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IIAS Newsletter

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Asia scholars as intermediaries between East and West

irector's note

Until very recently, many scholars had the idea that Asian Studies was a western endeavour. However, looking at the origin of the participants at ICAS we see that half of them were from Asia and the other half from the rest of the world, living proof that Asian Studies is and will increasingly become an Asian exercise.

One of the most important effects of the return of Asian Studies to its source is that several research traditions which have strong regional anchoring, the Anglo-Saxon, the South Asian, Chinese and continental European, will meet in Asia on a level playing field. The founding of an agile and mobile Asian Institute for Advanced Studies in Beijing could lead to a platform in which new ideas emanating from the fusing of these rich research traditions can blossom. To give a higher profile to Asian Studies in Asia, I hope that the initiative of CASS to form an Asian Alliance for Asian Studies will materialize in the course of next year.

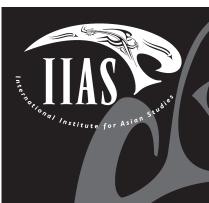
Looking at the situation in Europe, a complicated picture presents itself. Recently, Potocnik, the Euro-Commissioner of Research, pleaded for a European approach and cooperation in all fields of study. Some representatives from Asian Studies in Europe have tried hard in the past decade to make this come true, but if we look at the reality, we see the crumbling of Asian Studies at universities all over Europe. There is still not enough willingness to view Asian Studies at a European, let alone global, level.

What we see, just as in the US and Australia, is a mad scramble for Asian students who are shortsightedly considered as means to prop up the budgets of universities. Actually, the number of students from Asia in the western world has reached its zenith and their numbers are dropping. Within one or two decades Asia will be more than self-sufficient in educating not only its own intelligentsia, but also many other students from the rest of the world who will find the high quality and low cost of education in Asia most attractive.

We, as Asia scholars, never had to be convinced of the importance of Asia. Our role will be to act as intermediaries between East and West amidst converging research traditions in the emerging global research space of the 21st century, which will encompass all disciplines. In that way, Asia scholars can be considered avant garde. The mainstream will doubtlessly catch up in the not too distant future. \checkmark

Wim Stokhof Director, IIAS

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The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Our main objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and comparative study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation in the field. The institute focuses on the humanities and social sciences and their interaction with other sciences.

IIAS values dynamism and versatility in its research programmes. Post-doctoral research fellows are temporarily employed by or affiliated to IIAS, either within the framework of a collaborative research programme or on an individual basis. In its aim to disseminate broad, in-depth knowledge of Asia, the institute organizes seminars, workshops and conferences, and publishes the *IIAS Newsletter* with a circulation of 24,000.

IIAS runs a database for Asian Studies with information on researchers and research-related institutes worldwide. As an international mediator and a clearing-house for knowledge and information, IIAS is active in creating international networks and launching international cooperative projects and research programmes. In this way, the institute functions as a window on Europe for non-European scholars and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe.

IIAS also administers the secretariat of the European Alliance for Asian Studies (Asia Alliance: www.asia-alliance.org) and the Secretariat General of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS: www.icassecretariat.org). Updates on the activities of the Asia Alliance and ICAS are published in the IIAS Newsletter.