

developing world—in other words, in areas where the West has no coherent set of arrangements to protect its interests, such as those that link North America with Japan and Western Europe. It is sensible to ask ourselves, therefore, how well-placed we are to deal with crises in general, and with crises in the Third World in particular, to the extent that these involve western interests.

So far as Europe—the main theatre of East-West confrontation—is concerned, a more confident answer could be returned to this question today than was possible a year ago. Not that the situation in Europe is totally calm. But at least the process of political consultation in NATO has undergone useful improvement in anticipation of challenges that lie ahead. The Allies are working more effectively together in the development of a concerted approach to East-West relations. The policy of strengthening NATO's defences, while offering once again to negotiate arms control arrangements with the Soviet Union, commands the support of the whole Alliance and was confirmed at the recent NATO ministerial meeting.

Thus NATO continues to supply an indispensable framework for maintaining the cohesion and strength that ensures stability and balance in Europe. This is clearly in the western interest. And for all its public criticism of the Alliance, the Soviet Union would probably admit that its priority objectives in Europe are stability and balance as well.

It is more difficult, Madam Speaker, to speak confidently about arrangements to deal with crises outside Europe. Here neither East nor West is on its home ground. The rules of the game have not been defined. Although some lines—notably in the Persian Gulf—have been firmly drawn, much ambiguity, and potentially dangerous ambiguity, remains. The question of how best to secure Western interests in these areas, in full respect for the sovereignty of the States of the regions concerned, must continue to engage the attention of western policy-makers.

East and West must try to redefine a code of conduct for international relations, which would be mutually acceptable. Before this can be done, however, a solution must be found to the crisis in Afghanistan, whose invasion violated every standard of