

## *Introduction*

# **Asia's Visions of the European Union: Introducing the Volume**

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European Commissioner Margot Wallström in her 2005 “Plan D” initiative identified the major obstacle between the European Union (EU) and Europe’s citizens to be the lack of any “common narrative” about the nature of European integration: as the Commissioner noted, “the real problem in Europe is that there is no agreement or understanding about what Europe is for and where it is going”.<sup>1</sup> This absence of an EU consensus on the end goal of European integration 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 Union. The recent priority given to understanding how the EU is viewed externally has led to the creation of the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) consortium. From its launch in 2005, the ESiA network has embraced the Commission’s imperative and sought to better communicate the EU to Asian audiences. One mechanism utilised by ESiA to achieve this

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<sup>1</sup> Wallström, Margot, ‘Communicating Europe in Stormy Waters: Plan D’, <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/05/396&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>, accessed 31 April 2007.

goal has been the development and successful execution of the “EU in the Eyes of Asia” research project, the results from Phase III of which form the substance of this publication on how the EU is perceived in Asia. This inaugural project has become emblematic of ESiA’s relevance to the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) process and has contributed to the profile of EU Studies in Asia more generally.

The choice of EU perceptions as a research theme reflects both practical and conceptual motivations. At a policy analysis level, the surprising reality is that little reliable prior knowledge exists on this important topic, and what information did exist tended to be impressionistic, haphazard, ill-informed and lacking scientific empirical evidence on how Asian citizens and the media saw the European Union. This deficit appears remarkable when the EU’s international involvement with Asia is considered, both through region-to-region agreements (such as ASEM and EU-ASEAN relations) as well as on a country-to-country basis. For all of the localities examined in this publication, the EU is among the most significant economic partners and a major development aid donor (in terms of direct assistance, project support and preferential trade agreements). Moreover, the EU is increasingly seen as a partner for political dialogue. Conceptually, a focus on perceptions helps to inform us about the global importance of the EU and how this is being interpreted outside of Europe. As noted in an influential 2002 report for the Commission, “Europe does not exist without non-Europe” and “Europe can only be realized in the mirror of Others”.<sup>2</sup> To understand the European Union itself we need to have an external reflection in order to interpret its meaning.

## STUDIES OF THE EU EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS WITHIN THE ESiA FRAMEWORK

This publication is the latest in a series of research projects undertaken by ESiA partners. This interest in EU perceptions began modestly in

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<sup>2</sup> Stråth, Bo, ‘Introductory Report’, *Intercultural Dialogue*, Office for Official Publications of the EU, 2002.

2002 with a study of New Zealand conducted by the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE), University of Canterbury, New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> It then developed in 2004–5 into a trans-national comparative project covering Thailand, South Korea and Australia, in addition to New Zealand. The project was supported by an EU Commission grant and was again led by the NCRE.<sup>4</sup> The major findings of this multidisciplinary comparative research project have been presented in a number of publications,<sup>5</sup> including the volume “The European Union and the Asia–Pacific: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions of the EU” published in 2008.<sup>6</sup> Since 2006, with support from ASEF, the project has expanded to include Japan, China, Hong Kong SAR, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand (Phase II) and Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines (Phase III) with Phase IV commencing in July 2009 to include India, Malaysia and Macau.<sup>7</sup> Early results from this ‘EU External Perceptions’ research were presented in a volume “The EU through the Eyes of Asia” published in 2007.<sup>8</sup> Perceptions of the EU in Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia are the main focus of this book. Looking ahead somewhat ambitiously, it is envisaged that eventually the research will cover all Asian ASEM partners.

The complexity of such cross-national studies, let alone securing the funding base, remains a constant challenge, both methodologically and in geographical scope. The academic contributors to this

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<sup>3</sup> See “EU External Perceptions” website <<http://www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz/NZpercepts/index.shtml>>.

<sup>4</sup> See “EU External Perceptions” website <<http://www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz/comparitive/index.shtml>>.

<sup>5</sup> See “EU External Perceptions” website <<http://www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz/pubs.shtml>>.

<sup>6</sup> Chaban, Natalia, and Martin Holland (eds.) *The European Union and the Asia–Pacific: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions of the EU*, Routledge: London, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> See ESiA website <<http://esia.asef.org/>>.

