

But geography is not the paramount consideration. Freedom is.

Canadians have long enjoyed the benefits of a free and democratic society and institutions. Our commitment to those values has been demonstrated time and again.

Next week we will bear witness to the thousands of Canadian citizens who died in battle defending those ideals -- twice in Europe in this century, and again, on the other side of the globe, in the Korean War.

Our freedom, our prosperity, our values are best nourished in direct relation to their strength in the rest of the world. When they are advanced in the world at large, they are made safer here at home; when they are imperilled abroad, they are jeopardized here.

That view has been at the heart of Canadian foreign policy since it began. Our policy is the opposite of isolation. We are one of the most effective and consistent internationalists in the world. It is particularly ironic to hear the argument that to withdraw from an alliance is an act of Canadian nationalism. Because isolation is an American disease, not Canadian. One of the differences between the two societies in North America is that Canadians have always worked to build international cooperation, and Americans have been inclined more often to go it alone.

That is why Canada seeks to strengthen international organizations like the United Nations, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, and our defence alliances. That is why Canadians work in the deserts of Africa, in the villages of Asia, in the schools and hospitals of Latin America and the Caribbean. That is why we have been consistently at the forefront of the movement to liberalize and expand the international trade in goods and services.

NATO is a case in point. At its inception, NATO was seen as the most effective means to provide Canada, and our allies in the United States and Western Europe, with the security that is the most basic pre-condition to wealth and freedom. We also had a particular interest in promoting the recovery of Western Europe.

Modern day Western Europe, with a population well over 300 million, is now the world's wealthiest region. That did not happen by accident.