

Editorial

A recent photo in the papers shows a man with a bag on his head, his arms behind his back. The Iraqi is kneeling on the grass amongst scattered shoes and carpets. His hands are invisible but there's little doubt they are tied behind his back. The caption informs us American soldiers are looking for terrorists plotting attacks on coalition forces. What ought to be deduced from this photo and what does it suggest, rightly or wrongly, about American involvement in Iraq?

The photo captivates and shocks, but this alone does not make it good journalism. If not journalist practice itself, surely science must raise the demands of truth and representation. Unfortunately the demands of journalism often conflict with the scientific demands of truth and objectivity. When journalism, itself increasingly influential, misrepresents, it is the responsibility of science and of the humanities in particular, to raise criticism and to counter stereotypes, misconceptions, and lies. Part of the relevance of Asian Studies lies in shouldering this responsibility. With this backdrop, the IIAS' tenth anniversary provided the occasion for five renowned alumni to reflect on their craft. While it is easy to criticize how Asia has been construed in opposition to the European self, modernity, rationalism, Christianity, and the West, alternative frameworks are harder to come by. The visions contained in the 'Imagining Asian Studies' theme are thus invitations to further reflection and debate. What frameworks, scale of analysis, and units of comparison are most fruitful when studying Southeast Asia? Is it possible to study this region or for example India as wholes, and if so, how? How can we relate to Asian topics in meaningful ways and what place ought Asian Studies have in the larger whole? What framework and concepts does studying Korean history demand, and what keys do multidisciplinary and long-term perspectives hold for understanding Vietnamese villages?

If criticizing popular misconceptions is a necessary task, this issue strides the path with conviction. It tackles cognitive dissonance regarding contemporary North Korea, which is shrouded in political and media mystification; the transnational natures of 'nationalist' struggles, and the roots of 'religious' violence. As always we appreciate your reactions. Enjoy reading. – **MS**



The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Its main objective is to encourage the study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation in this field. The institute focuses on the humanities and social sciences and, where relevant, at the interface between these disciplines and sciences like medicine, economy, politics, technology, law, and environmental studies.

The IIAS endeavours to adopt a dynamic and versatile approach in its research programmes. Research fellows at post-PhD level are temporarily employed by or affiliated to the Institute, either within the framework of a collaborative research programme, or on an individual basis. In its aim to achieve and continue to build on a broad, high-quality level of knowledge of Asia, the Institute organizes seminars, workshops, and conferences, and publishes a newsletter with a circulation of over 21,500 copies. Additionally, the IIAS has established a database for Asian Studies, which contains information on researchers and research-related institutes worldwide.

The IIAS acts as an international mediator bringing various parties together and works as a clearing-house for knowledge and information. This entails activities such as providing information services, constructing international networks, and setting up international cooperative projects and research programmes. In this way, the IIAS functions as a window on Europe for non-European scholars and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe.

The IIAS administers the daily secretariat of the European Alliance for Asian Studies (Asia Alliance: www.asia-alliance.org) as well as the Secretariat General of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS: www.icassecretariat.org). Regular updates on the Asia Alliance and ICAS activities can be found in the IIAS Newsletter. <

www.iias.nl

Director's Note of Appreciation

This year, the IIAS celebrates its tenth anniversary. Board, director, and staff of the institute would like to thank its many researchers, the hundreds of IIAS fellows, the innumerable participants in our workshops, seminars, congresses, and masterclasses, and all the individuals who have been engaged in our activities over the years. Through your enthusiasm, interest in cooperation, and trust, we have been able to make the IIAS into a true centre for Asian Studies. We envision a great future for Asia and Asian Studies – let's continue to work together!

Wim Stokhof, Director

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