

Some three and a half years ago, as the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War ended, a sense of jubilation was in the air. The dream of achieving a "new world order" seemed to be achievable. Democracy had triumphed; prosperity in the West was at an all-time high, and free markets were being embraced by the former communist countries.

It was a heady time -- a brief period of relief following the Cold War tensions that had dominated our lifetimes; a glimpse of what the future could be like in a free, open, and co-operative world.

It has been a sobering three years: economic recession in the West; turmoil in some republics of the former Soviet Union; the agony of the former Yugoslavia; the drama and tragedies of Somalia and Cambodia. The dominant mood is one of pessimism and unease, supplanting the optimism of 1990.

The tumultuous events of the past few years were earth-shaking in every sense. The international community was often forced to make policy on the run. We acted and reacted to the power of the pervasive, new global media, which drives public opinion as never before. We tried to make sense of a torrent of events, conscious of the urgency of our tasks and the demands of our impatient publics, but we are often frustrated by the perceived need to respond before adequate plans and strategies can be developed.

We have learned at least one crucial lesson from going through a century's worth of crises in just three years. If we are to succeed in creating a stable and peaceful world, we need a long-term strategic vision with a global sense of perspective, and a comprehensive framework for building collective security.

The global context, the "security environment" in which Canada and other states fit and function, is rather Hobbesian. It is a world of brutality and viscousness, as we have seen in Bosnia. It is a world of intractable problems and inescapable dilemmas, as we have seen in Cambodia. It is a world of natural disaster compounded by human folly, as in Somalia. But it remains, also, a world of hope. The Referendum in Russia confounded the experts when the Russian people themselves chose to support not only President Yeltsin, but the road to reform and market change. And in South Africa, my destination when I leave New York this afternoon, a multiracial democracy is slowly and painfully rising from the ashes of apartheid. In my travels, I have seen first-hand the depth and variety of challenges to stability facing the world, and I see the enormity of the task that lies ahead in overcoming conflicts that now dot the globe.