

HOW
ASIA
CAN SHAPE THE
WORLD

FROM THE
ERA OF PLENTY
TO THE
ERA OF
SCARCITIES



JØRGEN ØRSTRØM MØLLER

Asia will redraw the map of economic progress over the next twenty-five years. Growth is necessary to solve economic and social problems, but harder to achieve as the age of plenty gives way to the age of scarcities. The challenge opens the door for an Asian economic model based on shifting of productivity from the individual to groups, ecological productivity instead of economic productivity, and a reversal to traditional Asian values — less materialistic than Western values. A new paradigm for economic thinking emerges to replace the one launched in the West 200 years ago.



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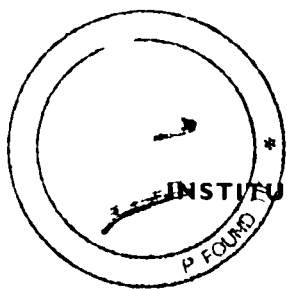
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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Singapore

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FOREWORD

Professor Jørgen Møller has for years given us his trenchant thoughts on the rise of new Europe after two disastrous wars in the twentieth century. I have had the privilege of spending many hours in conversation with him, listening to his critical examination of the current travails of both Europe and the United States. He also demonstrated a keen knowledge of the troubled experiences of Asian modernization. His deep concern that there should be better understanding in the West of what is happening in Asia has often encouraged me to think afresh about what we in Asia often take for granted. At one end, those who accept the Western model of growth as inevitable, also invariably believe we must get even closer to the West and absorb all its secrets. At the other, those who are determined to go beyond that model would ask us to think, wherever possible, out of the Western box in search of some Asian way. And, in between, there are those who have begun to doubt that there is any such thing as Asian and Western today as we take in each other's washing in this small and shrinking world.

In his new book, Professor Møller depicts the nature of politics in its many dimensions, sometimes bombastic, lofty, totalistic and awesome, but, at its core, he also shows that it is all too often petty and local. He ought to know, having worked as one of his country's most senior public servants during decades of European political turmoil. He is no less objective in his assessment of his own field of expertise, that of economics. He knows that economists can often sound like housewives counting pennies and keeping good accounts, but he also demonstrates that economic ideas and policies have the capacity to make or break nations and civilizations. There is little doubt that the cumulative power of nation states and their empires and various models

of rapid economic growth have, over the past 200 years, transformed every corner of the world. The rising rate of technological and material progress, and the obsession to better that rate, has dominated global discourse for so long that, now and then, this has driven poets and philosophers to wonder about the future of social cohesion and shared cultural values. I am fascinated by the way Professor Møller also wonders about that future. Indeed, many do ask if the advocates of sustainable growth and global environmental protection can really rid us of the prospect of an unending surfeit of worldly goods, cycles of economic stagnation, and relentless cultural destruction.

Professor Møller hesitates to make any forecasts, but raises similar concerns about the future world of scarce resources and suggests that group values will replace the traditions that give primacy to the individual. He has shown in his earlier writings to be a most versatile economist who can pick through the politics of high rhetoric and weave the threads of private finance into explanations of profound global change. In this book, he has drawn on his wide experience of the world of realpolitik and economic realism in European history to peer into Asia's future. By asking how Asia can shape the world, he examines the major changes of the past two decades with probing intensity. Clearly, the modern Western model has intervened at all levels of Asian political and economic development with considerable success. The most far-reaching changes in the realms of industrialization and urbanization have fundamentally changed everybody's lives, and societies and cultures that were once dominant have been systematically undermined. Now, as globalization becomes a great challenge to the whole world, what resources can Asia contribute to help the world respond?

He invites us to follow him on an exploratory and sometimes rollercoaster ride to survey Asia's uncertain but not necessarily unpredictable future. He has combed a large variety of sources to prepare a guide for the journey, warning at each step of the way that the forecasts attempted might well be sidetracked by new variables not taken into account.

This book does not allow simple answers. Professor Møller examines every effort at forecasting and each projection that has attracted attention, and subjects them to meticulous scrutiny. He persists in asking, what assets do the Asian growth centres have? What kinds of heritage have been helpful and what are likely to obstruct future development? Have they borrowed wisely from the industrialized pioneers of Europe and the United States? Are they ready to adapt, innovate, and experiment with the knowledge and skills that they have so far acquired? Have Asians educated their younger generations to build the inner strengths that will overcome current limits and reach out for zones yet to be discovered? Professor Møller has identified the achievements