<sup>8</sup> Holland, Martin, Peter Ryan, Alojzy Nowak, and Natalia Chaban (eds.), *The EU through the Eyes of Asia: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand*, Singapore-Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2007.

volume (together with those from previous volumes) collectively constitute the most significant and established EU scholars in Asia involved in the research of international perceptions of the EU. Importantly, within the framework of this project, these experienced academics established local teams of early career academics. Benefiting greatly from this mentoring, the new researchers have advanced their research training and acquired new knowledge about the EU, thus helping to ensure the sustainability of EU studies in the region. In keeping with ESIA's inclusive philosophy, participation in future phases of this research is open to all eligible and interested parties.

The approach taken in this research project is innovative and original. While some other studies have considered the EU's periphery, such as Turkey and Ukraine, in terms of European perceptions, as well as within the EU itself through the *Eurobarometre*, studies so distant from the EU are rare.<sup>9</sup> The methodology of this particular study is

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<sup>9</sup> Although, in recent years such research has become more fashionable: Global-scale surveys include *World Powers in the 21st Century*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Berlin, 2006, (<[www.cap.lmu.de/download/2006/2006\\_GPC\\_Survey\\_Results.pdf](http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2006/2006_GPC_Survey_Results.pdf)>); 2007 'Voice of the People' annual survey carried out by Gallup International in collaboration with the European Council on Foreign Relations. It was conducted in 52 countries with 57,000 respondents (reported in *EUObserver*, <<http://euobserver.com/9/25036/?rk=1>>); GARNET (2007) 'The External Image of the European Union', Working Paper No. 17/07, <<http://www.garnet-eu.org/index.php?id=27>>. In Asia specifically several studies have touched on perceptions: Final Report 'Survey Analysis of EU Perceptions in South East Asia', January 2003. Framework Contract AMS/451-Lot 7. A.R.S. Progetti S.r.l. Ambiente, Risorse e Sviluppo; 'Perceptions of the EU's role in South East Asia', Framework Contract Commission 2007, EuropeAid/123314/C/SER/multi, Lot n°4; Lisbonne-de Vergeron, Karine, *Contemporary Indian Views of Europe*, London: Chatham House, 2006; Lisbonne-de Vergeron, Karine *Contemporary Chinese Views of Europe*, London: Chatham House, 2007; Shambaugh, David, Sandschneider, Eberhard and Zhou Hong (eds.), *China-Europe Relations: Perceptions, Policies and Prospects*. London: Routledge, 2007; Tsuruoka, Michito, *How External Perspectives of the European Union are Shaped: Endogenous and Exogenous Sources*, paper prepared for the 20th World Congress of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), Fukuoka, Japan, 9–13 July 2006; Tsuruoka, Michito, *EU — Asia Relations and Security Matters (RCO3 on European Unification)*, <[web.uvic.ca/keurope/ipsa-rc3/IPSMTsuruoka.pdf](http://web.uvic.ca/keurope/ipsa-rc3/IPSMTsuruoka.pdf)>. Yet importantly, all these studies remain sporadic, not linked to each other and conducted in *ad-hoc* manner not prioritising a systematic, empirical approach.

multi-disciplinary in focus involving social science and humanities disciplines and has been successfully tested in the previous studies cited above. The research of EU perceptions in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines discussed in this book ran for eighteen months (January 2008–June 2009), and involved analysis of EU imagery in reputable news media as well as in public and ‘elite’ opinion. Most importantly, the analysis embraced the local language in each country and was not restricted to an English-language medium. The local research teams used materials in their original languages which were subsequently transposed, for comparative purposes, into an English-language dataset. In this way we believe we have successfully accessed what is locally perceived and communicated not only across the three research countries (which are explored in a greater detail in the first part of this volume), but across all nine Asian locations which have been involved in the project since 2006 (a comparative analysis of the EU imagery across those nine localities is a subject of the second part of this book).

