

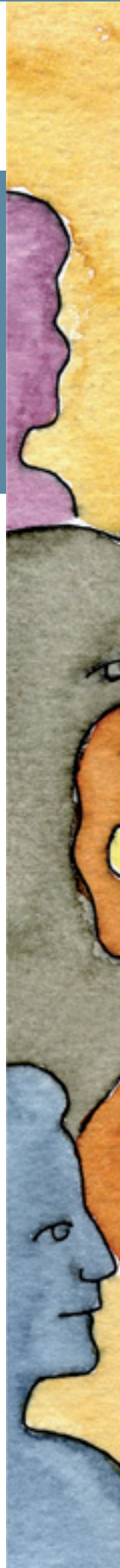


# An Unrecognized Global Authority: Asian Views of the EU's Development and Humanitarian Role

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# An Unrecognized Global Authority: Asian Views of the EU's Development and Humanitarian Role

## Abstract

With the European Union (EU) seeking to shift its identity from a soft to hard power, EU scholars keep debating the global image of the EU. One contribution to this debate is to assess if and how the Union's role as an international political actor is recognized outside EU borders. An examination of external perceptions of the EU may help the Union 'find a new postmodern *raison d'être* that inspires its own populace and appeals to the wider world as well' (van Ham 2008: 137).

This study analyzes daily coverage of the EU in 'popular' Asian sources of current affairs information (highest-in-circulation national 'prestigious' newspapers and national television prime-time newscasts) and compares the most visible media portrayals of the EU to the most typical public perceptions of the Union. The underlying assumption was that public opinion of a nation's foreign counterparts tends to be heavily influenced by the media, due to the limited personal experiences that an average person has with an international location.

The EU's visibility in Asian popular media is marginal, especially on television news. Yet, the EU does exist as an emerging political actor beyond 'soft power' in the eyes of Asian news media, although the EU is mostly found acting politically in 'somewhere else', such as Iran and Middle East, and appears to be a distant entity for Asia. While the EU's political and economic actions do receive constant attention, the Union seems to suffer from a low recognition of its efforts in developmental and humanitarian affairs, fields where the EU can proudly claim to be a global 'pioneer'. Concerning public opinion, the EU is still perceived predominantly as an economic entity that envelopes a number of individual states in Europe. The EU's developmental role is virtually invisible in both Asia's 'popular' news media and in public opinion.

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The ultimate findings of this paper will be of use to scholars and practitioners of the EU's international role and external relations, as well as to EU public diplomacy professionals. If the EU wants to communicate its evolving identity to the world, it

‘must speak to the world clearly, and it must start listening to what the world thinks about it’ (Lynch 2005: 11).

## Summary of Recommendations

In order to influence Asian audiences, the EU should:

- devise and implement programmes to reach the media, such as establishing an EU News agency that distributes news in local languages;
- instruct European Commission (EC) delegation officials to seek out, interact with and deliver EU messages to prominent journalists;
- make use of electronic media via regularly updated local Web sites and EU-Tube, in local languages;
- incorporate EU information into school curricula and sponsor European-Asian exchanges for teachers and students;
- raise cultural awareness through festivals, sister-city programmes and professional exchanges;
- implement a new cultural institution, ‘EU House’ (à la British Council, Alliance Française, Goethe-Institut); and
- provide an EU information bureau for the public and businesses.

## 1. Introduction

According to European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner (2007: 3), ‘those who believe the EU is still principally a soft power are behind the times’. Recent developments in the EU’s ‘hard’ power profile have included a number of peace-keeping operations in the Balkans, Africa and Southeast Asia, the launch of its own anti-terrorism strategy and an anti-piracy task mission, successful negotiation outcomes in global hotspots, and substantive military developments under the European Security and Defence Policy. Although modest, these ‘high politics’ initiatives, in combination with the EU’s commitment to peaceful regional integration, democracy promotion, international human rights, environmental protection, and administration of developmental aid, account for the EU’s growing global presence in terms of both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power. In the words of van Ham (2008:139), the EU ‘faces a serious branding challenge since its foreign policy and its subsequent identity are in flux; the

EU is morphing from a regional civilian power (*Zivilmacht*) into a more fully fledged global superpower’ and is ‘making an effort to shift its identity from soft power to hard power’ (van Ham 2008: 139).

This article discusses assessments on *if* and *how* the Union’s role as an international political actor is recognized outside the EU’s borders. Systematic insights into external

perceptions and images of the EU provides one contribution to the debate on the global presence of the European Union.

There is evidence that EU citizens do wish to see the EU be more active in global politics (Spongenberg 2007). Moreover, several global surveys have indicated that

**Systematic insights into external perceptions and images of the EU provides one contribution to the debate on the global presence of the European Union.**

international public opinion has a predominantly positive view of Europe (Korski 2008)<sup>1</sup> and perceived a growing importance of the EU in international affairs (Vucheva 2007). At the same time, EU scholars have identified certain limitations on the EU's external role because 'people outside Europe are not certain what the Union stands for or whether it matters' (Lynch 2005: 11).

This analysis identifies and measures the images and perceptions of the EU as an international actor in Asia. External perspectives on two of EU international roles are explored: EU interactions with third countries in the realm of 'high politics'; and the EU as a development 'superpower' and the 'export' of democratic values and human rights.

The data comes from an ongoing transnational comparative project, 'The EU in the Eyes of the Asia-Pacific' first begun in 2002 by the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE), University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Cumulatively, this study has involved 16 locations in Asia-Pacific and two in Africa (Holland *et al* 2007; Chaban and Holland 2008).<sup>2</sup> The specific focus of this analysis is based on the findings from the two most recent studies conducted within this larger project: 'The EU through the Eyes of Asia'<sup>3</sup> and 'The Visibility of the EU as a Developmental Actor in South-East Asia, South and East Africa and the Pacific'.<sup>4</sup>

National public opinion surveys explored the EU perceptions in the daily coverage of EU news found in 'popular' sources of current affairs information (national 'prestigious' newspapers with the highest circulation and the most-viewed national television prime-time newscasts). Television prime-time news bulletins were typically selected as the 'No. 1' source of information about the EU by the general public. 'Prestigious' newspapers were argued to be players in national policy debates (Bennet 1990) and believed often to voice the nation's elite view – a semi-official perspective that approximates the government position on different questions. 'Prestigious' papers are read by public leaders, policy-makers, and opinion-formers who take into account the newspaper's views while executing the political activity in the country (de Sola Pool 1952). 'Prestigious' papers are more inclined to cover international affairs and constitute a more reliable source of foreign news for the general public, as well as for other domestic and international media outlets. The sample size used was 3,824 news items from 'popular' prestigious newspapers and 254 news items from prime-time television bulletins, as well as 2,400 surveys with the public (please see Appendix I for more methodological considerations in designing this study).

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<sup>1</sup> A BBC World Service survey of nearly 40,000 people conducted in 33 countries.

<sup>2</sup> As of 2008, the locations studied in the project were New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, Thailand, mainland China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Japan, Singapore, Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Africa and Kenya. The number of countries involved in the project will grow in the future. See <<http://www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz/>>

<sup>3</sup> 2006 and ongoing, supported by the Asia-Europe Foundation, an inaugural project of the initiative 'European Studies in Asia'; see <<http://esia.asef.org/>>

<sup>4</sup> 2006-2008, sponsored by a grant under the Jean Monnet initiative 'Dialogue between peoples and cultures', European Union Directorate-General for Education and Culture (Grant agreement No. 2006-2746/001-001).

If the EU wants to communicate its evolving identity and express its values and norms globally, it 'must speak to the world clearly, and it must start listening to what the world thinks about it'.

The most visible representations and framings of the EU found in the media were then compared with the typical perceptions of the Union found in public opinion across the region. The conceptual assumption is that public opinion on a nation's foreign counterparts tends to be heavily influenced by the news media given the limited personal experiences average people have with an overseas location. Evidence-

based policy insights constitute one of the key objectives of this research. The findings are useful to both scholars and practitioners of the EU's international external relations, and contribute to developing EU public diplomacy. If the EU wants to communicate its evolving identity and express its values and norms globally, it 'must speak to the world clearly, and it must start listening to what the world thinks about it' (Lynch 2005: 11).

