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## Unified currency chance with Asian Union, says expert

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Jane Metlikovec

June 05, 2008 01:10pm

**A UNIFIED currency and open borders could follow any union between Australia and Asia, an expert says.**

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd today announced his plan to create a broad Asia-Pacific Community by 2020.

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**What would you name a unified Australian/ Asian currency? Comment below.**

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Professor Tim Lindsey from Melbourne University said an Asian Union was a fantastic idea.

"We are living in the "Asia century," he said.

"Australia is uniquely positioned as the only Western society in Asia and we have never capitalised on that, despite most of our commodities going to Asia."

He said Australia was still suffering from a ``colonial hangover" by setting ourselves apart from Asia.

"This perception of ourselves as a European nation has to change," he said.

"Our government-to-government relations have improved with Asia so much that we do need to capitalise on it now."

Opposition MPs are divided about Mr Rudd's plan, which he put forward during a speech to the Asia Society Australasia Centre last night, just days before he heads off on a week-long visit to Japan and Indonesia.

Mr Rudd has appointed former foreign affairs secretary and one-time ambassador to Indonesia Richard Woolcott as Australia's envoy to sell the idea.

Opposition's foreign affairs spokesman Andrew Robb says the plan is presumptuous.

"His (Kevin Rudd) first job is not to be making pronouncements about grand architecture for the region, telling China, Indonesia and Japan and India how they will be organised as a region by Australia in the next 20 years," Mr Robb told ABC Radio.

"It is a little bit presumptuous.

"Once he has demonstrated a capacity to build and maintain and grow strong bilateral relationships with all these countries (and) repair the damage he has already done with some of these countries, then we can... maybe influence the broader architecture that shapes the region."

But opposition trade spokesman Ian Macfarlane is less critical of the plan, saying he wants to see the detail before making a judgment.

"At face value, it's a step in the right direction,"he told reporters.

"But, as we know, from Kevin Rudd he's all about spin and not good on detail so when I see the detail I'll have more to say."

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Kevin Rudd wants to create an Asia-Pacific Union similar to the European Union. 6/2008 *Sky News*

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