

## FOREWORD

*Facing Asia* – what better way is there of thinking about Japan's position in the world on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? When Japan was *Facing Asia* for much of the 1990s, was it seeing itself as somehow apart? When Japan is *Facing Asia*, does it express new directions for the future or reaffirm existing boundaries? How does *Facing Asia* connect Japan and its main actors to broader political, socio-economical and cultural networks that set it on a grander stage?

This book addresses these questions as part of *Japan in Asia*, a multidisciplinary research project of the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ). The establishment of the DIJ in 1988 by a decision of the Federal Ministry of Research and Technology – the present Federal Ministry for Education and Research – reflects a new awareness in Germany of the need for a better understanding of East Asia and Japan in particular. To this end, the DIJ conducts research in the fields of the humanities, the social sciences, and the economy of modern Japan. As a research institute located in Tōkyō, the DIJ benefits from close contacts with Japanese institutions and scholars, while also capitalizing on its growing worldwide networks in Japan-related research.

In its endeavor to identify issues of special relevance from a European perspective, the DIJ launched its project on *Japan in Asia* in 1997. Given the geopolitical developments of the 1990s, Japan's locus in the global context and the re-definition of its relations with Asia are of considerable interest. At the same time, the question of *Japan in Asia*, a question that is equally acute in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres, also implies changes in Japan's relationship to Europe or the 'West'.

In the closely interrelated areas of politics and economics, we focus on the process of political and economic integration in Asia and Japan's role within it. From the perspective of political science, we scrutinize the domestic debate concerning Japan's future role in Asia and the influence of business and interest groups on Japanese foreign policy decision making. Economic relations between Japan and Asia in general, and on current changes regarding Japanese business networks within the Asian region in particular, are another important focus within this framework.

Several conferences of the DIJ have highlighted aspects of our *Japan in Asia* research focus. A 1997 conference on the historical background of Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors examined the political, econom-

ical, social, and cultural dimension of the interactions of Japan and the Japanese with Asia, and the Asians. The conference was called 'The Japanese Empire in East Asia and its Postwar Legacy', as was the publication that followed the conference, Volume 22 in the DIJ monograph series edited by Harald Fuess. In 1999, a DIJ conference brought together experts dealing with the strategic responses by Japanese and European firms to a changing business environment in Southeast Asia in the wake of the Asian economic crisis. Jochen Legewie and Hendrik Meyer-Ohle edited the results of this conference under the title *Corporate Strategies for Southeast Asia after the Crisis: A Comparison of Multinational Firms from Japan and Europe* (London: Macmillan, 2000). In 1998, the DIJ dedicated the tenth volume of its yearbook *Japanstudien* to 'Japan's new role in Asia'. Verena Blechinger and Jochen Legewie edited this volume which was one of the many other initiatives within this research frame. The DIJ has also been the site of a number of workshops and numerous individual publications by DIJ research fellows on the question of *Japan in Asia*. The most recent venture that focuses on *Japan in Asia* is a conference in April 2000 on 'Contested Historiography', the project of rewriting the history of World War II in Asia from feminist perspectives. Nicola Liscutin organized this conference and she will also edit a volume under the same rubric.

The volume at hand grew out of an October 1998 DIJ conference that took place over two days in Tōkyō titled, 'Regional Cooperation in Asia: Will Japan Stand Up to a Leadership Role?'. The DIJ gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Our thanks also go to the German Embassy for supporting the conference.

Special thanks are due to Verena Blechinger, head of the DIJ Social Science section, and Jochen Legewie, head of the Economics section, for organizing an exciting conference and putting together a well-rounded volume. They are to be congratulated for the many successes of this volume. Most of all, they have shown that the much-belabored and often-invoked notion of interdisciplinarity is not a chimera. Rather, one can see here that it unfolds its synergetic energies from within a well-defined framework and agenda.

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