BOOK REVIEWS


This book examines the East Asian high-performing economies from the perspective of the rational behaviour paradigm. It credits the rulers in these developmental states with the foresight and wisdom in designing special institutions and applying enabling policies deliberately to promote not only rapid growth but to ensure from the start that the benefits of such growth was widely shared. Hence the subtitle of the book: Making Shared Growth Credible. Few developing countries have been able to succeed in this way and as rapidly as the Asian Tigers.

What is the key factor behind this unique success story? Campos and Root see it in political leadership committed to the Principle of Shared Growth (Chapter 2). Given this political will, The Key to Asian Miracle proceeds to detail its principal argument in Chapter 3. Here the authors focus attention on domestic policy, specifically enabling policies designed and implemented by these development-minded leaders. From the beginning, these Asian leaders emphasized a Growth with Equity (GwE) strategy, unlike the neo-classical view of “growth first, distribution later”.

Of course, there were extenuating circumstances as well in East Asia. Thus, in the initial stages, these countries were fragile regimes; many faced a Communist threat. Therefore, the rulers had to win the hearts and minds of the masses to gain legitimacy and achieve regime stability. Consequently, a wide range of wealth-sharing mechanisms and policies were designed and applied to promote GwE. Notable in this policy menu was the priority accorded to asset redistribution: land reform and rural development particularly in Taiwan and South Korea (pp. 50–56), human capital formation via education and training for labour-intensive manufacturing (pp. 56–60), developing rural infrastructure (pp. 64–67), extensive equity restructuring as in Malaysia (pp. 67–68), effective tripartism and worker cooperatives (pp. 68–71), and subsidized public housing programmes as in Hong Kong and Singapore (pp. 74–75).

“To achieve their economic goals, leaders in the high-performing Asian economies needed to win the support and cooperation of economic elites.” (p. 76). The modernizing rulers in the Asian Tigers wooed and welcomed the private sector as active partners in the task of economic development. The role which private business played was comprehensively controlled top-down by the state. Democracy or civil society was put in the back seat. In other words, this was not growth by the free enterprise spirit of a decentralized economy; rather it was state-led development in which the modernizing leaders harnessed and mobilized the aid of a willing private sector to achieve national objectives.

In this national development process, all segments of society had their specific role to play, viz. the technocrats, labour unions, the army as well as the business élites. The modernizing leaders were there to co-ordinate it, to make it all
happen, to ensure that all contributed to rapid
growth and all shared some of the benefits.
Development became the logic and the central
objective of domestic policy.
Campos and Root are right in crediting domes-
tic factors and made-at-home policies for the
economic success of the Asian Tigers. This sets
them apart, for example, from the World Bank’s
1993 study, *The East Asian Miracle*, which cred-
its neo-classical market force as the determinant
of miracle growth in East Asia. While Campos
and Root look for enlightened and effective lead-
ership to trigger GwE, the WB prescription, as is
well-known, puts the emphasis on the standard
neo-classical medicine of structural adjustment
with virtually no concern (until very recently) for
political institutions, leadership and the cultural
determinants of development.
In their concluding chapter, Campos and Root
briefly discuss the rise of East Asia in a compara-
tive perspective. Their admiration for the East
Asian success story is slightly tempered by the
realization that in future the Asian high perform-
ers will face increasing political challenges.
Having conquered the economic challenge of
replacing poverty with prosperity, these countries
will have to “accommodate a policy dialogue”
(p. 177) amongst divergent interest groups often
cutting across multi-ethnic identities.
What are the subjects of this dialogue? On
these matters *The Key to Asian Miracle* is largely
silent. There is hardly any discussion of the future
of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, in particu-
lar in Malaysia and Indonesia, where ethnicity
remains a sensitive, taboo issue. Similarly, the
issue of how to balance worker rights and labour
standards in an increasingly affluent society is
also ignored. The role of the army in economic
development and in politics is not discussed. The
question of gender equality is also put aside.
While there is a passing reference to rent-seeking
behaviour, the topic deserves much more serious
attention. Rather surprisingly, the rapid emergence
of China, and the implications of this fact on the
rest of the East Asian economies as well as
globally, are avoided. Quite surprisingly, the book
relies too heavily on Western sources; for exam-
ple, in the case of Malaysia and Indonesia hardly
any local scholars (for example Syed Husin Ali,
Ungku Aziz, Jomo to name but a few) are cited.
This omission is especially awkward in a work
intended to stress the importance of domestic
policy; after all, much of the credit for
redistributive policies in these countries belongs
to local scholarship, which provided solid empiri-
cal and analytical support for GwE strategy. It is
about time that Western scholarship freed itself
from Eurocentric tendencies, explicit or implicit.
These limitations aside, the authors have
produced a well-written, well-presented work
which should be of great benefit to any serious
student of development. *The Key to Asian Mir-
cle: Making Shared Growth Creditable*, is a
welcome addition to the literature on the subject.
OZAY MEHMET
Carleton University

Population in Asia. By Warren C Sanderson and
Jee-Peng Tan. World Bank Regional and Sectoral

Although the commendably simple title of this
book sounds impossibly ambitious, the content is
more modest: a description and appraisal of
selected aspects of family planning policy and
services delivery for selected countries of Asia.
While the topic is clearly that of population, it is
not a book by demographers or for demographers.
“The primary audience is policymakers with a
general and broad interest in population matters”
(p. 1) “... policymakers with a broad rather than a
specialized interest in population problems” (p.
5).
The book is well written, clearly presented, and
strongly supported by some 60 tables and 29
figures with the authors providing their own brief
guide to the contents (p. 4). There are eight