

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today. I would have liked to use this opportunity to describe North America's strong and vital relationship with Europe. Instead I find myself contemplating two continents that are in danger of drifting apart.

This trend cannot be said to be the result of a conscious policy choice on either side of the Atlantic, although the relationship certainly does suffer at times from a sense of benign neglect. Our difficulties, more structural than political, seem to be at a deeper level--an inability to move from a transatlantic relationship defined primarily by strategic imperatives to one defined increasingly by our shared economic interests.

There can be little doubt that the end of the Cold War has served to weaken the strategic ties that bound our two continents together for almost fifty years. Until the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989, it was largely the Soviet threat that kept the West together in a defensive alliance. Just as this threat has now disappeared, so too has the pressure to subordinate underlying economic tensions.

Gone as well are the ideological foundations that underpinned our strategic alliance. It has been suggested that the Cold War was not primarily a war of national interests, but a war of ideas. In politics, it was a struggle of liberal democracy against collectivist totalitarianism; in economics a struggle of open, competitive markets against stifling central planning and state ownership. To paraphrase King George V, however, "we are all capitalists nowadays". Moreover, global events are increasingly driven more by technological innovations than by ideological convictions. Just as it is sometimes difficult to identify the "enemy" in an international arena defined primarily by the interplay of economic forces, so too is it sometimes difficult to recognize the values and ideals that still bind us together.

In essence, then, North America's post-war strategic partnership with Europe has given way to growing economic rivalry to which we both seem unable to adjust. The most obvious expression of this is the rising pressure on each side of the Atlantic for exclusionary regional blocs. Europe, preoccupied as it is with recession, unemployment, an ill-defined eastern border and continued turmoil in the Balkans, seems, to some North Americans, to have turned increasingly inward. Only a short time ago, "Europe 1992" was held up as a model of openness for the world. Now these same policies of regional liberalization and harmonization seem less admirable if one additional goal is to reduce or even shut out global competition. Regardless of the lip-service paid to openness and liberalization, the impression among some Canadians is of a Europe wary of globalization, disillusioned with freer trade, and beset by a fortress mentality.