The national findings reported in the first three chapters allow the reader to see the subtleties in the values and scope of meanings assigned to the concept ‘the EU’ in each individual location. This collection of ideographic cases, addressing a set of common topics, allows this comparative volume exercise an approach to cross-national comparisons known as “nation as object of study”.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the following three chapters employ a different approach to cross-national communication research, namely “nation as a unit of analysis”,<sup>11</sup> by selecting nine Asian ASEM countries as members of a common framework and developing thematic comparisons to interpret the imagery of the EU in the Asian region. According to Livingston, in this approach, “given the prior identification of a number of measurable dimensions along which nations vary (...),

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<sup>10</sup> Kohn, Melvin, ‘Introduction’, In Kohn, Melvin (ed.), *Cross-national Research in Sociology*, Newbury Park: Sage, 1989, as cited in Livingstone, Sonia, ‘On the Challenges of Cross-National Comparative Media Research’ (on line), London: LSE: Research Online, <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000403>>, pp. 12–16.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

systematic relations are sought among these dimensions”.<sup>12</sup> The comparative theory underlying this model “seeks to understand the diversity of different national contexts, achieving it by representing the specificity of each country using a common conceptual language”.<sup>13</sup> The combination of these two approaches adds to the methodological strength of this volume.

Respectively, Chapters 1–3, co-authored by the research teams from three locations, detail comprehensive empirical insights into the EU’s present-day perceptions and images in each society: Chapter 1 by Alma Maria Salvador, Leslie Advincula-Lopez and Manuel Enverga examines the EU imagery in the Philippines; Chapter 2 by Pham Quang Minh, Bui Hai Dang and Trần Bách Hiếu explicates EU perceptions in Vietnam; and Chapter 3 by Cornelis Pieter Frederik Luhulima, Edward Panjaitan and Anika Widiana discusses EU imagery in Indonesia. The three following chapters present comparative case-studies bringing together data from nine Asian locations, including Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. Chapter 4 by Martin Holland explores the EU’s perceived profile as an economic and political actor in four North-East Asian locations of Japan, China, Hong Kong SAR, South Korea, and five South-East Asian nations of Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Chapter 5 by Natalia Chaban investigates the visibility and content of the EU’s imagery in these Asian societies in the fields of social affairs, environment and development. Chapter 6 by Lai Suet-yi and Natalia Chaban compares the visions of the ASEM process in media, public and stakeholders’ discourses in the same nine locations. Chapter 7 by Peter Ryan offers a summary of the major findings of this next phase of the ESiA project and presents how studies of EU external perceptions could be instrumental in facilitating an informed policy formulation when developing the EU-Asia dialogue.

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<sup>12</sup> Livingstone, Sonia, ‘On the Challenges of Cross-National Comparative Media Research’ (on line), London: LSE: Research Online, <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000403>>, pp. 12–16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

The research design underpinning this project incorporated three elements. The first explored EU images in the news media; the second involved a survey about the general public's perceptions of the EU; while the third involved a series of interviews with selected political, economic, civil society and media decision- and policy-makers. It is assumed that reputable newspapers and television are still major sources, indeed *the* major sources, for forming political ideas and information in the regions we have examined. This assumption was confirmed by the public opinion survey respondents who clearly preferred these two traditional media for accessing international news. It can be debated whether the internet will supersede traditional print and television, and hence requiring a modified methodology in future, but in the cases examined in 2006 and in 2008, newspapers and television, and not the internet, remained the dominant information mediums for Asian societies. Rather than repeat the common methodology across each of the studies reported in Chapters 1–6, this introduction provides a comprehensive description of the methods used, criteria and concepts that construct the datasets. In order to follow the arguments within each of the country-reporting and thematic chapters, readers are urged to first inform themselves with this short and jargon-free methodological section.

## **METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS**

This section delves into the basic methodological techniques and guidelines that informed this multidisciplinary and multi-methodological cross-national research. The difficulties associated with such ambitious multilingual research are not inconsiderable: however, the multiple methodologies employed here and the experience of conducting several earlier “EU External Perceptions” studies elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region provides a high level of confidence that can be placed on the empirical findings. Inevitably, all methodologies involve compromises largely derived from limited resources and this study is no different. The budget, while generous from ASEF and participating ESiA institutions, was not inexhaustible: the resulting compromises in methodology are, we believe, comparatively minor and do not detract from the

scientific value of this pioneering empirical analysis of EU perceptions with Asia.

The three methodological elements — media analysis, public opinion surveys and ‘elite’ interviews — are described below. The research teams who were responsible for gathering the data were formally trained during four regional training workshops (held in Manila, Singapore, Hanoi and Christchurch). A key methodological strength of the project was the inter-coder reliability, as well as the enhanced comparability and consistency that were established during the week-long training sessions.

