of the imagery of the EU in Asian public discourses. This study suggests that the findings may in fact turn out to contradict the EU’s initial expectations and self-visions, and this is where such research is of a great value to both the EU and the Asian countries.

Mis-measured or under-measured external images and perceptions of the EU are argued to have serious consequences at EU policy level. An imperfect set of indicators may result in inappropriate policy, in misallocation of resources, and in under- or over-evaluation of the EU’s own performance in the Asian regions. In addition, this hindered global understanding of the EU threatens to de-prioritise the Union in the eyes of its important Asian partners in favour of other powerful world players. Finally, the lack of a credible external recognition is

\(^{51}\) Bury Rubin, “How Others Report Us: America In The Foreign Press”, 7
\(^{52}\) Ibid.
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
argued to have a potentially negative influence on the degree of the EU’s experienced internal integration. The perception of Europe ‘failing’ internationally in social or environmental affairs – be it in promoting international human rights or in endorsing the Kyoto protocol targets – puts at risk the notion of integration and its legitimacy for EU citizens.\textsuperscript{56} Therefore, a discussion of external images and perceptions of the EU is important to the internal dynamics of the European democratisation processes.

Equally, a low awareness of the EU jeopardises the Asian position in its dialogues with the global powers. Mutual challenges shape Asia and Europe, such as better understanding of the diversity of cultures and civilisations, impacts of global warming and climate change, a fair gender balance, better education for children, good health for all and a safer existence. Fed by impaired imagery of Europe and its social and environmental activities, the Asian countries may not fully engage with the EU in new ways, may overlook the need to initiate the contacts, or may miss out on a range of activities in established areas of interaction. This study argued that an honest, sober and consistent account of such imagery is a crucial element in the process of reassessment of dynamics in EU-Asia relations necessary to boost a more effective dialogue between the two in order to meet the regional and global challenges.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Many factors shape the perceptions of importance with which domestic actors view an international counterpart. Among those, the personal interactions and direct experiences of members of a given society with a foreign entity are considered to be the most effective. Additionally, interpersonal interactions on the topic and motivation for learning about international partners are also powerful influences. Finally, because most members of the general public are limited in their direct contacts with the foreign lands and peoples, mass media portrayals are argued to contribute enormously to the formation of images about a nation’s important ‘others’. It is no secret that a nation’s media will always prioritise the national or domestic frame in their reports, and will scrutinise most international events from the vantage point of the home country’s gains and losses. Unsurprisingly, not only the choice of facts in the reportage of foreign events will be filtered through this ‘sieve’ of national perspectives, but the emotions and language of reporting will follow suit. With this mighty arsenal of influences, the news media creates a shared public space in which it constructs images about other parts of the world. Significantly, this information on foreign counterparts is very often the only such information available to the majority of the national audience.

From the audiences’ point of view, more publicity and visibility arguably suggests greater importance of a particular subject, be it a subject of domestic or external affairs. The logic at play in this inference is simple – if the news media pays attention to a subject, then it is assumed that this subject is worthy of an audience’s attention. The more overtly the media focuses its attention on specific foreign issues, events and personalities, the higher the volume of their coverage, the more frequently they are referred to, the more importance is assigned to them by the public. As this book has shown, in the majority of countries in this study, the European Union (EU) often suffered from an impaired visibility, particularly in the television news media, presumably therefore indicating to the general publics in those countries that the EU is of limited importance.
How, then, could EU visibility in the Asian news media be raised? One starting point may be to build on what Mr Solana has achieved in his post as EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. Despite its partial derailment, the European Constitution project is crucial to this question of external images and perceptions, and the more the EU can have a single external personality then the more understanding in the media and public opinion is likely to follow. Following this, the envisioned provisions for an all-but-in-name EU foreign minister are of incredibly critical importance for external perceptions. Whether this position will be held by Mr Solana or a successor, the focus will make a significant difference to the role, particularly if the position is supported – as suggested by the still debated reform treaty – by an EU diplomacy (or what has been called an external action service). A whole set of EU embassies with a political and diplomatic role (not just Commission Delegations, which are primarily economic in focus) is envisioned in this external service. Ironically perhaps, with the current state of the reform treaty, external perceptions may now feed on the internal cuisine of constitutional ratification within Europe.

