

Forging Partnerships: the Role & Mission of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Asia

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The long and certainly exhausting week-long workshop in Shanghai was drawing to an end. The students and professors were wrapping up their last group presentations. Using this moment, the authors conducted a small opinion poll among the young workshop participants from Japan, South Korea, and China. As one graduate student from the University of Kobe put it: “I thought it would just be another lecture, but working together with students from Korea and China on the same research topic really opened my mind to how similar our thoughts and aspirations actually are.”

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) office in Japan organized a “Young Leaders Forum” in 2015, inviting over 40 young talented students and professors from Japan, China and South Korea to take part in a transnational workshop on economic sustainability in the Asia-Pacific. International events like these are the quintessence of our work as a political foundation in Asia: forging partnerships, enhancing political discourse, and facilitating knowledge transfer. Here we would like to introduce the scope, network, mission and vision of the KAS’s work in Asia.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung: Concise History

The foundation was established in 1955 as the “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education”. In 1964 the “Society” took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, Germany’s first federal chancellor from 1949 to 1963. Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the KAS. As a political foundation, it is closely affiliated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), which has been the ruling party in the German Bundestag (national parliament) since 2005. In postwar Germany Konrad Adenauer united Christian-social, conservative and liberal traditions. His name is still synonymous with the democratic reconstruction of Germany, the firm alignment of foreign policy with the trans-Atlantic community of values, the vision of a united Europe and an orientation towards the social market economy.

Adenauer’s intellectual heritage continues to serve both as the KAS’s guideline as well as its obligation today. Keeping in mind the moral basis of the foundation, it is certainly of particular interest to shed some light on the notion of “political foundations” in a German context. The founding and implementation of political foundations was a reaction to the experiences during the “Weimar Republic” (1918-1933), where the established parties were not able to convince citizens of the value of democracy and where an open and inclusive political culture could not flourish. The shortcomings and subsequent failure of the “Weimar Republic” culminated in the rise of National Socialism,

the terrors of the “Third Reich” and ultimately led to the total destruction of large parts of Europe. Hence, after World War II it became apparent that postwar Germany was in need of a deeper understanding of democratic principles and the rule of law. The necessity for providing the young democracy’s people with a thorough civic and political education was hence recognized as paramount to peace and stability in Germany.

Thus since the mid-1950s the major political parties of West Germany established their own political foundations that would take over the mission of educating civil society about democratic principles and the respective aims and values of each party. Next to the KAS there are today five political foundations in Germany that are all affiliated to either of the five established parties of the German Bundestag. All of the German political foundations have their headquarters in Germany. In addition to that, the foundations operate a number of offices worldwide. The KAS has nearly 80 offices globally and is represented with projects in over 100 countries, each of which has a unique portfolio of topics relevant to their host country and region.

KAS in Asia

Depending on the wider region or continent, the focus of the foundation’s work abroad has been shaped by the local socio-political and economic environments of the host countries. For instance, KAS offices in Latin America were among the first overseas offices to be opened in the 1960s due to an underlying set of shared Christian-democratic values. KAS offices in Europe historically worked towards European integration, a process that is still relevant and ongoing. In Africa many of the KAS offices focus their efforts on democracy-building projects, economic development or anti-corruption measures.

For the broader region of Asia it is slightly more difficult to identify one or a few priority topics, since the region is politically and socially so highly diverse. One country in the region is among the G7 industrialized nations; others are still struggling with poverty, endemic corruption and the implementation of the rule of law. The KAS operates 23 offices in Asia, including a number of so-called sector programs which operate in the whole Asia-Pacific region. With offices in Central Asia and even Afghanistan, the foundation is present in almost all of the continent’s countries. Since the early 1990s the KAS has maintained a presence in Central Asia with a country office in Kazakhstan and a sector program in Uzbekistan, which covers all five central Asian republics. The priority topics for KAS projects and cooperation in Central Asia are decentralization, support for the

building of an independent media, and human rights.

