



CONFLICT AND PEACE BUILDING

It is important for the world economy that East Asia stays relatively peaceful. However, any important economic influence must also deal with conflict impact.

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MADE IN CHINA

Cheap labour, outsourcing and increasing import from Asia have Western economies feeling threatened – but what does the reality really look like?

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LANGUAGE - THE KEY TO ACCESS

Japanese news in English does not prioritise coverage of national news. A perfect example of why knowledge of local language is necessary.

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UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Profile / ASIAN DYNAMICS



■ **Profile /Asian Dynamics**

1. edition July 2010

■ **Published by**

University of Copenhagen
Communication
Nørregade 10
PO Box 2177
DK-1017 Copenhagen K
www.ku.dk

■ **Editors**

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■ **Pages / photographers**

Frontcover / iStockphoto: Robert Churchill
2 / Flickr.com: Magalie L'Abbé
4 / Illustration: Nanna Obel
4 / Flickr.com: Wen-Yan King, Mitch and Petra,
Sangalina, Marco Bellucci. Scanpix.
10 / Flickr.com: fusionpanda
13 / Illustration: Nanna Obel
13 / Flickr.com: Paul Nine-O, Arthur Embleton,
Ka Tate. Scanpix
17 / Flickr.com: Stuck in Customs
18 / Flickr.com: Harry Alverson, Diana Bella
19 / Flickr.com: Magalie L'Abbé

■ **Graphic design**

Signe Lund-Sørensen

■ **Typography**

Adobe Frutiger
and Garamond

■ **Paper**

Silkemat
(230 grams/150 grams)

■ **Printing**

Best-Buy-Broker

■ **Copies**

2,000

■ **ISBN**

978-87-90655-86-0

■ **Contact**

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www.asiandynamics.ku.dk
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Marie Roesgaard, Associate Professor and Chair of the Asian Dynamics Initiative Steering Committee, University of Copenhagen.

Asia

– shaping the 21st century

There is no denying that Asia has become an increasingly important player on the global scene. After decades of dividing the world into the rich and powerful West and the developing 'rest', Asia's expanding economic markets, growing centres for science and technology and rich cultural diversity have led to talk of a new 'Asian Century'.

The spectacular progress has improved standards of living for much of Asia's population – but the challenges facing the region are also considerable: environmental deterioration, extremely uneven distribution of wealth, violation of human rights, internal tensions and conflicts, terrorism and corruption. It is thus of

strategic importance to relate to Asia and gain new insights into a region that will no doubt be influential in shaping the 21st century.

Recognizing this, the University of Copenhagen launched the Asian Dynamics Initiative (ADI) in 2008. ADI coordinates studies on Asia at the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences and engages in new, interdisciplinary research and teaching on modern Asia.

In this magazine we want to give YOU an idea of who we are, what we can do – and why we do it. We hope that you will enjoy this edition of the magazine and take the opportunity to get in touch with us.

Asian Dynamics Initiative (ADI) is a cross-disciplinary focus on Asian Studies based at the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences.

ADI's research themes are:

- Knowledge in transit
- Security at global and local levels
- Borders, territorialisation and regionalisation
- Belonging, citizenship and identities
- Local responses to global challenges
- The economics of the Asian challenge
- Political institutions and cultures

Web: <http://asiandynamics.ku.dk>

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Kulturkurser.dk offers educational courses on cultural understanding for Danish businesses and organisations that are either establishing themselves abroad or hiring foreign employees. More than 100 experts from the University of Copenhagen and the Industrialisation Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) help businesses overcome cultural differences and barriers. Courses on Asia – especially China, Korea, Japan, India and Southeast Asia – are highly in demand.

Web: <http://kulturkurser.dk>



Global INDIA

Developing or developed? Neither of these categories describe 'New India' – an emerging power in a globalised world. At the heart of this huge transformation lie altered power relations, wealth generation and new challenges in terms of poverty and conflict over resources.

BY RAVINDER KAUR



THE RAPID RISE OF INDIA – from an aid recipient nation to an imminent global power – is a transformation that few expected to actually materialise just some years ago. Against the backdrop of economic growth, a variety of social-political upheavals are taking place within. The rise of a vocal and prosperous middle class, the ascent of cosmopolitan mega-cities, the social and spatial rearrangement of the rich and the poor, the emergence of youth politics, and strong civil society movements, are just a few markers of this transformation. On the outside, India is more assertive in the way it projects itself in the arena of global politics, foreign policy and its brand identity. The making of a global India is therefore not merely a product of economic growth and cold statistics. It is a historical transformation the consequences of which we have barely begun to understand.

“

The emerging powers, such as India, have clearly upset the global hierarchy of nations that had evolved since the end of the cold war.



