

Waking Giants

Giants are awakening. It's all over the news: in newspapers, magazines and television news shows. And it's not only in the popular media that our attention is being drawn to them. Professional journals and in-depth television documentaries are also signalling the development of new and powerful economic structures. In the forefront of these, of course, it is China that is truly stunning everyone with amazement. That country's economy grew last year, for the third in a row, by 10% - a percentage the old economies only dream of. From coverage in the popular media one can get the creepy feeling that the west should be afraid of new economic superpowers like China, India and other countries in Southeast Asia.

But giants are not necessarily scary or threatening. I feel for a more subtle and positive approach to these fast-growing economies. It's only natural that China and others take their rightful place on the world economic stage, and therefore, because it's an integral and very important part of that economy, in geomatics too. I believe that "new" economies are a positive factor in keeping the old ones sharp in terms of innovation and competition. That owners, managers and professionals in geomatics businesses in the new economies are doing exactly what owners, managers and professionals in the old economies are employed and get patted on the back for: being successful. Fair game.

It might well be that the astonishment is somewhat less in geospatial, surveying, remote-sensing businesses than, let's say, in the motor, agriculture or textile industries. Asia has been around for years in geomatics. Maybe a bit more in the background than the place they are demanding these days. But still. A little insight into the development of Asian self-consciousness concerning its rightful presence in the world of geomatics you can find in this month's article by Shunji Murai of the Asian Association on Remote Sensing under the title For Asians, By Asians and with Asians. It shows that things did indeed get off to a quicker start in geomatics than in other sectors - the Association celebrated its 25th jubilee conference in 2005.

By the way, the above mentioned article is a modified version of a paper published in the Japanese Journal of Survey. GIM International on a regular basis exchanges articles with this magazine, showing how highly we value input from the east. In addition to this exchange we plan to keep an attentive eye on all developments within the gigantic new economies. We have always done this and will keep on doing so. For a magazine calling itself The Global Magazine in Geomatics, the natural way to go. Watch this space!

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