In addition, the media profile of the EU may become more pronounced outside its borders, if a set of concrete measures are considered for implementation. For example, more frequent appearances of the EU on the most popular news medium, television, where its presence is currently limited, could be the key. Also a wider spectrum of EU appearances should be seriously considered – from everyday news bulletins to documentaries and features, from official websites to weblogs and online search engines, and from articles and editorials in reputable national newspapers to news items in free metropolitan popular dailies. Content-wise, a focused grounding of EU events and issues within the local contexts will render a message of its relevance and the importance. Emphasising the European Single Market as a bilateral framework could also contribute to the visibility of the EU as a communal actor within the international arena. Additional measures might also include increasing the number of avenues for local newsmakers in communication with the EU. Such avenues could be a series of targeted, externally-funded exchange programmes between Asian and European media professionals, for example. In such programmes, newsmakers spend some time in each others’ regions, collaborating on various projects with their respective colleagues, both in Europe and in Asia.

Obviously, the consideration and execution of those measures will necessarily be the prerogative of the local media; an independent actor in local public discourses and one whose actions are often ruled by commercial imperatives and not necessarily by a benign interest in raising global awareness. Thus, the challenge for the respective EU and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) mechanisms which deal with international communication will be to develop and implement a set of efficient strategies to raise the EU’s profile in Asia, while at the same
time avoiding practices which may be deemed as propagandist or ‘bragging’. The gate-keeping role of the media must be mentioned in particular – the elite interviews conducted with editors and lead writers in the region helped to identify whether there is actually some conscious filtering and prioritisation or whether EU news coverage in Asia is largely random. We certainly know from the past, particularly from a previous study we conducted, about the open hostility of some news editors to the reporting of the EU. Our researcher, a graduate student at the time, was accused of being a traitor by one news editor for even researching how the EU was perceived in her country! Apparently, for many people the topic of the EU is quite sensitive.

Among the relevant practices that could promote media visibility in a sensitive yet efficient way could be extending links between the European Commission (EC) Delegations and the EU studies centre(s) in each location; offering a higher number of EU Journalism/VIP awards; co-funded documentaries on the EU; better practices in conducting press conferences for local newsmakers (including better ways of working with e-resources); systematic EU-briefing workshops for local journalists; and strengthening PR/media liaison role. It is very important to realise that the initial impact in establishing such linkages should be directed towards raising the awareness of the EU. The EU as an economic ‘giant’ seems to be a well-recognised and an obvious association detected in both general public and elite discourses in Asia, yet perceptions of the EU as a political actor that is growing in importance, as a champion of environmental causes and international human rights, and as a leading developmental aid donor remain very much in the shadows of public attention in the Asian region. Addressing these ‘grey-areas’ must be the focus of the EU’s efforts, and drawing media attention to its actions in political and social arenas needs to be given the highest priority. Importantly too, it is not enough to simply brief journalists on the various EU developments and actions that are taking place and hoping that from this a higher media visibility will be achieved. Such efforts must emphasise the local relevance of such developments, and in such a way, may EU news more palatable to Asian news producers and consumers alike. Through these methods, among other more educationally-oriented practices, the contribution of the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) may prove invaluable.

The second aspect of this research that warrants further discussion comes from studies we have conducted in public opinion in countries around the region rather than out of the media. Survey participants in all six countries were asked to name the three leading thoughts that came to mind when thinking about the EU. Significantly, the study found that people did have images of the EU; they were

