

# **Synergies from Cross-National Economic Cooperation: Why Japan, China, and India Should be Seeking Opportunities for Collaboration James Portwood (Hungary 1990)**

## **Biography**

Dr. Portwood is currently a Professor of Human Resource Management and International Business in Temple University's Fox School of Business and Management. He is an active scholar and author in the areas of International Human Resource Management, Global Change Management, and the Human Side of Organizational Transitions. He has taught internationally in England, Italy, France, Ukraine, Hungary, and Japan. He is Director of the Temple University Center for European Studies and since 1990, has been an adjunct Professor of Management at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. Dr. Portwood was a Fulbright Fellow in Hungary in 1990-91, and has since led projects promoting economic and social transformation in Central and Eastern. These projects include reform efforts in the public as well as private sectors. He has also worked as a consultant with numerous international companies.

Dr. Portwood's current research interests include tracking trends in international labor markets, especially the increasing use of offshoring and of contingent workers as tools of strategic HR practice. He is also studying the impact of economic transitions in Eastern Europe on career opportunities for both native and foreign professionals. Finally, he is studying the cultural and labor market implications of the trend towards global product design and production.

## **Background**

Michael Porter, author of the recent "Global Competitiveness Report" (Harvard Business School, 2006), states that the relative competitiveness of nations is a measure of "their ability to sustain significant growth in productivity and economic development." This, in turn, is based on such factors as resource availability, education, management sophistication, infrastructure, and environmental conditions. As economies have globalized and economic competition has intensified, however, individual countries may find it increasingly difficult to muster all the factors necessary to keep pace. This is why the appropriate unit of analysis for competitiveness in the future may well be geographic regions rather than single countries. This will be especially true where proximate countries with complementary assets are willing to collaborate and develop integrated economic strategies.

The proposed panel discussion will focus on possible synergies that could be developed through greater cooperation among three key Asian economies – Japan, China, and India. Each country, standing alone, has obvious competitive challenges (For example, Porter notes that China is actually slipping in its competitive ranking due to strains brought on by its rapid industrialization). While each country is facing limitations, they also possess "assets" that could help their prospective partners meet their challenges. Japan is a country of limited size with a shrinking population, but it has a wealth of technology, management know-how, and investment capital desperately needed by its two neighbors. At the same time, China has a growing industrial base and large (though aging) workforce, but it suffers from a polluting energy inefficient infrastructure that could benefit significantly from Japanese technology and expertise. India, for its part, needs investment capital and infrastructure development to take full advantage of its young growing work force and large western trained scientific and technological cadres.

Working together these countries could provide ready markets, talent, key resources, and a variety of business opportunities to each other, while improving their mutual competitiveness in the global economic arena. The proposed panel discussion will explore in more detail potential synergies from economic cooperation in the Asia region, and discuss some steps to encourage further political and business "partnering" among these leading nations.

## **Discussions Questions**

1. What are some of the complementary economic strengths and challenges shared among these three key Asian nations?
2. What are some significant synergies that could be achieved through greater cross border cooperation?
3. What are the major hurdles that stand in the way of greater economic and/or political cooperation among these nations
4. What are the key, economic, socio-cultural, and political characteristics/conditions that are likely to help or hinder greater cross-national collaboration among these countries going forward
5. What key changes would need to be undertaken in each country to foster greater economic cooperation?