

5-4-2022

New ways forward to promote peace in the face of Russia's invasion

Erika Simpson

University of Western Ontario (Western University), simpson@uwo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/politicalsciencepub>



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#)

Citation of this paper:

Simpson, Erika, "New ways forward to promote peace in the face of Russia's invasion" (2022). *Political Science Publications*. 197.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/politicalsciencepub/197>

GLOBAL

New ways forward to promote peace in the face of Russia's invasion

By ERIKA SIMPSON MAY 4, 2022

Russia is entering another Afghanistan-like quagmire, but by providing Ukraine with state-of-the-art and Soviet-era weapons, the West runs the risk that hostile forces could capture those same weapons.



Latvian President Egils Levits, left, Canada's Minister of Defence Anita Anand, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Ādaži Military Base on March 8, 2022. The war in Ukraine finally pushed Canada to commit about \$8-billion in new military spending in the 2022 Budget, writes Erika Simpson. *Photograph courtesy of NATO/Flickr*

If Russia does not achieve a conventional forces victory in eastern Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin might resort to using weapons of mass destruction, like chemical and tactical nuclear weapons. Russia has so far threatened to cut off gas supplies to Europe, if its bills are not paid in rubles, and to target any NATO convoys bringing weapons to Europe. Russia could attack a supply line near NATO's Poland border or a staging base for

armaments inside NATO territory. Then NATO would have to decide by consensus whether to issue Article 5: an attack against one member is an attack against all. And, because of the prospect of world war, decisive responses might be lacking.

If Finland and Sweden seize the opportunity to become part of NATO, applying for full membership before the NATO summit in June, they could join 30 allies relatively quickly and painlessly. On the other hand, they are already de facto NATO allies under no more threat of attack than other allies. They would become de jure NATO countries the moment the first errant or deliberate missile passes over any Western border. Instead, NATO must refrain from over-hasty enlargement. Indeed, expansion would be perceived as provocative by Russia.

To reassess decades-old foreign and defence policy doctrine in the face of Russia's invasion means more governments will raise military spending to meet NATO's two per cent target. When NATO expresses spending as a percentage of GDP, Canadians appear like laggards, but in terms of per capita defence spending, Canada ranks highly because of its small population of 38.8 million people. In 2021, Canadians spent about US\$592 per person on defence. Still, Americans spent US\$2,187—a four-to-one differential that has stayed constant since 1990. Americans spend much more on defence compared to most of the rest of the world except the Saudis, Turks, and Israelis, who are receiving gigantic American subsidies, as well.

For too long, the United States has carried too great a share of the burden for North American and European (as well as Asian) security. As it moves forward, Canada will need to spend wisely now that the government has decided to spend more. If we examine Canada's defence budget over time, in 2016-17 the Liberals raised it to \$18-billion, but promised to go much higher in the 2017

defence review. According to the 2017 defence policy statement, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, Canada's annual defence spending is expected to increase from \$17.1-billion in 2016-17, to \$24.6-billion in 2026-27, and \$32.7-billion in 2026-27.



Erika Simpson is an associate professor of international politics at the University of Western Ontario and president of the Canadian Peace Research Association. *Photograph courtesy of Erika Simpson*

If Canada's defence spending doubles under the Liberal government, as promised, it will include debatable procurements, like the expensive Lockheed-Martin F-35, as well as significant investments to better look after the wellness of armed forces personnel, reduce sexual harassment, and modestly increase the number of reservists, intelligence, and cyberwarfare specialists. The war in Ukraine finally pushed the Canadian government to commit about \$8-billion in new military spending in the 2022 Budget, that should raise Canadian defence spending, as a share of GDP, to 1.5 per cent after five years. Canada has also shifted its policy and will export lethal arms to the conflict zone in Ukraine, including anti-tank weapons and ammunition.

It was the Russian attack on Ukraine that pushed governments—like Germany and Canada—to change their policies, not so much pressure from the United States as hegemon. Indeed, on former U.S. president Donald Trump's first

foreign trip, he pressured many NATO leaders to double their defence spending to two per cent of their country's GDP. On his second visit to NATO, he strongly reiterated those same criticisms, and at the 2019 NATO summit in London, UK, during a press conference, Trump said: "Some countries aren't fulfilling their commitment and those countries are going to be dealt with."

Now NATO spending will drastically increase, but NATO also needs to be careful about involvement in another out-of-area conflict for just war causes. NATO decision-makers deluded themselves into thinking that fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan and building democratic institutions in that country needed expensive involvement for 20 years. The myth was that to see the Taliban and al-Qaeda defeated, the NATO allies were required more than ever on the ground in Afghanistan.

Similarly, Russia is entering another Afghanistan-like quagmire, but by providing Ukraine with state-of-the-art and Soviet-era weapons, the West runs the risk that hostile forces could capture those same weapons. Mujahedeen-like soldiers in far-flung countries must not use Ukraine's burgeoning arsenal against innocent civilians in other war-torn regions.

While Putin tries to undermine the liberal rules-based international order, the West's united stance, including the imposition of sanctions that have hurt Europe and North American pocketbooks, proclaims that might is not right; great powers cannot act as they see fit. International law and an interconnected world economy can no longer tolerate the absorption of sovereign states by a greater power.

However, fully isolating a great power like Russia can be risky because Russian leaders need face-saving measures to extricate themselves from foreseeable military losses. The danger is that Russians rally behind autocratic leaders;

their lack of access to media outlets means too many misinterpret the invasion as a purge of Nazi remnants.

Condemnably, Putin might threaten the use of tactical weapons to signal resolve; but the American leadership is also negotiating on the international stage as if nuclear use still is credible and useable. The U.S. plans to spend \$1-trillion over the next 30 years to modernize its nuclear weapons: its air, land, and sea strategic nuclear triad. U.S. President Joseph Biden agreed to—and the U.S. Congress has recently endorsed—a defence budget for the 2022 fiscal year in the range of US\$813-billion (C\$1.04-trillion).

Democrats and Republicans supported their defence budget and in the maelstrom around the Ukraine war, it was hardly noticed by observers that the United States is endorsing a call for spending on the military that nearly reaches US\$1-trillion a year on a yearly basis.

Canada, along with other middle powers, should spearhead a call for the U.S. and Russia to return to the arms control table; negotiate limits on their nuclear arsenals; and deescalate provocative conventional postures. For the past 70 years, NATO, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe were the bedrock of security in Europe, creating an environment in which freedom and democracy thrived.

The UN General Assembly resolution that condemned Russia entailed 141 nations united in opposition to Russia. Only five voted no, and 35 abstained. By attacking the territory of a sovereign country, Russia violated international law, and it is violating international humanitarian law in the ongoing war, as China and India need to acknowledge.

Like U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [should endorse Marshall Plan 2.0](#)—an agreement among nations not only to rearm,

but also to rebuild Ukraine—once a ceasefire is negotiated by the UN (and agreed upon by all warring parties). Marshall Plan 2.0 might also prevent more Ossetia's and Georgia's in Russia's Near Abroad, slow the establishment of a new Central Front in Europe, and ensure more countries refrain from acquiring nuclear arsenals.

Erika Simpson is a professor of international politics at Western University, the president of the Canadian Peace Research Association, and the co-author of How to De-escalate Dangerous Nuclear Weapons and Force Deployments in Europe (forthcoming International Journal).

The Hill Times