The Uncharted Territory

It is an ambitious task that the 'New India' research programme at the University of Copenhagen is currently engaged in – to explore the momentous changes taking place within and outside nations that no longer fit the neat categories of either 'developing' or 'developed'. The emerging powers, such as India, have clearly upset the global hierarchy of nations that had evolved since the end of the cold war. It is within this 'new' new world order – the altered power relations between the North and the global South – that India's rising influence needs to be placed and explored.

The research programme focuses on the processes of global nation-building and the new Indian identity that is being shaped and projected since the 1990s neoliberal reforms. India is not the only actor in these ongoing processes. The corporate sector, non-governmental organisations, and social movements compete, challenge and contest from within to give shape to the contours of a global nation. These challenges can, for example, be witnessed in the violent conflicts over land acquisition to create special economic zones, specifically targeted poverty reduction schemes launched by the government, and the creation of private townships that segregate the prosperous middle class from the less well-off citizens. This uneven distribution of capital, resources and opportunities within the society, and its affects on the project of global nation-building is an uncharted territory that the programme is currently exploring.

Image Making and Unsettled History

Often India is seen as a runner-up to China in this new global race for power and ascendancy. These comparisons, however, seldom take into account the differing histories and political realities in which the two nations exist. The nature of India's rising global influence can only be understood within its democratic framework that allows competing interests, voices and critical opinions to share public space. The research programme takes its point of departure

in the specific histories of the nation within which the idea and imagination of 'new' India is currently taking shape. A concrete focus, for example, is on the making of global identity of the nation in post-liberalisation era. While India is set on creating and projecting a fresh image of the nation for outside consumption, it has yet to fully deal with its unsettled histories of subjugation and colonialism within these contemporary image making processes. These unsettled histories underpin India's global engagement, and are often revealed in unintended forms and moments.

To make sense of contemporary India is to make sense of its remembered and erased histories that underpin its global makeover. The history of neoliberal growth and governance in India is one such trajectory that is yet to be fully unpeeled and unpacked. It is this project that the research programme has engaged itself with by exploring different bits and pieces of the emerging power now popularly known as 'New India'.

■ By Ravinder Kaur, Associate Professor, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.

India Facts:

- 1/6 of the world's population (1.2 billion)
- Second largest military in the world
- World's largest democracy (344 million voted in the 2009 elections – this is 60% of the total electorate)
- 6th largest nuclear arsenal
- Largest youth population in the world (42% of 1.2 billion)

Interview:

CONFLICT and PEACE

building in Asia

Asia is the future and the future of Asia lies in our hands, argues Professor Timo Kivimäki, who specialises in conflict and peace building in Asia.

BY ANNE TRAP-LIND



TIMO KIVIMÄKI IS A PROFESSOR at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, where he researches conflict resolution and transformation, security in Asia and East Asian peace. His latest book, published in April 2010, deals with new initiatives for development organisations preventing conflicts in Burma (Myanmar). *Why is it important for the West, and to the world as a whole, to be occupied with the conflicts in Asia - for instance Burma?*

“I think that as human beings we should be interested in human rights wherever in the world there is a conflict. Violation hurts us all. In the case of Burma, it is important because it’s very close to one of the world’s most strategic straits, the Malaga Strait,” says Kivimäki.

“Both ministries and bigger companies focus increasingly more on building relations to Asia – especially East Asia. I think East Asia is becoming very important to the world economy. It is vital that this part of the world remains relatively peaceful and develops into a direction where they can not only avoid conflict but also resolve problems.”

Failed Forestry

The main focus of Timo Kivimäki’s research is the existing conflicts and especially the peace processes that emerge from these conflicts in East Asia, that is Burma, the Philippines and Indonesia – as well as potential conflicts in China. The lesson to be learned from this research is that any important economic influence or intervention has a conflict impact.

“West Kalimantan in Borneo, Indonesia, offers a good example of how things went wrong. Western companies participated in the development of provinces forestry business without sufficient understanding of the conflict risks. Their activities offended some indigenous communities and went against the local understanding of rules of forest use and ownership. While being legally permitted to operate in the area, their presence was against the local customary law and the lands they operated were communal lands of an indigenous community according to the communal law. This way the presence of these western companies contributed to the outbreak of widespread cannibalistic rioting, rather than offering economic prosperity that could help stability and peace,” says Timo Kivimäki.

“The Westeners’ forest activity had a great conflict impact despite the fact that they didn’t always recognise that the fighting around them was actually partly caused by themselves. In the end, the conflict also affected their businesses.”

“The utilisation of natural resources in countries which don’t have an established institutionalised system of governance is always tricky as conflict often breaks out over who controls the resources and who gets the revenues from this business. Companies do things the wrong way because they simply don’t know enough about the region.”