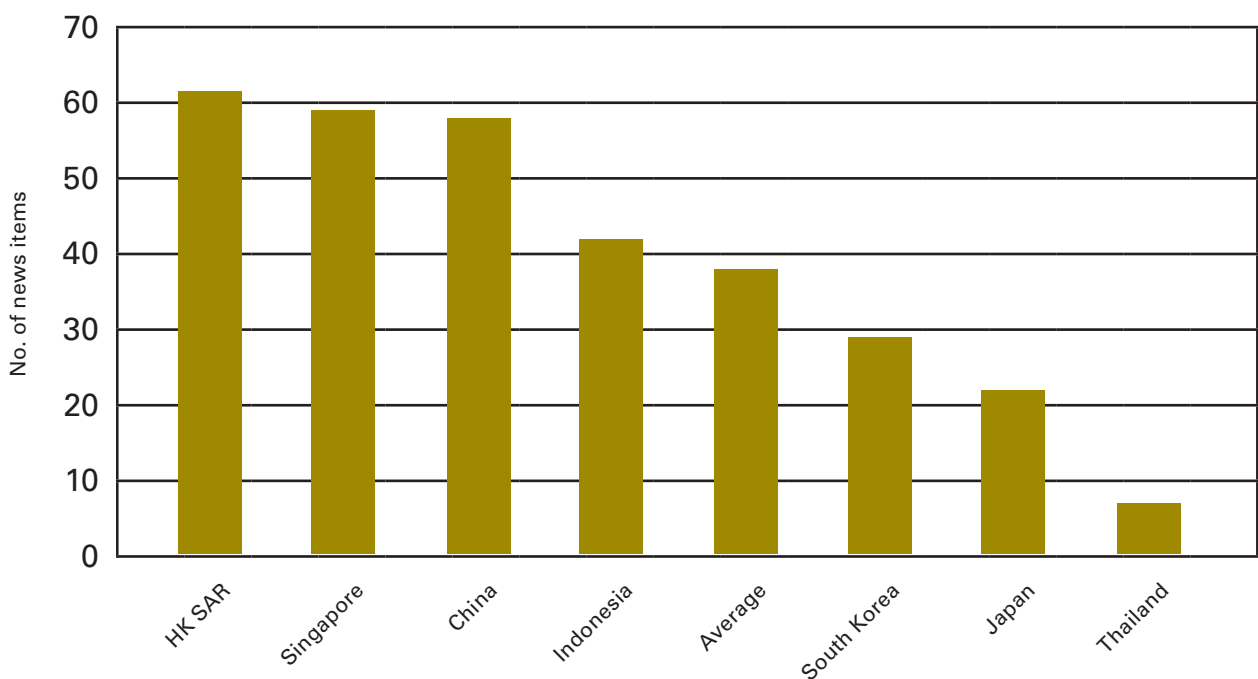
## 2. Some Findings: Visibility of the EU in Reputable 'Popular' News Media

The weekly average for news items referencing the EU was a very modest 6.9 news items per week. In contrast, a weekly average for 'business' dailies was 11 items and for 'English-language' papers 9.6 reports per week. Prime-time television newscasts averaged just a single EU news item per week. With television news bulletins thought to be the leading source of information on the EU in the region (Holland *et al.* 2007), it was revealing that prime-time television produced the least volume of news referencing the EU when compared with the regional press.

Predictably, the actual distribution of the news items featuring the EU in the 'popular' prestigious papers in Asia ranged widely, from a low of just 8.0 in Thailand to a high of 62.2 in Hong Kong (Figure 1).

EU coverage in Hong Kong, mainland China and Singapore was the most voluminous. In Hong Kong and Singapore, local newsmakers focused on Europe's financial and

Figure 1: Monthly average of EU news in 7 Asian 'popular' newspapers



economic situation in 2006 and the euro. In mainland China, the EU's political actions in relation to the Iranian nuclear issue and the EU's trade were constantly highlighted. Among the seven Asian newspapers, *Thai Rath*'s EU reports stood out as being especially low. One key explanation relates to the coup which took place in Thailand in the second half of 2006. As the major domestic event, it drew local newsmakers' attention away from foreign news. Yet another explanation can be found in the nature and status of the paper; it is the highest popular daily in circulation in Thailand but is closer to a tabloid than quality press. The tabloid qualities of the paper may inhibit its editorial gatekeepers from publishing a greater number of serious international news in general, as well as EU news specifically.

For television, mainland China's *CCTV* prime-time news bulletins featured the largest number of EU news per month in comparison with the five other locations studied—almost 12 news items per week (Figure 2). Around one-third of these news items (35 per cent) were broadcast under the programme's "Brief on international news" section. *CCTV* covered the EU's role in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discussion on Iran's nuclear issue, EU reactions to Asian bird flu, the EU's stance in the World Trade Organization Doha Round, and EU anti-dumping duties against Chinese and Vietnamese leather shoes.

The EU's actions in the realm of 'high politics' was given the most attention with almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of *CCTV* prime-time news reports on the EU as an international political actor. The dominant theme in the 2006 sample featured the EU in its interaction with Iran to curb nuclear proliferation. In these television reports the EU was seen as acting both as a common actor (with Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) High Representative Javier Solana being the 'face' of Europe), as well as a collection of individual member states (with the United Kingdom, Germany and France being the most vocal). The EU was represented as an equal and valid interlocutor for other international players, such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Nations. For example, one *CCTV* news item stated (*CCTV* 02/02/2006),

"Today, IAEA committee holds an urgent meeting to discuss and vote on the proposal distributed by France, Germany and UK. In the afternoon of 1st Feb, the three representatives of EU, France, Germany and UK officially distributed their proposal of resolution on Iran nuclear issue to members of IAEA committee, which suggests reporting Iran's nuclear issue to UN Security Council..."<sup>5</sup>

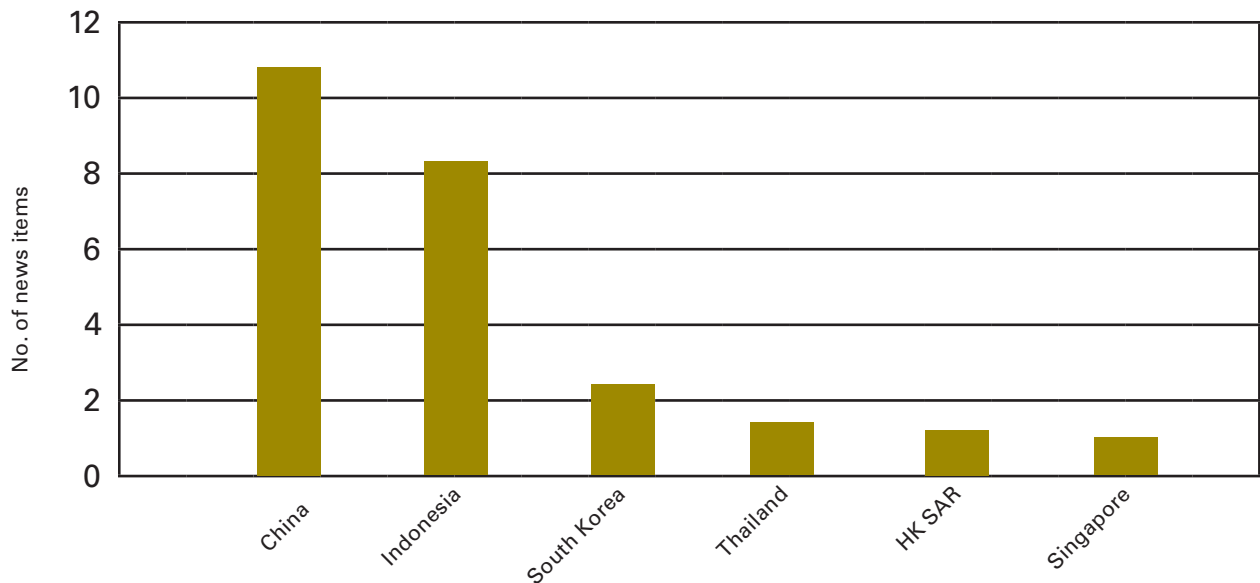
Second highest among the six monitored television channels was Indonesia's *TVRI*'s EU reports, where news on the EU's international actions occupied close to three-quarters (73 per cent) of all EU television news. Most of these reports on Indonesian television dealt with EU political actions in relation to Kosovo, Chad and mainland China. Possibly drawing some parallels to the then situation in Aceh, the Indonesian media covered the EU response to Kosovo's declaration of independence in the context of Serbia's and Kosovo's possible accession to the EU (*TVRI* 20/02/2008; 12/03/2008).

