

Thus the great challenge to international law is to adapt itself to current circumstances - a set of circumstances which is now very different from that envisaged by those who shaped the postwar international legal régime and who were clearly influenced by the pattern of interstate violence seen before and during the Second World War.

I raise this international legal point not just because I am here at the University of Toronto Law Faculty, but also because I believe that we have to have clearer international norms and workable international machinery to deal with current circumstances. To take one key challenge: can international law and international institutions contribute to preventing the spread of East-West rivalries into the Third World?

This, in my view, has become one of the great problems in international relations - how to stop East-West conflicts from inserting themselves into the developing world. Central America is a case in point. To a greater extent than ever before, regions such as this risk becoming the focus of East-West rivalry, the landscape on which the superpowers measure their gains and losses.

I don't want to convey any sort of neutrality in this regard. Along with our Western Allies, Canada takes Soviet expansionism in the Third World and in this hemisphere very seriously. However, we are realistic enough not to be surprised that East-West rivalries see targets of opportunity in unstable Third World situations - particularly situations of extremes where the grinding poverty of the many is colocated with the extreme wealth of the few.

In many parts of Central America, and particularly in El Salvador, we see with shock and horror widespread violations of elementary human rights, atrocities, torture, massacres and murder on an appalling scale. These crimes against humanity are perpetrated by forces on both extremes of the political spectrum. The Canadian Government continues to protest against this wave of violence.

But we cannot understand political terror in Central America, nor hope to resolve it, simply by blaming a clash of ideologies or great-power interests.

Here to me is the crux of the problem. Instability in Central America - and in most other cases in the Third World - is not a product of East-West rivalry. It is a product of poverty, the unfair distribution of wealth, and social injustice. Instability feeds on poverty and injustice. East-West rivalries flow in its wake. I can think of few examples where the process has been the other way around.