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1 The “EU through the Eyes of the Asia-Pacific” study launched by the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE), University of Canterbury in 2004.
not just blank ‘canvases’. Increasingly, and almost in a dominant manner, the image of the euro, the common European currency, was mentioned by respondents as an immediate association. Presumably, the euro was not created purely to function as a symbol of identification, yet it is now a symbol that people around the world associate with the EU itself, rather than the individual member states. Perhaps, then, increasing the theme of the euro as an international currency in the Asian region may be one means of raising the EU’s visibility more widely. One does have to be careful when playing these image ‘games’, however. As authors of the report ‘European Infopolitik’ warned, “to obsessively harmonise and manage the image of Europe and the EU would be both very difficult and counterproductive”. Yet, they go on that, “despite the political and organisational hurdles, it would be naďve and irresponsible of policy makers of both in the EU and outside its borders to ignore completely the possibilities afforded by public diplomacy”. Obviously, public diplomacy – that is, the increasing of people-to-people contacts and the investment of greater funding for fostering those dialogues – is an important means of raising the EU’s profile in Asia, particularly in light of the importance of personal exposure in perception formation, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Ultimately though, it may not be just money that is needed, but also a more effective strategy for dealing with this money, ensuring that it is spent in places which may have tangible benefits for not only the EU, but its relations with Asia more generally.

One means of increasing people’s direct interaction with the idea of Europe, for example, may be to focus on the next generation of the Asian general public. Typically throughout the Asia-Pacific region in most secondary schools, in social studies or even history classes, the EU is invisible: it does not appear in the curriculum. For example, if you are a 15, 16, or 17 year-old high school student, you can study the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, and yet there is no parallel module on the post-1945 integration of Europe; fairly strange, perhaps, in light of the significance of the peace and prosperity that has been achieved since that time on the European continent. Indeed, this situation is rather typical of Asian secondary studies. At the tertiary education level, the programmes of European studies at universities in the region are few, far between and fragmented.

The EU’s nascent public policy is increasingly being firmly advocated within the EU and yet some of these practices may be similarly employed when working with the EU’s external partners. Some concrete measures of the EU’s actions in this domain in Asia, for example, could involve a conscious effort of the EC

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Delegations (the current ‘voices’ and ‘faces’ of the EU in the region) to diversify. Education-wise, these activities could promote education links between various levels of students – high school and tertiary level would likely be the central ones, yet, other levels (e.g. middle school, vocational training, or post-graduate degrees) could also benefit from such exchanges. We also must not forget the educationalists themselves – the introduction of schoolteachers’ awards to educators who promote study of the EU/Europe and EU-Asia interactions could be subsequently established in each location. Public diplomacy efforts are obviously not confined to the realm of education, though. A more focused approach in spreading wider information about the EU is also needed. Extended cultural activities and trade fairs where the EU support is visible, information bureaus in the regional capitals, attractive and easy-to-navigate websites of the EC Delegations are just some of the ways that general EU information might be spread throughout Asia in a more efficient way.

From these suggestions, two points should be noted. Firstly, the EC Delegations in the region are already implementing most of these measures. Obviously, their activities are not identical – EU regional offices are different in terms of the numbers of staff members employed, the size of the host locations, and indeed the expertise of the workers. Thus, in order to guarantee the best implementation and synchronisation of public diplomacy efforts, a centrally-organised training for EU officials involved in the external action and public diplomacy is clearly required. Secondly, the central theme in all public policy activities should be the mutual benefit of EU activities to the people of the two continents – Europe and Asia. When expertise and mutual consideration are in place, any accusations of ‘propaganda’ become groundless.

In this regard, local bodies could meet the EU’s efforts in the middle. The key role in such a process will belong to the centres of academic excellence -- university departments, research centres and think-tanks, which focus their research activities on interactions between Asia and Europe. Utilising their research-based expertise, such entities could initiate presentations for the members of local parliaments (e.g. committees on foreign relations and defence) and governments (e.g. ministries of foreign affairs, trade, education, communications, etc.). It could be a viable option to introduce the ‘EU External Perceptions’ project to the research agendas of those centres in the region (if this has not already been attempted), and it is recommended to continue with the ‘perceptions’ projects (where they are in place) in order to identify the dynamics in the imagery in each location. New themes and new countries would add novelty to the comparative analysis of such investigations in Asia. Research centres can also serve as a key junctures in the network with high-profile research centres from the EU member states, as well as deliver local findings at the EU level, develop knowledge in the field of perceptions by attracting MA/PhD theses students and
by promoting Erasmus Mundus exchange programmes, and disseminate findings through web pages, publications and conferences. In this context, ASEF’s support of the project “EU through the Eyes of Asia” was invaluable – it provided an opportunity to connect regional experts on the EU in one vibrant and productive network and conduct a two-year trans-national research project of unique and pioneering nature. In parallel to the attempts of the research centres and bodies like ASEF, local governments could consider co-funded scholarships and internships in the EU states for their citizens, and respective Europeans activities in the Asian locations. Parliamentarians may consider a more intense dialogue with their counterparts in the European Parliament.

