



PETRA MÅNSTRÖM
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Asia got their self-image of Europe

EAST There is not much that unites all Asian countries. To the extent that there is an Asian identity, it is based on common experiences of encounters with Europe and the new self-confidence brought by the Japanese victory over Russia in the war 1904-05.



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December 20, 2012 at 01:00. Updated: 20 december 2012 at 19:31

What is Asia? We talk almost daily about Asia, the Asian food, that something happened in Asia, that have traveled in Asia. My son, who was born in Japan, talk about their Asian friends here in Sweden. So, a little loose, has spoken of Asia ever since the ancient Greeks. They argued, however, immediately Asia Minor. Alexander the Great did the larger Asia and brought Greek historians to India. Some limits to what Asia did not exist. It expanded as it made contact with states and cultures further east.

It was the Europeans in the Middle Ages divided the world into "a puzzle of territories" (Christian Grataloup). Asia became a concept when Europe became aware of itself and began to believe that the area to the east was different.

The German historian Jürgen Osterhammel notes in "Die Entzauberung Asia: Europe und die asiatische Reiche im 18th Jahrhundert" (1998) that in Europe for a long time held similarities with Asia in the foreground. But in the 1700s performed what he called a collective antagonism took the form of a cultural struggle, as in the early 1800s turned into contempt.

How do we perceive Asia today? A large international research project in eight EU countries have recently resulted in a book, *Asia in the eyes of Europe. Images of a rising giant* (red: Bersick, Bruter, Chaban, Iglesias and Lemlihan, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 304 s). The intention was that in Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Romania, UK, Germany and Austria examine perceptions of Asia in the public, media and policy makers, in order to improve cooperation between Europe and Asia, especially in the organization Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

It may be added that the definition of Asia as EU's "foreign ministry", the European External Action Service (EEAS), uses do not include, for example, the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). A fundamental question in the survey was whether the public and decision-makers perception at all consistent with the EU's view of what Asia is. Understanding perceptions've an impact on the policies and how it is received now that there is so much talk about Asia's dramatically increased importance. There are even within ASEM a special foundation, the Asia-Europe Foundation, to - as they say in the research report - "facilitate cooperation and counter the perceived threat of clash of civilizations."

The survey showed that there is a very vague and diverse views of what Asia is. Not surprisingly dominated the image of China than the other countries, while the knowledge of regional cooperation organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asian Development Bank was small despite the EU attaches great importance to cooperation with them. The belief that they can resolve conflicts and problems were also small.

They surveyed journalists, for its part that it simply is no Asian identity, or as an editor at the French *Le Monde* said: "China never talk about Asia, China tells China. India speaks of India / ... / We have an Asia Desk, but that we write about China and what we write about / ... / India have totally different characters."

When the respondents were to choose three words that they spontaneously came to mind when they hear "Asia", it was just 10 percent who said "politics". Instead, they thought primarily to "people and population", "geography" and "Economy and Trade". The notion that China is the economically most important country in Asia and that Asia is a "giant" were common.

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The most striking was that Asia is widely regarded as a rather insecure and a bit dangerous part of the world. Increased economic competition, lack of human rights, crime and environmental degradation were causes. Asians would surely be surprised Europeans Asia Image, said the researchers.

One wonders then understood what image Asians themselves of Asia. The Indian writer *Pankaj Mishra*, now living in London, has been in the inspiring book *From the ruins of empire. The intellectuals who remade Asia* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 368 s) tackled the issue from a historical perspective.

Mishra's starting point is Japan's victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. It was a turning point in history because it was the first time a European power had been defeated by an Asian state. The Russian troops suffered loss to loss of land. When the Tsar's fleet had been traveling for six months from its Baltic home port, and finally reached the cut in his first clash with the Japanese in the Battle of Tsushima.

In **South Africa, realized** the still unknown lawyer Mohandas Gandhi that "the roots of the Japanese victory has spread out so far and wide that we can not imagine what fruits they will bear." School boy Jawaharlal Nehru hoped that he would have a role now India and Asia would free himself from "Europe's slavery." Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk, was in Damascus and believed in Japan as a model for the reform of the Ottoman Empire. Sun Yat-sen, the future president of China, where the last emperor would soon be overthrown, was on a ship in the Suez Canal in 1905 and hailed by Egyptian workers who thought he was Japanese.

