

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge and thank the Canadian Centre for Policy Development, of the Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, for financial support of this project. Dr. James Gripton, of the University of Calgary, provided invaluable expertise in analyzing and processing the data. We also thank those who took the time to complete the questionnaire.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background & Rationale

The importance of Asia on the world stage is summed up by John Naisbitt, writing in *Megatrends Asia*: "What is happening in Asia is by far the most important development in the world. Nothing else comes close, not only for Asians but for the entire planet. The modernization of Asia will forever reshape the world as we move towards the next millennium".

One assumption of this study is that the process of modernization includes the development and strengthening of democratic practices and institutions. In recent years we have seen the struggle for democracy, in the streets as well as the ballot box, carried on throughout Asia. Student action led to the ousting of Thailand's military strongmen in 1973 and again in 1992. The dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown by the nonviolent action of students, workers, priests and nuns in the Philippines.

In South Korea, after many years of rule by ex-generals and their business supporters, the people have elected Kim Dae-jung, a man who believes in and tries to practise democracy in his country. "Asia should lose no time", he said, "in firmly establishing democracy and strengthening human rights".

Perhaps the most surprising change, however, has been the removal of Indonesia's long-reigning dictator, Suharto, and the unexpected public clamour in that populous country for opening the doors to free expression, democratic elections and a just system of law - doors which have been shut since the 1965 coup d'etat. Megawati Sukarnoputri, former leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party, stated that "Indonesia should be a country based on the rule of law, not might. Democracy, human rights and living standards, these will be central to the twenty-first century".

The struggle for democracy continues in Indonesia and other Asian countries, notably Burma, China, Vietnam and North Korea. It embraces not only the weakening of authoritarian regimes, but the strengthening of human rights and civil society in all its forms, the protection of minorities and the struggle for more equitable development.

Canada, too, is a Pacific Rim country and its business leaders, diplomats, academics, development and religious leaders visit and live in Asian countries. More than one thousand Canadians participated in the Team Canada tours of Asian countries, led by