The last point in this discussion comes out of other research work we have done on Europe’s development role in the Pacific and elsewhere. It is interesting if one thinks in the broader context that the EU and the member states, that their combined contributions represent 55% of all overseas development aid in the world. Yet, this study has found that in the public opinion and media portrayals in Asia, a developmental perspective of the EU is not being profiled extensively, despite the fact that the notion of Europe is one of a development super-power. Arguably, its unique focus and priority on global development and sustainability make the EU an interesting case, and featuring these distinctive traits may serve to broaden the EU’s profile in Asia.

We harbour a hope that what we have done in this distinctive trans-national research collaboration is not only interesting academically, but is possibly also intriguing politically. The truth is that this comprehensive and highly detailed volume has provided only the briefest of snapshot of what is very clearly a vast project with a whole variety of different angles and elements. This illustrates the huge number of possible lines of discussion and enquiry that can emerge from major comparative projects. This richness of data and the opportunity to investigate things from different angles attracted both experienced and young researchers, and one of the major achievements of this project is that several young researchers have used the project as the basis of their MA and PhD theses. Our research team hopes that there are other graduate, or indeed academics, who are and will be interested in this work, will follow this interest up with future enquiries. Our team has accumulated unique data sets which we have made freely available, including the public opinion analysis.

Why do images and perceptions matter? A short answer to this question is the importance of ‘persisting stereotypes’. If inaccurate pictures and perceptions of a major foreign partner exist within a country, then it is unlikely that a gov-

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4 Indeed, in the previous “EU through the Eyes of Asia-Pacific” study, where we examined perceptions of the EU in Thailand, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, we had at least 45 academic outputs.
ernment will adopt appropriate policy and lines of behaviour; a major oversight based on ignorance or misperception which may have serious consequences for foreign relationships. Yes, Europe still is punching below its weight as a global actor, but the perception of it is even lower than is justified. Yet, as is evidenced in this study, there is a very distinct and encouraging shift in place towards recognising Europe as more than just ‘milk rivers, wine lakes and butter mountains’.

This volume advocated a higher visibility for the EU, however; paradoxically, Europe must be careful too – if it wants to enhance its profile, it has expectation to live up to. If you set the bar of being a serious political actor higher, then it is imperative that you have the capacities to deliver on those promises, because the opposite scenario is highly self-defeating. Correspondingly, we feel very strongly that what happens outside the EU is fundamentally important internally for integration. If there is a positive external view of the purpose of the EU, and if it is seen as actually externally benefiting Thailand, South Korea, China, Japan, Singapore and other countries whatever those may be, then we could arguably have a very interesting ‘spill-back’ effect, to use EU jargon. This spill-over would be that the European citizenry may actually come to see that the European integration process does have a much bigger agenda, and that it is perhaps more valued externally, than it is internally. In this way, in the European integration project, the external images may prove to play a vital role.
About the Contributors

Editors

Prof. Martin Holland
Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration and International Relations
Director
National Centre for Research on Europe
University of Canterbury

Martin Holland holds the Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration and International Relations and is the Director of the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) at the University of Canterbury. Since writing his PhD at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom (UK) on the 1979 direct elections to the European Parliament, he has specialised in the analysis of the European Union (EU)’s external relations, initially in terms of European Political Co-operation and latterly through the Common Foreign and Security Policy. His research on EU-South African relations during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras is particularly well-known and saw him involved as a practitioner in one of the EU’s first election observer missions to monitor the first democratic non-racial South African election in 1994. More recently, he has focused his research interests most broadly on the EU’s global development policy and on the perceptions of the EU in third countries.

Mr. Peter Ryan
Director of Intellectual Exchange
Asia-Europe Foundation

Peter Ryan, a career diplomat from Ireland, joined the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), as Director, Intellectual Exchange, in September 2006. He received his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the National University of Ireland in Dublin. In addition to serving in the Irish Embassies in Japan, Korea and Singapore, he served as Deputy Director, Asia-Pacific, in the Bilateral Economic Relations Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs.
About the Contributors

Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak, Ph.D.
Professor of Economics and Dean
Warsaw University School of Management
Poland

Alojzy Z. Nowak is also a President of the Research Council of the University of Warsaw Centre for Europe. He is a Chair in International Economics at the University of Warsaw and Chair in Finance at the Leon Kozminski School of Management and Entrepreneurship in Warsaw. He was educated both in Poland (at the Warsaw School of Economics and University of Warsaw) and abroad (in the USA at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in England at the University of Exeter and in Germany at the Free University of Berlin). He has been a visiting professor in many American, European and Asian universities – teaching Economic Analysis of the European Union, International Economics and International Banking. Published over 150 books and articles in Poland, USA, England, Belgium, Italy, Spain. Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, China and Taiwan. He is on editorial boards of many national and international journals and a member of many international organisations. Recently he was appointed as a Chair of the Research Committee to the President of the Polish National Bank.

Dr. Natalia Chaban
Deputy Director
National Centre for Research on Europe
University of Canterbury

A native of Ukraine, Natalia Chaban was educated in Cherkasy State University, Ukraine; New York University, United States; and Kyiv State Linguistic University, Ukraine; where she earned her PhD in Linguistics (focus on political discourse analysis). She has held research and teaching positions at Cherkasy State University, Ukraine; Lund University, Sweden; and at the University of Maryland at College Park, US. Her interdisciplinary expertise has been engaged in designing cross-cultural learning activities for the US Peace Corps, Ukraine.

At present she is a Lecturer and Deputy Director at the NCRE. She is currently co-ordinating multi-national research project Public, Elite and Media Perceptions of the EU in Asia-Pacific Region. She is actively pursuing her research interests in cognitive and semiotic aspects of political and mass media discourses, image studies and national identity studies in the EU context.
Authors

Dr. Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan
Associate Professor
Department of Government and International Studies
Hong Kong Baptist University
China

Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan received his D.Phil. in Politics from Nuffield College, University of Oxford in the UK and is currently Associate Professor at the Department of Government and International Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), China. He has also taught at the University of Warsaw and the University of Gdansk in Poland. In recent years he has taught for the Master Programme in European Studies at the Institute of European Studies at the University of Macao, China. His interests include post-communist politics, democratisation, British politics, EU politics, Hong Kong politics and Eastern European languages. Recent research outputs concern the politics of electoral reforms in post-communist Europe and the Perceptions of the EU in the Asia-Pacific region. He has published articles on the topics of Europe-Asia studies, electoral studies, party politics and West European politics; in publications such as Oxford International Review, Central and East European Political Science Review, International Journal of Social Psychiatry, Asian Journal of Social Science, Studia Polityczna (Poland), Družboslovne Razprave (Slovenia), Open Times (China), and the Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences.

Prof. Dai Bingran
Jean Monnet Chair in Economics
Honorable Director
Center for European Studies
Fudan University
China

Dai Bingran is Professor and Honourable Director of the Centre for European Studies, Fudan University, China. He began his academic career on European integration studies in the late 1990s, and has been since actively involved in both teaching and research. He became Jean Monnet Chair in Economics in 2001, and under his directorship, the Fudan Centre was awarded the Jean Monnet European Studies Centre of Excellence in 2004. Nationally, he is Vice Chairman of the Chinese Association of European Studies, Vice Chairman and Secretary General
of the Chinese Society for EU Studies, and Chairman of the Chinese Society for European Economic Studies. Regionally, he is Vice President of the Shanghai Institute of European Studies.