“Obviously, this means that companies that deal with developing countries with natural resources have a responsibility for the impacts of their businesses.”



Timo Kivimäki conducts re-search for a peace and conflict impact assessment in 2008 in the village Nadzhi in the Sittwe township, Rakhine State, Burma.



The Westerners' forest activity had a great conflict impact despite the fact that they didn't always recognise that the fighting around them was actually partly caused by themselves. In the end, the conflict also affected their businesses.

What should companies do to act more responsibly?

"It is useful for companies that are considering doing anything on a larger scale to do some peace and conflict impact assessment of their operation. Universities and I myself are developing methodologies of how to assess to what extent economic intervention influences a conflict situation and the society. Companies ought to conduct analyses like this routinely, just as they do environmental analysis. Fortunately, there is a growing interest in doing this."

Business and Development with Care

According to Timo Kivimäki, the Asian security theme has attracted a lot of external interest from ministries and from companies, as well as from big international NGO's during the last decade. For example, assessments on conflict impact are gradually becoming part of a strategic planning.

"As brand images are becoming more important, bigger companies are becoming interested in, not only whether their operations will be safe, but also whether they in general help create safety, or whether their economic interventions actually fuel conflict or repression."

"Previously these companies just closed their eyes saying business is business – but today markets are more sensitive to ethical issues, and customers know more about countries. So, companies have to be careful about what they do in these developing countries. But, I am sure that ethics in business are becoming more important, also because Danish businesses want, aside from gaining profits, to contribute to something positive in Asia. In addition to these companies, development organisations have been very interested in investigating what their intervention against poverty may cause in terms of conflict impact," says Kivimäki.

From your conflict point of view, what does the future of Asia hold?

"I think I see the future the same way as many companies do. It is not a question that we necessarily have the answer for, but change is in our hands. We can change things."

5 Questions about OUTSOURCING

BY JAKOB R. MUNCH

1

What is outsourcing?

Outsourcing refers to the situation where a firm splits up the production process into stages in which intermediate inputs can be produced outside the domestic plant, possibly in low-wage Asian countries.

2

Has outsourcing become more important recently?

Yes. The average Danish manufacturing firm has more than doubled its purchase of imported intermediate inputs during the period 1995-2006.

3

Are Asian countries important source countries for Danish firms?

Other European countries are the most important source countries, but Asian countries are becoming more important. Asian countries have doubled their share of Danish outsourcing from 5 percent in 1995 to 10 percent in 2006.

4

Are Danish workers' wages and employment affected by outsourcing?

Yes. If a firm doubles its outsourcing, the workers who stay in the firm earn around 5 percent lower wages on average. Workers who separate from firms that increase outsourcing experience greater earnings losses after displacement than other displaced workers. This is due to longer spells of unemployment and a lower hourly wage rate when reemployed.

5

Are certain groups of workers in the Danish labour market affected more than others?

Yes. Workers in occupations that intensively employ knowledge sets from social science and languages are systematically less affected by outsourcing. Those employees that employ knowledge sets from natural sciences and engineering are no more insulated from outsourcing shocks than the average manufacturing worker. Also, occupations that expose workers to potentially unsafe working conditions experience wage drops after outsourcing.

Made in China

– should we be concerned?

Danish manufacturing firms will suffer from increased competition from cheap Chinese labour. This is what sceptics say as the Chinese share of Danish import goes up. However, research in the field of trade with China shows that this fear is often based on misconceptions.



BY JAKOB R. MUNCH

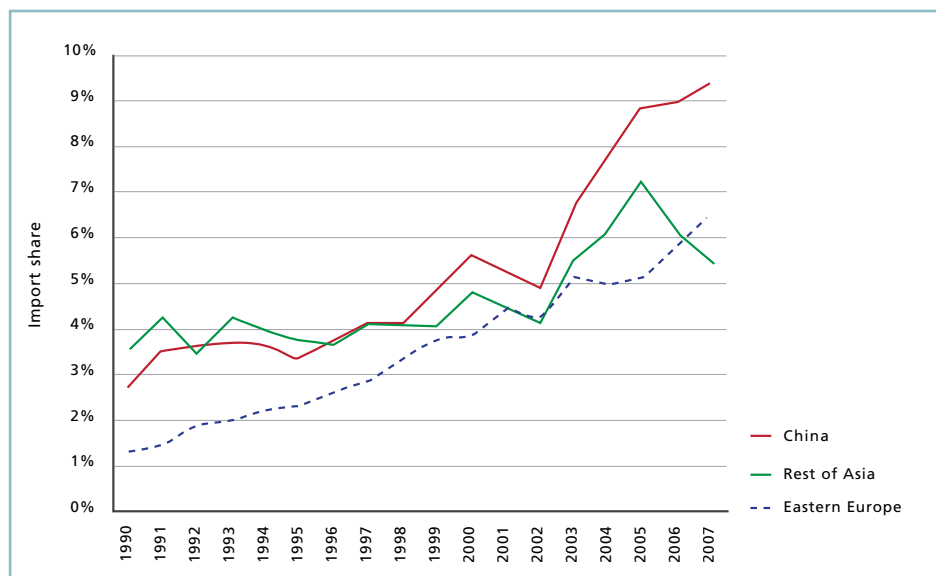
GLOBALISATION AND INCREASED TRADE with low wage Asian countries has attracted much attention over the past two decades. A primary reason behind the sharpened focus on the issue, is the increasing role that these countries – particularly China – play in world trade. Thirty years ago, China's share of world exports in the manufacturing sector was around one percent. Today, China is one of the largest exporting countries in the world, with a share of total world exports of roughly ten percent.

