involvement in world affair) countries such as Great Britain and France were finding it difficult to respond decisively to the aggressive actions of the revisionist powers of the interwar period.[14] Canada declared war on Nazi Germany on September 10, 1939 only seven days after Great Britain's declaration, and before the US decided to join in the Second World War effort. Some 42,000 Canadian were killed in that war and, like as in the previous war, Canada's contribution to the war effort was disporportionate to a country of its size and stature.

Once the US joined the Allied powers in entering the war, Europe no longer remained the only part of Canada's strategic perimeter. It would take one specific action to bring home this fact – i.e. the suprise attack on Pearl Habour by the Japanese. That act demonstrated the extent to which the war was no longer distant from North American shores. By the end of World War II the strategic threat to Canada and to North America became increasingly evident as the US and the Soviet Union emerged from the war as two global superpowers and became locked in the comprehensive ideological, geopolitical, military, and international struggle which we call the Cold War. This Cold War environment defined international politics for Canada and for most of the rest of the world. Indeed, Canadian foreign and defence policy during this period cannot be fully explained without an understanding of how the Cold War environment affected and limited Canada's external actions.

The Cold War created an environment of insecurity, on the one hand, and of precarious stability, on the other. All peoples, from every country, lived under the fear of the possibility of a global nuclear war as the security dilemma produced an escalating nuclear arms race between the the Americans and the Soviets. Luckily, the Cold War never became a hot war, although there is now evidence to suggest that the world came dangerously close to that scenario. Instead of using their military capabilities directly against each other, the US and the USSR engaged in proxy wars and maintained a precarious bipolar balance of power arrangement through threats and counter threats from the armed camps of NATO and the WARSAW pact, and through military doctrines such as mutual assured destruction (MAD) and nuclear deterrence, and by developing a number of security regimes. For Canada, the Cold War became the context or backdrop in developing its postwar security policy.

Canadian Security Policy and NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) became the central forum within which Canada's defence and foreign policy was formulated during the Cold War era.[15] Canada was one of the original signatories to the Washington Treaty that created NATO in 1949 and played a significant role in negotiating the text.[16] Canada also actively supported the move to transform the NATO alliance "from its original juridical form of a guarantee pact, with limited institutional arrangements for allied consultations, into an integrated military and political structure." To demonstrate its commitment to the defence of Europe, Canada provided substantial land and air forces to the alliance in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. That strong commitment receeded under the Trudeau administration, and even further by the Mulroney government in 1992 when financial exigencies forced Canada to withdraw its military units from Europe.[17]

Nonetheless, during the Cold War, the Canadian government demonstrated by its commitments to NATO that a forward defence in Europe was directly linked to Canada's own security interests at home. By buying into the NATO alliance's philosophy, the Canadian