

Armed to the teeth: The case for foreign aid

Does increased security spending increase security?



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On February 22, President Trump proposed a US\$54 billion increase in defence and security spending. This increase will come, in part, from a reported 37 per cent cut to the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) - the country's foreign aid body. Currently, foreign aid makes up 1 per cent of the US federal budget and 2 per cent of the Canadian federal budget. With President Trump's announcement, Canada is in a position to respond to significant changes in the international aid sphere.

“Whether our task is fighting poverty, stemming the spread of disease or saving innocent lives from mass murder, we have seen that we cannot succeed without the leadership of the strong and the engagement of all.”

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

When discussing the proposed increase in defence spending, President Trump cited the importance of a robust military to ensure the security of the American public. His rationale, however, is not without dispute. There is a strong argument to be made that national security depends, in large part, on international peace and stability.

Over 120 retired U.S. generals and admirals made just this argument in a letter to Congress, stating that “development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way.” When governments and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), like **Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR)**, address climate change, gender inequity, food and water scarcity, poor access to healthcare, and compromised opportunities for youth, they are, in effect, contributing to national and global security infrastructures.

Examples of the importance of these programs abound, among them the Arab Spring. These uprisings were driven not only by political and economic stressors, but, also, by



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hunger and compromised livelihoods. The first Syrians to protest against Bashar Al-Assad included many poor farmers who had been displaced by drought and the government's destruction of infrastructure and irrigation systems. Protesters in Tunisia brandished baguettes, while in Egypt, revolutionary chants demanded, “Bread, freedom, and social justice”.

Institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Security Council, make cases for increased youth employment and gender equity as crucial to preventing conflict. And USAID reports that when 10 per cent more girls attend school, a country's GDP increases by an average of 3 per cent, leading to greater economic and social stability. Militarized responses, on the other hand, address symptoms rather than root causes, and alone, are insufficient in responding to increasingly complex and interwoven cultures and nations.

Prime Minister Trudeau seems to agree that strong development indicators are critical to peace and security. In September of last year, he traveled to Africa promising to “strengthen relations with our African partners and advance issues, such as the rights of women and girls, gender equality, health and peace and security.”

A commitment to foreign aid ensures that future generations will inherit a more peaceful and stable world. With President Trump's proposed budget changes, Canadian INGOs like **CPAR** are looking towards Prime Minister Trudeau and Canadian citizens to help promote the universal values of peace, democracy, and social progress.

To learn more about **CPAR** please visit us at www.cpar.ca or call 1-800-263-2727.

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