*pode ser tarde, e bem tarde, para que a sua produção venha a ser endogeneizada.*

Mas o que o relato não deixa de nos indiciar é a enormidade do risco que a Simoldes teria corrido se entretanto tivesse teoricamente confiado nas virtudes de desenvolvimento da indústria automóvel portuguesa já instalada e a instalar em resultado do contrato com a Ford/Volkswagen. O que, a dar-se, muito poderia ter atingido a Simoldes, mas não só.

Gostaríamos que as palavras de apreço com que nos referimos à Simoldes não fossem confundidas com qualquer suposta acrítica posição nossa em relação à Empresa. Realmente, sequer parece deslocado tecer considerações como a seguinte: sendo certo que a Simoldes ainda está a crescer, haverá a tendência de, por tal motivo, a empresa não apresentar problemas típicos de outras que se confrontam, por exemplo, com capacidades excedentárias. Facto que pode explicar a ausência de certas preocupações (ou de certas políticas) presentes noutras empresas. Mas, de qualquer modo, não encontramos, no caso, razões para antecipar críticas, antes talvez seja mais adequado expressarmos os nossos votos para que a Empresa venha a encontrar soluções igualmente sábias para ultrapassar situações como as aventadas de perversos excessos de capacidade.

Uma palavra final sobre riscos que rodeiam a actividade da Simoldes. Parece difícil não apontar dois tipos de risco: a Simoldes, a crescer como vem acontecendo, pode vir a sentir-se, no quadro nacional, demasiado sozinha na procura de recursos específicos à sua actividade. Outro risco é o de, pela notoriedade internacional conseguida, vir a ser comprada por interesses estrangeiros. Poderão os seus donos ganhar monetariamente com essa transacção, mas o país, a indústria em Portugal, poderá perder em especial no caso de essa eventual aquisição visar não o aperfeiçoamento do projecto Simoldes centrado em Portugal mas, antes, algures, o que pode significar, então e em prazo muito curto, o fim desta até à data bem sucedida aventura empresarial portuguesa.



Mário Murteira

# The Developement of economic and business relations between PRC and European Union

## Possible contribution of economic and business administration schools

I

It is well known that two dominant trends in the present world economy are globalization and regionalisation.

By *Globalization* we mean the emergence, at world level, of a global market where the dominant actors are Transnational Corporations (TNC), acting according to transnational strategies. Globalisation is a complex process embracing different dimensions, not only economic. Perhaps the most dramatic implications of the process are to be found at the levels of global finance on one hand, and at the level of global information and telecommunication technologies, on the other hand.

By *Regionalisation,*, we mean the process of economic integration, formal and/or informal, currently going on in specific ways in different areas of the world economy, such as Europe, North America or Southeast Asia.

In very broad terms, we may say that both trends are, after all, the two faces of the same fundamental process: the growing interdependence or interconnection at world level of all the regional, national, or local components of the global market economy.

At first sight, however, globalisation and regionalisation may appear as contradictory, not complementary, processes. In fact, regional economic integration — whatever the ways and goals of that integration are, explicit or implicit — may be more or less open, or more or less closed to the outside economic environment. One possible and undesirable prospect for the future of the world economy is a scenario of economic war among different regional economic "fortresses", built around some dominant poles.

We all know that, at present, we have three great poles in the world economy — US, EU and Japan — and that, in the near future, PRC may become a fourth dominant pole. In fact, according to certain forecasts, the

Chinese economy may become the largest economy in the world, early in the next century.

The present three dominant poles are simultaneously performing determinant roles — though specific and not equally relevant — in the process of global and regional economic integration.

If we consider, separately, the interconnections between each of those poles and the other two, on one hand, and the degree of relative openness — in terms of trade as well as of investment of each pole, de per se, we may observe the following:

Japan is relatively the most self centered of the three poles, that is: the one that is relatively successful in its external projection, but has kept its economy more protected from external penetration.

The dominant pole, the US, is the least "regional" and the most "global" power. That is, in spite of being the most powerful world pole, it is relatively open to the other two and it is also the most able to develop significant economic relations with them, particularly Europe.

The EU, on the other hand, is obviously, (say) "underdeveloped" in its systemic positioning in relation to the Asian/Pacific Pole, and (say) "overdeveloped" in relation to its economic links with the North American Pole.

There are many reasons for that situation, which are not of our concern here. But let me just refer one historic as well as cultural aspect that, maybe, is relevant to remember on this occasion.