Mr. Bertrand Fort  
*Deputy Executive Director*  
Asia-Europe Foundation


Prof. Sunghoon Park  
*Professor of Economics and International Trade*  
Graduate School of International Studies  
Korea University

Sung-Hoon Park has been Professor of Economics and International Trade at the Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS), Korea University since 1997. He has held a research fellowship at Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) during 1993-1997, and visiting professorships at Macau Institute of European Studies (2000 – now), Ritsumeikan University (2003) and ASEF University (2000, 2004), etc. For 2003/2004 academic year, he was awarded a Fulbright Visiting Scholarship to the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS) at University of California, San Diego, US. He has been doing research on international trade policy including World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, European and Asian economic integration, and Korea’s external economic policies. He was nominated Expert of APEC’s IAP Peer Review Study of the Russian Federation in 2005, and delivered a thorough analysis of liberalisation policies of the Russian Federation. He is currently the Korean representative of the newly established EU-NESCA Dialogue, which has recently been awarded a major research project by the European Commission (EC).
About the Contributors

Prof. Apirat Petchsiri
Former Director
Multidisciplinary Programme on European Studies
Chulalongkorn University
Thailand

Associate Professor of Law, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University, President of European Community Studies Association (ECSA) Thailand, and Counsellor to the Multidisciplinary Programme on European Studies at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Born in Bangkok, Thailand, and received Doctorate of Juridical Science from New York University’s School of Law, US. His first academic appointment was at the Faculty of Law of Chulalongkorn University. Visiting appointments have been held at Melbourne University, Australia and at Chase College of Law, Northern Kentucky University, US. Presently he is also President of ECSA Thailand.

Prof. Toshiro Tanaka
Ad personam Jean Monnet Chair
Professor of European Political Integration
School of Law
Keio University Japan
and Inaugural President
European Union Studies Association Asia-Pacific

Prof. Toshiro Tanaka received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Faculty of Law in 1969, and his Masters of Arts in Political Science, Graduate School of Law and Political Science in 1971, both from Keio University in Tokyo, Japan. He has become a Member of Faculty of Law, Keio University since 1971 and has been Professor since 1985. He has been Vice-President of Keio University responsible for International, Public and Alumni Relations between May 2001 and May 2005. He was a founding member of the European Union Studies Association of Japan (EUSA-Japan) and has been a member of the Board since 1980. He was President of EUSA-Japan between November 2002 and November 2004. Tanaka was also President of EUSA Asia-Pacific and Publisher of Asia-Pacific Journal of EU Studies from September 2004 to December 2006. His recent publications in Japanese include Politics of the European Union (in Japanese), Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1998 and he has been co-editor of The European Union and Citizens, Keio UP, 2005, and The Historical Developments and Vectors of European Union, Keio UP, 2006, International Politics of the European Union, Keio UP, forthcoming. His recent articles written in English include “Peace and Reconciliation

**Prof. Barnard Turner**  
*Academic Convenor*  
European Studies Programme  
National University of Singapore

Barnard Turner is currently Associate Professor of English at the National University of Singapore and Academic Convenor for European Studies. He was born outside London, England and studied in the UK and at two universities in the Pacific Northwest, the University of British Columbia (Bachelor of Arts in 1976) and the University of Oregon (PhD in 1988). He has published a book and a number of articles on a variety of topics in European and American culture and cultural politics, and a study of Thoreau reception in India. He has more recently been working on a wider range of European topics, including the Constitution debate, the recent British Labour Party, and the Lithuanian tourism industry.

**Other Contributors**

**Ms. Jessica Bain**  
*PhD Graduate*  
National Centre for Research on Europe  
University of Canterbury

**Mr. Eijiro Fukui**  
*PhD Candidate*  
Graduate School of Law  
Keio University  
Japan

**Mr. Trip Kirtiputra**  
*PhD Candidate*  
Department of European Studies Graduate School  
Chulalongkorn University  
Thailand
Ms. Cher Lai Suet-yi  
*PhD Candidate*  
National Centre for Research on Europe  
University of Canterbury

Mr. Ma Shaohua  
*PhD Candidate*  
Department of Political Science  
National University of Singapore

Ms. Rachanirom Raveepaopong  
Department of European Studies Graduate School  
Chulalongkorn University  
Thailand

Ms. Yeo Jung Seo  
*Graduate Student*  
Graduate School of International Studies  
Korea University

Mr. Zhang Shuangquan  
*PhD Candidate*  
Fudan University, China  
and Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium
The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer co-operation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focused on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations. Established in February 1997 by the partners of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEF reports to a board of governors representing the ASEM partners. ASEF is the only permanent physical institution of the ASEM process. Having completed over 310 projects, involving over 13,500 individuals (‘ASEF Alumni’), ASEF works in partnership with other public institutions and civil society actors to ensure its work is broad-based and balanced among the partner countries.

