

## What's Eurasia Thinking?

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Tue, 26 Jun 2012

**Rising Asia and a climbing Europe – what are the mutual perceptions of those in the spotlight?**



While Europe is trying to restore its beauty, economic integration within Asia is likely to become stronger. During the G20 Summit at the paradisiac beach resort of Los Cabos in Mexico, China and India affirmed themselves as crucial 'responsible stakeholders' by contributing to a new emergency fund of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The gesture was nothing short of a life jacket for Europe, which is also of crucial importance for Asia's economic health. The mutual reliance and perhaps mutual suspicion has become intertwined with the current economic limbo, beckoning the question of how is Europe perceived by Asia and vice-versa?

*"The EU does act as a reference point for many Asian decision-makers and citizens. While it is not regarded as a 'model' that Asia ought to emulate, it is valued for the peaceful integration process that it represents. However, over the last two years that positive empathy has been tempered somewhat by a more critical view of the euro and the EU's response to the sovereign debt crisis,"* Prof. Martin Holland, Director of the National Centre for Research on Europe, told The Beginner.

A decade ago it is likely that neither Europeans nor Asians imagined how close the two continents would become despite their geographical and cultural distance, but has growing closer brought about more understanding as well?

Mr. Ronan Lenihan, coordinator of the Asia-Europe Foundation ([ASEF](#)) research project [EU through the Eyes of Asia](#) and its new mirror project - Asia in the Eyes of Europe, examined the mutual perceptions of the European and Asian public, media, and opinion leaders.

*"The understanding of a wider Asia is weak in Europe. The study interviewed over 100 media professionals including correspondents and foreign editors. A major finding was that what sells well is the major Asian economies, with China leading the way. There was less support for understanding a wider Asia or understanding Asia's regional instruments,"* Lenihan told The Beginner.

From an Asian perspective *"Asians are increasingly aware of the impact of the eurozone crisis and the continued economic challenges. Perhaps a sign of this is the large number of news items focusing on Greece and the ongoing issues with the bailout. That said, many Asians identified the EU as 'modern' and 'likeable'."*

What creates confusion among Europeans is the fact that there is not a single, unified Asian voice. *"On the Asian side, unity does not exist. Our findings are of a state driven dichotomy of actors. Asian regional mechanisms were not really identified by European public and media. There is no resonance with people,"* Lenihan affirmed.

Asia's interests and those of Europe are extremely inter-connected. Europe's future prosperity will depend on its engagement with Asia. Besides increasing trade and investment between the two continents, facilitating mutual understanding is also a key aspect of how the Asian Century will evolve, and how Europe will find a way out of the crisis.