For certain reasons, in the second half of this century Europe had more lasting and direct economic and political power in Africa than Asia. On the other hand, we may say the opposite in relation to the US: that is, the direct influence (and concern) of the North American superpower has been much greater in Asia than in Africa. This, of course, must be understood in the framework of the "Cold War" and the complexities of the relationships among China, Soviet Union and US in the decades following the end of the Second World War.

But the important fact we want to stress here, without trying to explain it, is that Africa had a disappointing economic performance in that period — most African countries are LDC (Least Developed Countries), according to the UN classification — while certain East Asian countries, more direct or indirectly influenced by the US had, on the contrary, spectacular economic performances.

It is often referred how the "Asiapessimism" and "Africaoptimism" of the sixties turned to "Asiaoptimism" and "Africapessimism" two or three decades later. Perhaps we are entering now in a new phase, not so regionally homogeneous in terms of economic performance, in Africa as well as in East Asia.





The PRC is a relative late-comer in this process of world economic growth. However, since the end of the seventies, it has been successfully following a very specific and autonomous process of insertion in the world economy. It has also been, in the last fifteen years or so, the economy of fastest growth in the world. And, as you know, it was precisely Ghuandong province which was the fast runner inside the PRC economy, on the road to economic growth.

The point that I would like to stress now, concerning this evolution, is the fact that, in the last decades, Europe has been economically, politically and culturally, more influential to a down grading region of the world economy (that is, in particular, Subsaharian Africa), while, on the contrary, the US have been more linked to an up grading region of that economy — that is, some so called New Industrializing Countries or Economies (NICs or NIEs) in the Asia / Pacific region.

The possible responsabilities of US and Europe in these contradictory economic performances may be questioned, but this is not our purpose here. We could also speculate about the possible change in the near future of these regional trends. But we are not, here and now, interested in such questions, however important they may be.

Let us just conclude this brief introduction by stating one hypothesis: that behind this present (say) economic "distancing", or relative separation between Europe and fast growing Asia, and in particular between Europe and China, there are among other possible factors, strong cultural barriers, which are not easy to remove.

Could universities and higher education institutions, from both sides, in particular in the field of economics and business administration, play any significant role to overcome those cultural barriers?

## II

To try to answer to that question, let me evoke here our own experience of cooperation among universities from Macau (Faculty of Business Administration), Ghuangzhou (Shongshan University) and Portugal (ISCTE, Lisbon). I will not bother you describing our modest but significant experience of several years. Instead, let me just generalise with some empirical evidence supporting our analysis, as it is supposed scientific researchers should do...

There are many things we can do together at the higher education level, in order to reduce cultural barriers to business development between our countries and regions. I know, of course, that this is a long term process and not only cultural barriers, at present, are an obstacle to closer economic and business links between China and Europe. But I am sure that we all agree that, in a broad sense, "culture" is a fundamental area where there is an urgent need for developing a mutual better understanding.

I will briefly mention a few possibilities to that end: organisation of joint courses on business administration at post graduation levels; exchange of professors and students, in particular at post-graduation levels; joint development of applied research projects (for instance, as in our case, about the comparison in different aspects, namely FDI projects, between the two SEZ neighbouring Macau and Hong Kong, that is, Zhuai and Shengzhen); joint organisation of institutions able to give technical support, adapted to the "cultural environment" in question, to firms in different aspects of business administration, say, in matters like marketing, organizational behaviour, international trade or transcultural management. It is obvious that, at least for the organization of some of these activities, business interests from both sides could and should be associated.

Let me finish, briefly, with a personal story.

I was happy, recently, to be the supervisor to the elaboration of an MBA thesis in the University of Macau of a brilliant Chinese student, from North China. The thesis was about certain aspects of the reform of large and medium state firms in China, and has been published, in English, by the University of Macau. I had something to teach the Chinese MBA student about the process of transition to a market economy and, on the other hand, I had a lot to learn from my student about the on-going reform of PRC's economic system. I think we both learned something from each other and perhaps the example could be generalized to the global level of socio-cultural relations between China and Europe![1]

(1) This was one of the "key note" speeches at the final session of an international conference held in the Sun Ya Tsen University of Ghuangzhou (Canton) last October. The INDEG/ISCTE was one of the sponsers of the event. The central topic of the conference was also the subject of this speech.



# Autores

# Authors