

find a place within library holdings and reading lists in academic programmes and courses that deal with urban and poverty studies. Moreover, it will be instructive to both NGO and official development assistance professionals.

NOTE

1. An excellent depiction of life in Klong Toey is contained in *Welcome to Bangkok Slaughterhouse: The Battle for Human Dignity in Bangkok's Bleakest Slums*, by Joe Maier and Jerry Hopkins (Bangkok: Asia Books 2005).

ROBERT L. CURRY, Jr.
California State University, Sacramento

DOI: 10.1355/ae24-3i

***Challenges to the Global Trading System: Adjustment to Globalization in the Asia-Pacific Region.* Edited by Peter A. Petri and Sumner J. La Croix. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. Pp. 234.**

The Pacific Trade and Development (PAFTAD) Conference series since 1968 is rightly celebratory in its thirtieth volume of twenty-four chapters in long and short essays by thirty-one-strong academic, policy and business practitioners. The editors' opening chapter reveals a self-deprecating quote of Charles Dickens' "the best of times ... the worst of times" for international trade.

It critiques free trade in two principal threads. One is unsurprising, namely, trade is a flawed policy because the real world is always one of even negotiators and negotiations. Two is globalization as the ultimate villain; no surprises again as any contemporary trade volume doubles as one on globalization.

The layperson often wonders why economists theorize from unattainable ideals when the real world is not. Students wonder why they study textbook cases laboriously to find they are in a

different world when they graduate to work as policy-makers and business practitioners. All lament about perfect tools ill suited to the imperfect world. Unlike most engineers or doctors, economists do not seem to be able to fix problems as easily.

Any PAFTAD volume adds value to communicate and educate the less academic readers on this apparent chasm or disconnect as PAFTAD has business stakeholders as its clients. This volume comprises a first part of longer scholarly papers, which revisits old issues with new topics. The academic papers include new challenges to the global trading system and policy, globalization fatigue, political economy of free trade agreements (FTAs), Sino-U.S. relations, the environment, outsourcing, intellectual property right (IPR), Asia-Pacific interdependence, and security.

A fresh chapter on "intra-mediate" trade variously noted elsewhere by others reflect on the nuances of location-globalization, spatial-cross ownership, including holding companies, intra-firm and invisible knowledge-based economy transactions. China as encircling the traditional triad to rearrange the geoeconomics and geopolitics especially of the United States, old and new security threats to affect fundamentals in sovereignty and finance are exemplary chapters of how PAFTAD goes beyond the old chestnut. More insights from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as social stakeholders as already observed in many chapters are as salutary.

No contemporary trade literature can miss welfare concerns to realize the same non-level playing field in free trade and income distribution. Theory remains a useful handle, but as noted in the chapters on externalities, globalization and trade have messy collateral damages. It takes more than wishful platitudes and esoteric computable general equilibrium (CGE) models on FTAs to bring some acceptable levels in both playing fields.

To preserve sustainability, one wonders if a more practical encouragement of capitalistic environmental companies may result in a cleaner safer planet. More localized products to meet traditional, cultural and religious preferences from

hospitality to medical products however globalized and dispersed may still create some local jobs while losing some to outsourcing. The PAFTAD experts with local knowledge and anecdotes can reinvent the PAFTAD contribution with more practical corporate stories as much as academic principles and models feed the intellectually inclined.

The second part of the volume appears to recognize that scholarly chapters need to be supplemented and complemented by shorter perspectives from the policy, and business and academic authors. Accordingly, from policy-makers and policy executives as eminent as a minister and a diplomat to policy advisers and academic professors field their views. A sharper focus on what can be built into larger PAFTAD projects and communication to the basic stakeholders is, however, missing.

The practitioner contributors range from Indonesia to Iceland in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) besides the United States. The business perspective seems balanced by the academic and corporate authors on new globalization, with California, Hawaii, and Singapore as case studies. The academic perspectives have more on globalization and its adjustment to management of WTO negotiations. A warning is of East Asian FTAs replicating or innovatively recreating U.S. FTAs as a potential for missteps. It echoes the worry in net benefit of competitive or complementary FTAs vis-à-vis the WTO. Clearly, it is not so much as readers expecting any correct answers any time soon from the practitioners, but a culture of consensual-diverse mixture as acceptable and tolerable. This is another product that PAFTAD can help to manufacture.

A greedy reviewer always asks for more. In that spirit, one might add a missed opportunity for PAFTAD to reinvent itself. It seems to be getting so little for so much in the 2005 anniversary in Hawaii without a roadmap of whither goes PAFTAD as role model of trade analysis. The introductory chapter noted the “real world” and human side, but missed the chance to deliberate further how PAFTAD can bridge the moral high

ground with the second-best theory’s imperfect assumptions as part of the real world.