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<sup>5</sup> (original)

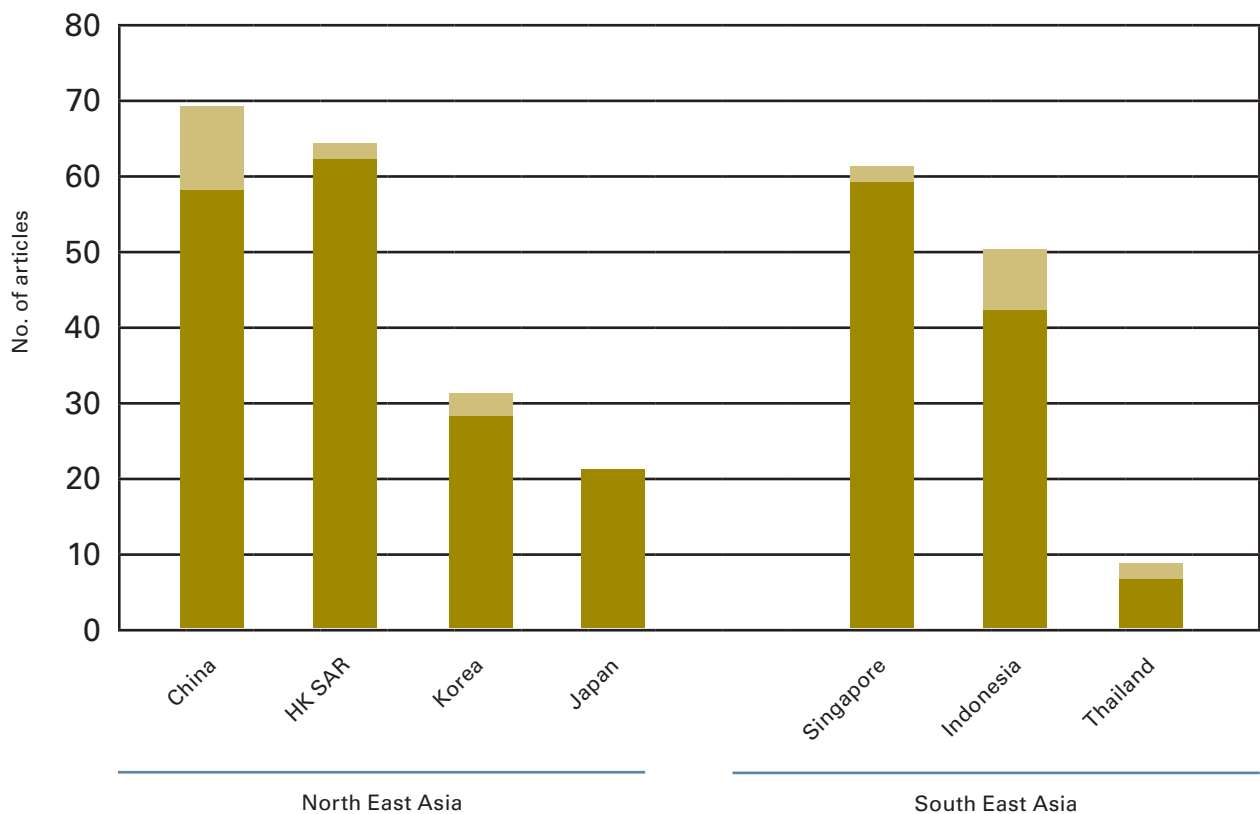
"国际原子能机构理事会今天举行紧急会议，讨论并表决法德英三国散发的决议草案。代表欧盟的法国、德国、英国三国2月1号下午正式向国际原子能机构理事会成员散发关于伊朗核问题的决议草案，提议将伊朗核问题向联合国安理会报告。"

**Figure 2: Monthly average of EU news items in 6 television channels**



Comparing the frequency of the EU’s monthly profiling by the ‘popular’ media (high circulation newspapers and television prime-time newscasts) across the region, mainland China and Singapore were the clear ‘leaders’ in EU news production (Figure 3). This finding can help develop the EU’s communication strategies with Asia; it seems that media gatekeepers in these specific locations and media outlets are more inclined to cover news reports involving the EU.

**Figure 3: Monthly average of EU news per location in ‘popular’ news media**



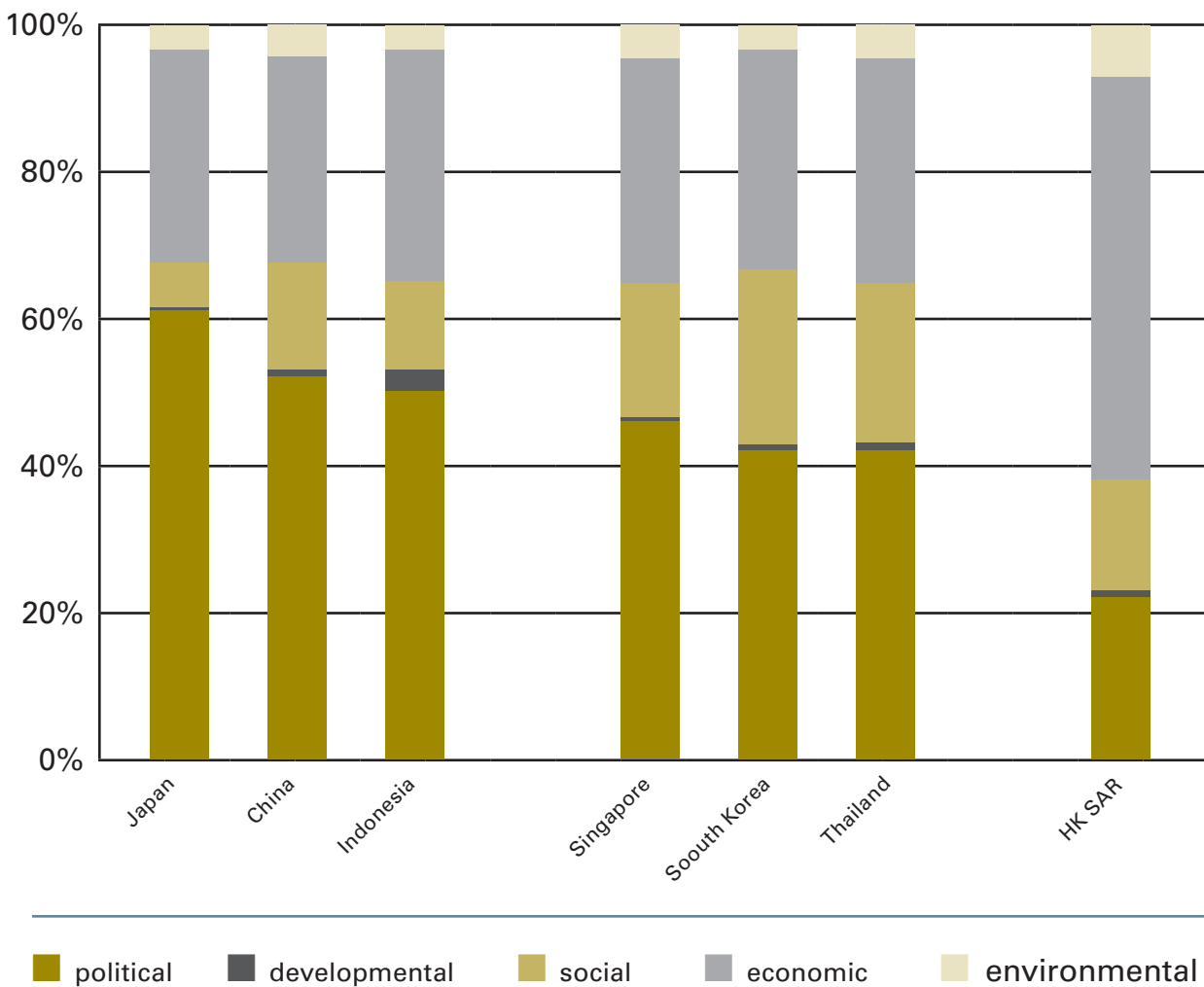


### Visibility of the EU as an International Political Actor

To differentiate between how these reputable ‘popular’ news outlets presented the EU’s actions, this study employed five frames: the EU as an *economic* actor, as a *social* actor, as an *environmental* actor, as a *political* actor and as a *developmental* actor.

