

FOREWORD

In this issue we emphasize a sampling of recent work in the social sciences, with several articles about economic issues of Bangladesh. This is in part due to a trend in submissions to the journal and we encourage all our readers with an interest in the humanities to send us articles about literature, philosophy, history, and other pertinent subjects but in any event it provides a good overview of current research about economics and other matters of social interest. Given the economic situation of the world today it certainly is a good idea to step back and look carefully at the nature of that situation.

We begin with a methodological article by Dr. Kriengsin Prasongsukarn. Understanding cultural orientation is a critically important topic. Differences in such orientations play an important role in international relations, marketing of products, and everyday interpersonal relations. In a world that is increasingly globalized the local differences that resist homogeneity ironically make such differences especially important. The Cultural Values Scale tries to capture the five cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede: culture namely, Power distance, Uncertainty avoidance, Individualism Masculinity, and the Confucian dynamism. Using a Thai research population the Scale is found to have strong reliability and validity and thus a proper research instrument.

We then move on to our investigation of the economy of Bangladesh. In the years since its independence Bangladesh has been an emerging economy that has sought to overcome the serious problems of its early history. The articles in our focus section each consider one aspect of this effort.

Asst. Professor Mohammad A. Ashraf and Asst. Professor Hasanur R. Joarder begin the section by analyzing Bangladeshi trade deficits whose volume and volatility constitute a persistent and the authors find increasing problem for the country's economy. This is not only an inherent problem but the high levels of volatility also make economic planning difficult. The authors investigate the root causes of these problems and make suggestions for meeting the trade deficit problem. Jashim Uddin, Md. Lutfur Rahman and Shehely Parvin also emphasize an analysis of trade relations and its importance to the overall Thai economy. Looking at businesspeople in the ceramic tiles and sanitary wares industry they investigate how they use their country-of-origin as part of their marketing strategy, indicating the factors relevant to sourcing strategy. Because these elements have a significant effect on exports, the results from this study indicate important factors in improving the trade imbalances analyzed in the earlier article.

The final two articles do very much place economics and business in a larger context of religion and philosophy. Fr. Michael Picharn Jaiseri retains a social science approach in his investigation of Christian values in business practice in the Thai cultural context. Such values, it is demonstrated, are not incompatible with the leadership and managerial approaches that are needed to achieve success in business. Professor Leon Miller addresses

the philosophical context of business in a more directly philosophical manner. In his article Miller investigates the relationship of Buddhist ethics to business practice but in making this investigation he also considers interesting relationships between the Buddhist and Western traditions.

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