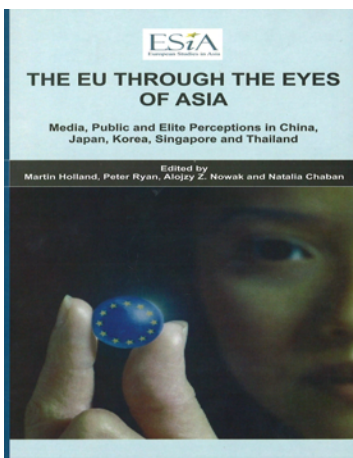


The EU through The Eyes of Asia

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



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SYNOPSIS

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 EU27. As a result, the EU's international role often appears ambiguous both within and outside the EU.

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" undertaken in China (including Hong Kong), Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand. 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 assisted informed policy and suggests recommendations to the EU, third countries and the media, contributing to more effective public diplomacy.

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