As described in Figure 4, three broad groupings of countries can be identified: those where the EU as a political actor represented at least 50 per cent of the news stories; those where this focus accounted for some 30–50 per cent of reports; and a smaller group of countries where reports of the EU as a political actor were minor. Three out of seven locations fell into this first grouping. The highest share for this frame was found in Japan’s *Yomiuri* newspaper. On the opposite side of the spectrum was the ‘popular’ news outlet from Hong Kong, where reporting of the EU as a ‘high politics’ actor was the least pronounced. Rather, the ‘popular’ news media of Hong Kong featured the EU in a traditional manner as an *economic* actor. As was typical for all newspapers, the EU’s development and environmental actions were unreported in the Asian region.

**Figure 4: Framing of EU news in 7 locations**



In the eyes of the regional media, the EU was seen to be the most active in the Middle East, with a focus on the EU’s ‘high politics’ interaction with Asia coming a distant second. EU political actions in the EU’s own neighbourhood ranked next. The EU’s political involvement with Africa and North America were rarely profiled in the Asian ‘popular’ news media, while the EU’s political interaction with South America and the countries of the Caribbean were almost invisible in the monitored news outlets (Figure 5). Clearly, when, what and where the EU is seen as playing an important role is to some degree shaped by the geographical perspective of editors.

**Figure 5: ‘Map’ of EU external political actions**

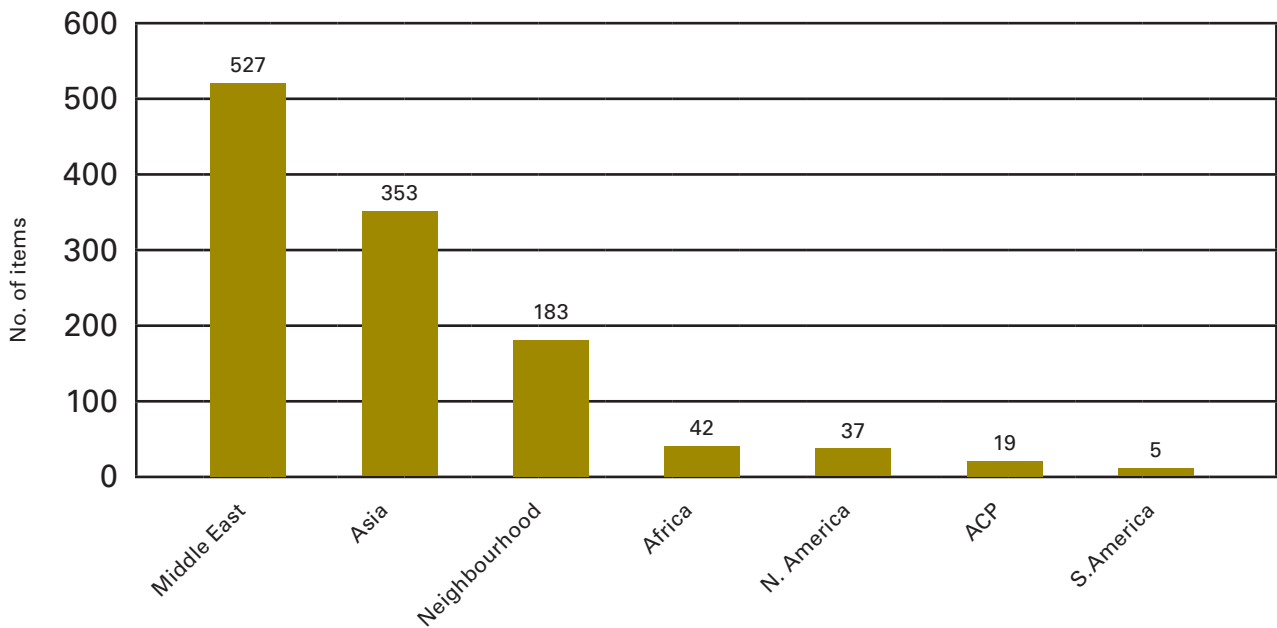
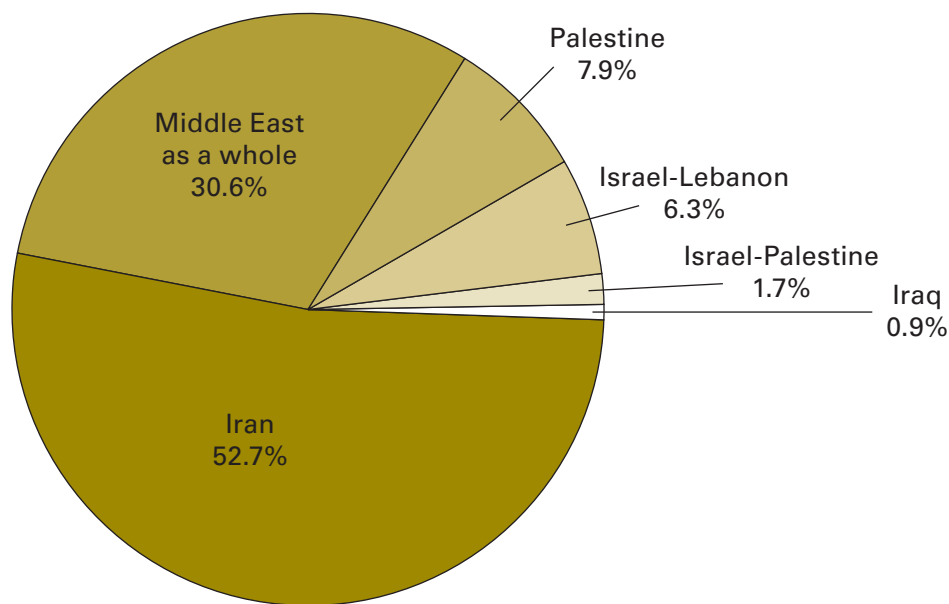


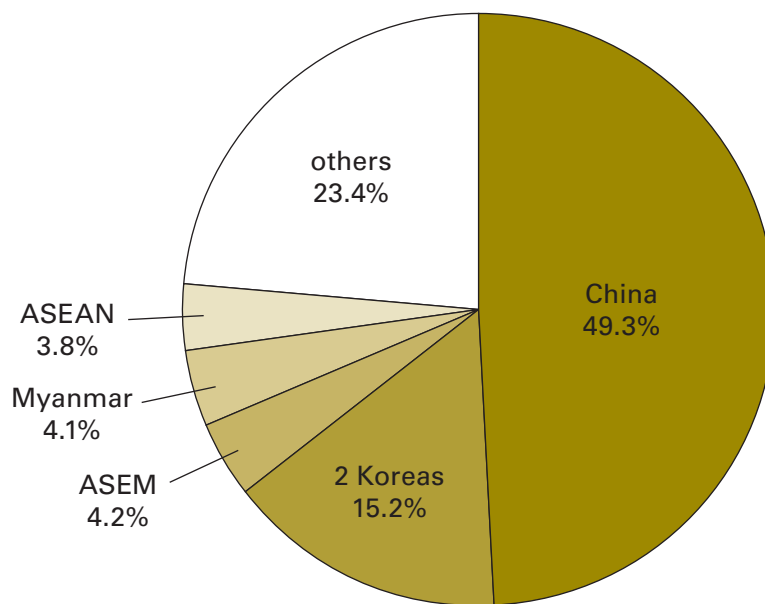
Figure 6 provides an overview of the 527 news reports of the EU’s political involvement in the Middle East. The EU’s efforts to address Iranian nuclear proliferation as well as the Union’s involvement in the Middle East peace process attracted Asian newsmakers’ attention and accounted for 4 out of 5 EU news reports under this frame. Typically, the EU was presented as a proactive force in the peace process. In the Iranian frame, these ‘popular’ Asian news outlets followed the ‘saga’ of the EU’s ongoing reactions to Iranian nuclear developments. These ranged from launching negotiations to halting the negotiations, resuming the negotiations again (*People’s Daily*, 16/02/2006, *Lianhe Zaobao*, 22/09/2006; *Chosun Daily*, 04/03/2006) from optimism to pessimism and uncertainty (*Yomiuri*, 16/12/2006; *People’s Daily*, 11/02/2006; *Chosun Daily*, 25/10/2006). Asia’s ‘popular’ media highlighted the differences between EU and American approaches towards the situation in Iran. The USA was clearly seen and reported as exercising so-called ‘hard’ power involving sanctions and threats. Conversely, in most of the 2006 coverage, the EU was characterized as the epitome of ‘soft’ power, preferring diplomatic means of conflict resolution and insisting on the importance of continuing negotiations (*People’s Daily*, 19/01/2006; *People’s Daily*, 01/09/2006). But in 2008, the EU was reported to be slowly ‘morphing’ into a ‘hard’ power through the imposition of sanctions against Iran (*Kompas*, 24/06/2008; *Kompas*, 25/07/2008).