This development may have pronounced implications for developed countries, since these countries import the goods produced in China and other Asian countries. Denmark is no exception in that respect. As can be seen in the figure

below, Danish imports from China and other Asian low wage countries have increased markedly over the past 15 years. The Chinese share of Danish imports is now almost ten percent and other low wage Asian countries also account for a significant proportion.

Facts instead of Fears

This has sparked fears that Danish manufacturing firms and workers will suffer. Questions are frequently raised about whether Danish manufacturing firms will survive the increased competition from China. Or will Danish workers have to accept wage cuts or even lose their jobs due to, for example, outsourcing? >



This figure shows the total share of Danish import from the following regions: China, Eastern Europe, and the rest of Asia.

“

Somewhat surprisingly, it turns out that Denmark continues to import products from other developed countries even as Chinese firms enter these same Danish product markets.



The answers to these questions may have important policy implications. It is sometimes claimed that Danish firms might better survive globalisation pressures if they are able to hire workers with a high level of education. Other commentators call for protectionist trade policy measures.

Unfortunately, the public discussions are often based on anecdotal evidence and misconceptions, and rarely is the debate accompanied by solid evidence. To alleviate this problem, ongoing research at the University of Copenhagen explores how increased trade with China and other emerging economies affect Danish firms and workers along several dimensions.

A first natural step in this research programme is to describe in greater detail the composition of imports from Asian countries. Traditional trade theory tells us that Danish firms and workers have reasons to be worried if we import the same goods as those produced by Danish firms. However, theory also predicts that countries with cheap labour, such as China, should produce a different mix of goods compared to countries with a relatively high skilled labour force such as Denmark. Chinese firms should specialise in producing relatively simple products such as t-shirts whereas Danish firms should produce more advanced knowledge-intensive products such as pharmaceuticals.

Prices and Quality

Somewhat surprisingly, it turns out that Denmark continues to import products from other developed countries even as Chinese firms enter these same Danish product markets.

In 1990, Denmark imported from other developed countries in basically all existing product categories, whereas we only had imports from China in 37% of the product categories. In 2007, we continued to import from other developed countries in all product categories, but the share imported from China increased to 66%. An important reason why Chinese competition did not push the developed countries out of Danish product markets is that Chinese products have a lower quality and sell at lower prices. Because Denmark belongs to the group of developed countries, this suggests that Danish firms indeed sell different products than Chinese firms – they are differentiated in the price and quality dimension. One example of a quality differentiated product with sizeable Danish imports from China and a sizeable sale from Danish manufacturers is women's or girl's cotton denim trousers and breeches. In this category the price of the Danish product is almost double that of the imported Chinese product.

A central part of the research programme is to enhance our understanding of the relationship between a Danish firm's choice of factor inputs and its ability to charge higher prices in product markets. It will be pursued whether a different choice of factor inputs, for example hiring more high skilled labour, may increase product quality and prices that in turn yield higher productivity and growth.

■ Jakob R. Munch, Professor of International Economics, Department of Economics, University of Copenhagen.

How are you?

Korean:

안녕하세요

Nepalese:

तपाईं लाई कस्तो छ ?

Japanese:

お元気ですか。

Indonesian:

Apa kabar

Tibetan:

ཁྱིད་རང་སྐྱེ་གཟུགས་བདེ་པོ་ཡིན་པས།

Thai:

เป็นอย่างไรบ้าง

Malaysian:

Apa khabar?

Burmese:

နေကောင်းလား။

Pakistani (Urdu):

آپ کیسی ہیں؟

Hindi:

आप कै सी है ?

Chinese:

你好吗

Mongolian:

Сонин сайхан юу байна вэ?

