

Economy

New Opportunities for Polish-Japanese Cooperation: Diagnosis and Prospects

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Preface

The conference: “2014 – New Opportunities for Japan + V-4 Cooperation” was organized by the University of Lodz to mark 2014 as the V-4 + Japan Exchange Year. This event followed the decision to declare 2014 the year of exchange at the summit of Japan + Visegrad countries’ Prime Ministers in Warsaw on 16 June 2013. The meeting commemorated the 10th anniversary of the collaboration between Poland, Czech, Slovakia, Hungary and Japan in a vast range of issues and pointed to the opening of a new stage of further cooperation in the fields of economy, society, as well as science and research.

“2014 – New opportunities for Japan + V-4 Cooperation” was designed to emphasize the continuation of dialogue between Japan and Poland on issues of mutual interest. The initiative had its roots in the joint statement of the Prime Ministers of Japan and Visegrad countries, called: “The partnership for common values in the 21st century”, issued on 16 June 2013 in Warsaw. The topics planned for the conference referred to major world challenges. As a result of the conference we planned to exchange ‘research products’ to continue the promising opportunities for successful collaboration in the fields of science, economy and culture.

We are very grateful to our honorary patrons: the Embassy of Japan in Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Marshal of the Lodz Region and The Japan Foundation. The University of Lodz also owes much to the distinguished partners of the conference: The National Bank of Poland, The City of Lodz, Lodz Special Economic Zone, Lodz Regional Development Agency, the Yakumo-goto Association and the British Centre-Language School.

The main organizer of the conference was the University of Lodz, which gathers prominent researchers in thirteen faculties and has more than 45 thousand students. Its highly educated graduates exert influence each year on the creation of a skilled and professional labor force. The University is the biggest employer in the Lodz region with 2,370 academic teachers, 623 of whom bear the highest academic rank. The University treats international cooperation as a way to foster

its development and continues the city's tradition of international cooperation. It regularly hosts guest speakers, renowned politicians, businessmen and cultural representatives from Poland and abroad. At present we have two Japanese partner universities – Kwansei Gakuin and Josai, and the preparation of other agreements is under way. Every year the “Japanese Days” event, under the auspices of the Embassy of Japan in Poland, is held at the university campus. The University of Lodz is repeatedly ranked among the top higher education institutions in Poland, and it especially excels in such fields of study as management, law, and economics.

The socio-political climate for Japanese undertakings in Lodz is very favorable and also strongly encouraged by Lodz's excellent public governance, conducted by Mayor Hanna Zdanowska and the Marshal of the Lodz Voivodship, Witold Stępień. Currently, there are several Japanese engagements in Lodz and the Lodz province and still there is a lot of space and opportunities for further ventures. Lodz is strategically located at the crossroads of major European communication routes and has the largest railway cargo container terminal in the Central Europe. Its highly-qualified, skilled employees and competitive labour costs make future investments in the entire Lodz region attractive, competitive, and above all feasible. The Mayor of the City of Lodz has been recently very active in promoting Lodz as an attractive centre for foreign direct investment. In line with a recent visit of the Lodz municipal authorities (February 2015) to Japan with the aim of participating in economic seminars and business talks with representatives of Japanese industry, the University of Lodz made a commitment to organize an interdisciplinary conference on the “V-4 + Japan Exchange Year 2014”. Moreover, in 2012 Lodz was chosen one of 31 awardees in the “IBM Smarter Cities Challenge Program”, alongside such cities as Kyoto, Copenhagen, Buffalo and Richmond. The concept of smart cities is well-developed in Japan, so there is much to be gained from Japanese experience, knowledge and practice.

General objectives of the conference involved:

- The creation of new academic and business links as well as enhancing the existing contacts;
- Bringing institutional and industrial players from Japan and Poland together to gain insights on the existing opportunities for future cooperation in various fields;
- Spurring intellectual development with the purpose to demonstrate to Japanese investors the attractiveness of the city and region of Lodz in a number of fields: economy, cultural exchanges as well as societal challenges; offering opportunities and challenges not yet exploited;
- Exploring and identifying new opportunities for Japanese – Polish collaboration and sharing the idea of the “2014: V-4 + Japan Exchange Year”;
- Increasing cultural exchanges and promoting better understanding of cultural differences. This involved expanding the consciousness of conference participants (entrepreneurs) in the field of cross-cultural communication and its influence on efficiency in international business relations;

– Japan's corporate culture and advanced technologies deserve an adequate follow up. These universal values and state-of-the art technologies were addressed during the conference implicitly, if not explicitly. This created an educational aspect of the event.

The selection of paper presenters met the high professional standards of the respective institutions to which the presenters belonged. All the participants were recruited from among distinguished academics, civil public servants and industry experts. The Conference Programme Committee was overseen and coordinated by:

- Prof. Teruji Suzuki – Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management, Warsaw,
- Prof. Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski – Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz,
- Prof. Ryszard Piasecki – Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz,
- Tomoyuki Miura – independent consultant and a long-time employee of Sumitomo in Japan and in Poland.