More precisely, how PAFTAD re-engineers its mandate with its resources of academic first-best world theoreticians to a pragmatic second-best with *realpolitik*? It need not condone bad imperfect behaviour, but how does PAFTAD help elected governments steer through politicking and voters’ job loss? How do any government and its technocrats preach education, reskilling or labour flexibility to a demographically “age-inappropriate” mass or shifting the welfare culture to workfare state? This plea is to PAFTAD pioneer and *dillettanti* alike with the chemistry, old and new blood from politicians, ministers and statesmen to academics with scientific and analytical tools.

A humble adaptation is the *charrette*, referred to as any collaborative session in which a group of designers drafts a solution to a design problem. Through creative, intense work sessions, public workshops, and open houses, a PAFTAD *charrette* as a collaborative planning process to harness all stakeholders’ talents and energies may plumb a creative and supportive feasible plan. Representing transformative community change on cross-functionally, dynamic and collaborative design planning process, the PAFTAD-plus *charrette* adds to public education. The mystique of free trade is “lost” to the common man who is rightly more concerned with real job loss and income insecurity. If nothing is gained by “real” answers, at least the communication of information and any impossible policy balance-choice may be delivered and educated across-the-board.

Many chapters noted cooperation from high politics down to grassroots NGOs; why not a step further to re-examine policy blunders and missed opportunities? Is history not the best teacher and reflection good for PAFTAD souls? The emerging ICT cyber state as recognized by many authors lends urgency. The masses have zero tolerance from a dysfunctional World Trade Organization (WTO) to Indonesia being not globalization-ready be it the financial crisis or bird flu pandemic. From the refocus in Hawaiian oceanographic research to Singapore city-state experimentations,

PAFTAD must bridge any information asymmetry or at least the outcomes in lay person terms by making them simple and result-oriented.

The combined and accumulated wisdom and experience of this thirty-one-strong edited volume could stretch further and farther in future conferences. A broad multi-disciplinary and multifaceted array of chapters has been produced. Greater due diligence to truly practising and seeing through a few prescriptions would be appreciated. If the PAFTAD intellectual think-tank cannot think this out, it would be a remiss for yet another conference and volume in another PAFTAD year. PAFTAD is itself globalizing beyond Asia and Australia to being co-sponsored by the Brandeis International Business School and East-West Center for its thirtieth big bang. PAFTAD has to be a continuous harbinger by its creative innovative momentum.

LINDA LOW

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
and
Department of Planning and Economy,
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

DOI: 10.1355/ae24-3j

***Malaysia: From Kampung to Twin Towers.* By Richard Leete.** Shah Alam: Oxford Fajar, 2007. Pp. 358.

The publication of *Malaysia: From Kampung to Twin Towers* coincides with the celebrations of fifty years of Independence in Malaysia. It documents the economic and social progress that Malaysia has achieved over the past fifty years and some of the development challenges that it faces today. The book begins with a chapter that examines how changes in Malaysia's demography over the past fifty years have profoundly influenced its economic development. This is followed by chapters on the growth and

transformation of the economy, and poverty eradication and the restructuring of society. The final chapters examine achievements in the areas of education, health, and greater gender equality.

The tone of this book is perhaps set in the forward, which states that at Independence Malaysia was on par with Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Ghana, Morocco and Senegal in terms of per capita income. However, fifty years on, its per capita income is double that of Sri Lanka, three times that of the Philippines and Morocco, and six times that of Ghana and Senegal. The message is that Malaysia's record is one of success, which deserves to be celebrated and to be emulated by other developing countries.

However, it also true that Malaysia has slipped in the East Asian growth league table and its performance in the East Asian neighbourhood has been mediocre. Both South Korea and Taiwan, which started out with lower levels of per capita GDP, have well surpassed Malaysia fifty years later, while several that started almost on par or at lower levels of per capita GDP have grown much faster. In terms of total factor productivity, Malaysia has also lagged behind.

Since Independence, Malaysia has been ruled by just one political party, and the policies of that party, particularly the New Economic Policy and its current variant, have been instrumental in charting the development and growth trajectory in Malaysia. As there is no counterfactual to the NEP and no way of gauging what growth rates would have prevailed in its absence, perhaps the challenge is then is to explain how Malaysia was able to do as well as it did it spite of the NEP. Was it just good luck and did good policy have much to do with it?

Leete maintains that unlike many other resource-rich countries, Malaysia did not succumb to the curse of reliance on its natural resource abundance and is one of the leading exporters of high technology electronics. However, underlying the impressive growth of the Malaysian manufacturing are a number of serious shortcomings. These include a high concentration in the electronics sub-sector, high foreign ownership, weak linkages, and human resource