

Foreword

Conventional thinking tells us that globalization is eating away at the sharp differences that characterized life in different parts of the world in former times. Nowhere are these effects said to be more evident than in the field of international business. To be sure, it is true that we can now communicate with one another a great deal faster, more readily meet up with one another, dress more similarly and eat more similar foods. However, these convergences need to be placed into a broader context. Commerce has always involved a good deal of mingling between cultural groups, yet the differences between these groups have converged little over centuries. So, caution is needed in assuming that one global business model is currently in the process of construction. We now have transnational organizations within which only a tiny percentage of employees are located in the nation where that organization is headquartered. But do transnational organizations headquartered in the USA, Japan, Germany, India, the UK, France, Sweden, China or elsewhere operate in similar ways? What we need is careful scrutiny of the evidence relating to the many processes that contribute to successful organizational performance in different parts of the world, and in the joint ventures and enterprises that bring together organizational units from different cultural settings.

For better or for worse, we are all now engaged in communications and transactions with persons from differing cultural perspectives and each of us must struggle with the limitations of our own worldview. This struggle affects the authors of books as much as the rest of us, and it is commendable that this book draws together three authors with distinctive and complementary perspectives. They were born on three separate continents, and they face one another as representatives of three different generations of researchers into the relations between culture and organizational behavior. Having themselves worked together in different ways over several decades, this places them well to be sensitive to the distinctive and sometimes subtle cultural differences that can make the difference between organizational successes and failures. They have provided you, the reader, with a welcome and refreshingly accessible account of key aspects of 21st century organizational behavior.

Peter B. Smith
Professor Emeritus, University of Sussex, UK