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The Human Rights Politics of Japan: Mirror of "Asian Identity?"

What is Japan's human rights policy? How does Japan form its positions on human rights at U.N. Conferences? And after these conferences are over, what effect do they have on subsequent human rights policy positions and initiatives?

The speaker will explore these questions in the context of debates about regionalization and Asian identity, and present findings based on very recent interviews in October and November, 2000.

This presentation is part of a larger project underway at the Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg on the politics of identity in Asia. It focuses on the politics of human rights in Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines, analyzing the national and regional processes leading up to the UN Human Rights conferences in Vienna 1993, Beijing 1995, and Copenhagen 1995.

Furthermore, it examines the outcomes of these conferences five years later and their effects on subsequent human rights policies in each country. The project thus derives a coherent picture of each nation's human rights policies from the intersection of its actions over time and across national, regional, and international arenas. These detailed analyses will allow researchers to draw careful conclusions about the nature and extent of the much-discussed "Asian Identity" and whether there are limits to its usefulness for understanding Asia.

Martina TIMMERMANN is head of the research project "The Human Rights Politics of Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines: Mirror of 'Asian Identity'?" at the Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg. She received her Ph.D. in 1998 from Ruhr University, Bochum with a dissertation on values, change and political culture in Japan and the US. From 1994 to 1999, she was Assistant Professor of International Relations at Trier University.

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