**Figure 6: Distribution of news reports on EU political action in the Middle East**



Turning to those 353 EU news reports that concerned the EU's political actions towards Asia, virtually half focused on the EU's interactions with China alone. (Figure 7). Predictably, the EU's political involvement with China was profiled the most in the 'popular' news outlets in mainland China (60 per cent of all 'EU-China' news in the region) and in Hong Kong (12 per cent). Singapore, with a majority of its population being Chinese, saw 19 per cent of its 'popular' news media focus on EU-Sino political relations. In 2006, the news focused on China's bilateral relationship with the EU or with individual EU member states (occasionally, the EU was referenced in articles covering Sino-American relations). Notably, the EU's 1989 arms embargo on China was a leading topic. Other topics were joint efforts by the EU and China to upgrade Sino-EU relations to the level of strategic partnership (*People's Daily*, 26/10/2006; *Lianhe Zaobao*, 13/12/2006); China's relations with individual EU member states (seen as a bridge reinforcing Sino-EU relations); and China-EU cooperation in response to the Iranian nuclear crisis (*People's Daily*, 05/07/2006 and 15/07/2006; *Lianhe Zaobao*, 27/10/2006). However, by 2008, the coverage of the EU's political actions towards China reflected a different picture. For example, the Indonesian paper *Kompas* reported the EU's political reaction to sensitive issues such as protests against the Chinese government before the Beijing Olympics and human rights issue in Tibet (*Kompas*, 02/04/2008).

**Figure 7: Distribution of news reporting EU political action towards Asia**



The second most visible topic in the reportage of the EU’s external actions in Asia, the EU’s political involvement with the two Koreas, was mainly recorded by the *Chosun Daily*, South Korea’s ‘popular’ newspaper. It is worth noting, however, that the *Chosun Daily* did not present the EU’s response to North Korea’s human rights abuses or nuclear weapons development (*Chosun Daily*, 14/02/2006; *Chosun Daily*, 14/06/2006). Outside of South Korea, other Asian ‘popular’ news outlets seemed to only be interested in EU actions concerning North Korea’s nuclear development (*Lianhe Zaobao*, 06/07/2006; *YOMIURI*, 18/10/2006).

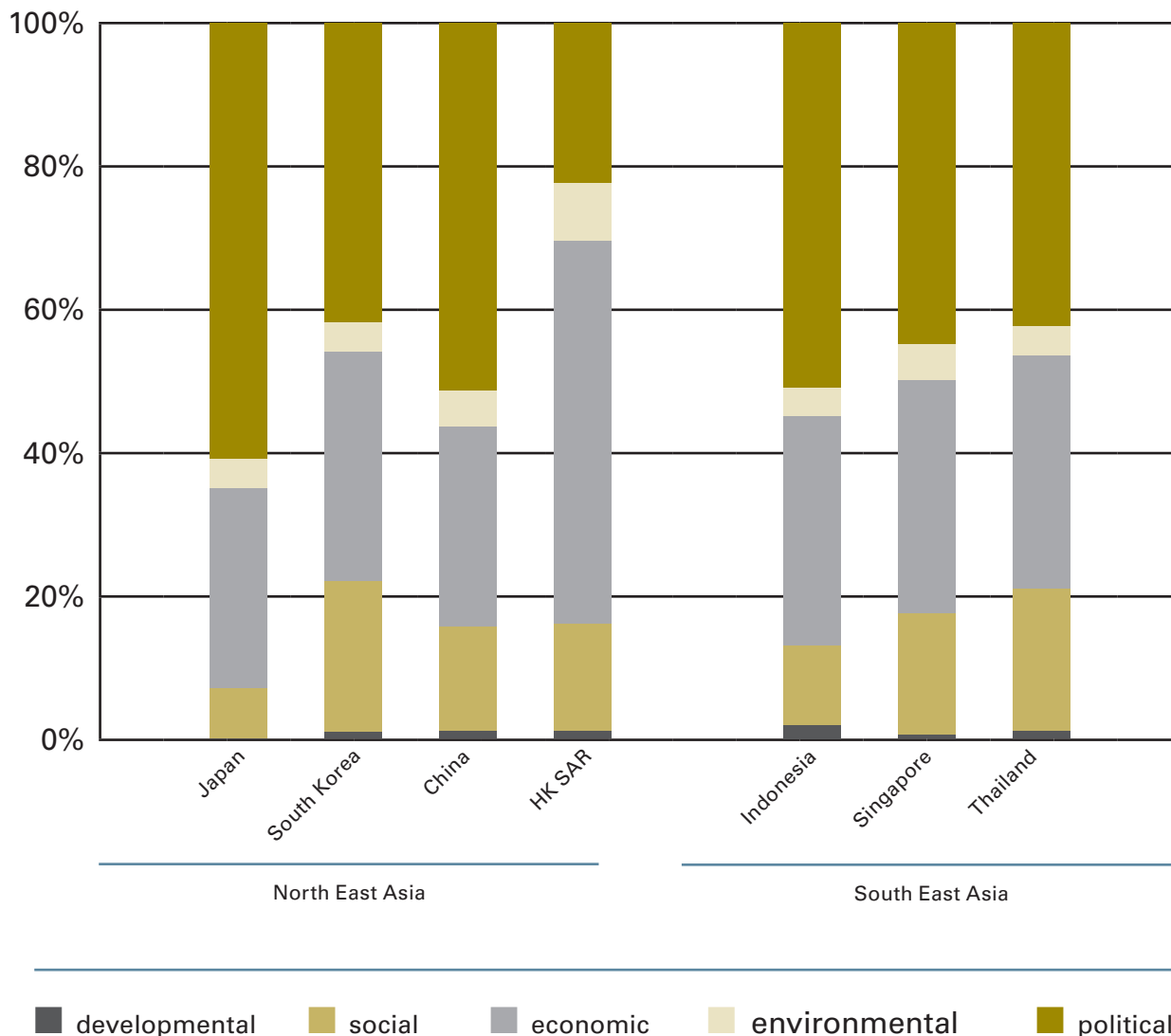
### **EU as a Developmental Actor in Asia’s ‘Popular’ News Media**

The EU’s developmental role was virtually ignored in Asian media (Figure 8). The ‘popular’ media in two lesser-developed Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia and Thailand) occasionally profiled this EU activity, while the EU’s developmental actions were barely visible in Northeast Asian reportage. While extreme, this pattern was generally reflected in the other non-Asian countries studied in the wider perceptions project and it should be a major concern for the EU that its role as the leading global development actor and its promotion of democracy and human rights go largely unnoticed internationally.

**The wider perceptions project found that neither Asian nor world media reported on the EU’s developmental activities. It should be a major concern for the EU that its role as the leading global development actor and its promotion of democracy and human rights go largely unnoticed internationally.**

Similarly, all surveyed Asian ‘popular’ news media outlets paid little attention to the EU’s environmental role. Even in Hong Kong, where EU environmental actions were reported the most, such news reports only accounted for 7 per cent of the total reportage.

**Figure 8: Framing of EU news in 7 locations, developmental frame**



Without forgetting that coverage of the EU in Asian media per se is extremely modest, the EU’s political ‘face’ seems to have achieved a visible profile in reputable ‘popular’ news media. The EU’s economic ‘persona’ comes second, and the EU’s developmental actions were largely overlooked by Asian news producers. When reported, the EU is more likely to be treated as a political actor than a normative power in developmental realms.

