

Introduction

The timing was a matter of chance, but the decision was powerfully telling: Just weeks after the election of his government in 1993, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien chose as his first foreign-policy mission the Seattle summit of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation—APEC. Ever since, Canada's relations with Asia and the Pacific Rim have commanded more attention from the Canadian public and policy-makers than at any time in our history.

And small wonder. In its sheer size and diversity, in the turbulent speed of its economic growth, in the turmoil of social and political changes throughout the region, Asia-Pacific demands new efforts of understanding by Canadians and their government. In the years to come, events in Asia-Pacific will go a long way to determining our prosperity as a country, our security in the world, and the prospects for sharing democratic values in an emergent Pacific community.

The purpose in this discussion is to explore some of the dangers as well as the promise in the Asia-Pacific future—and to identify a few hard choices that Canadians will have to make in our own foreign policy. Specifically:

1. To what extent, and by what measures, should Canadians promote and protect human rights in the Asia-Pacific region?
2. How can Canadians help the region's indigenous peoples find their voice and their place in the countries of Asia-Pacific?
3. How should Canadians help Asia-Pacific societies transform environmentally destructive growth into sustainable development?