

PREFACE BY THE EDITORS

In the 1990s, there is clear evidence of increasing political and economic cooperation in Asia. The end of the Cold War and economic globalization have accelerated regionalization in Asia. Increasing economic interdependence and intense lobbying efforts by multinational corporations operating on a regional scale have made Asian governments realize the need to take political steps to increase cooperation and dialogue in order to preserve stability in the region. These developments have been stimulated by trends of regional integration in other parts of the world, *i.e.* Europe and North America. The 1997/98 Asian economic crisis further added to the dynamics of this process. It painfully illustrated the high degree of mutual dependence of Asian economies and hence the need for a closer regional cooperation in the future. The crisis also reinforced calls from inside and outside of Asia for Japan to take on a stronger leadership role in the process of regional cooperation.

The articles in this book – all written in 1999 – take a closer look at the topic of cooperation at the institutional level of policy formation and coordination within a region. Addressing the various driving forces of regionalism and regionalization, the authors analyze attitudes and expectations of Asian political leaders and civil society and, examine the measures taken by state and non-state actors, *i.e.* by bureaucrats, politicians, and business to bring about closer political and economic cooperation in Asia. Rather than discussing this topic in general terms, the articles in this volume focus on the many facets of Japan's role within this process. By doing so, the Japanese position toward regional cooperation in Asia is analyzed from political, economic and sociological points of view before being summarized in the final chapter.

Throughout this volume, we understand Asia as the region made up by Northeast and Southeast Asian countries. We thus deliberately exclude countries like India or Russia, and do not take into account countries such as Australia, Canada or the United States that belong to the wider Asia-Pacific region. Choosing this definition of Asia, we do not only follow the general understanding of the term 'Asia' that is held in Japan, but also focus on the region that lies at the core of the ongoing process of regional cooperation – a fact that has become especially obvious with the gradual decline of APEC in the aftermath of the Asian crisis.

Many people have contributed to the completion of this book. First, we thank our authors for their contributions that consist of either updated and revised versions of their presentations at the conference ‘Regional Cooperation in Asia: Will Japan Stand up to a Leadership Role?’ that we organized in Tōkyō in October 1998 or of papers written originally and exclusively for this volume. We also thank three anonymous referees for sharing their precious time and insightful comments on the papers with us and the authors. Peter von Staden, Darryl Flaherty, David Leheny and Paul Talcott aided in the important task of proofreading the manuscripts while our colleagues at the DIJ supported us in the final editing process of this book. We would like to thank all of them and apologize to all the others who supported us in many ways that we can not mention them individually. The responsibility for any mistakes that may remain lies of course with the editors. Finally, we express our gratitude to Iudicium Verlag for a fast and efficient publishing process.

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Verena Blechinger and Jochen Legewie