

The 3rd Policy Plenary Meeting on “What is East Asia? Its Historical and Cultural Foundations”

September 22, 2004

The Third Policy Plenary Meeting was held under the theme of "What is East Asia? Its Historical and Cultural Foundations" in the Conference Room of the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) on September 22, 2004. The meeting began with keynote speeches from the two Council Members, Prof. SHIRAISHI Takashi of Kyoto University and Prof. AOKI Tamotsu of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

Prof. SHIRAISHI pointed out that the momentum for the conceptual formation of "East Asia" in the postwar era was brought about by the following factors 1) U.S. hegemony, 2) the business network of Japan, 3) the model of industrial policy in East Asia, 4) the experience of the Asian economic crisis, 5) the rise of the middle class in East Asia, and indicated that "although Asia is characterized with diversity, East Asian identity can be created even from now."

Prof. AOKI also stated that the basic character of East Asian culture originates with "cultural hybridization" combining indigenous cultures and the great traditions of India and China, and that after the experience of modernization and industrialization, the formation of an urban culture, and the spread of Japanese popular culture since the 1990s, there are now being created in East Asia a new common culture among the youth.

The Council Members had lively discussions and the following comments were made: "Regional integration in Asia is taking place at the market base, whereas in the case of European integration, important factors were the Cold War rivalry and the historical postwar reconciliation. Can we create the philosophy of regional integration in Asia?" "In Europe there was the role of Franco-German leaders in the process of European integration, but in East Asia a structure of political leadership is still uncertain." "Cultural exchange and in particular, step-by-step approach of advancements are important."