Interview:

Japanese Connections

A nation's self-perception determines the prejudices and narratives it constructs about other nations. This maxim is at the heart of Professor Yoichi Nagashima's year-long research in cultural relations between Denmark and Japan.

BY ANNE TRAP-LIND



Haruki Murakami is a writer in voluntary exile in his own country. He does not draw on the so-called exotic Japan and he disapproves of traditional Japanese values dictating people's behaviour and punishing transgresses.

BUSHIDO, CHRISTIANITY AND NIELS BOHR – these are the main themes of the book that Professor With Special Responsibilities Yoichi Nagashima is currently working on. Yoichi Nagashima is a professor of literature at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, Japanese Studies. Yoichi Nagashima is from Japan and during the last 25 years he has dug and dived into every archive on cultural connections between Japan and Denmark, for example visits, negotiations, deals, and exchanges of any kind. So far his research has resulted in two comprehensive books on these cultural connections.

“My duty as an academic researcher is to document every aspect of my research field. But, in the third volume on Danish-Japanese relations, I am specifically interested in the perception of things, i.e. the way the Danes perceive Japanese culture – and vice versa,” says Nagashima.

The first time Denmark and Japan got acquainted with one another was during the reign of Christian IV in the 1700th century, but the first real exchange of handshakes and impressions took place in the year 1873, according to Yoichi Nagashima.

“That year a Japanese delegation visited Denmark and this was the first occasion for both countries to get a closer look at one another. From the Japanese point of view, Denmark presented, as did Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland, a tiny but



strong country, which got along well in the world. In this respect, Denmark was a role model for Japan, which was a tiny country itself having to cope with the mighty countries surrounding it.”

In Search of Niels Bohr

On the contrary, Danes at that time thought of Japan as a small, strange country where people were clean and polite, but not trustworthy. However, this idea changed completely in 1905 when Japan won the war between Japan and Russia. This was when the Danes began to see the Japanese people as a nation of samurais, who won a war against all odds through the moral strength of Bushido.

“The samurai culture is the national spirit of Japan. A Danish writer, Karl Larsen, described the Bushido culture at that time, but he did not see it the way the Japanese did – Bushido was mythologized. This is the so-called bias – creative misunderstanding – that interests me,” says Yoichi Nagashima.

According to Nagashima, the Japanese point of view was that Denmark was very much identical to Christianity.

“Christianity also made its way to Japan, and in the third volume I want to explain how Japanese people have interpreted and integrated the Christian religion.”

Another theme that Yoichi Nagashima wants to pursue is Danish scientist Niels Bohr.

“Like many others, Japanese scientists were very inspired by Niels Bohr’s revolutionary theoretical physics, and it turns out that Niels Bohr himself was quite attracted to Japan – i.e. Japan as a destination for travelling. In the third book, I will follow in his footsteps to find out what exactly fascinated him in Japan,” says Nagashima.

Comics and existential fear

In the new millennium, two cultural products from Japan have made their way into the hearts of the Danes and Western people in general: the Manga comics and the writer Haruki Murakami – why this popularity?

“Manga has become a universal language through the encounter with the US and Walt Disney. The sketchy style draws on an old Zen Buddhist tradition characterised by the cultivation of emptiness illustrated by non-coloured spaces on the painting – very unlike the Western tradition where people dislike the thought of emptiness. But, the Mangas that we read in the West reflect the common set of interests we have in a globalised world,” says Nagashima.

“Haruki Murakami is a writer in voluntary exile in his own country. He does not draw on the so-called exotic Japan and he disapproves of traditional Japanese values dictating people’s behaviour and punishing transgresses. Murakami’s writing is also part of a globalised world, where the saying goes that women in Tokyo and women in Copenhagen have the same things in their handbags. Also existential fear is the same in a world constructed in a way, which makes us even more lonely with every unpredictable day that goes by. This is the fear and loneliness we experience when we get problems, and this is what Murakami is digging into, while at the same time wanting to leave readers with the hope of being able to return to the sound and sane world after having been through this complex of existential problems, which he with a metaphor calls the wall.”

Yoichi Nagashima is currently working on an up-coming presentation and reading of Murakami’s latest novel, 1Q84.

■ Anne Trap-Lind, Communications Officer, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen.

China and the global BIOTECH RACE

– ethics and science

Being number one can be vital when it comes to medical life science research. China's new-found determination to be a world leader in biotech raises both scientific and ethical challenges.

BY AYO WAHLBERG



Zheng Mengfu, China's first "test tube baby", with Professor Zhang Lizhu.

“AND HERE WE HAVE Zheng Mengfu, China's first 'test tube baby' born in 1988 together with Professor Zhang Lizhu, her 'creator'". Just before projecting this image of a beaming professor cradling a newborn baby at a Beijing workshop on reproductive medicine, Professor Qiao Jie of the Peking University Third Hospital had shown an almost identical picture of Louise Brown, the world's first test tube baby born in 1978, being held by her 'creators' Dr. Robert Edwards and Dr. Patrick Steptoe in the United Kingdom. The message was clear: China was catching up with the West when it came to new reproductive technologies.

In medical life sciences research, being first is a prestigious affair. In the early 1990s, two competing teams raced to become the first to have sequenced the entire human genome. By 2000, a working draft had been completed – by both teams – leading President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair to call a joint press conference to hail such a 'historic achievement'. Yet, the race to be first was also notoriously implicated in the downfall of prominent



With growing international prominence comes increased international scrutiny of scientific practice – not only in regards to the quality and rigour of the scientific research, but also when it comes to ethical integrity.



Scientists manning sequencing machines at the Beijing Genomics Institute, Shenzhen, China.

South Korean stem cell scientist Hwang Woo-Suk. In late 2005, Hwang's claim of having created the world's first cloned human embryo was exposed as fabrication leading to his resignation and disgrace.

From brain-drain to brain-gain

On both fronts – genomic and stem cell science – China has announced its intentions to become an important global player. This ambition has manifested itself through government funding of life sciences research, the emergence of an indigenous biotech industry as well as efforts to turn brain-drain into brain-gain by luring back young Chinese researchers from Europe and America with promises of new laboratory facilities and funding.

Over the last three years, I have had the chance to follow China's emergence as a biotech power through the lens of a Chinese-European project on the ethics of biomedical research, BIONET, funded by the European Commission. During visits to various centres of bioscience in Shanghai, Beijing, Changsha and Shenzhen, I was struck by how much energy and excitement surrounded the life sciences. When asked about access to so-called 'spare embryos' left-over from infertility treatment (many scientists in Western countries have spoken of difficulties in getting access to embryos), stem cell scientists replied: "Our tanks are bursting" – a curious side effect of the one-child policy. Genomic research centres packed with state-of-the-art sequencing and data storage machines explained how they could sequence an entire genome in 24 hours and how they were working with international colleagues to bring costs down to \$1,000 per genome.

Ethical concerns

Yet, with growing international prominence comes in-

creased scrutiny – not only in regards to the quality and rigour of scientific research, but also when it comes to ethical integrity. Governments, scientists and clinicians are reliant on volunteer human subjects in their quest to develop advanced life sciences research – either as recipients of experimental therapies, such as gene therapies or stem cell therapies, or as donors of biological samples and biographical information. As a result, China has begun building up ethical governance systems for life sciences research including new forms of legislation, ethical oversight mechanisms, as well as the mandating of voluntary informed consent for all research involving human subjects. Still, gaps between regulation and implementation remain, and a number of concerns relating to possibilities for coercion, conflicts of interest and exploitation require urgent attention.

■ Ayo Wahlberg, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen.

China Facts:

- World's fourth largest country (9.6 million sq km)
- World's largest population (1.33 billion)
- 56 ethnic nationalities – more than 90% Han Chinese
- World's third largest economy
- World's largest labour force (more than 810 million)

Language

– the KEY to ACCESS

The University of Copenhagen offers students the chance to learn several Asian Languages – but why not be content with knowing English? A look at the Japanese media provides one prime example of how language knowledge is the key to cultural understanding.

BY MARIE ROESGAARD



ON A PASSENGER BOAT traversing the lake by the foot of Mount Fuji in Japan, there is a sign that says: "This door cannot be opened". It says the same in Chinese and Korean – but not in Japanese as one would expect. Is that because only foreigners would dare to open the door? Is there some kind of cultural knowledge about doors on boats that only the Japanese are presumed to possess?

At the University of Copenhagen's Asian Section we know that regional insight is a precious commodity, which is in high demand in both the business world, the media and society as such. The Asian Section therefore works to develop and maintain an expertise in the different regions' languages because linguistic competencies are the key to studying source material, culture and society.

English is definitely very useful, but in order to conduct research or build businesses in foreign countries, we need to either learn the language or make sure we have access to reliable interpreting – cultural and linguistic. The need for getting the national news may serve as an example of what can happen when we try to make do with English in non-English speaking countries. In this case, we depend on English editions of local newspapers, but we should be cautious about assuming that the English edition is a translation of the original. On a randomly chosen day in April 2010 the main headlines in the English internet edition of the Japanese Asahi newspaper were: the strengthened Nissan-Renault alliance, China executes a Japanese drug trafficker, and the establishment of a foundation in support of exports of anime (Japanese animated movies). In the Japanese edition the main headlines were: the nature of political support for the governor

English is definitely very useful, but in order to conduct research or build businesses in foreign countries, we need to either learn the language or make sure we have access to reliable interpreting – cultural and linguistic.



in Osaka, the relocation of the American Futenma military base, and problems with health insurance. Can this really be the same newspaper in the same country on the same day? Clearly, the English edition does not give us much insight as to what the Japanese are preoccupied with, but it does say a lot about what the Asahi editors assume English readers have an interest in.

