

Éva Bóka: Europe and Asia. Modernization and Globalization: India, China, Japan and Singapore

This book investigates the phenomenon of modernization and globalization within the framework of the classical idea of World federation (“One World”) in a historical perspective. It investigates the characteristics of European modernity, and how it challenged and changed the traditional Asian civilizations of India, China, Japan, or Singapore, the latter being considered as an example for a global city-state.

The book concentrates on the European civilization and compares the development of its values and principles in the economic, political, social, and cultural domains with the East-Asian civilizations. European civilization has developed and renewed itself in close interaction with other civilizations of the World. It played an important role in the creation of the phenomenon of modernization, i.e., the development of capitalism as a global economic, commercial, financial, and political system during the 19th and the 20th centuries. The whole World had to face, in all this period, the necessity to understand and interpret modernization as a way for peoples from different countries and civilizations to live and interact with each other. “Western” countries played a leading role in this process by opening up, by force, the classical agrarian civilizations worldwide. Their goal was to involve these in a free market based economic and commercial world system.

The economic, commercial, financial, and political principles of the West, as well as its idea of a democratic civil society represented a challenge for the political elite of the Chinese, Japanese, or Indian civilizations, reinforced by the issues around colonization, imperialism, or, more recently, the Cold War and globalization. Comparing their own societies to “Western modernity” they investigated what to adopt and what to reject; this investigation often resulted in bringing forward the contradictions and possible criticisms of those Western values and principles. At the same time, they became actively involved in the emergence of a capitalist economic, commercial, and financial system in their own countries, which gradually replaced the traditional agrarian societies. As a consequence, these Asian peoples have developed their own “Asian” ways of modernization, which gradually resulted in an economic prosperity in this part of East Asia. Modernization became a universal process, transcending the ideas and values of Europe or the United States. As part of the globalization process that characterizes our time, the European Union, India, China, Japan, and Singapore already participate as partners pursuing a policy of dialogue among each other.

The book quotes and describes the works of a number of important European and Asian thinkers their interpretations of the phenomenon of modernization; these include Kant, Tocqueville, Rougemont, Schuman, Monnet and Spinelli; Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kang Youwei, Sun Yat-sen, Deng Xiaoping, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and Lee Kuan Yew. The book also deals with the influence of the European integration process on the East-Asian integration counterparts (ASEAN, ASEM, SAARC), and the possible ways for a reform of the international organizations.