On the South Asian subcontinent the KAS is represented in both India and Pakistan. The India office opened as early as 1960 and focuses on the enhancement of rule of law commitments. Since the 2000s the efforts of the country office have been aimed at supporting the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). For further regional integration the KAS operates offices in neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan. Special attention in the former is given to security policy and the relationship between civil-society and the military. Projects and civic education programs in the latter are being organized in the context of democratic transformation. Here, young diplomats are trained in cooperation with the Afghan Foreign Ministry. Another focus area is the improvement of journalistic quality.

Moving further east, the programs of the KAS in Southeast Asia aim at the ongoing ASEAN integration process and anti-corruption measures in eight countries. Active since 1964, the KAS office in the Philippines tackles issues of political and party reforms, and peace building and development in the troubled region of Mindanao in cooperation with various institutionalized partners. The Manila office has, over the years, successfully established the “Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism” at the Ateneo de Manila University. Another long-running office in Southeast Asia is the one in Jakarta which was established in 1968. Our colleagues in Jakarta not only cover the culturally and religiously diverse Indonesian archipelago with their projects, but also, since 2002, have extended their scope of activities to Timor-Leste after it gained its independence.

In neighboring Malaysia, where the KAS has been active for over three decades, the office has been contributing to the governments “Vision 2020”, which aims at transforming Malaysia into an industrialized nation by 2020. Right in between the spheres of influence of these two regional powers, KAS operates three regional sector programs out of the city-state of Singapore. The three programs work toward “Political Dialogue”, “Rule of Law”, and “Media”. Their programs span the entirety of Asia and involve a magnitude of different think tanks, regional NGOs as well as governmental institutions. One of the flagship projects of the “Political Dialogue” program is the “Konrad Adenauer School for Young Politicians” (KASYP) which is being conducted with a fresh batch of upcoming and promising young politicians from Southeast Asia every year. The idea behind KASYP is to provide future decision makers with a vast toolkit of political education and communication measures.

Similar work is also being done by our colleagues in Thailand where training courses especially for the younger rural population in aspects of participatory democracy are offered at a local level. Within the triangle of Cambodia-Laos-Myanmar-Vietnam, KAS is represented with offices in Phnom Penh and Hanoi. Priority projects for the office in Vietnam revolve around the strengthening of a free and independent media, especially in the areas of business and environmental journalism. In Cambodia the KAS team works on issues of administrative and parliamentary reform as well as strengthening political parties on a non-partisan basis. After the end of the isolationist stance of Myanmar’s government and the incremental implementation of socio-economical and political reforms in recent years, the KAS has now also been represented in Yangon since 2014. Special attention is paid to projects that are aimed at enhancing the

Photo: KAS Japan



Participants pose for a photo at the “Economic Sustainability at the End of Double Digit Growth” workshop in Shanghai in 2015.

decentralization process and other vital aspects of a functioning democratic society. In Mongolia, the KAS, which opened its office in Ulan Bator in 1993, looks primarily to further the decentralization processes and strengthen local self-governance.

Located in three cities in China, the KAS has been represented in the People’s Republic since 1996, when the first office was opened in Beijing, followed by offices in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Our colleagues in China’s capital are foremost concerned with enhancing and strengthening the German-Chinese and European-Chinese relationship. The exchange between German, European, and Chinese politicians and diplomats aims at establishing a platform to sustainably ensure open communications. The youngest of the offices, the one in Hong Kong, was opened only recently and has a clear focus on environmental and climate policy in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, the China offices award scholarships to young Chinese professionals to allow them to further their studies in either China or Germany. Thus, a vast network of experts is constantly expanded.

Another country that is steadily becoming a regional player is South Korea, where the KAS has had an established representation since as early as 1978. The main priority of KAS Korea is strengthening the peace and reconciliation process between the southern Republic of Korea (ROK) and the regime of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north. Drawing from the historical experience of division after World War II, Germany finds itself in a unique position to share its “lessons learnt” on the way to reunification and pathways to reconciliation after unification. In many ways, the German experience can serve as a blueprint for a successful reunification, but also as a reminder of the hurdles and obstacles on the way towards it. For instance, KAS Seoul together with a special school for North Korean refugees organized a workshop pertaining to “Enhancing Social Integration Processes in Anticipation of a Potential Future Reunification”.