For Ourselves and for the Future

For years I have worked with Japanese education. In my research, to understand and learn from the Japanese, and to get a glimpse of what is going on in Japan, I need to know their language and understand the context of meaning. The same goes for China, India, Thailand and other Asian countries, or even Germany for that matter.

I work especially with educational reform, support facilities for the regular system of schooling as well as changes brought on by law revisions. To do this, I have to be able to access the newest material, laws and legislature, and other information as soon as it appears. To wait for it to be translated would mean that I could only use “old news”,

and not be able to communicate properly with my Japanese colleagues.

Furthermore, not everything is translated and not everything we find interesting is researched by the Japanese themselves. My work with the support facilities (known as “juku” in Japanese) is an example of this. It would not have been possible without conducting interviews in Japanese, reading primary and secondary sources in Japanese, and using Japanese statistics. Almost none of this is translated, and the only road of access is knowing the language.

At the University of Copenhagen’s Asian Section you can learn several Asian languages. We offer all of the following study programmes: Chinese, Japanese, Indology, Indonesian, Korean, Thai and Tibetology. The combination of language and culture is the key to effective analysis of events, to strong international relations, to friendships and not least to personal development. We need to know languages for our own sake, for that of society and for the future.

■ Marie Roesgaard, Associate Professor, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.



Steps towards the future: the European ballroom dance, the waltz, has made its way into the hearts and the active outdoor arenas of the Asians. Vice versa, the Asian tradition for a healthy, peace-of-mind, park life activity has inspired Europeans to practice the slow going martial art of tai chi.

All Change!

Western values are being exported to Asia – Asian traditions are being imported in the West. This ongoing exchange of Confucianism, chopsticks, sushi, ideas of modernity, science and so on is of interest to us because we are all in a constant state of translation and change.

mopolitan”. Yet we still have a generally negative image of the Chinese despite numerous examples that could paint a different picture. We still have a generally positive image of the Americans despite the many examples that should paint a different picture.

All of these issues show that some things change while others do not. This simple statement is, like so many other simple statements, the best place to start a research project.

BY DENISE GIMPEL



WE WRITE THE YEAR 2010. Why is it that Europeans do not balk at the prospect of eating with chopsticks? Why do we light up “joss sticks” in our homes? Why do we damn the Chinese for being difficult at the COP 15, yet we fail to notice that the United States of America (together with Somalia) is the only nation not to have signed the UN Convention on Children? Now using chopsticks and lighting joss sticks are considered “trendy”, “modern”, “cos-

Sushi is hot – dog meat is not

The Asian Dynamics Initiative’s (ADI) theme “Knowledge in transit” addresses such issues with regard to Asia. The focus is on what “things” move to, from and within Asia, when, why and how they move, change, adapt to or resist the new territory in which they find themselves. “Things” in this context refers to objects such as chopsticks, fast food or furniture. It refers to institutions and organisations such as NGOs, universities or business set-ups. It refers to ideas such as “modernity”, “environmental protection”, “science”, “Confucianism” and other “-isms”. And it refers to the way in which these “things” are discussed and legitimised at any one given time. We are interested in the manner in which things and ideas become blended, become something other than what they set out as. Not everything (or everyone) on the move is accepted or appreciated at the place to which it has moved. Sushi has been accepted in Europe, eating dog meat has not. McDonald’s has conquered Asian urban centres, Danish design has not conquered Asian homes.

So-called “Western values” have been robustly exported and imported to Asia, and yet so-called “Asian values” have just as robustly been rejected by Western societies.



Whether we like it or not, all of us are in a constant state of translation, of change and realignment. Our lives are and always have been predicated on change.

