



Editorial

In the relationship between science and politics, in large parts of Europe, the former seems to have found a special niche, further and further away from its role as critical examiner of politics and power. To my mind a new scientific approach towards politics is urgently called for. Stating it simply, this lamentable development requires science – ranging from technical studies such as physics to social sciences, from urban studies, anthropology, and cultural or art history to classical literature or archaeology – to accept its responsibility towards society in the public sphere (political as well as cultural). Science's vital role in the political field is best determined as a means of informing the public and policy makers, while offering vociferous critique when it is called for.

By the time these words are published, we may well have been presented with yet another depreciation of the words 'compelling evidence', to be followed by a decrease of stock market prices. Current international affairs not only underline the responsibility of science towards society and thus politics, they even challenge the concept of 'evidence', the scientific concept *par excellence*. The existence of (outside) threats, whether valid or not, should push the scientific community to involve itself more in public discussion, surely not less.

Current warmongering aside, the increased importance of Asia in the international field as well as the rapid and continuous increase of international relations in general, amongst which Asian-European connections feature prominently, make it more important than ever to be informed about Asia's past and present, its cultures, politics, economies, and societies. The necessity lies in closing the gap between international researchers, between researchers and students, and between academia and society, of which it is a vital part.

In celebration of its tenth anniversary, the IIAS will hold a festival on 16–17 May this year, with which it hopes to interest prospective students in Asian Studies. In the long run the IIAS hopes to work towards increasing a general interest in Asia and perhaps close some of the above-mentioned gaps. Meanwhile, and regardless of what thirty signifies for many, reaching the thirtieth issue has done nothing to distance the newsletter from our open attitude towards new and uncharted topics of research. As the IIAS aims to operate at the interface of technical studies, life sciences, and social sciences, we hope that this issue's theme on 'Psychiatry in Asia', guest edited by Waltraud Ernst, will constitute a promising step towards such an approach. As always we warmly welcome your comments and suggestions.

Enjoy reading. < **Maurice Sistermans**