

While the possibility of a war remains real for many, the anticipated cause of such a war has shifted radically in the last few decades. Today, the vast majority of Canadians (69%) think a world war would be caused by countries other than the USSR or US; less than one in four (23%) thought so in a 1961 Gallup poll. Only 2% now believe a war would come about as a result of Soviet action. Thirty years ago, the figure was 41%. By contrast, more, although only about one in seven (13%), currently expect the US to be the cause.

When asked last year, the month before the Berlin Wall was opened, whether the Cold War was over, few Canadians (6%) were so optimistic. After a dramatic year of events in Eastern Europe, significantly more are optimistic (21%) but most remain cautious. Fully two-thirds (66%) say that the Cold War is lessening but not over.

CANADIANS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE CONSISTENTLY SUGGESTED THAT THE greatest military threat to world peace is either the spread of nuclear weapons to smaller countries or a regional conflict, most likely in the Middle East. Thus, many Canadians would not have been surprised either by the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf or by speculation that such conflicts might involve nuclear or non-conventional weaponry.

Canadians are changing their conceptions of security threats. As first demonstrated in last year's CIIPS poll, these threats now feature environmental and economic problems as well as more traditional military threats.

When asked to rank five major environmental issues (global warming, toxic waste, acid rain, ozone depletion, and water pollution) in terms of seriousness as international problems, the CIIPS respondents did not come up with a clear top priority. Two issues, however, did stand out. Almost one in three (30%) pointed to depletion of the ozone layer as the most serious. In second spot was the pollution of lakes and oceans (24%). Further back were toxic waste (16%), global warming (15%), and acid rain (12%).

The Canadian public has clearly begun to re-think their country's NATO commitment. For the first time in recent decades, support for NATO has plunged dramatically. On the October 1989 CIIPS survey more than one in two (52%) ranked Canada's continued membership in NATO as very important. Only one in every three (32%) now give it a very important rating. In short, there has been a 20-point drop in the perceived salience of the alliance.

While this drop might be explained as a response to the decline of the old Soviet threat, the effort to reform the Soviet Union along liberal democratic and free market lines, the collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, and the expectation of the demise of the Warsaw Pact, the extent of the drop is all the more striking in that it precedes any notable public discussion of this issue.

Declining support for NATO force commitments appear to be part of a general decline in the importance afforded the alliance. A slim majority of Canadians (50%) still supports keeping Canadian forces in Europe at their present levels. But the number who would reduce the size of those forces has roughly doubled since last year. In the 1989 CIIPS poll, only 10% favoured a reduction (of unspecified size). The proportion is now 21%. In 1989, 14% favoured outright withdrawal of Canadian forces from Europe. Now 20% favour it.

The post Cold War shift from East-West matters and military "solutions" has notably not prompted greater interest in solving North-South problems. The importance for Canada of providing aid to developing countries has slumped; while 39% rated it very important on a 1984 External Affairs survey, only 22% do so now. A similar decline has occurred on the priority for "helping reduce hunger and poverty around the world"; those giving a high ranking have dropped from 62% (on a 1985 Decima survey) to 41% now.

In contrast to the declining importance of aid, Canadians continue today to afford roughly the same priority as in 1984 to such commitments as participating in the United Nations and in UN peacekeeping efforts, perhaps a reflection of concerns about the Gulf conflict. Also, in contrast, almost nine in ten (87%) rate protecting Canada's oceans and offshore resources as very important.

Canadians' opinion has not been inert. Nor is it incoherent and confused. The incredible international events of the late 1980s have clearly and already had a significant impact on the thinking of the Canadian public.

CANADIANS APPEAR TO PERCEIVE A WORLD IN which the superpowers are becoming less dominant and more cooperative; those with burgeoning economies like Japan are assuming greater importance (and becoming economic threats); military force is playing less of a role; NATO's future is uncertain; the Cold War, if not over is at least on the wane; the dominant conflicts are North-South rather than East-West; and instability and militarism in the Third World are emerging as serious international, not just regional, problems, as are such global ecological issues as depletion of the ozone layer. In short, Canadians see themselves entering a more complex, multipolar and interdependent world.

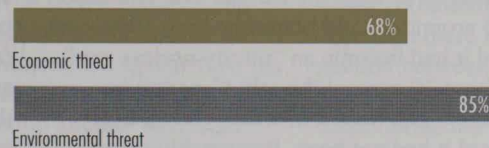
Is there an overall pattern to the policies Canadians want in response to this new order? At the risk of being both simplistic and speculative, the thrust seems to be toward withdrawal rather than greater involvement. A growing mood among Canadians may be to turn away not only from the problems of Europe, which have been solved, but also from those of the Third World, which seem insoluble, and to harbour our own resources and address our own problems. □

## CANADA AND THE US

Considerable or great confidence in the ability of the US to deal wisely with world problems:



Regard the US as a serious threat in the next ten years:



## CANADA AND THE WORLD

Very important for Canada to:

