

Foreword

The East Asian cooperation movement started with sub-regional efforts led by Southeast Asian countries. ASEAN was established in the late 1960s with the aim of resisting external threats by uniting the regional members together. ASEAN readjusted its direction later by initiating AFTA and identifying the ASEAN Community as a goal. The great value of ASEAN is in uniting all members through regional cooperation to secure peace and promote the economic development of the Southeast Asian region. ASEAN, as a pioneer of the regional cooperation movement, also plays a very important role as a driver in leading East Asian countries toward regional cooperation. In 1997, ASEAN invited three major economies in Northeast Asia, i.e. China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, to dialogue and cooperate during the Asia financial crisis which started the process of the East Asian cooperation movement under the framework of “ASEAN+3”.

A big step was made when “ASEAN+3” leaders agreed to set up a vision group of eminent persons from East Asia (EAVG) to envision the future of East Asian cooperation. The EAVG’s report recommended that the long-term goal for East Asian cooperation should be an East Asia Community with high-level integration and cooperation on economics, politics, security, society and culture. Under the framework of East Asian cooperation, progress has been achieved in the areas of high-level policy dialogue and consultation (leaders’ meetings, ministers’ meetings, and other high

officials' meetings), monetary and financial cooperation (Chiang Mai Initiative), FTAs (ASEAN+1 FTAs and feasibility study on East Asian FTA), as well as sub-regional cooperation (GMS). A new cooperative vehicle was also developed under the East Asia Summit (EAS) with the cooperation extending to India in South Asia and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania.

East Asia cooperation has developed within multi-layered frameworks, i.e. with several, rather than just one, integrated process. This may well comply with the reality of East Asia – a region with great diversity. However, the real challenge is how to make those different processes into an integrated single process, for example, from several “ASEAN+1 FTAs” into an EAFTA. ASEAN, with its long effort at regional cooperation, has decided to realize the ASEAN Community by 2015. Nevertheless, its role as a driver for the East Asia cooperation movement seems vulnerable due to its internal constraints. The question is: While supporting ASEAN's role as a driver and its effort towards building the ASEAN Community, how does it project and move forward the process of East Asia community-building? Also, the question is often raised about whether the East Asia cooperation movement really needs to be under a single and integrated process, and towards an East Asia Community. Europe, with its special and unique character of history, culture and politics, has developed a successful model from being a divided continent and becoming a united region based on very high-level integration in economics, politics and society. Although East Asia can learn a lot from the European experience, it has to define its own path and model in its effort towards becoming a community. ASEAN has spent 40 years in its effort towards becoming the ASEAN Community, while East Asia cooperation has began only about 10 years since. Compared with Europe, the history of regional cooperation in East Asia is still short. East Asian countries need both confidence and wisdom to drive the train of the regional cooperation movement rightly.

As a scholar, I am fortunate to participate directly and deeply in the East Asia cooperation process since the beginning as a member of EAVG and many other activities, such as the ASEAN-China

FTA Official Study Group, first general coordinator of Network of East Asia Think Tanks (NEAT), chairman of Joint Expert Group of Feasibility Study on EAFTA, the Joint Expert Group of Feasibility Study on CEPEA, etc. I have written intensively on all these areas in both Chinese and English. This book comprises 15 chapters and policy research reports in English on East Asia cooperation.