

Central to its recovery from the devastation of the Second World War has been NATO. Europe has become strong because, for the last four decades, it has enjoyed peace and political stability - the longest uninterrupted peace Europe has enjoyed in the twentieth century. Secure and at peace, Western Europe has prospered and grown. That security was assured through the collective assertion of western will through NATO.

Like most other cooperative arrangements in life, the maintenance of unity and resolve in NATO has not been effortless or without strain. We have had to face constant challenges to its integrity from within and outside the alliance.

At times the American commitment to the alliance has been questioned, or was thought to be wavering. Fatigue with its international commitments, or frustration with having to pay a large share of the cost, have, on occasion, tempted some Americans to shrug off the burdens of collective defence, to go it alone, to look out only for number one. Europe worries periodically about the strength of the American commitment. Often there are tensions, which Canada is well placed to resolve.