The element of news media analysis was included into the “EU External Perceptions” study since “the regularity, ubiquity and perseverance of news media will in any case make them first-rate competitors for the number-one position as international image-former”.<sup>14</sup> The media data for this three-country study came from the daily monitoring of three prime-time television newscasts and nine reputable newspapers over the six months of 2008. To identify the ‘EU’ element in a news story, the following procedure was adhered to: the news story had to reference the ‘EU’ (or ‘European Union’) or its institutions (‘European Central Bank’/‘ECB’, ‘European Commission’/‘EC’, ‘European Parliament’/‘EP’, and ‘European Court of Justice’/‘ECJ’) or ‘Asia-Europe Meeting’/‘ASEM’ at least once, even if only briefly, in order to be included in the media database. The research was explicitly EU focused; consequently, items that were about individual Member States without any EU reference were not included in the database.

In each location, the teams monitored four media outlets: a primetime news bulletin on a television channel with the highest rating and a nation-wide outreach; a reputable national daily newspaper with the highest national circulation; a business daily targeting specialised audiences possibly involved in business dealings with the EU; and an English-language newspaper read by educated locals who wish to profess their skills in English, foreigners wishing to learn about the locations and expatriates residing in the country. The respective

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<sup>14</sup> Galtung, Johan and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965) ‘The Structure of Foreign News’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 64–91, p. 64.

media outlets analysed were: *Kompas*, *Bisnis Indonesia*, *Jakarta Post* and *TVRI* in Indonesia; *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, *Business World*, *Manila Bulletin* and *GMA 7-24 Oras* in the Philippines; and *Tien Phong*, *The Vietnam Economic Times*, *Vietnam News* and *VTV1* in Vietnam. All outlets are described in a greater detail in Chapters 1–3.

The methods and techniques of the media study in this volume were grounded in the tenets of content and discourse analysis theories, as well as cross-national comparative media research. The media methodology for this project followed that of the groundbreaking 1985 UNESCO comparative media study,<sup>15</sup> as well as a series of pioneering investigations of EU visibility in the EU media,<sup>16</sup> and of

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<sup>15</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle with Kaarle Nordentreg, Robert Stevenson and Frank Ugboajah (eds), *Foreign News in Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries*, Paris: UNESCO, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Research by Amsterdam School of Communication (among its many studies there are de Vreese, Claes, Susan Banducci, Holli A. Semetko and Hajo Boomgaarden, 'The News Coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary Election Campaign in 25 Countries', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2006, pp. 477–504; de Vreese, Claes. *Framing Europe: Television News and European Integration*, Amsterdam: Askant, 2004; Peter Jochen, Holli A. Semetko and Claes de Vreese, 'EU Politics on Television News', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003, pp. 305–327; Semetko, Holli A. and Patti M. Valkenburg, 'Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News', *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2000, pp. 93–109. Other researchers that have contributed to the field are: Van de Steeg, Marianne 'Rethinking the Conditions for a Public Sphere in the European Union', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2002, pp. 499–519; Meyer, Christoph, 'The Europeanization of Media Discourse: A Study of Quality Press Coverage of Economic Policy Co-ordination since Amsterdam', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2005, pp. 121–48; Trenz, Hans-Joerg, 'Media Coverage of European Governance: Exploring the European Public Sphere in National Quality Newspapers', *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2004, pp. 291–319; Kevin, Deirdre, *Europe in the Media*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London, 2003; Gavin, Neil T., 'Imagining Europe: Political Identity and British Television Coverage of the European Economy', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2000, pp. 352–373; Norris, Pippa, 'Blaming the Messenger? Political Communications and Turnout in EU Elections', in *Citizen Participation in European Politics*, *Demokratiutredningens skrift*, Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 2000a; Norris, Pippa, *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000b.

the EU's imagery in the Asia-Pacific public discourses.<sup>17</sup> This current study's methodology involved quantitative and qualitative measures, and it is the combination of these two that provided a particular sophistication in the analysis. Quantitative tools included the volume of coverage of the EU, its institutions and officials in the media; the monthly distribution; type of media outlet; and news sources.<sup>18</sup> Two other categories used in this analysis — the *degree of centrality*<sup>19</sup> and *focus of domesticity*<sup>20</sup> — were instrumental in a more nuanced study of the EU's media visibility. The former one, evaluating if the EU was presented from a major, secondary or minor perspective, helped to identify the importance and intensity with which the EU was presented to the news audiences in each location. The latter one helped to assess the context and relevance of the EU. This category included four instances in analysis, namely whether the reportage of the EU's actions was grounded locally, regionally, in the European/EU context, or in the context of the third party (neither the EU nor the locality in question). Both the degree of centrality and focus of domesticity categories used qualitative assessment which was later classified creating a quantitative reality.

