



Diverse and Dynamic



“Development policy is the peace policy of the 21st century.”

This statement by Willy Brandt has become the guiding principle for our daily activities.

Goals and Commission

The countries of **South, Southeast** and **East Asia** in which the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is active are neither politically nor economically homogeneous. Striking differences exist in both political and economic terms. Democracies neighbor autocratic systems while some of the world's poorest developing countries neighbor rapidly growing national economies.

Former planned economies are increasingly integrating elements of the market economy while other countries have long since reached the status of emerging and growth economies.

Being located near China and India, the two most populous countries in the world, smaller neighboring countries often feel threatened. This has led many to enter into unequal alliances with these regional powers. Regional and global questions are becoming increasingly important and there is heightened willingness to cooperate with neighboring countries. Not least because of their economic growth and their role in international organizations, China and India are becoming regional leaders and global players.

Economic growth remains the primary political objective of Asian governments. Increasingly, however, social stability and ecological concerns are also recognized as important criteria for political decisions.

Socio-economic, political, cultural, ethnic and religious tensions often lead to serious conflict and there is a growing awareness that rule of law and legal stability are basic prerequisites for social, economic and political stability.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Asia and the Pacific

Established in 1925, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is the oldest political foundation in Germany. It is a private and non-profit institution, committed to the ideals of social democracy named after the first democratically-elected German President, Friedrich Ebert. To this day, the foundation continues his legacy of shaping politics in the spirit of freedom, solidarity and social justice.

FES fulfills this task at home and abroad through political education programs, international cooperation and the promotion of study and research. At the center of the foundation's work in Asia is the promotion of democratic development, the realization of social justice, crisis prevention and international dialogue.

I. Promotion of Democracy

Parliamentary democracy, the protection of human rights, a free press, the separation of powers and a functioning state governed by rule of law are universal principles which are shared by the democratic powers in Asia. The FES supports programs and activities aimed at establishing and strengthening civil society and reinforcing democratic government institutions. Special emphasis is placed on contributing to the peaceful reconciliation of interests and mediation between civil society and state powers. In the process, the FES works together with numerous governmental institutions, local representatives, labor unions, political parties, social movements, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the press and academic institutions.



Gender

Since the mid-1980s, gender equality has been one of the main focal points of the work of the FES. Our goal is to get more women involved in the political decision-making process and to establish gender equality in all areas of politics. This includes gender mainstreaming as a strategic consideration for the various effects of political decisions on women and men. One of the most important activities in our regional gender project is the establishment of a Gender Competence Center, which generates knowledge related to gender and makes it accessible through a political platform.



Quota System for Women in India

After India introduced a 33% quota for women participants in local elections in 1993, more than one million women have entered the public arena for the first time, many with little knowledge of their new rights and without any basic political skills. Therefore, providing training and counseling to these local women politicians is an issue of crucial socio-economic importance. The FES promotes an exchange of ideas among organizations that train these local women representatives for their work. The starting point is a pilot project in rural Rajasthan that reaches more than 1,600 women and has been recognized throughout India as a successful model.

Support of the Media

The availability and access to pluralistic, qualitatively valuable information is a prerequisite for the democratic process of forming opinions as well as for political, societal and cultural participation. In order for this to occur, freedom of speech and freedom of information must be guaranteed and must exist within a regulatory political framework that safeguards these liberties. In numerous countries of the region, these prerequisites are insufficiently ensured. However, since many countries in Asia have committed themselves to improving the scope of the media on the regional and international level, the FES has a starting point for its political consultation work with the media.



II. Social Justice

The establishment of social justice is one of the pillars of democracy. It ensures the legitimacy and stability of the political system. The FES supports the debate on appropriate economic strategies for growth and the implementation of measures for societal security. Cooperation with labor unions as independent and democratic representatives of workers is of great importance, and can be extremely significant in reducing the negative effects of trade liberalization.





Securing Social Standards in the Textile Industry

As one of the foremost producers of garments and shoes, Indonesia primarily supplies the large markets in the US, Europe and Japan. Competition in these work-intensive industries leads to constant pressure in terms of wages and working conditions. However, multinational companies react sensitively when they see the reputation of their brand-name products in jeopardy. A growing number of suppliers in manufacturing countries are therefore instructed to implement so-called "codes of conduct." The FES supports the establishment of labor unions in companies supplying German retail chains and the monitoring of codes of conduct in these businesses.