***The ‘Face’ of the EU in Asian Media***

A common belief, held since at least the 1975 Tindemans Report, is that a key problem facing the EU is the lack of a single international identity, along the lines of a European Union foreign minister. As former American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger first pointed out, too often outsiders do not know who to call when they want to talk to the EU. Thus, this research has also sought to find out whether there is such a commonly

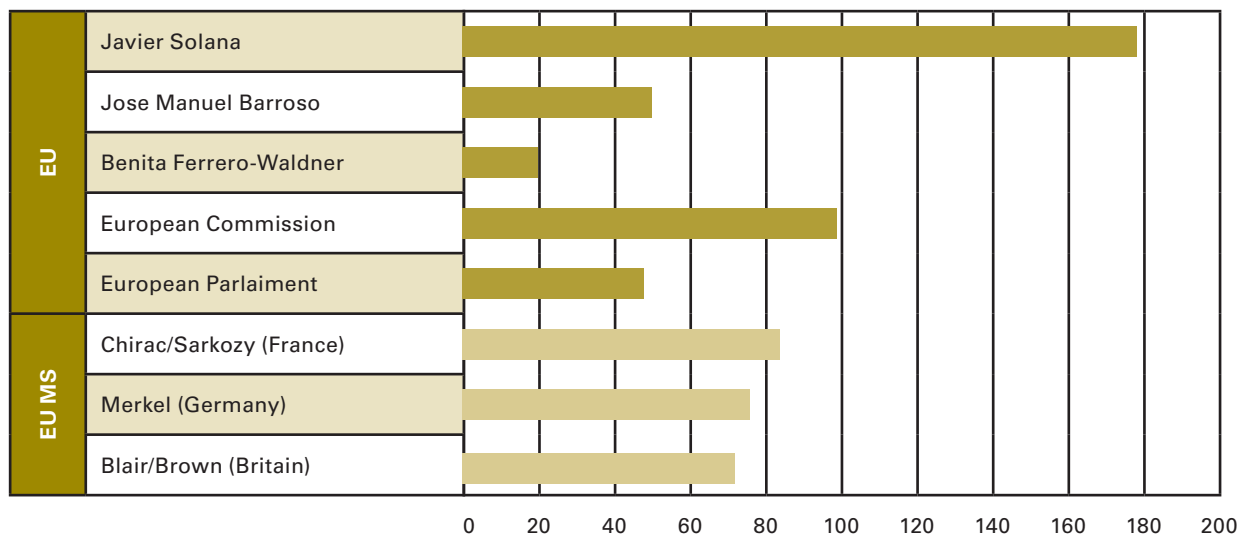
recognized face of Europe in Asia. The findings indicate that the EU is represented by mixed personalities rather than a single image – and that these faces vary according to different policy fields. As a device to help comprehend these multiple personae, the media’s ‘faces of EU’ can be classified into three main categories: officials of EU, institutions of EU and leaders of individual EU member states.

**The findings indicate that the EU is represented by mixed personalities rather than a single image – and that these faces vary according to different policy fields.**

In reports that frame the EU in political terms, Javier Solana stands out as the most ‘outspoken’ EU official (Figure 9).

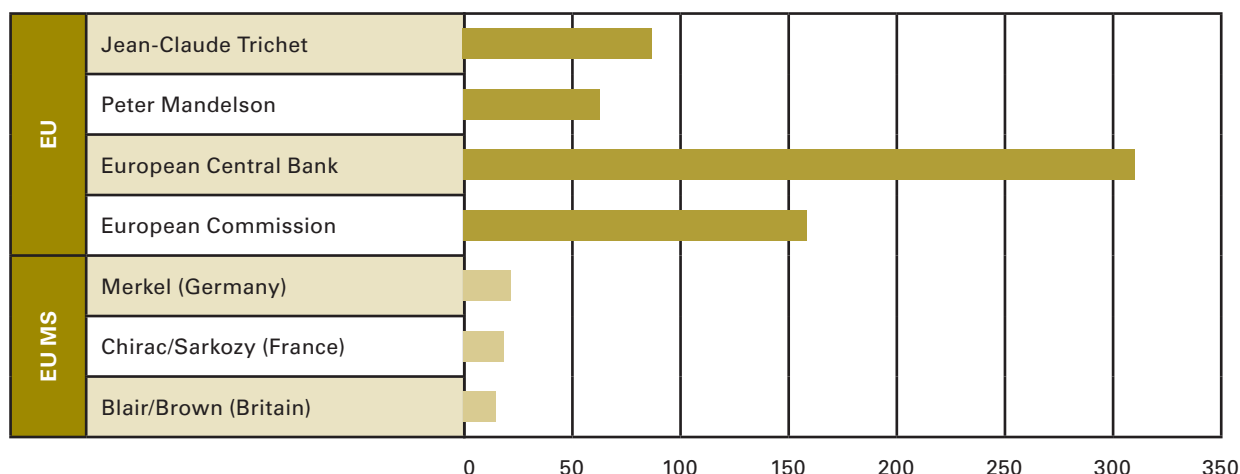
Also, the European Commission, as an EU institution, often appears to speak for Europe, much more so than any specific commissioner (including EC President Jose Manuel Barroso and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner). The presence of individual member states’ heads is strong, yet Solana’s voice is much ‘louder’ in political EU news reports, indicating that the creation of the position of CFSP high representative (even if often erroneously described as the EU foreign policy chief) has had a helpful impact in terms of EU visibility.

**Figure 9: Appearance of EU officials and institutions in political EU news**



If we turn to EU economic-framed news, the reflected personality of the EU as reported by the media changed. Emphasis was given to institutional bodies rather than individuals or member states. Notably, the European Central Bank (ECB) was the most visible actor in economic EU news reports. However, there are regional differences that skew this perception somewhat. A significant proportion of the ECB’s total references (as well as those for its president, Jean-Claude Trichet) were concentrated in Hong Kong (73 per cent) and Singapore (11 per cent) (Figure 10). Moreover, 84 per cent of EU economic news items that mentioned Trichet were from the Hong Kong media. If these two international financial centres are excluded from the analysis, it is the EU’s common institution – the European Commission – that was the most visible spokesperson for the EU in economic affairs. In this aspect, institutional actors appeared to be more active than any individual member state.

**Figure 10: Appearance of EU officials and institutions in economic EU news**



It remains difficult to identify who speaks for the EU in the Asian media. Remedying this situation through the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions for permanent EU foreign policy and presidency roles may help find a solution to this public diplomacy challenge.

### **Representations of the EU in the Eyes of Asian General Public**

As suggested previously, an underlying assumption of this research was that general public opinion towards a nation's foreign counterparts tends to be heavily influenced by the news media, due to the limited personal experience an average person is likely to have with an overseas country. The public survey results of this research broadly confirm this assumption.

When asked the question, *What three thoughts come to your mind after hearing the term 'European Union'?*, interestingly, in all Asian locations, the euro was always found to be among the most commonly recognized images representing the idea of the EU (even though the euro is not used in all member states) (Table 3). In mainland China, Hong Kong and Japan, the euro was the most frequently mentioned EU representative symbol. Related economic perceptions such as 'trade' and 'economic power' were also mentioned as mental maps for interpreting the meaning of the EU for Asia's public. This recognition of the EU as an economic power broadly corresponded to the media's presentation of EU. Furthermore, in Hong Kong, where more than half of EU news was in the economic realm, economic symbols of the EU occupy first and second place. In Thailand, where the EU is reported as both an economic and political actor in equal proportions, in Thai public opinion three of the top four images of the EU were economic in focus. And the Thai public was unique in identifying national diversity and disunity as its No. 1 perception of the EU.

**It remains difficult to identify who speaks for the EU in the Asian media. Remedying this situation through the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions for permanent EU foreign policy and presidency roles may help find a solution to this public diplomacy challenge.**

**When asked the question, What three thoughts come to your mind after hearing the term 'European Union'?, interestingly, in all Asian locations, the euro was always found to be among the most commonly recognized images representing the idea of the EU.**

Elsewhere, the idea of ‘union’ or ‘integration’ appeared to be a relatively common impression of EU for Asian publics. However, the presumed polar opposite idea, namely the recognition of individual states as a primary reference point, was widely cited in all countries other than mainland China. France, Germany and the United Kingdom were most often mentioned as individual countries that represented or substituted for the public’s understanding of the EU.