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<sup>17</sup> List of publications resulting from this project (2002–2009) has included more than 50 various publications (for more details see “EU External Perceptions” website <<http://www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz/pubs.shtml>>).

<sup>18</sup> Such quantitative categories as the *placement* and *length* of articles were also used in the study of EU media imagery in this project, however they were not in focus of analysis in this particular volume.

<sup>19</sup> The notion of *degree of centrality* of news used in this volume is similar to the definition used by Kevin, Deirdre, *Europe in the Media*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> The notion of *focus of domesticity* of news used in this volume is also similar to the “concept of domesticity of EU stories” used by Peter, Jochen, Holli A. Semetko, and Claes de Vreese, ‘EU Politics on Television News’, *European Union Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003, pp. 305–327, p. 310, p. 313, p. 318 and the “domestic or European” focus used by Claes de Vreese, *Framing Europe: Television News and European Integration*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2003, p. 81, pp. 85–86, p. 92, pp. 103–105. See also Shulz, Winfried, *Foreign News in Leading Newspapers of Western and Post-Communist Countries*, paper at the 51st Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Washington D.C.: USA, May 24–28, 2001.

Two qualitative measures, namely, the notion of *frames* and the concept of *evaluation*, have also been employed in the analysis.<sup>21</sup> The notion of a *frame* — defined here as the “selection of some aspects of perceived reality to make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, caused interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendations”<sup>22</sup> — was used to categorise whether the EU was being presented (traditionally) as an economic actor, a political actor (something that is possibly emerging), a social actor (setting social norms, values, legislation, etc.) or whether the EU was now being understood internationally more as an environmental actor (advocating environment protection inside the European continent as well as globally), or as a leading developmental actor (providing assistance world-wide in general and in the region/country in particular)? All the data generated by the project used these five frames to describe the media framing of the EU and thereby facilitated the comparative analysis of how the various media in different countries interpret the EU.

Media representations of the EU as an actor were further analysed using the second qualitative measure — *evaluation*. This notion, while contentious and despite its ambiguity, is widely used in related communication studies.<sup>23</sup> The case-studies presented in this volume involved the assessment and coding of the explicit judgment and/or tone of an article towards the EU by native speaking coders. Depending on an articles' approach towards the EU and its style,

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<sup>21</sup> Such qualitative categories as *conceptual metaphors*, *journalistic attitudes* and *character of news* were also used in the analysis of EU media images in this project, yet they were not in focus of analysis in this particular volume.

<sup>22</sup> Entman, Robert, ‘Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm’, *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 1993, pp. 51–58, p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> Peter, Jochen, Holli A. Semetko and Claes de Vreese ‘EU Politics on Television News: A Cross-National Comparative Study’, *European Union Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003, pp. 305–28 and de Vreese, Claes, Susan Banducci, Holli A. Semetko and Hajo Boomgaarden, ‘The News Coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary Election Campaign in 25 Countries’, *European Union Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2006, pp. 477–504.

three categories were identified in this analysis: neutral, negative and positive. Rigorous training and cross-coding assessments were undertaken to ensure the coding reliability of this variable. Evaluation was considered to be a tool to triggering emotional responses from the readers and thus a key for “interpreting discursive representations”.<sup>24</sup> The inclusion of evaluation as an important affective component in discourse analysis rests on the assumption formulated by Ross who addressed the notions of emotions and affects in the international relations: “[W]hereas feelings are subjective ideas, affects cut across individual subjects and forge collective associations from socially induced habits and memories. Moreover, they are experienced by decision-makers and publics alike.”<sup>25</sup>

This comprehensive and internationally benchmarked methodology creates a high degree of confidence and reliability in the media analysis. Other methodological qualifications notwithstanding, the validity of this methodology is broadly acceptable and has been rigorously executed.

