

Such developments create for all of us a need to adjust our foreign policies and sometimes our domestic policies. They offer us the opportunity of a more secure world at the same time as they portend the risks of a less certain and predictable one.

Since early August, our attention has been riveted to the crisis in the Gulf. Events in that region have demonstrated how the absence of mutual understanding at the regional level can have catastrophic consequences, and how important international dialogue and co-operation can be, especially through the United Nations, in confronting a situation of great danger.

The Gulf crisis is a most telling example of the consequences of not pursuing -- effectively and exhaustively -- all avenues of consultation before resorting to the grave step of military aggression. It has shown, in a dramatic manner, the dangers involved when a state shows a preference for unilateral action over dialogue and compromise.

I would also assert that it illustrates weaknesses in the fabric of regional dialogue in the Middle East. Dialogue was not absent in the run-up to the Gulf War, nor would I discount other factors that led to conflict. But I would say that there was insufficient commitment to using dialogue to address the fundamental problems of the region and the interests of its people.

When I turn to the North Pacific, I cannot help but feel concern at the tenuous threads of communication and the sporadic nature of dialogue among the countries of the area. My concern deepens when I view these weaknesses in the light of the very significant challenges to security and stability we in the North Pacific face.

Canada was extremely active in the Gulf; from the beginning we saw it as a challenge to the rule of international law and the role of the United Nations. For a nation with our territory, our traditions, our interests, it is imperative to respect and strengthen international law and the United Nations. So we became fully involved -- diplomatically, militarily, and now with post-hostilities proposals including arms control -- all this despite the fact that our direct connections with Kuwait and the Gulf are relatively limited.

Our connections with the North Pacific are far more profound and complex. We live here.