

12. Overall Conclusion of the book

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Although Asia has been the world engine of economic growth for several decades since World War II, growth rates have differed sharply among the countries of the region. However, in many Asian countries, the questions of limits to growth and the challenges of overcoming such limits are clearly at work today. Japan is facing the crucial issue of a quickly aging and shrinking population, a situation that South Korea is bound to face in the near future too. China still enjoys relatively high growth rates, but the country is facing the problem of the exhaustion of its export-led growth model based on low factor prices, as well as the unprecedented problem of environmental degradation. Food supply is still of concern in most Asian countries in spite of huge increases in productivity in the agricultural sector, the main reason being that global demand for food inputs and food products increases at a high speed. Moreover, over the long run, climate change is projected to diminish the agricultural productivity growth potential; this may further worsen the current food security level. A paramount issue is thus the environmental constraint and the transition of these countries to energy-saving methods of production. China is shifting quickly to the use of electric cars whereas Japan still faces uncertainty in terms of its nuclear energy program.

One should thus underline the diversity of challenges to be overcome in Asia. Some of these challenges can be analyzed and tackled at the micro-economic level, - the level of the firm -, whereas other challenges are better apprehended at the nation specific level, while many others still are to be tackled at the international level, particularly as far as

international relationships are concerned. The different chapters of this book have therefore provided many useful insights on some of these challenges.

The first part of the book was devoted to trade issues and international business strategies: chapter 2 dealt with the European Union's bilateral agreements in East and Southeast Asia as a way to overcome the recent limits of the overall multilateral framework, namely the one shaped by the WTO; chapter 3 considered the strategies of Chinese MNCs in Europe, focusing on the case of France, as a way of internationalization of Chinese firms in order to overcome their weaknesses in terms of technology and range of products, and the fierce competition they face on their own national market; chapter 4 analyzed the evolution of the world trade web for the period 1995 through 2013 (with a particular focus on China) questioning again the most influential factors and related characteristics.

The second part of the book was devoted to agriculture, food supply and sustainable development. Chapter 5 focused on the impact of the European Union enlargement on agricultural and food trade in some selected Asian countries; agriculture is a sector where protectionist policies remain high, and trade in agricultural products continues to be a source of friction in the ambit of international trade negotiations (at both the bilateral and multilateral levels). The chapter examined the trade creation and trade diversion effects emanating from the 5th EU enlargement on the agricultural sector on the one hand, and the effect of the enlargement on exports of agricultural products from some selected Asian countries to the EU market on the other hand. Chapter 6 analyzed the European vegetable oil market focusing on the palm oil industry, a commodity very much under the scrutiny of public opinion that sees it as an unsustainable production whilst being in the meantime a strategic product for some Southeast Asian Countries. With this purpose in mind, the chapter explored the linkages existing between palm oil and other vegetable oil prices in the European market so as to identify future sustainable different scenarios. Taking the

Thai food-processing industry as a case study, chapter 7 investigated the extent to which firms' knowledge interactions with universities are conducive to the enhancement of their innovative capabilities. The study showed that food-processing firms do not consider universities as their primary knowledge source: informal interaction is the most popular mode that firms use to source knowledge from universities, while long-term and institutionalised collaborations are less common in that country.

Part 3 of the book investigated and analyzed various additional and more specific challenges such as *The Great East Japan Earthquake's effects on electric power companies' financial situation* (chapter 8), *The impact of the Trump Administration on the economies of the Greater China Region* (chapter 9), *Microfinance in South-East Asia: The case of Vietnam over the period 2005-2015* (chapter 10) and the issue of the *Staffing of French MNCs in Asia: The Roles of Long-Term Expatriates versus Short-Term Assignee* (Chapter 11). The analysis of the Japanese electric power companies' performance after Fukushima in chapter 8 showed that investors are still reluctant to invest in this industry some 8 to 10 years after the nuclear upheaval. In chapter 9, it is argued that the new US Administration has had a differentiated impact on the economies of China, Hong-Kong and Taiwan (GCR), which are intimately linked to the US economy through the trade-investment nexus. Although the announcement of the new US President did not have much of an impact on the GRC financial markets, a different scenario is emerging with the implementation of the "Trump tariffs". The following chapter (chapter 10) casts an optimistic eye on economic development in a country such as Vietnam by looking at the issue of micro-finance, whereas the last chapter of the book (chapter 11) discusses the way European MNCs adapt to the new challenges described in the book, by focusing on the issue of staff management in Asia.

Beyond the general and fundamental question raised by Robert Taylor in the introduction of this book, which is whether the countries of Asia with authoritarian social and political traditions will be able to create a conducive environment to further growth and

development, we hope that the readers of this book will have found useful insights on the nature and diversity of challenges that Asian nations on the one hand and both Asian firms worldwide and Western firms in Asia on the other hand are currently facing.