Professor Włodzimierz Nykiel, Rector of the University of Lodz, opened the conference and welcomed all the distinguished guests. Next, Mr Marek Cieślak, First Deputy Mayor of the City of Lodz, and Mrs Bożena Ziemniewicz, Member of the Regional Council, representing Marshal of Lodz Voivodship, delivered welcoming speeches. Mr Hiroshi Matsumoto, Counsellor, Embassy of Japan, stressed the importance of the visit by Mr Shinzō Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, to Poland in June 2013, which widened cooperation in the spheres of international security and energy as well as the economy and culture, in general. He greeted the Japanese firms present at the conference, noting that Takeda and Fujitsu and the afore-mentioned Josai University – a conference participant – had made crucial contributions to collaboration in the field of international security with Visegrad countries, including at the governmental level.

The conference consisted of three different sessions.

Session I was dedicated to science, research and innovation. The keynote speaker was the President of the National Bank of Poland, Professor Marek Belka, with his academic background and the previous work at the University of Lodz. Professor Marek Belka served twice as Deputy Prime Minister, then as Minister of Finance and later Prime Minister of Poland. Professor Belka has also held numerous high ranking positions within the international community: he had held office in the United Nations as Executive Secretary of Economic Commission for Europe, and afterwards assumed office as the Director of the European Department at the International Monetary Fund. Enjoying high prestige in academic circles and maintaining personal connections with renowned financial institutions throughout the world, Professor Belka could exert meritorious leadership of Session I. The major topics in this panel were: aging societies and smart com-

munities, both of which are pending challenges for mankind. The broad array of detailed topics included:

- social infrastructures to enhance the quality of life while reducing the burden on the environment;
- state-of-the-art Japanese management practices and technologies (ICT, top world-class manufacturing clusters, green technologies, small electric power grids);
- silver industries as a response to the dramatic process of population aging.

The contents of the presentations in session I were as follows:

- Prof. Marek Belka, President of the National Bank of Poland – “Global economy knows no borders”;
- Prof. Akira Shirahata, Vice President, Josai International University, Tokyo – “Josai on academic cooperation with V-4 universities”;
- Mr Yoshikuni Takashige, Vice President, Portfolio Strategy Division, Fujitsu, Tokyo – “Shaping a more prosperous, sustainable future”;
- Dr Yuka Sugawara (maiden name Minagawa), Sophia University, Tokyo – “Determinants of successful aging: implications from Japan”.

Session II, devoted to Polish-Japanese business was presided over by Mr Katsuyuki Kambara, a highly esteemed Japanese businessman who had been involved in Poland's industrial relations for over 40 years. He met the expectation that his negotiating skills and experience would have had the effect of promoting the Japanese presence in the Lodz region. Mr Katsuyuki Kambara had been awarded several important Polish medals, as well as a Commendation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Living in Poland since the early 1970s, he had been active in negotiating Poland's government debt with Japan. He worked as director of NSK Europe Ltd. and enjoyed high respect among both the Japanese community in Poland and his Polish co-workers. He was a Japanese representative in the Polish-Japanese Economic Committee. The organizers of the conference envisioned his leadership impact due to his mediating and socializing skills. In this panel the participants discussed and debated on the opportunities and conditions for Japan's further investment in our country, primarily in the city of Lodz and the Lodz province/region but also covering other Polish engagements in Japan. Various means of industrial cooperation were discussed.

The agenda of Session II was divided into two parts: lectures and a business-to-business panel.

The lectures were delivered by:

- Prof. Zofia Wysokińska, University of Lodz – “Competitiveness and internationalization – the case of University of Lodz”;
- Prof. Atsushi Tanaka, Kwansei Gakuin University, Nishinomiya – “Japanese economy and the global financial crisis”;
- Mr Marcin Włodarczyk, Director, Investor Relations Unit, City of Lodz Office – “The City of Lodz – an attractive place for Japanese FDI”.

The B2B panel was organized by the Lodz Regional Development Agency and Lodz Special Economic Zone. Panelists included:

- Mr Naofumi Makino, Director, Japan External Trade Organization JETRO, Warsaw;
- Mr Yuji Noguchi, Director, YKK Poland;
- Mr Yoshito Okada, President, Union of Employers Shokokai;
- Ms Aleksandra Suszczewicz, Vice-Director, Development and Strategy Department, Lodz Special Economic Zone;
- Mr Przemysław Andrzejak, President, Lodz Regional Development Agency;
- Ms Ewa Florczyk, Director, Entrepreneurship Department, Marshal Office, Lodz Voivodship.