**Table 3: Spontaneous image of EU for the Asian general public**

	1st	2nd	2rd	4th
China	€	Enlargement	Union/ integration	Trade
HK SAR	€	Trade	Union/ integration	Individual countries
Japan	€	Union/integration	Individual countries	Disparities/ unfairness
Singapore	Union/integration	€	Economic power	Individual countries
South Korea	Union/ integration	€	Individual countries	Exceptionalism/ problems
Thailand	Individual countries	Economic power	Trade	€

**The notable exception in these public perceptions was the absence of any images of the EU as either an environmental leader or as a democracy and human rights advocate. Similarly, the view of the EU as a principal donor of developmental aid was absent. Seemingly, for the perceptions of the Asian public, the EU remained predominantly a common economic entity comprised of individual states in Europe.**

**While the political and economic activities of the EU do receive attention, the Union suffers from an extremely low recognition of its efforts in environmental and developmental issues. These are the two fields where the EU presumes it has leverage as a ‘soft power’ global leader. If that is the case, this EU role goes unreported in Asia.**

The notable exception in these public perceptions was the absence of any images of the EU as either an environmental leader or as a democracy and human rights advocate. Similarly, the view of the EU as a principal donor of developmental aid was absent, a finding that corresponded to the media findings. Seemingly, for the perceptions of the Asian public, the EU remained predominantly a common economic entity comprised of individual states in Europe.

### 3. Conclusions

The EU’s visibility in Asia’s popular media is marginal, and close to invisible on television prime-time news. Yet, when reported, the EU is recognized as an emerging political actor moving beyond ‘soft power’ in the eyes of the Asian news media, even if the EU is typically reported as acting politically ‘somewhere else’, such as Iran and Middle East, and appears to be a distant entity for Asia. While the political and economic activities of the EU do receive attention, the Union suffers from an extremely low recognition of its efforts in environmental and developmental issues. These are the two fields where the EU presumes it has leverage as a ‘soft power’ global leader. If that is the case, this EU role goes unreported in Asia.

Meanwhile, the general public perceives the EU as a predominantly economic entity based around individual states in Europe: these perceptions seem historically tainted



and trapped to a degree in the 20th century. The EU's developmental role was again unrecognized.

Finally, the research has provided unique empirical evidence of the continuing 'Who speaks for Europe?' problem from the perspective of third countries. Such reflections for EU policy-makers are rarely available but invaluable. To resolve this 'faceless' crisis, the necessity to ratify and implement the Lisbon Treaty appears paramount.

#### 4. Policy Recommendations

Reflecting on these substantive empirical findings, a range of policy recommendations categorized under five headings can be identified that address this perception 'vacuum' in Asia.

##### *The Media*

A wide range of audiences exists in Asia. Some are traditional in their habits of accessing information (including international news), others prefer modern technologies. Thus, EU external relations, communication and public diplomacy strategies aiming to reach hearts and minds of wider audiences in Asia should target both avenues for information distribution.

Given the EU's relative invisibility in the popular mass media in Asia, a set of measures to raise the EU's profile is recommended for EU external relations, communication and public diplomacy offices:

- **Establish a common EU News agency** (or service) to disseminate news in local languages to introduce the EU's common actions internationally.
- **EU news must be made more easily accessible.** Large international broadcasting networks in Asia (such as *AsiaNews*), as well as local TV news and media print services, would be more inclined to use 'ready-made' news items and footage.
- **Increase the number of EU Journalism Awards** to bring Asian media professionals into Europe and present them with a firsthand experience of the EU (including establishing productive contacts with European media colleagues).
- **Introduce outward EU Journalism Awards** for European journalists to be placed on exchanges with leading Asian media outlets.
- **Introduce incentives to increase the limited TV coverage** of the EU (co-fund local TV documentaries in local languages on EU-related topics; prioritize EU Journalism Awards to TV journalists).
- **Include radio** professionals into the orbit of EU activities in Asian countries (in many developing countries in the region, radio remains a major source of political information for the general public). Target both AM and FM stations.
- **Stress the new EU member states** in the media's coverage of the EU within Asia. The newest members usually have limited diplomatic representation in Asia and are not traditionally well-known to the Asian public (with the exception of China's and Vietnam's close contact with former communist countries).

## The Delegations

Effective public diplomacy cannot simply rely on the media. The Commission delegations (or future external action service embassies) should play a more proactive role and engage beyond the business and political elites in third countries. In order to achieve this, a number of practical initiatives are recommended.

First, focusing on the delegations themselves, strengthening or creating media liaison positions in the delegations (even in smaller posts) should be prioritized; a coherent and consistent training for public relations (PR) and media liaison officers working in the delegations should be established; and a local staffer in each delegation should be designated to ensure that the media messages spread by the EU are culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate.

Second, focusing on the delegations' relationship with the media, regular EU briefing workshops should be held for local Asian journalists at the delegations and at EU member states' embassies. Each delegation's 'presence' needs to be consistently and regularly promoted through interviews for local and national television news/radio and through commentaries in 'prestigious' popular newspapers (such as a regular column by the head of delegation). Local media professionals (leading writers, editors-in-chief, television and radio news directors, media personalities) should be automatically included on the lists for diplomatic events and receptions by the delegation and EU member states embassies. It is vital to recognize the status of these people as opinion-formers and influential members of their societies. Finally, links between EU press, PR and media liaison officers (both from Brussels and from the local delegations) and EU research centres in the Asian region should be enhanced. There are several RELEX or Jean Monnet-funded initiatives within the region that typically remain underutilized by delegations. For example, the results of the study 'EU external perceptions' presented here could be an invaluable source of orientation training for all incoming delegation professionals.

## New Technologies

New technologies should be harnessed for more extensive and effective public diplomacy. Information delivery is changing dramatically in both the developed and less-developed countries of Asia, and it is essential that the EU engages in these new ways to reach Asian publics and elites.

At the simplest level, regularly updating delegation Web sites is vital; they are valued sources of EU information for local businesses and interested citizens. Given that the EU's Web engine *EUROPA.net* is often too comprehensive to navigate simply, smaller and locally linked delegation Web sites are more useful and relevant to their respective Asian audiences. At the more popular level, EU-Tube should be continued and expanded to other local equivalents, including hosting relevant messages in local languages.

## Education

Interacting with all levels of education is an effective form of public outreach. Each delegation should review how the EU is incorporated in the school curriculum in host countries. A successful model for this can be seen in a 2008 initiative by the European Commission delegation in New Zealand ([www.eucnetwork.org](http://www.eucnetwork.org)). Teachers Awards

(for high-school teachers and university lecturers) should be created to bring Asian teachers to Europe and European teachers to Asia. Existing links, including exchange programmes for school and university students, should be actively promoted. Finally, the untapped expertise and resources of EU studies research centres in the region should be maximized.

### **Cultural Awareness**

The cultural dimension of the EU is a relatively underexploited area where positive public perceptions can be used to enhance EU understanding among Asia's publics. Areas where coordinated delegation activities can contribute would include cultural festivals; exchanges between professionals and pensioners; sister-city programmes; an in-house catalogue for the region's delegations of the most effective and culturally appropriate activities; and most ambitiously, design and implement a new cultural institution, 'EU House' (similar in concept to the British Council, Alliance Française, the Goethe-Institut, etc.).

If public diplomacy is to reach the ground level, the EU needs a 'shop window' in third countries. Universally in the region, delegations are difficult for people to access for security reasons or even recognize. In addition to the official delegation, each third-country location should provide an EU information bureau for the public and businesses. Such a strategy would heighten visibility and enhance real people-to-people interaction at the popular level.

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Professor Holland is internationally recognized for his work on the EU Development Policy and Common Foreign Security Policy. He led the 'EU External Perceptions' project, which was named by the EU's Directorate-General for Education and Culture as one of the 'Top 20 Jean Monnet Success Stories'. His fellowships include the Jean Monnet Fellow, European University Institute, 1987; Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, Freiburg, Germany, 1992-94; Rockefeller Bellagio (Italy) Fellow, 2000; and Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration and International Relations, 2002-06.

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## Appendix A

### 1. Methodology of the Perceptions Studies

The primary goals of the research of the European Union (EU) images and perceptions were to identify and measure how the EU is interpreted and understood in non-European countries and to address those missing elements in the studies of the EU's international identity through collecting a pioneering and unique systematic empirical dataset on EU external perceptions. A common methodology has been applied in each of the 18 countries so far examined.

