

1. OVERVIEW

Introduction

The world today is a scene of extraordinary change. A time of progress has dawned in East-West relations that is yielding remarkable advances on some of the most thorny of international issues, and there are now great hopes of moving on to a new era of co-operation and common security. Naturally, though, there are enduring concerns about security in the Northern hemisphere, just as difficult problems persist in the South and at the global level. This is a time for fresh thinking and for new initiatives, but also for careful responses that draw where they can on well-tried knowledge and proven method.

Canada has also entered a new phase of its history. At the international level, it has joined in a free trade agreement with the United States, participated in efforts to reformulate security relationships in Europe, and dispatched naval vessels, fighter aircraft and other forces to the Persian Gulf. For the first time in a generation, Canadians are facing the possibility of military action, in support of the United Nations and of international order.

This is the context in which Canada again faces the question of NORAD renewal. Parliament and government have to consider the state of the international system and decide whether joint aerospace defence of the continent with the United States is still required for the coming period. They have to review Canada's goals and requirements in this field and determine whether the North American Aerospace Defence agreement is the best way of pursuing them. Modifications in the accord itself or in the command structures, decision-making procedures, and consultative arrangements that support it might also be made if they seem warranted.

When NORAD was last renewed in 1986, Canada seemed to many people to be caught in perpetuity in the midst of a strategic confrontation between the Soviet Union