The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute’s research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies (RES, including ASEAN and APEC), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS).

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ASEAN-JAPAN RELATIONS

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In the autumn of 2011 I proposed a joint study on ASEAN-Japan relations to Ambassador K. Kesavapany, then director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), and Professor Takashi Shiraishi, president of the Graduate Institute of Policy Studies (GRIPS). They gave their consent to my proposal. Ambassador Tan Chin Tiong, director of ISEAS, added his support to the project.

The objectives of the proposed joint study were to re-examine and critically analyze relations between ASEAN and Japan and to give future perspectives and directions. I was of the view that despite its importance, the ASEAN-Japan relationship had been undervalued and overlooked on both sides in recent years. In this respect, however, I am happy to observe that there has been a favorable change, especially since Shinzo Abe came back to power as prime minister of Japan in December 2012. He is focusing on ASEAN as one of the pillars in his foreign policy.

To implement the joint study, Professor Shiraishi and I tried to recruit competent contributors not only academics but also practitioners from ASEAN and Japan to cover various fields such as foreign policy, security, business, development assistance, and fiscal cooperation and to shed light from different angles. We are grateful that Professor Tommy Koh, ambassador-at-large at Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professor Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and Rodolfo Severino, former ASEAN secretary-general, accepted our request to contribute.

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