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East Asia at a Crossroads

The Japan Center for International Exchange wishes to thank



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Edited by

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Foreword

East Asian efforts to build the underpinnings of a regional community have drawn heightened attention in recent years. In a sense, the push to establish regional institutions and mechanisms has been a natural outgrowth of the region's rapidly growing economic interdependence. At another level, these efforts also reflect an acknowledgement of the need for greater regional cooperation in the face of growing transnational challenges, as well as a calculation that strengthening regional institutions can help stabilize East Asia in a period of dynamic change and shifting balances of power.

Despite the notable progress made to date, the question remains as to how much further community building can proceed in the face of the mutual suspicions, deepset animosities, and widespread disparities that persist among states in the region. In a sense, East Asia finds itself at a crossroads, where regional cooperation can help overcome these divisions or where it can fall victim to them. With this in mind, the contributors to this study attempt to assess the current state of East Asia community building and identify ways that momentum can be sustained and regional cooperation further deepened. At the same time, they examine an issue that is often overlooked in the debate about regionalism in East Asia, namely how a more coherent East Asia might be a better global citizen. In other words, they are concerned with how regional community might better enable East Asia to serve as a counterpart for interregional initiatives, primarily with Europe and North America, and how it can ultimately provide a platform for East Asia to expand its contributions to global governance.

This study was undertaken under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Agenda Project (APAP), an initiative operated by a consortium of policy research institutions that promote joint policy research, dialogue, and

information sharing on key issues facing the Asia Pacific. With the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) serving as the secretariat for APAP, leading intellectual figures from around East Asia—including from China, Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines—as well as from Europe and North America were convened for two forums, the first in Bali, Indonesia, on November 27–28, 2006, and the second in Tokyo, Japan, on March 10–11, 2007. All of this was made possible by the generous funding of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The book that emerged from these discussions has been brought to fruition through the hard work of the staff of JCIE in cooperation with their counterparts in the APAP member institutions. While extending our deep gratitude to all of them, we would like to particularly note the efforts of Ryo Sahashi and Hyoma Ito to help organize the workshops; the work of Hideko Katsumata, James Gannon, and Ryo Sahashi to shepherd this book to completion; the able copyediting of Kim Ashizawa and Susan Hubbard; and the layout and design of Patrick Ishiyama. Most of all, we wish to thank the authors, who have been so generous with their time and so willing to engage intellectually on this important topic.

In an era when East Asia is becoming an increasingly important player in global affairs, we hope that this study can help deepen understanding of what is actually underway at the regional level and perhaps provoke greater exploration of how East Asia might contribute more effectively to the international community.

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