The second element in the project design was an analysis of the general public opinion on the EU. The rationale to include this particular information was formulated by Stephen Twigg who claimed that “for the Union to prosper it must project a positive image of itself to opinion formers and to the ‘man in the street’ both within and beyond its borders.”<sup>26</sup> While the survey’s conception, design and analysis were undertaken by the NCRE and ESiA research group, the administration of the surveys was sub-contracted to a professional social research company — an established Asia-Pacific survey company, TNS-Global.com. This partnership ensured a very high level of methodological precision in collecting the data thus warranting a higher reliability of the findings. The surveys in the

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<sup>24</sup> Ross, Andrew, ‘Coming in from the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions’, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2006, pp. 197–222, abstract.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> Twigg, Stephen, ‘Preface’ in de Gouveia, Philip Fiske de and Hester Plumridge, *European Infopolitik: Developing EU Public Strategy*, London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005, p. VI.

Philippines and Vietnam were administered via telephone. The survey in Indonesia was conducted in a face-to-face format, taking into account the low level of telephone technology penetration.

The public opinion fieldwork was conducted in November–December 2008 (including a pilot phase prior to administering the survey in early November). The sample size — 400 respondents in each location — was dictated by budgetary constraints and gave a  $\pm 4.9\%$  degree of accuracy. While a total of 1,200 respondents were approached in this stage of the ESiA project, the nine-country sample (explored in the three comparative chapters in this volume) resulted in an impressive sample of 3,600 members of the general public in the region. Each sample was stratified by age (18–64) and gender for each local population. The identical questionnaires administered in local languages used in this study comprised 20 questions (including two open-ended questions, nine structured questions and nine demographics questions). Transcribed verbatims in local languages were subsequently translated into English for comparative purposes. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, while the extensive verbatim answers in the open-ended questions were assessed qualitatively.

Turning to the methodology used in the study of the national stakeholders' opinion on the EU, the sampling strategy, data collection methodology, and data analysis techniques were chosen to guarantee the “output of the rigorous and reliable data which could be used in providing evidence-based policy recommendations”<sup>27</sup> and thereby ensure a reliable measure of the EU–Asia dialogue. Indeed, as Michael Brecher argued, “decision makers act in accordance with their perception of reality, not in response to reality itself”.<sup>28</sup> These surveys of ‘elite’ opinion of the EU were conceived as a series of ‘snap-shots’ of perceptions across time as well as across diverse groups of local decision- and policy-makers. This approach corresponded to

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<sup>27</sup> Enticott, Gareth, ‘Multiple Voices of Modernization: Some Methodological Implications’, *Public Administration*, Vol. 82, No. 3, 2004, pp. 743–756.

<sup>28</sup> Brecher, Michael, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*. New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968, p. 298.

the goals of the project — to identify the comprehensive range of perceptions of and attitudes towards the EU that exist in Asian public discourses.

A target of thirty-two interviews in each location was set (eight for each sector — business, political, media and civil society). The random selection of respondents in each of the three locations resulted in a 96-person sample.<sup>29</sup> The overall sample from the nine countries examined in the three comparative chapters of this volume was 265 respondents. Information was collected through individual semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews that lasted for up to one hour in duration.<sup>30</sup> This technique has proven to be particularly effective for approaching ‘key informants’ — it is more personal, flexible, respects privacy and status, and can generate greater openness and trust between interviewer and interviewee.<sup>31</sup> Interviewees were given the option of their comments either being anonymous or associated with them directly.

Predictably, this methodology leant towards qualitatively rich discursive comments and a wider utilisation of open-ended responses in contrast to the more structured online public opinion surveys — the pre-tested 18-question questionnaire featured only two structured questions. The study used two versions of the questionnaire — one for business, political and civil society respondents, and another slightly modified for media practitioners. The question order rotated depending on the flow of conversation.

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<sup>29</sup> In Vietnam, 33 respondents were interviewed, in Indonesia 32, and in the Philippines 31.

<sup>30</sup> This particular method of information gathering was preferred to focus group discussions (a method used by A.A.R.S. Progetti S.r.l. in a 2003 study of elite perceptions on the EU in South East Asia). Schedule flexibility in arranging face-to-face interviews, undivided attention to the interviewee by the researcher during the conversation, and more open atmosphere during the individual interviews decided for that particular method against the focus group option.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, Richard and Gareth Enticott, ‘Using Multiple Informants in Public Administration: Revisiting the Managerial Values and Actions Debate’, *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2004. pp. 417–34.