III. Crisis Prevention and Civil Conflict Management

Crisis prevention and civil conflict management are becoming increasingly important in the political cooperative work of the FES. Based on conflict analyses, in several Asian countries, conflict sensitive project work has been implemented. In the process, possibilities for improving monitoring and evaluation systems are being discussed.



Civil Conflict Management in Afghanistan

Project planning in Afghanistan began with a conflict analysis. The various levels of conflict and the local and national participants were examined in order to develop possible future scenarios. Today, this still provides the basis for the socio-political work of the FES in this fragile post-war society. Possible consequences of our activities on the complex conflict situation are taken into consideration – a process which also must be conveyed to the project partners.



Conflict Analysis in Southern Thailand

For more than 100 years there has been tension and violent conflict in the three southern border provinces of Thailand: Pattani, Yala und Narathiwat. Since 2004, there has been renewed escalation of violence in which several thousand people have died. As part of its conflict-sensitive work in Thailand and the region, the FES has carried out a socio-political conflict analysis of Southern Thailand. It provides an overview of the possible causes, factors and participants of the conflict, analyses the fundamentals of peace and suggests spheres of action for the work of political foundations.



IV. International Dialogue

With cultures rich in tradition and history, the countries of Asia have partnered with Germany and Europe in an objective and constructive dialogue about common values among equals. It is becoming increasingly clear that this cooperative work primarily involves similar or shared problems to which joint or complementary solutions must be found within the context of global networking. Some of the topics debated in Asia include universal human rights, the social dimensions of globalization, regional security, the development of the media, gender equality and innovation.

The regional office of the FES, based in Singapore, supports the dialogue between the ASEAN states (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the Asian-European dialogue in the ASEM process (Asia-Europe Meeting). In doing so, special emphasis is placed on integrating the demands of groups from civil society and labor unions. Together with NGOs and members of parliament, these groups mandate that ASEM acquire a fourth social pillar. A platform for this is the establishment of regular meetings with the labor and social ministers and the development of corresponding subject matter. The first two meetings have already taken place with the support of the FES.

Security Policy Dialogue of the FES Office in Singapore

The end of the Cold War and the beginning of reforms in the People's Republic of China have brought about fundamental change in Asia's foreign and security policy. Although the probability of war between the countries has significantly decreased, individual countries have to come to terms with the new and altered threat scenarios such as terrorist attacks or regional conflicts. Asia needs a new security structure which includes the interests and security needs of all the countries. The FES Office for Regional Cooperation in Southeast and East Asia with its headquarters in Singapore is involved in creating this framework. During several German-Asian security dialogues, it has become clear that the problems of security policy in a globalized world can be resolved solely through joint coordination and cooperation.



FES China: Political Dialogue on Security and Global Governance

As a result of its rapid economic climb and swift global market integration, China is striving for continued self-confidence as a regional and global player in the global political arena. The country finds itself faced with the demands of economic and global governance, as well as questions of environmental policy, social standards and the global campaign against poverty. Additionally, China is called upon to make a constructive contribution to the reform of the UN. It is in the vital interest of Germany and Europe to convince China to become involved in crisis management on a multilateral level and in advocating for joint approaches to global problems in questions of security and development.

The FES has established two dialogue series aimed at continuity: The "German-Chinese Security Dialogue" was initiated in 2001 in cooperation with the Communist Party of China and the German Minister of Defense at that time, Rudolf Scharping. The second is the "Workshop on Global Governance" which has been conducted since 2003 together with the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS). Both dialogues take place annually in Beijing and Shanghai. Additionally, the foundation has established a well-developed network of contacts with leading experts in foreign and security policy in both locations in order to strengthen the partnership between Germany/Europe and China. This also serves to promote an exchange of ideas by politicians and experts concerning joint tasks in global economic governance, security, and development.

The Offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in South, Southeast and East Asia



The Department of Asia and the Pacific at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung runs 15 project offices in South, Southeast and East Asia, with 16 staff members delegated abroad and over 100 local specialized and administrative staff members.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

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