In every location, the project has investigated media imagery of the EU, as well as the perceptions of the Union among the general public and national stakeholders. Since 2002, more than 14,000 pieces of news have been analyzed; 5,600 members of the general public interviewed in national surveys; and 400 Asia-Pacific national decision- and policy-makers have been interviewed face-to-face. Crucially, in every location local researchers were responsible for conducting the data collection in the appropriate local languages and according to cross-culturally sensitive protocols. This highly systematic methodology was rigorously applied and implemented across all locations, and involved numerous research training workshops held throughout the region to ensure reliability and consistency in data collection and collation.

### 2. The Three Elements: Media, Public Opinion and Elites

For the print media, EU reporting and imagery in the selected most popular prestigious newspapers were investigated (Japan, South Korea, mainland China, Special Administrative Region (SAR) Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia); for the visual media, six prime-time television news bulletins on national state-owned channels were monitored (in South Korea, mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia) (see Table 1).



**Table 1: ‘Popular’ newspapers and television prime-time news bulletins monitored<sup>6</sup>**

	Location	‘Popular’ press	Circulation	TV newscast	Viewers	Period
2006	Mainland China	<i>People’s Daily</i>	3 000 000 <sup>7</sup>	<i>CCTV</i>	34 per cent <sup>8</sup>	Jan–Dec 06
	Hong Kong SAR	<i>Oriental Daily</i>	530 000 <sup>9</sup>	<i>TVB Jade</i>	86 per cent <sup>10</sup>	Jan–Dec 06
	Japan	<i>Yomiuri</i>	10 032 441 <sup>11</sup>			Jul–Dec 06
	South Korea	<i>Chosun Daily</i>	2 300 000 <sup>12</sup>	<i>KBS</i>	35 000 000 <sup>13</sup>	Jan–Dec 06
	Singapore	<i>Lianhe Zaobao</i>	200 000 <sup>14</sup>	<i>Channel 8</i>	N/A	Jan–Dec 06
	Thailand	<i>Thai Rath</i>	1 000 000 <sup>15</sup>	<i>ITV</i>	N/A	Jan–Dec 06
	Indonesia	<i>Kompas</i>	500 000 <sup>16</sup>	<i>TVRI</i>	N/A	Jan–Jun 08

The methodology of content analysis is used in the analyses, allowing for both qualitative and quantitative interpretive insights into the media texts. The underlying conceptual approach is consistent with that suggested by Manners and Whitman (1998: 246): ‘a position from which to commence conceptualizing the global role of the European Union as being greater than the sum of its parts’. Respectively, the key terms under observation and used to delimit the media dataset were ‘the European Union/EU’, as well as ‘Council of Europe’, ‘European Central Bank/ECB’, ‘European Commission/EC’, ‘European Parliament/EP’ and ‘European Court of Justice/ECJ’ and their officials. Consistent with the focus of this analysis (and of the wider project) – the Union as a communal actor in the national arena – member states appear in the media text datasets

<sup>6</sup> Press data from Vietnam and the Philippines is currently under analysis as is the television data from Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines. In the Pacific, television data was not collected as there are no comparable indigenous prime-time news programmes.

<sup>7</sup> Source: *People’s Daily* Online, Source: People’s Daily Online, <<http://202.99.23.198/about/aboutus.html>>, accessed 11 December 2008.

<sup>8</sup> CCTV occupies a market share of 34 per cent nationally according to 2005 statistics from its official Web site, <<http://www.cctv.com/profile/intro/index.shtml>>, accessed 12 December 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Source: *Oriental Daily* official Web site, <[http://opg.com.hk/tc/product\\_newspapers.html](http://opg.com.hk/tc/product_newspapers.html)>, accessed 11 December 2008.

<sup>10</sup> TVB Jade occupies 86 per cent of the TV audience in Hong Kong. Source: <[http://i1.web.vip.hk1.tvb.com/www.tvb.com/affairs/faq/interim/2008/pdf/c0511\\_080827\\_ir.pdf](http://i1.web.vip.hk1.tvb.com/www.tvb.com/affairs/faq/interim/2008/pdf/c0511_080827_ir.pdf)>, accessed 12 December 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) ‘Newspaper Publisher Report’ <[http://adv.yomiuri.co.jp/m-data/english/2008\\_2010/newspaper1.html](http://adv.yomiuri.co.jp/m-data/english/2008_2010/newspaper1.html)>, accessed 11 December 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Source: <<http://www.mondonewspapers.com/circulation/worldtop100.html>>, accessed 11 December 2008.

<sup>13</sup> In 2007 KBS has a worldwide viewership of 35 million according to its 2007-08 annual report: <[http://english.kbs.co.kr/about/annual/KBS\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2008.pdf](http://english.kbs.co.kr/about/annual/KBS_Annual_Report_2008.pdf)>, accessed 12 December 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Source: *Lianhe Zaobao* official Web site, <<http://www.zaobao.com.sg/pages/lianhe.html>>, accessed 11 December 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Source: *Thai Rath* official Web site, <[http://www.thairath.co.th/about/data\\_thairath/data.htm](http://www.thairath.co.th/about/data_thairath/data.htm)>, accessed 11 December 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Source: ‘*Kompas* daily replaces its editor in chief’, *Jakarta Post*, 12 December 2008, <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2008/02/12/039kompas039-daily-replaces-its-editor-chief.html>>, accessed 12 December 2008.



*only* when connected to an EU news story and not when the member state was reported in its own right without any EU connection.<sup>17</sup> The media analysis explores the visibility and framing of the EU in news reporting across various frames: political, economic, social, environmental and developmental.

### **Public Opinion Survey Analysis**

For public opinion, the perceptions of the EU held by the general publics of Japan, South Korea, mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand are reported (representing 400 respondents in each case, with identical questionnaires translated into appropriate local languages) (see Table 2).

The analyses presented in these papers focus on respondents’ answers to just one particular question (from a total of 24 questions asked): ‘What three thoughts come to your mind when you hear the words “the European Union”?’ This question is argued to reveal (stereo)typical visions of the Union. Special attention has been paid to the spontaneous associations that relate to the images of the EU’s emerging role in international affairs.

**Table 2: Public opinion surveys<sup>18</sup>**

Location	Date	Sample size	Method
Hong Kong SAR	November 2006	400	Internet
Japan	November 2006	400	Internet
South Korea	November 2006	400	Internet
Singapore	November 2006	400	Internet
Thailand	November 2006	400	Internet
Mainland China	November 2006	400	Internet

### **Stakeholder Interviews Analysis**

A target of 32 interviews in each location was considered to be sufficient to obtain reliable representative views. The size and profile of the sample and the nature of the data contemplated reinforced the choice of the data-collection strategy – individual, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured on-record interviews – which facilitated a more personal and flexible approach, respectful of respondents’ privacy and status. It also enhanced the response rate significantly. Each interview included 18 questions, and lasted 45 minutes on average. The issues targeted included professional involvement and personal contacts with the EU; perceptions of the EU (images and evaluations) and its importance to their locality (present and future); the state of the relationship and the

<sup>17</sup> The methodology of the study assessed whether the EU and its institutions and officials were reported as a major actor with a member state(s) framed as a secondary or minor actor; or if the member state was a central focus of the report, and the EU and its communal actors were a minor reference.

<sup>18</sup> Data from Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia is currently being collected.

bilateral main issues (present and future); the role of the local European Commission delegations; the EU and Asia-Europe Meeting process; and finally, access to EU news and information.

Interviews were conducted in 2007 in the respective local languages, Thai, Korean, Japanese, Cantonese and Mandarin (transcribed into English) and English. Due to challenging political circumstance in Thailand (the 2006–08 coup), the rate of responses was low. To guarantee a higher representation of Thai elite opinions, the database has incorporated results from a previous series of elite interviews in Thailand (Chaban and Holland 2008), conducted in 2004 which followed the same methodology and employed the same questionnaires. In total, this article analyses responses from 188 Asian elites (Table 3). Both content analysis and qualitative interpretative methodology were employed in analyzing the interview data. A comparative approach was chosen as the study’s dominant framework as it is widely acknowledged to ‘open up new and rather exciting subjects for investigation’ (Lazarsfeld 1976: 487).

**Table 3: Number of interviews per location**

Total	Japan	South Korea	Singapore	Thailand	China	Hong Kong
188	32	27	32	34 (14 in 2007) (20 in 2004)	32	31