

CANADIANS' PRIMARY INTEREST AFTER THE COLD WAR

The first goal of any state, and of human society in general, is to provide its members with a base of security against threats to their lives and properties. For forty years, an over-riding threat of ideological and military expansion provided a clear and compelling framework for the international activities of most states, and consumed vast amounts of energy, ingenuity and treasure.

Some cynics and separatists in Canada have seized on the end of the Cold War to argue that it has ushered in an era of peace and tranquillity, making past security alliances largely irrelevant, and a coherent Canadian state even less necessary than they had already assumed it to be.

Some peace! Some tranquillity!

The end of the Cold War, while stopping the global confrontation of the two superpowers, has opened up *more* instability, *more* challenges to security, and *more* dangers of armed conflict. In fairness, it has also opened up extraordinary opportunities to confront and surmount these problems, but no one can view with complacency the turbulent ethnic and political conditions, and the pent-up expectations, which follow the collapse of the Soviet external and internal empires. Because these changes are so rapid and massive, and so fundamental for the entire international order, they rightly capture the first attention of policy-makers and publics in countries like Canada, and this priority of attention will also be reflected in the present analysis. While focussing on what was the Soviet Union and on Europe, however, it is crucial to remember that the changes in that region both permit and require a much wider restructuring of the whole international order.

There are strong analogies in the present situation to the period after the Second World War. Then, a wide-ranging set of security concerns gave birth to a massive effort of solidarity in the political and economic reconstruction of western Europe and Japan, and in the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty as a temporary and partial substitute for the global UN system of collective security, then blocked by the Soviet veto.