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# Taking over...

## Director's note

In my first director's note I think it appropriate to make some retrospective observations. I wish to use the opportunity to thank my predecessor Wim Stokhof for what he has achieved as founder/director of the International Institute for Asian Studies. I will keep this word of thanks brief, if only because Wim feels uneasy with personal praise and finds such expressions of appreciation a waste of time. After 13 years of directing the institute, Wim retired from office on 1 September of this year.

I have known Wim Stokhof since 1993, when I was setting up a European grant scheme for Asian Studies at the European Science Foundation in Strasbourg. With support from the governments of the Netherlands, France and the Nordic countries, the initiative developed into a major programme for the humanities and social sciences. The then newly established IIAS became the secretariat and its director Wim Stokhof the secretary to the ESF Asia Committee; Thommy Svenson, then at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, was chairman. Together we ran the Asia Committee, gathering scholars representing the major Asian Studies research institutes in Europe. From this experience we learnt how to navigate decision-making within complex fields of national interests and disciplinary traditions, experience which still informs decision-making within our present grant schemes of the European Alliance for Asian Studies/ASEF workshop series. After I left the European Science Foundation in 1996, I kept in touch with IIAS and became a member of the board.

Wim Stokhof founded IIAS in 1993 and managed to create an institute that has gained a worldwide reputation for its breadth of activities. With offices in Leiden and Amsterdam, and with a board hailing from universities across the Netherlands, the institute has a truly national character. With its fellows from around the world, and with its many linkages to other institutes, IIAS at the same time has a broad international character. This is reflected in its range of research programmes, workshops, conferences, lectures and masterclasses. Stokhof always emphasized the need to be outward-looking, to break through institutional and disciplinary boundaries, to collaborate and keep an open mind to what sometimes seemed risky endeavours. Typically, as one of my colleagues recently put it, where others would automatically say no to someone with a budding new research initiative, Stokhof would in principle say yes and inquire how a proposal could be improved to increase chances for funding. With his enthusiasm and constructive attitude, he helped many researchers on their way. He fully realized that an institute such as IIAS should be complementary to the university departments, that this offered opportunities for IIAS to do things the departments could not do. Un-bureaucratic and flexible, the institute has offered opportunities to scholars from around the world and created new momentum for Asian Studies in the Netherlands. This we owe largely to the vision and unconventional ideas of its founder. As far as I am concerned, the institute will continue to fulfil this pioneering function.

We are fortunate that Wim is not leaving IIAS for good. He will remain in charge of the organisation of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) under the wings of the institute. As for myself, I am proud to stand on Wim's shoulders and will do my best to keep up the good work. There will be new programmes, new forms of co-operation, many new fellows, and of course the good old newsletters. I am grateful to the IIAS board for confiding Wim's creation to me. ◀

Max Sparreboom  
Director, IIAS



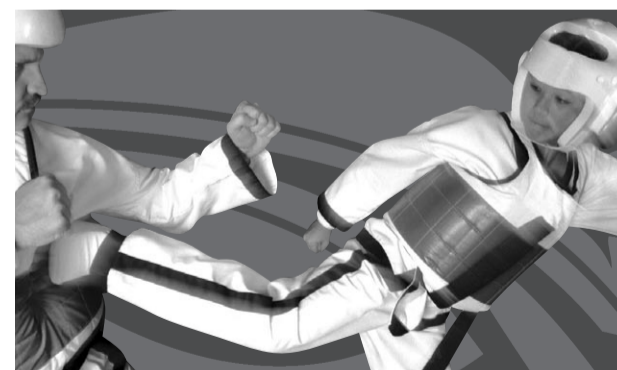
The International Institute for Asian Studies is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Our main objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and comparative study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation in the field. The institute focuses 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 a collaborative research programme or individually. 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 26,000.

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](http://www.asia-alliance.org)) and the Secretariat General of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS: [www.icassecretariat.org](http://www.icassecretariat.org)). Updates on the activities of the Asia Alliance and ICAS are published in this newsletter. ◀

[www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl)



## East Asia out of balance?

Introducing East Asia

This interuniversity credit course is open to the public and held from 30 October 2006 to 1 February 2007 (5 ECTS) on Mondays at the University of Amsterdam starting at 17.00 hours to ensure participation of non-students.



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