

A major focus of Canada's recent arms control activities was the Prime Minister's proposal at the first United Nations' Special Session Devoted to Disarmament in 1978 in the context of restraining the technological momentum behind the strategic nuclear arms race. The elements of the "strategy of suffocation" -- a comprehensive test ban treaty, a ban on the flight testing of all new strategic delivery vehicles, a ban on production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons purposes and an agreement to limit and then progressively to reduce military spending on new strategic nuclear weapons systems -- were not new to the arms control discussions. What was new was the concept of their interaction in combination to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons among heretofore non-nuclear weapons states or the nuclear weapons states themselves.

Three years later the concept of the strategy of suffocation remains valid. The government takes every opportunity to reaffirm the importance it attaches to the continuation of the SALT process and to the realization of a verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty. These priorities, together with assisting in the preparation of a conventional ban on chemical weapons and the promotion of the evolution of an effective non-proliferation régime, will guide Canadian preparations for the second United Nations' Special Session on Disarmament next year in which Canada intends to take an active part.

As the Prime Minister has indicated, in the 1980s we must look for new ways of dealing with tension and threats to peace through new forms of consultation and crisis management, including ways of dealing with regional crises. Peacekeeping has been an important Canadian contribution to the search for international stability in the 1970s. We are hopeful that the wide range of multilateral machinery built in the 1970s will provide us with a good basis for developing these new ways of approaching security-related issues. It is particularly important to recall that the instability of our world, which we expect to deepen in the 1980s, is of a different, less predictable character, centred to some extent in the growing interdependence between industrialized and Third World nations.

The peace and security of Canada thus is becoming increasingly linked to regional tensions and crises. Regional crises are rarely contained in one particular region. There is a growing spill-over effect. There are wide-ranging repercussions that have a multidimensional impact far from their point of origin. A regional crisis of a military or a political nature in one region can have an economic impact on the other side of the globe; witness the economic impact of the Arab-Israeli war and the Iran-Iraq war on the West. On the other hand, the shock waves from an economic crisis in one region can trigger a military or political crisis elsewhere.