

The Konrad-Adenauer Foundation in Asia

Interview with Dr. Stefan Friedrich

by Dr. Peter Roell

Dr. Roell: Herr Dr. Friedrich, what aims is the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung pursuing both nationally and internationally?

Dr. Friedrich: As you know KAS is a political foundation and therefore its main aim in Germany is to pursue political and civic education from a Christian democratic perspective. At an international level we aim at pursuing goals such as peace, liberty and justice through political education and dialogue. Our main aims are promoting democracy, supporting the further unification of Europe, intensifying transatlantic relations and development cooperation.

Dr. Roell: Where is your focus in Asia-Pacific?

Dr. Friedrich: This is best illustrated by our four regional programs: Firstly, political dialogue within the region but also between Europe and Asia. Secondly, we support independent and critical media. Thirdly, we strive for strengthening the acceptance of the rule of law in Asia. And last but not least, we try to support economic transformation processes in Asia. A further, very important task, is the support of an intensive dialogue with the Islamic world. There are many very positive examples in South East Asia which show that Islam and democracy can work together. We are very keen to support this development.

Dr. Roell: Where in Asia is KAS represented?

Dr. Friedrich: In East Asia we are represented in China, South Korea and Mongolia. In South East Asia we have offices in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and the Philippines. In South Asia we are represented in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Central Asia we have offices in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Dr. Roell: Japan is of particular political interest to Germany. So far, KAS has no representation in the country. What plans do you have for the future?

Dr. Friedrich: We are currently running our activities in Japan from our office in Seoul. However, I can tell you now that we will be sending a representative of KAS to Tokyo in the beginning of 2011. This person will be responsible for our new regional project „Social Order Policy Asia“ (“*Soziale Ordnungspolitik Asien*”) and will also intensify our relations with our Japanese partners.

Dr. Roell: The situation in Afghanistan gives reason for concern. How is KAS supporting the stabilisation efforts of the West both in Afghanistan and the region?

Dr. Friedrich: In Afghanistan we are working together with members of parliament and support political research conducted by Afghans for Afghans. Only recently we have successfully completed a survey prior to the parliamentary elections in cooperation with our partner, the National Centre for Policy Research at the University of Kabul. Purpose of the survey was to obtain rather solid information about the opinions of Afghans to a range of current hot topics. In addition, we have run a number of events which have brought together decision makers from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Such interactions foster understanding between these two nations that are so important to each other.

Dr. Roell: In 2005 KAS introduced a regional rule of law program in Asia. What can you tell us about the results?

Dr. Friedrich: I am happy to say that the overall results are positive. For example, almost ten years ago KAS started to organise an annual conference aimed at members of Asian high courts which has enabled a very useful exchange of views and ideas. As a result of this initiative the participants decided in July 2010 to create an association of Asian high courts. I would like to emphasise that this was their decision, not an initiative of KAS. In addition to this, our activities have also contributed to the preparatory work on the ASEAN charter.

Dr. Roell: For a number of years now KAS has supported a trilateral dialogue with high-ranking decision makers from China, India and Germany. What have been the main results of this initiative?

Dr. Friedrich: The very fact that we manage to bring such people together on a regular basis is a success story in its own right. By this, we have been able to ensure that even critical and sometimes controversial questions relating to security policy could be discussed openly on the basis of mutual trust. The fact that the participants are high level ensures that the discussions are informed and their content will find its way into the respective government channels.

Dr. Roell: You mentioned that KAS concerns itself with questions of social order policy or “ordo-liberalism”. How open are your Asian partners to this subject?

Dr. Friedrich: Over the past few years we have recognised a significant shift in the attitude towards order-policy debates. Following the recent economic and financial crisis, for example, there clearly has been a growing interest in the functioning and the working of Germany’s social market economy. The question is not at all one of implementing the social market economy in countries in Asia but to sensitise decision makers in Asia with regard to the role “order-policy” could play for the economic development and the economic and social stability in the region.

Dr. Roell: Germany is somewhat reluctant to address the issues of her interests with regard to foreign policy, security policy and economic policy. What role could KAS play in supporting German interests in the Asia-Pacific region?

Dr. Friedrich: Let me give you just one example. The security of our main trading routes is one of vital interest to Germany. KAS will be organising an international conference on the subject of maritime security in Seoul in February 2011. KAS will ensure that speakers from Germany will contribute to the success of the conference and highlight German interests in this subject.

Dr. Roell: What visions do you have for the further development of KAS's work in the Asia-Pacific region over the next ten years?

Dr. Friedrich: In my view the importance of the Asia-Pacific region will further grow in importance for both Germany and Europe. We are currently in the happy situation that we are seen by our partners in Asia as being both trustworthy and highly esteemed. Our aim is to ensure this mutual regard grows further. Moreover, it is our intention to further include the democratic Asian neighbours such as Australia and New Zealand into our dialogue programs in the future. All such developments benefit from the fact that our work is founded on the basis of values. Our aim remains to provide thought-provoking impulses for the region; however, we remain equally open to such impulses from our partners in the region as well. We need to understand that with regard to some developments in Asia we in Europe can also learn a great deal.

Dr. Roell: Many thanks for this interview.



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Dr. Stefan Friedrich has been Head of the Team Asia and the Pacific of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung since spring 2005. Between 2001 and 2005 he was Head of the KAS office in Shanghai. Prior to joining KAS Dr. Friedrich was at the Institute of Asian Studies in Hamburg and is co-editor of *Das Große China-Lexikon (The Great China Encyclopaedia)*. As a sinologist and political scientist his main emphasis is in the field of Chinese foreign policy and other developments in China.



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