Session III was devoted to cultural exchanges, with the chief contribution coming from Dr Jadwiga Rodowicz-Czechowska, General Counsellor at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, an expert in culture creation and promotion. Dr Jadwiga Rodowicz-Czechowska is a former Ambassador of The Republic of Poland to Japan (2008–2012), author of the first Noh play in Poland, and recipient of the award “Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star”. The organizers of the conference recognized her leadership arising from her creative capabilities and personal sensitivity. This panel was devoted to issues of promoting national culture in general. Particular subjects concerned the new multimedia, Japanese language teaching, and business culture. The presentations were as follows:

- Dr Jadwiga Rodowicz-Czechowska, General Counsellor, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland, Former Ambassador of Poland to Japan – “Promotion of Polish culture in Japan”;
- Ms Wioletta Laskowska-Smoczyńska, Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology, Jagiellonian University, Krakow – “The Twentieth Anniversary of the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology – past achievements and future plans”;
- Mr Waldemar Czechowski, Polish-Japanese Institute of Technology, Warsaw – “Innovations in multimedia communication”;
- Prof. Arkadiusz Jabłoński, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan – “Japanese language teaching in Poland in the contemporary world of cross-cultural communication”.

After the conference participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire which facilitated the process of evaluation and specified expectations concerning future actions with the aim of enhancing business cooperation and promoting Japanese culture in Poland. Moreover, the results (81 returned questionnaires) were useful in determining the meritorious value of the conference with reference to corporate culture in Japan as well as the economy, innovation and Japanese society. Taking into account the diversified interests of the participants, it is very hard to

define a specific value added to this event. Respondents positively assessed the following: professional choice of speakers (42%); chance to establish contacts between Polish and Japanese entrepreneurs (41%); chance to establish new relations between Japanese and Polish participants (35%); opportunity to meet specialists in one's own profession and the presence of influential personalities of authority (25%); creative mix of economic, political and social issues (15%).

Session I (Science, Innovation and Research) and session III (Cultural Exchange) proved to be equally interesting and inspiring (41% and 43% respectively); while Session II (Global and Regional Aspects of Economic Growth) aroused the special interest of approximately 28% of the respondents. The most highly assessed were the lectures of: Professor Marek Belka, President of National Bank of Poland on global economy, Professor Arkadiusz Jabłoński from UAM in Poznań on Japanese language teaching in context of cultural differences, and Doctor Yuka Minagawa from Sophia University in Tokyo on coping with Japan's aging society. Nearly all – 98% – of respondents declared that the conference met their expectations, especially with respect to assimilating basic knowledge on Japan's economy, science and culture (57%) as well as understanding differences in corporate culture between both nations (38%). The vast majority of surveyed declared that the conference upgraded their competences to a high or very high extent (82%); and 98% of respondents expressed the opinion that the conference inspired them to further study cultural and business issues about Japan. According to poll, the next edition of the conference should focus on Japanese society, its values and tradition (56%) and Japanese-style business negotiations (38%). As many as 61% of surveyed would like to participate in workshops on Japanese corporate culture, and 20% aspire for a better understanding of Polish-Japanese cooperation in hi-tech, while only approximately 12% expressed the desire to take part in a conference of a branch range (green technologies, ICT, power engineering etc.).

In concluding this preface we would like to quote a few preliminary opinions resulting from the conference:

1. Culture is an important determinant for business engagements;
2. It is worthwhile to study other nations' tradition and moral norms as the core for industrial relations;
3. Some developments, such as e.g. technological, might be adjusted and followed in different than the original conditions;
4. Introducing (inviting) foreign direct investment from Japan requires respected knowledge and widening of the consciousness of the uniqueness of the Japanese corporate culture.

The above judgments will be meticulously traced in all the presentations and lectures, published within this monograph. We appreciate all the contributions very much and are deeply convinced they will provide an impulse and inspiration to development of further cooperation between Poland and Japan in many areas.

After the conference we received the very sad news Mr Katsuyuki Kambara passed away on the 3rd of May 2015 at the age of 74. He was buried in Warsaw, the city he loved, at the Powązki Military Cemetery. This is a great loss for the development of Polish-Japanese economic relations and for all of us who have known him personally.

Prof. UŁ dr hab. Jolanta Młodawska-Bronowska

This monograph covers the output of the conference titled “2014 – New Opportunities for Japan and V-4 Cooperation” and contains Japanese and Polish contributions. It offers reflections on the *statu nascendi* of economic and cultural relations between the two nations. Viewpoints and research results mirror the various interests and arguments of the scholars (mainly economists, sociologists, and japanologists), businessmen, and representatives of administrative bodies (central and local governments) who participated in the conference, all of whom are searching for common solutions.

The presented papers are very much diversified with respect to their content and writing styles. The book itself reflects an eclectic approach. The multifaceted approach to the discussed issues facilitates the comparison of expectations against real life activities. The most important goal of the book is to identify the potential for collaboration and crucial fields in which there exist challenges and a need for changes, all in the interest of leading to a new stage of reciprocally profitable relations between Poland and Japan in today’s globalised world.



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