Tokyo Office & Its 2 Programs

It could be noticed in the description of the various KAS offices in Asia and their work and scope that the majority of Asia representations are already quite established and seasoned, with many of the offices having been in operation for longer than a decade. Some offices even

reach back as far as the 1960s and 1970s when not only Asia was a different place, but the world as well. With changing global power hubs and ever increasing globalization and international cooperation across country and continental borders, the need became apparent for the KAS to establish networks and form partnerships with newly emerging regional powers. Japan is not only one of those regional powers, but a global economic and political power as well. A member of the G7, highly industrialized, and a time-proven matured democracy, Japan shares a lot of common interests and values with Germany. It was the next logical step in a long history of economic and political cooperation between the two countries that a KAS office would finally be opened in Tokyo. In July 2011, KAS Japan started operating. The core objectives of the country program for Japan are:

- 1) Strengthening of partnership-based cooperation of experts on foreign policy and security policy from Japan, NATO, and the EU
- 2) Consolidate networks among political and economic elites of Japan and Germany through dialogue
- 3) Institutionalization and increase of exchange between representatives from politics, economy, finance, and the media.

In order to accomplish these goals, the country office organizes expert roundtable discussions, international symposiums, and workshops. One of the most covered issues is, without doubt, security policy, especially in the context of NATO-EU-Japan cooperation.

International and inter-institutional security policy cooperation became of much greater significance after initial contacts between NATO and Japan were established in the 1990s. Cooperation was then gradually intensified and finally cemented in 2013, when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen signed a *Joint Political Declaration*, underscoring their shared understanding of an international order based on peace, stability and dialogue. In May 2014, Japan issued an *Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program*, further strengthening its ties with NATO. These developments have pried open the field of cooperation, releasing a whole new variety of prospective conjoint endeavors between Japan and NATO based on shared democratic values. This has led NATO to describe Japan as one of its “longest-standing *partners across the globe*”. Against this backdrop, the KAS country office in Japan continues to organize conferences aimed at exploring areas of potential benefit and cooperation between Japan

and NATO, by seeking the input of distinguished experts in the fields of defense and international relations.

In order to ensure a fruitful outcome with high-ranking representatives from these various fields, conferences are often supported by institutions such as the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, NATO, the Japan Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the National Security Secretariat (Japan), NATO Defense College, and the National Institute for Defense Studies (Japan). Other conferences and events pertaining to security policy issues not including NATO or EU cooperation are also regularly being conducted by KAS Japan, including topics such as territorial disputes in the South China Sea and shared German-Japanese experiences of overseas military deployment.

Recently, socio-economic and political issues are also being covered by KAS events and publications. Here, special topics of interest are demographic change and its implications for future generations. Germany and Japan are struggling with similar symptoms of an aging society. An open discourse and mutual exchange of experiences can help to facilitate knowledge transfer in both directions. To offer a platform for such discourses, KAS Japan brings together German and Japanese experts from academia, think tanks and the private sector.

Moreover, the KAS office in Tokyo regularly welcomes German politicians, members of parliament, and other senior officials for whom visiting programs are arranged. The German guests meet and discuss issues with their Japanese counterparts and other relevant experts.

The country program of the KAS Japan office is accompanied by a regional, or sector, program with a much wider geographical scope, covering the entire Asia-Pacific region. This “Social and Economic Governance Programme Asia” (SOPAS), organizes conferences, workshops and seminars for experts from Asia and Europe outside of Japan. The goal is to establish a stronger dialogue and a continuous exchange of views on current challenges, risks and opportunities of multilateral cooperation between Asia and Europe. Main topics are economic developments and changes in the Asia-Pacific region both in terms of greater economic integration and against the background that long-standing strategies of many Asian countries for continuous economic growth have partially changed in recent years and will change even further due to demographic change, urbanization, environmental challenges, rather sluggish economic growth in major

Photo: KAS Japan



A speaker gives an address at the “German–Japanese Security Policy Forum 2015”.