The sampling strategy for the 'elite' interviews involved the selection of key informants in each location and across the four designated sectors. This approach allowed for a better categorisation and integration of the results and provided an insight into the nature of current links that domestic decision- and policy-makers had with the EU, as well as their personal knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards the Union. The selected political stakeholders were identified from members of national parliaments, or equivalents, representing different political views. Media 'elites' were identified as the editors/news directors and lead reporters of the reputable media outlets. Civil society members were representatives of various national and international non-governmental organisations. Business respondents were identified from members of national business round-tables and other official business networks, as well as leading international traders. The interviews took place in relevant political and economic centres — Manila, Jakarta, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, during March–September 2008.

The study's analysis utilised qualitative interpretative methodology capitalising on its strong insight and interpretation. To improve the reliability of this particular attitudinal research, the collected data was analysed using content analysis methodology incorporating cognitive semantics tools. The employed methodology revealed the categories which 'mapped' the concept 'EU' via re-constructing mental 'schemata' of that concept.

Significantly, the three elements of this research in each location — media content analysis, the general public survey and the interviews with the national stakeholders — were ultimately designed and positioned within a framework of a large-scale cross-national comparative study — a type of research which is described as "exciting but difficult, creative but problematic".<sup>32</sup> According to Blumler *et al.*,

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<sup>32</sup> Livingstone, 'On the Challenges of Cross-National Comparative Media Research', 2003, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Blumler, Jay, Jack McLeod, and Karl Erik Rosengren, 'An Introduction to Comparative Communication Research', in Blumler, Jay, Jack McLeod, and Karl Erik Rosengren (eds.), *Comparatively Speaking: Communication and Culture across Space and Time*, Newbury Park: Sage, 1992, pp. 3–18, p. 8.

comparative research has “a more creative and innovative role — opening up new avenues”,<sup>33</sup> yet it features numerous theoretical, methodological, empirical and practical challenges. The consistent standards of research methods and techniques exercised in this volume, the extensive contextualisation and a two-tier approach to the comparison (i.e., ‘nation as a object of study’ and ‘nation as unit of analysis’) are argued to be instrumental in overcoming the above listed challenges. Most importantly, using the words of Livingston, this comparative work “reli[ed] not only on time, funding and mutual interest, but also on good will, on trust, and on what Hochschild (1983) terms ‘emotional labour’...”.<sup>34</sup> It is hoped that our readers will feel and share excitement and passion our multinational team experienced when working together and writing this volume.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The audience for this publication straddles academics, students, politicians, officials and the media, and the goals and expected results intentionally combine academic concerns with those of policy. First, 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 the ongoing process of EU identity construction, linking the perceptions of ‘Others’ and self-perceptions. Second, the analysis provides scientifically valid feedback that can assist better informed policy and suggests recommendations to the EU, third countries and the media and contribute to more effective public diplomacy. Misperceptions or ill-informed views of the EU’s global role puts the EU at risk of being overlooked or undervalued by third countries for whom the EU is a significant partner. Similarly, low awareness of the EU exposes third countries to the risk of slipping off the EU’s ‘radar’. Third, this publication is just one mechanism that will be used to disseminate the results of the research among academic communities and EU policy-makers. The

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<sup>34</sup> Livingstone, ‘On the Challenges of Cross-National Comparative Media Research’, 2003, p. 10.

dataset that has been collected will be available from ESiA for secondary analysis by academics and graduates alike throughout ASEM. Furthermore, complementary scholarly publications, media publications, seminars, conferences and workshops targeting young scholars, academics, political practitioners and media professionals will be organised in order to increase awareness and access to ESiA's ongoing research on EU perceptions in our region.

The content of this publication is empirically rich and the research has produced a series of fundamental questions relating to the EU's international identity and global role. Are there cognitive and communication gaps between the EU and the external world? What are the implications for the EU's negotiation effectiveness and perception? And, what conclusions for the media and public diplomacy emerge? Hopefully, the recommendations from this study will go some way to addressing these key questions and demonstrate how the EU is understood and seen from third countries and help to identify and define Europe for itself and better inform EU public diplomacy.