

The 27th Policy Plenary Meeting on “The Trends of EAS Countries and the Relationship between APT and EAS”

July 23, 2008

The 27th Policy Plenary Meeting of the Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) was held on July 23 at the conference room of the Japan Forum on International Relations to discuss "The Trends of EAS Countries and the Relationship between APT and EAS". Prof. SOEYA Yoshihide, Member of CEAC and Professor of Keio University, made a keynote report, which was followed by an active exchange of views among Members of CEAC.

Prof. SOEYA stated, "We are now at the stage of discussing an East Asian Community by proposing each other a vision of desirable regional order in East Asia. It should not be seen from the viewpoint of whether it can be realized. It can be understood as a diplomatic road map when we think about how to get close to an appropriate picture of East Asia. What kind of regional order is desirable for Japan can be found in a policy speech by former Prime Minister Koizumi in Singapore in 2002. While China was included in that vision, it also contained Australia and New Zealand, thereby presenting a different picture from the regional order in East Asia which has centered on China. In that sense, it certainly has an aspect of competing with China. Both Australia and New Zealand are important partners for Japan because they share universal values. It also aimed at securing the relationship with the United States. However, it should be noted that a competition with China does not mean a geopolitical clash. The trend from peaceful rise strategy to harmonious diplomacy in China has been developed while the Chinese have conducted a scrupulous self-examination of serious domestic problems and looked for the measures to be taken. Domestic issues are of special importance and nationalism is aroused through a complex mixture of rapid economic growth and victim consciousness held since Opium War. When China seeks a desirable regional order, the United States would be regarded as negative although it does not mean that China would exclude and have a conflict with the United States. On the other hand, the United States has started to see China as a "stakeholder" while both "containment" policy and "engagement" policy are all but gone. But China has thought that the concept of "stakeholder" might be similar to "engagement"

policy. China has been now looking for a new principle which can be applied to an East Asian regional order instead of "Washington Consensus" and trying to awake sympathy in ASEAN. The United States has now recognized that it can co-exist with China although the aspect of strategic competition does not disappear. The United States has been recently inclined to multilateralism and seeking "double-hedging" by admitting a central role of China while putting China under the framework of multilateralism. If the United States attach more importance to multilateralism, it might be more seriously involved in an East Asian Community. The role of the United States which China thinks of as desirable is different from what Japan regards as desirable. Therefore Japan should deliver a clearer message to the world and make an effort to gain support from ASEAN, Australia and so on. In that sense, Japan should re-construct its strategy of East Asia Summit (EAS). For such a purpose, it is important for us to organically combine a vision and functional approach. A strategy for the diplomacy in East Asia cannot be realized without simultaneously pursuing a strategy towards China and that towards the United States. Although ASEAN+3 (APT) used to play a central role rather than EAS, both are now equally treated. The consensus is that we should stop arguing which one is more important than the other.

In response to the above report and comment, 17 member of CEAC joined in an active exchange of views on the topic.