

Preface

Ever since 1980, Asian economies – the NIEs (Newly Industrializing Economies), the four countries of ASEAN, and China – have enjoyed worldwide attention thanks to their spectacular economic development, but in the watershed year of 1996, they began to attract a new and different kind of concern.

This concern, sparked by an almost uniform decline in their economic growth rates caused largely by slackening export performance, has given rise to a number of differing views about the sustainability of their economic growth.

Through the process of export-led development, these Asian economies have become the growth center of the world (the world's fastest-growing region) and are now inextricably linked not only with the development of advanced countries across the world but also with that of other Asian economies, including Japan. For this reason, while the outlook for each of these national economies is a matter of global concern, it is also of particular interest to other Asian countries.

In the light of these considerations, the present study looks at the Asian economies, which have been increasingly viewed as one economic region in recent years, on a country-by-country basis. It attempts to identify the preconditions in each country for sustained economic growth in the late 1990s by analyzing the problems – and the background to the problems – now confronting each country, and assessing a likelihood that these problems can be overcome.

This report is the work of a task force made up of experts on each Asian country, drawn from staff members of the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), under the co-chairmanship of Kayoko Kitamura and Tsuneo Tanaka.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily coincide with those of the Institute of Developing Economies.