Public, Media & Opinion Leader
Perceptions of the EU in Singapore
2011-12

6 June 2012
Singapore

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Public opinion survey, Singapore
March 2012
3 spontaneous images of the EU
‘How important is **Europe/EU** to your country in the next 10 years?’
‘How important is the **US** to your country in the next 10 years?’
‘How important is China to your country in the next 10 years?’
‘How important is Asia (excl. China & Japan) to your country in the next 10 years?’
‘On the whole, how positive or negative is your perception of the European Union?’
Elite interviews, Singapore
Jul - Dec 2011
Who were the interviewees?

POLITICAL / POLICYMAKING (7)
- MPs
- senior civil servants in trade, foreign affairs

BUSINESS (9)
- From law, finance, property, aerospace, trade associations

CIVIL SOCIETY (8)
- From groups for women’s issues, heritage, trade union, arts, sports
- 4/8 are academics by profession

MEDIA (6)
- From media outlets monitored in project
3 images of the EU

• “Brussels, boring, bureaucratic” – Media elite

• “The modern Roman Empire – only without an army [laughter].” – Media elite

• “When will it end? When will we see clarity? When will it get better?” – Civil society elite

• “I would say the first thing is that it is a bloc of the advanced economies. It is quite a superpower bloc, so to speak, in the international frontier.” – Business elite
Is EU a great power?

- Almost all said no, but qualified it (“a soft power”; “an ‘emerging’ power”)

- Like Japan?
  - “To me, the closest example is like Japan – it is a great country, but they are not in the business of trying to influence the rest of the world [laughter]... or change the rest of the world, unlike other powers.” – Business elite

- Size matters?
  - “Yeah, I think it is. I mean, it has a lot of people in it, and therefore a lot of industries.” – Business elite
  - “As the largest economy in the world, it is an economic power.” Policymaking elite
Most respondents (across all cohorts) said more could be done in trade and economic issues. Yet few mentioned the ongoing FTA negotiations. Some in Business were not even fully aware of it (a sense that Singapore has been signing too many FTAs to recall).
“The euro definitely has a lot of problems, but at the end of the day, it’s a freely tradable currency, it’s backed by strong institutions, it’s backed by transparent governments, institutions, democracy. In the end, when you talk about a reserve currency, what you want to look for.”

– *Business elite (banking sector)*, *Singapore, October 2011*
Importance of EU to Singapore, on a scale of 1 to 5...

- Mixed ratings for present importance of EU to Singapore

- Some felt this rating should be seen as relative
  - i.e. EU’s importance not declining, but China’s is rising
    (esp. Business elites)

- A number of respondents did not want to rate future importance, saying it depends on outcome of crisis
On ASEM...

- “Can’t recall [ASEM 2010]. But I recall the first one [in 1996] which I covered. I had a good first impression, but they have not kept up the momentum.” – Media elite

- “Well, I think it’s no secret that Singapore’s a big fan of the ASEM process; we embrace it very fully, at least on the Track two level.” – Civil society elite
Highlights of each cohort

- **Media elite**: the most consistently euro-sceptic of all cohorts
  - but Chinese media (TV & Popular paper): ignorant and disinterested in EU and foreign news

- **Business elite**: the most consistently pro-EU, quite aware of high trade flows between Singapore & EU

- Low contact between Singapore **civil society** and EU
  - Due to historical political restrictions on “foreign funding” & “foreign interference” (from interview responses)

- **Political elite**: standard responses regarding foreign affairs
The most visible EU/EU member state officials:
$n = 1,042$
Media analysis, 2011, China

The most visible EU/EU member state officials
Singapore media, 2006
Most visible EU/EU member state officials:
$n = 2,428$
News Framing, Singapore: 2006 vs 2011

- 2006:
  - Politics: 36%
  - Economy: 45%
  - Social affairs: 15%
  - Environment: 3%
  - Development: 1%

- 2011:
  - Politics: 17%
  - Social affairs: 7%
  - Economy: 73%
  - Environment: 3%
  - Development: 0%

NB. Development: 0%
Dominant EU issues in the Singapore media, 2006

- ECB interest rate hikes
- WTO talks (stalled)
- Iran nuclear crisis
- Middle East Peace Process
- Danish ‘cartoon issue’
- Avian flu
Why was Solana so much more visible in the Singapore media than Ashton is?

- Solana was engaged in Southeast Asia, had visited Singapore, attended ASEAN Regional Forum etc.

- Ashton only made her first visit to Southeast Asia in April 2012, has missed ARF meetings which Hillary Clinton had attended

- If Ashton does not engage Southeast Asia more deeply, her low visibility in the media is to be expected (cf. China)
Most common images of EU in Singapore media, 2011