All these countries had long been victims of European colonialism. The Ottoman Empire was a long time to dissolve, the Indian subcontinent was under British rule, Vietnam under French, Indonesia under the Dutch. China had since the 1500s repeatedly humiliated by all Western powers. The prevailing view, even among many of the victims were in Darwinian spirit that all these peoples and countries were not robust enough to withstand the new rulers and the new modern era. Of Western technology, management, government, ratify laws, financial systems, tax collection, military and civil society stood for progress and, with Mishra's words, "confused the Asians."

Many intellectuals did not think Europe had something better to offer but their own cultures had nothing to put against. Rabindranath Tagore, who would become Indian Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, wrote: "Asia remains forever accountable in European courts and takes forever her sentence as the last word, as she acknowledges that the only right thing for us is to eradicate three quarters of our society and its entire base to replace it with English brick and mortar. English as English engineers 'plans.'"

Many found it that Europeans were too horrible. "Intoxicated by the power myfängna strong wine, scary as wild animals who do not see the difference between good and evil, female slaves, crazy with their lusts, soaked in alcohol from head to toe, without any rules for rituals, unclean, materialistic, dependent objects, grabbing other land and assets anyway / ... / the body is their self, their appetite the only important - such is the image of the western demon in Indian eyes," wrote the Indian thinker Swami Vivekananda.

The Japanese victory meant hope for a new era. In Europe encouraged sovereignists in Finland and Poland. In Asia were united for the first time people from Turkey in the west to China in the east by a common quest: liberation from Western colonialism, even from western morality - or lack thereof. By following the Arabic, Indian, Chinese and Japanese intellectuals, their starting point in their history and culture and their dreams, Mishra is on a completely different side of 1800 - and the early 1900s Asia than usual for stationary despotism.

Inspired by the Japanese victory pilgrimages young to Tokyo. How did you come to Japan, which in 1853 of U.S. warships had been forced to open their borders, in 50 years had made equal, yes on some level exceeded, Westerners? And yet preserved their individuality?

Young Muslims from countries as diverse as Egypt, Turkey and Iran went to Tokyo as well as thousands of Chinese people. In India, where it already had been anti-British riots, began collecting money to send students, especially from the radical Bengal, to Japan. The leading Vietnamese nationalist Phan Boi Chau lived there for four years. Mishra writes that "Japan's victory over Russia ran on an intellectual process that could not be turned back."

Even the Chinese, who for 2000 years talked about China as the world's center to which other countries in suzerainty could pay tribute, now saw Asia as a community that could stand up to Europe. Sun Yat-sen wrote: "People thought and believed that European civilization was progressive - science, industry, manufacturing, and armor - and that Asia had nothing that could compare to it. Therefore, they also started from Asia could never make opposition to Europe, they would never be able to shake off European oppression."

The secret of Japan's success lay partly in Japan in the 1600s had succeeded in closing its borders to foreign influence you not want to know but allowed some knowledge to seep into. Shogunate had ended with a brief civil war in the late 1860s, but the new management team of young dedicated samurai created a new society by using the same principle as the previous government: to retrieve selected lessons outside. Tomorrow's most prominent intellectuals, Yukichi Fukuzawa, was to begin with in the same way as Europeans contemptuous attitude towards (other) Asians and advocated that it would turn them back.

There was lively debate on the development of the company should focus on and what place Japan should have been in the international arena. At the same time you could see how Europe and the U.S. to bed with increasing influence in Asia. Why should not Japan could become a forerunner in Asia? Japan's task was to get the West to respect Asia. Japan may even be able to liberate Asia from colonialism. Japan would act as the leader of "PanAsianism".

With the victory over Russia emerged as this increasingly possible. Japan, however, had simultaneously colonialist ambitions as no different from the Western. It turned out victories in both Sino-Japanese War 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese War. 1910 Korea became Japanese colony. Then came the invasion of Manchuria who became Japanese vassal state and the war in China. Despite this hope men who Subas Chandra Bose in India, Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi's father, in Burma and Sukarno in Indonesia to present their countries with Japanese help would be independent. 1943 was proclaimed "liberation of Asia" as Japan's war aims.

But the Japanese occupation of Korea and warfare in China, Southeast Asian countries and islands in the Pacific showed that Japan was not better than Westerners, on the contrary. Dreaming of Japan as Asia's leaders did not lead to any Asian identity - even if it contributed to the demise of colonialism.

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