Photo: KAS Japan



Conferees at the “German–Japanese Security Policy Forum 2015”



Conferees at the symposium "Economic Growth and the Role of Women – Implications for the Group of Seven for Gender Equality" in 2016

export markets like Europe and the United States and technological developments, among many other reasons. Within the private sector, SOPAS also concentrates on fostering exchanges regarding new and modern Corporate Social Responsibility concepts and methods, especially in highlighting the intersection between CSR and the Media.

The core objectives of SOPAS are the following:

- 1) Principles of social market economy are being introduced in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 2) Cooperation between countries of the region in tackling socio-economic and political challenges is fostered by enabling an open discourse among relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector.
- 3) The integration process of Asian countries within the international order is being assisted by offering cooperation mechanisms.

SOPAS is constantly aiming to achieve these goals by conducting a range of conferences and events that differ in size and scope. During the planning stage SOPAS tries to figure out what kind of subjects are suitable for certain countries/cities. In this vein, KAS SOPAS in December 2015 identified competition law and regional antitrust measures as topics that were gaining a lot of attention in Southeast Asia. Due to global economic integration, emerging and developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region continue to either amend or implement competition laws for their respective markets. Countries like Australia and Japan have reviewed their regulations to prohibit anti-competitive practices and to ensure a level playing field for businesses while new regulations have been adopted or signed into law in countries like the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar. Hong Kong brought its new cross-sector competition regime into force while Cambodia is currently the only ASEAN member state which has no national competition law yet. Based on these positive developments, 2015 was considered a key year for antitrust in Asia: almost all countries which have committed to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint to introduce competition laws by the end of that year have managed to fulfill their pledges. The significant growth of the Asia-Pacific antitrust community paves the way for both a more predictable competition enforcement within the national jurisdictions and increased cooperation between regional regulators throughout the AEC and beyond. Since the majority of antitrust frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region draw on EU competition laws and international best



Participants listen to an address at the symposium "Economic Growth and the Role of Women – Implications for the Group of Seven for Gender Equality" in 2016.

practice models, KAS SOPAS at the end of 2015 invited experts from Europe and Asia to Singapore to compare the various compliance approaches and to discuss the necessary steps for cross-border enforcement. This week-long expert roundtable discussion with workshop elements and visits to Singaporean think tanks was one of KAS SOPAS's more prominent events.

In 2016, the SOPAS program identified "Economic Growth and the Role of Women" as an important topic against the background of Germany's G7-presidency in 2014 and Japan's G7-presidency in 2016, when the empowerment of women was recognized as one of the priority commitments in the years to come. Education and professional development have, for example, been identified as indispensable factors for economic participation of women in developing countries. Nevertheless, many industrialized states, including Germany, are still lagging behind in appointing women to leadership positions. This international conference was organized in cooperation with the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB) in order to foster dialogues to further improve the socio-economic and political participation of women. Distinguished speakers from Asia and Europe were provided with the opportunity to exchange their ideas and expertise with in-depth discussions. The keynote speaker was Roberta Clarke, regional director for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Similarly, for 2017 KAS Japan will focus their SOPAS-scope on topics of trilateral cooperation between South Korea, Japan and China.

The KAS in Japan, including its SOPAS program, aims at forging lasting partnerships in the region, bringing together experts, and most of all building platforms, for open discourse and discussion. It is only through discussions and the constant exchange of ideas that we can hope to understand and make sense of the globalization-driven, fast-changing world we live in. In 2017 KAS Japan looks forward to connecting experts in Japan and the Asia-Pacific region with their German and other international counterparts, thus expanding networks, building friendships and forging professional partnerships. This is the KAS's contribution to help understand the world a little bit better.

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