

An Introduction to

# The Japan Forum on International Relations, Inc.

— a private, non-profit, independent foreign policy think tank —



## April 2009

### From the Chairman & the President



“At this juncture of historic reforms, I am convinced that the *raison d’être* of the Forum as a ‘private, non-profit and independent’ think tank is increasing. We are determined to promote our activities with the aim of contributing to the peace and prosperity of the world community.”  
**Mr. IMAI Takashi, Chairman, JFIR**



“JFIR is not an institution where only scholars and specialists assemble. It is a membership think tank where people from academic, business, political and mass media circles voluntarily assemble to discuss issues of international and diplomatic importance. Hence the organization name carries the word ‘Forum’.”  
**Prof. ITO Kenichi, President, JFIR**

### Policy Recommendations

The fundamental purpose of JFIR is to promote policy-oriented research. Therefore, all the activities of JFIR are directed towards that purpose. Two Councils were set up specifically for this. One is for the policy recommendations in the long-term perspective and the other is for those in the short-term and immediate perspective. The former is the *Policy Council* and the latter is the *Emergency Policy Council*. In the case of the Policy Council, a Task Force headed by a member of the Policy Council and staffed by research fellows of JFIR serves the Plenary Council as assistants for making an intensive in-depth analysis of the issue and working out a draft of the policy recommendations.

When more than two thirds of the full members of the Policy Council endorse the draft or its revision, it is approved and becomes the recommendations of those members of the Policy Council who sign it. Please note that in this and other cases, the Forum takes no institutional position on issues of foreign policy, though its members are encouraged not only to analyze but to propose alternatives on matters of foreign policy. Though the Forum helps its members to formulate policy recommendations, the responsibility for the contents is that of those members of the Forum who sign them alone.

Since 1988 the Policy Council has publicly announced 31 policy recommendations and presented them to the Prime Minister of Japan. Recent Policy Recommendations have covered themes such as “Japan’s Strategy for its Agriculture in the Globalized World,” “Nature of Russian State and Japan’s Strategy towards Russia,” “India’s Leap Forward and Japan,” “Japan and China in the Changing Asia,” and “The Establishment of an International Energy Security System.”



Presenting the 20th Policy Recommendations on “Towards Collective Human Security: A New Internationalism and Japan” to Prime Minister KOIZUMI in July 2001.

### Internet Activities

In tandem with the core activities of policy recommendations, another important pillar of JFIR’s activities is the **BBS “Hyakka-Seiho”** (<http://www.jfir.or.jp/cgi/m-bbs/>) which started on April 12, 2006. The BBS is open to the public, functioning as an interactive forum for discussions on foreign policy and international affairs. All articles posted on the BBS are sent through the bimonthly e-mail magazine “*Meru-maga Nihon Kokusai Fōramu*” in Japanese to 10,000 readers. Furthermore, articles worth attention are translated into English and posted on the English website of JFIR (<http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/index.htm>) as “**JFIR Commentary**,” as well as introduced in the e-mail magazine “**JFIR E-Letter**” in English. “JFIR E-Letter” is delivered bimonthly to 5,000 readers worldwide.



### International Exchanges

Through policy-focused international exchange, JFIR not only keeps abreast of global public opinion, but also strives to play a part in the formation of a public opinion that reflects Japan’s positions. With this in mind, JFIR has been sponsoring international dialogues, meetings, symposia and workshops. As of February 2009 JFIR has held 67 such international exchange meetings. In addition, JFIR also supports similar activities of its sister organization, The Global Forum of Japan.

### Foreign Policy Briefing

Foreign Policy Briefing meeting is organized monthly to provide an occasion for members of JFIR to meet, in an informal and confidential manner, senior officials of the Japanese Government and other authorities in the field of international affairs. Speakers are invited to give a talk and is followed by questions and answers. The meeting is conducted in Japanese. Foreign Policy Briefing meeting is held under the co-sponsorship of JFIR with its sister organizations, The Global Forum of Japan, and The Council on East Asian Community.



Ms. KOIKE Yuriko, former Defense Minister, speaking in February 2008.