In 2000, the forerunner to the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) – the Centre for Research on Europe – was founded at Canterbury University. In 2002 a grant from the European Commission was awarded and at this time the Centre became the NCRE. It remains the only EU-dedicated tertiary level centre in New Zealand. Since then, the NCRE has developed significantly in both academic and outreach activities, involving a variety of roles and mechanisms. It has also established an effective form of collaboration with four other New Zealand universities (Auckland, Victoria, Otago and Lincoln) and one Australian university (Melbourne) during this time. Above all, the NCRE has begun the essential process of encouraging and promoting a new generation of New Zealand graduates who have a high level of expertise and interest in the European Union (EU).

The Ateneo de Manila University’s European Studies Program equips students to understand the cultural, economic and political relations between the Philippines and Europe, specifically the European Union (EU). The programme seeks to develop future professionals who will enhance the Philippines’ role in the global community, particularly in that region of the world. The programme thus educates professionals who will help the country respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the European integration.
The Centre for Europe at University of Warsaw was established in October 1991 and was one of the very first institutions of its kind in Poland. The centre is an autonomous inter-faculty institute specialising in European studies. The Centre for Europe focuses its research and teaching activities on political, economic, legal as well as cultural and social aspects of European development, within an interdisciplinary framework. The Centre’s primary objectives are to promote, initiate and support research and education in European studies; develop the European and international collaborative research network; and create a broad forum for the exchange of ideas.
About the ESiA Network

The European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network was initiated to stimulate European studies in the Asian region by providing a reliable platform for exchange and co-operation between European studies academics both in Asia and Europe. As an all-inclusive network, ESiA embraces all academics, institutions and networks in the field of European studies in Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) countries. It endeavours to strengthen existing academic links in Asia as well as facilitate the creation of new synergies within Asia as well as between Asia and Europe, through networking meetings, academic collaborations and the use of online tools.

ESiA is the flagship initiative of the Asia-Europe Foundation under the framework of the ASEM Education Hub.

For more information please contact:

Mr. Peter Ryan
Director for Intellectual Exchange
Asia-Europe Foundation
31 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 19595
Tel. +65-6874-9738
Fax +65-6872-1207
E-mail esia@asef.org
Website http://esia.asef.org
Fifty years since the Treaty of Rome, the European Union (EU) continues to realise Jean Monnet’s vision for a unified Europe. Spanning twenty-seven countries with a combined population of almost 500 million and a nominal GDP of €11.6 trillion, is the EU primarily an example of the EU’s successful economic and political integration? Or is it also, and perhaps most of all, a community of values? According to European Commissioner Margot Wallström in her 2005 ‘Plan D’ initiative, an obstacle between the EU and Europe’s citizens is a lack of any ‘common narrative’ about the nature of European integration. She noted ‘the real problem in Europe is that there is no agreement or understanding about what Europe is for and where it is going’. This absence of an EU consensus on the final goal of European integration – be it among policy-makers or ordinary citizens – has also created a confused and perplexing image for those outside the borders of the EU27. As a result, the EU’s international role often appears ambiguous both within and outside the EU.

The external image of the EU constitutes a fundamental component of an ongoing process of EU identity, linking the perceptions of ‘Others’ and self-perception. Misperception or ill-informed views of the EU’s global role puts the EU at risk of being overlooked or undervalued by third countries with whom the EU is a significant partner. Similarly, low awareness of the EU exposes third countries to the risk of slipping under the EU’s ‘radar’. This publication presents the findings of the inaugural project of the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network, the ‘EU through the Eyes of Asia’. The findings reported here will help to develop a wider knowledge about the international perceptions of the EU, specifically in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand. The analysis provides scientifically valid feedback that can better assist in policy-making, suggesting recommendations to the EU, third countries and the media.

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