

# Logic of Mutual Escalation Leads to Nuclear Apocalypse

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*Canada's obsession with NATO is escalating the conflict in Ukraine and increasing the possibility of nuclear confrontation.*

*During a press conference with her US counterpart last week foreign affairs minister Melanie Joly [said](#) Canada supported fast tracking Ukraine into NATO. If that transpired alliance members would be treaty bound to invoke Article 5 of the NATO charter, which commits member states to consider an armed attack against one member an attack against all. It could lead to a formal declaration of war with Russia, which would greatly increase the odds of a nuclear exchange.*

In response to Joly's comment, John Ivison [warned](#) that Canada's hawkish position increased the chance of nuclear apocalypse. On the front-page of the *National Post* Ivison pointed out that the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists had already placed its Doomsday Clock at 100 seconds to midnight prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Fortunately, US officials expressed slightly more caution on NATO. In the same press conference Secretary of State Anthony Blinken refused to commit US support for fast tracking Ukraine's NATO membership.

While it would ratchet up tension, Ukraine's adhesion to NATO would largely just formalize its current de-facto status. Since 2015 Canadian forces have trained their Ukrainian counterparts to pave the way for the country to join NATO. "[The objective](#) was the modernization of their forces with the aim of one day becoming a member of NATO", explained Jeffrey Toope, former commander of Canada's training mission in Ukraine.

Similarly, invoking Article 5 would to some extent just formalize Canada's de facto war footing. Canadian special forces are facilitating weapons deliveries and other supports on the ground in Ukraine. The federal government has encouraged former soldiers to travel to Ukraine and Canada has also provided significant amounts of arms and military intelligence.

Canadian forces are also training Ukrainian soldiers in the UK.

The Canadians are operating alongside a larger contingent of US forces. The Intercept recently reported, "[clandestine](#) American operations inside Ukraine are now far more extensive than they were early in the war." It added that there was "a much larger presence of both CIA and U.S. special operations personnel."

Joly's call to fast-track Ukraine's NATO membership reflects Ottawa's aggressive promotion of the nuclear weapons club. According to the *Toronto Star*, Canadian officials strongly [advocated](#) for Finland and Sweden's recent bid to join the alliance. In early July Ottawa was also the [first member](#) of NATO to ratify the two Scandinavian countries membership into an alliance, which defines nuclear weapons as "a fundamental component" of its planning.

Canada's decades old promotion of NATO has contributed to the current crisis. Ignoring US/European promises to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to not expand NATO eastward, soon after taking office in 1993 Prime Minister Jean Chretien began promoting Poland's admission to NATO. Without so much as a [debate](#) in Parliament, Canada was the first NATO country to formally approve enlargement of the alliance and Ottawa pushed to double the size of the initial expansion.

Some say establishing NATO in 1949 was a Canadian idea and Canadian officials participated in the initial private meetings to launch the alliance with representatives of the US and UK. Canada has "[participated](#) and contributed to every NATO mission, operation and activity since NATO's founding", noted Canada's Ambassador to the North Atlantic Council Kerry Buck in 2018. A decade earlier military historian Jack Granatstein pointed out that NATO is "the alliance to which Canada had devoted perhaps 90 percent of its military effort since 1949."

Immediately after its creation Canada began [sending](#) billions of dollars in NATO mutual assistance weaponry to the colonial powers as they suppressed independence movements in Africa and Asia. From the early 1950s to the early 1990s thousands of Canadian troops were stationed in Western Europe on NATO assignments. In 1999 Canadian fighter jets dropped 530 bombs in NATO's illegal 78-day bombing of Serbia. During the 2000s tens of thousands of Canadian troops fought in a NATO war in Afghanistan. In 2011 a Canadian general led NATO's attack on Libya in which seven CF-18 fighter jets and two Canadian naval vessels participated. More recently Canadian troops have participated in NATO naval expeditions in Europe, Africa and the Mediterranean as well as missions in [Iraq](#) and [Poland](#). For five years Canada has led a NATO battlegroup in Latvia, which borders Russia.

For Canada there's never been a plausible defensive element to NATO. Does anyone believe Ukraine, Lithuania or Latvia would defend Canada if it were invaded? It's ridiculous, as Dimitri Lascaris [explains](#):

"Of course, the Article 5 obligation of collective defence is reciprocal, which means that, if Ukraine were admitted to NATO, Ukraine would have an obligation to defend Canada in the event that Canada is attacked. The geopolitical reality, however, is that Canada, which shares a border with only one country (the United States), and which is separated from Russia by the Arctic Ocean, is far less likely to come under attack than Ukraine.

Also, as the poorest country in Europe, does Ukraine actually have the capacity to come to Canada's defence in any meaningful way if Canada were attacked?

Furthermore, would Canada even need Ukraine's assistance if Russia (or some other hostile state) attacked Canada? The United States, which possesses the world's most powerful military, would almost certainly act decisively to prevent the entry of hostile forces into Canadian territory. It would do so in its own interests, not in the interests of Canada.... The formidable deterrent of proximity to the United States would continue to exist *even if Canada was not a member of NATO*. The reality – which no one in the Canadian security establishment dares to acknowledge – is that, from a security perspective, Canada gains essentially nothing from NATO membership, and yet Canada has exposed itself to considerable risk by assuming an obligation of collective defence with respect to European states. For Canada's security, there is essentially no upside from NATO, only downside, and Ukraine's admission to NATO would constitute a particularly bad deal for Canadians."

By pushing to fast-track Ukrainian membership in NATO Ottawa is escalating a conflict that may still draw in more countries. Anatol Lieven recently pointed out that China could respond to escalation by offering Russia weapons.

"[If the](#) Chinese government becomes convinced that America is in fact waging a war for the complete defeat of Russia and the overthrow of the Russian state, then fears for the effect on their own vital interests seem all too likely to lead them to give the kind of enormous military aid to Russia that America has been giving to Ukraine — at which point the balance of forces could swing back hard against Ukraine", noted Lieven.

At the NATO summit in Spain three months ago the alliance released a new strategic concept that for the first-time listed China. It labeled Beijing a challenge to the alliance's "[interests](#), security and values" and NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declared, "[China](#) is substantially building up its military forces, including nuclear weapons, bullying its neighbours, threatening Taiwan ...."

On Thursday the head of the Canadian military told the House of Commons standing committee on national security that Russia and China believed themselves to be at war with Canada. "[Russia](#) and China are not just looking at regime survival but regime expansion. They consider themselves to be at war with the West", claimed Chief of Defence Staff Wayne Eyre.

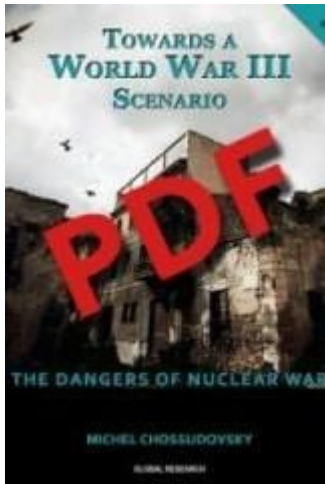
While the militarist *National Post* warns against Canada's position on Ukraine joining NATO, few social groups or unions are expressing concern about Ottawa's role in increasing the odds of nuclear apocalypse. It's time for peace and antiwar minded Canadians to start demanding restraint in Ottawa's role of further escalating this conflict.

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