### Diplomatic Roundtable

Diplomatic Roundtable meeting is organized, taking advantage of an occasion of a visit to Japan of a person prominent in various fields of activities abroad, for the purpose of providing an occasion for the visiting speaker to meet and exchange views with members of JFIR. Unless the speaker agrees to speak in Japanese, English is, in principle, the language used in the Roundtable and no translation is provided. Diplomatic Roundtable meeting is held under the co-sponsorship of JFIR with its sister organizations, The Global Forum of Japan, and The Council on East Asian Community.

## Regular Research Programs

JFIR's various researchers from both Japan and abroad are engaged in research projects either collectively or individually, and the results of their research are published in a series of reports.

## Special Study Projects

In addition to the *Regular Research Programs* cited above, JFIR organizes multi-year *Special Study Programs* on an ad hoc basis to conduct research, exchanges, and recommendations on international and diplomatic issues that demand attention, with the results announced to the public. The main projects which have been conducted recently are as follows:

1. **"Study Group on Japan's National Strategy"** aims to play the role of a bridgehead for strengthening strategic way of thinking in Japan. The members of the Study Group consist of scholars, politicians and government officials.

2. **"Network of East Asian Think-tanks (NEAT)"** aims at the creation of a network of think-tanks in ASEAN+3 nations, for research collaboration on the integration of the East Asia region.

3. **"East Asia Forum (EAF)"** aims at enhancing understanding and cooperation among industry-government-academia in ASEAN+3 nations.

4. **"Russian Study Group"** aims to study Japan's strategy toward Russia, particularly in relation to the Northern Territories issue.

5. **"Chechnya Study Group"** aims to raise understanding and awareness of the Chechnya issue in Japan. It invited to Japan an eleven member Chechnya delegation headed by Vice Premier Noukhaev in 1996.



"Asian Economic System Study Group" meeting on December 2003.

## Publications

JFIR publishes extensively results of its various research activities in Japanese and English. The publications comprise ①JFIR Series Publications, ②Policy Council Recommendations, ③Emergency Policy Recommendations, ④Regular Research Program Reports, ⑤International Exchange Reports, ⑥Special Study Project Reports, ⑦Promotional Materials and ⑧English Publications. As a part of the Promotional Materials, JFIR produces a quarterly "Bulletin" reporting on JFIR's activities. A complete detailed list of all publications is available on JFIR's website (<http://www.jfir.or.jp>) where selected publications may be purchased. Moreover, on the website several English publications are available in their entirety free of charge. Recent publications include "The Advent of No-War Era."

## History and Purpose

The Japan Forum on International Relations, Inc. (JFIR or The Forum) was founded on March 12, 1987 in Tokyo on the private initiative of Dr. OKITA Saburo, former Foreign Minister, Mr. HATTORI Ichiro who contributed the endowment, and 61 other independent citizens from business, academic, political, and media circles of Japan, recognizing that a policy-oriented research institution in the field of international affairs independent from the government was most urgently needed in Japan. JFIR celebrated its 20th anniversary on March, 2007.

The Forum is a private, non-profit, independent, and non-partisan organization dedicated to improved understanding of Japanese foreign policy and international relations. The Forum takes no institutional position on issues of foreign policy, though its members are encouraged not only to analyze but to propose alternatives on matters of foreign policy. Though the Forum helps its members to formulate policy recommendations on matters of public policy, the views expressed in such recommendations represent in no way those of the Forum as an institution and the responsibility for the contents of the recommendations is that of those members of the Forum who sign them alone.



The Inaugural Dinner of JFIR  
(March 12, 1987, Tokyo)

## Organization

JFIR is a membership organization with four categories of membership, namely, ①corporate, ②associate corporate, ③individual and ④ associate individual. It is governed by the **Board of Directors**, which is in charge of the management, and is supervised by the **Board of Trustees**, which elects the Directors and advises the Board of Directors. The **Steering Committee** coordinates the annual work program while fundraising and financial matters are handled by the **Financial Committee**. Advisors give advice at Board of Directors meetings, while Councilors serve the President as his advisors. The Chairman, President and Executive Director are elected for two-year terms by the Board of Directors and are eligible for reelection.

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