The Faraway is Near

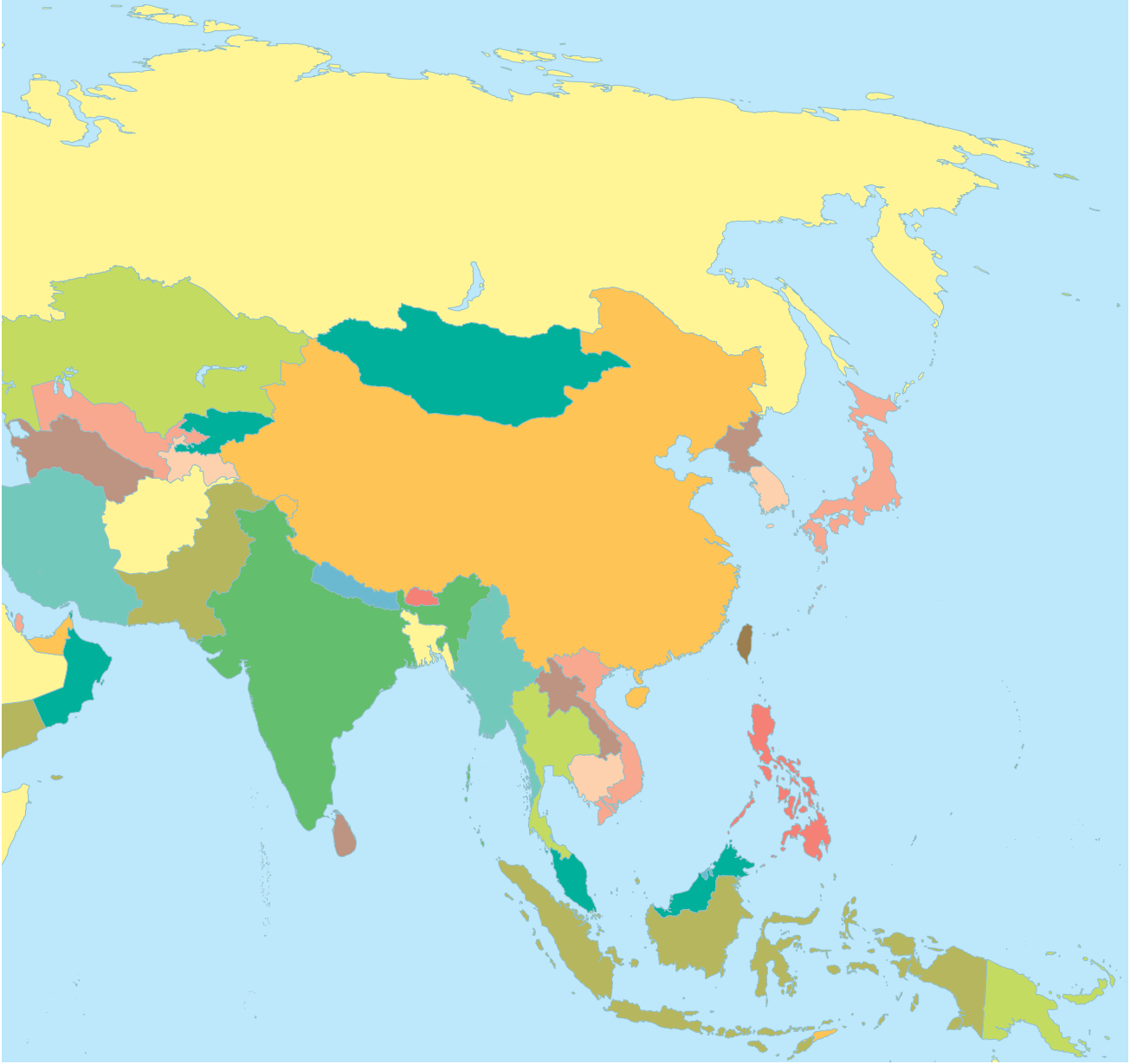
Whether we like it or not, all of us are in a constant state of translation, of change and realignment. Our lives are and always have been predicated on change. An awareness of the instability of traditions and cultures can help us to understand and respect the many varieties of human thought and action, and be able to recognise the places where they coalesce and where they give rise to conflict. It is this kind of knowledge that the ADI's theme "Knowledge in transit" can provide.

Also we live in a globalised world, a world in which the faraway has never been so near. A willingness to enter into other people's narratives, to comprehend them, even if we do not and cannot share them, is a prerequisite for tolerance, and the first step to successful future interaction between nations no matter whether it is political, economic, social or personal.

Such insight creates a win-win situation, or as George Bernard Shaw is supposed to have said: "If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange apples, then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas."

■ Denise Gimpel, Associate Professor, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.





ASIA

– borders, territorialisation and regionalisation

BY LARS HØJER

“Asia”, “Central Asia” and “South Asia” are not regions in their own right, but are made to appear as regions through historical, political and cultural processes.

The imagination of regions and frontiers based on national identity, language, literature, religious affiliations or economic security is the background from which more established cultural identities and political relations across regions materialise.

It is thus vital to investigate the processes through which borders and territories within

Asia emerge and are voiced by scholars, indigenous people and external actors alike.

Along these lines, Asia can be envisaged as a dynamic part of the world without fixed regions or clear-cut boundaries, and as a region where the constant redefinition of territories, boundaries and relations have a real effect on people’s lives, whether in terms of regional security, economic exchange or cultural links.

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