

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following is a set of recurring major arguments encountered in this study, drawn from a multiplicity of views. Taken as a whole, they represent a confirmation of the growing recognition of the importance of the Asia Pacific region for Canada, and are the premises upon which my recommendations and conclusions have been based.

Originally, support for an Asia Pacific Foundation was efficiency oriented: based on a belief that Canadian ties with Asia and the Pacific had developed to such a point of complexity and overlapping that an umbrella organization was required to make the best possible use of whatever Canadian institutions already existed.

Recently, however, the urgings for the creation of an Asia Pacific Foundation reflect a broader and deeper reassessment. Fresh arguments are based on the growing realization that we are moving into what might be called an Asia Pacific era in world affairs; an era for which we should be better prepared. Already there are early intimations that, out of the vast region which comprises Asia and the Pacific as we have known it, a small group of countries are beginning to develop the new concept of a Pacific community. This is a concept of a community that would embrace the developed and developing countries on both sides of the Pacific, held together by the glue of interdependence, mutual respect and economic cooperation. Since Canada is a natural member of this likely emerging community, we should be addressing ourselves in a co-ordinated and rational way to the economic, cultural and political implications of such an important eventuality.

Advocates for these new arguments point to evidence of the massive acceleration in the rate of change taking place in the world today, especially in the Asia Pacific region. With the rapid advances in communication technology, we are faced with the reality of an ever-shrinking world; a world in which every country's future is inexplicably bound up together in a new and fragile global web. Within this new reality, the Asian and Pacific region has a very distinct and important role to play.

One reason is the simple fact of their population density. The Asian and Pacific nations account for over half the human race. They represent a virtual kaleidoscope of possible societies and conditions ranging from the primitive stone age societies of Papua New Guinea to the most technologically advanced ones of Japan. They contain free market economies like Hong Kong as well as highly centralized ones like North Korea. They stretch from the sparsely populated areas of Australia to the most densely populated ones of Singapore, from totally agricultural countries to totally industrial states. They contain the world's oldest cultures and four of the major religions – Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism.

These facts, coupled with the vigorous energy some of these societies have been capable of generating, have caused an enormous take-off in their economies in the last twenty years. Japan alone has become a trillion dollar economy. The added examples of South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan have shown there is a new complexity in the ways of doing business – ways that are different from our own. The spinoff from all of this Asia Pacific activity has already had considerable impact on our own economy, and will continue to exert an even greater one in the future. The challenge is inescapable. The consequence of that impact we can no longer afford to ignore nor approach with half-hearted measures. Either we learn to adapt to these changes and find long range solutions, or our present economic difficulties will deepen if not prevail.