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Singaporeans don't attach much importance to EU ties

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Singapore - The average Singaporean does not attach much importance to ties with the European Union even though the EU is the city-state's second-largest trading partner following Malaysia, a published survey said on Saturday. The group of 27 European countries is viewed mainly as an economic bloc and less as a political power.

The findings reported in The Straits Times are included in a new book on the EU's image by the Asia-Europe Foundation and the National University of Singapore's European studies programme.

The 400 Singaporeans surveyed ranked the EU sixth on a list of important partners, behind China, the United States, Asia, Japan and India.

Only 1 per cent of the respondents saw the EU as a model for the 10-member Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The EU "is often considered a distant 'other,'" the newspaper quoted Barnard Turner of the university's European studies as saying. The United States has the greatest influence and clout in global relations, he said, and Asia in trade.

In contrast survey respondents in China ranked the EU as second on their list of key partner countries following the United States.

The survey suggested the legacy of colonialism as a reason for the EU's lack of visibility in Singapore.

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