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# Money Better Spent

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## Money better spent

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President Donald Trump is proposing to increase U.S. defence spending to \$603 billion annually. The U.S. already spends twice as much as China and Russia put together — \$215 billion and \$69.2

billion respectively, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which monitors worldwide defence spending based on open sources.

SIPRI estimates the world's entire military expenditure at US\$1.7 trillion last year, equivalent to 2.2 per cent of global GDP or \$227 per person.

If Trump's budget passes, his proposed hike would push the U.S. military budget up by 10 per cent. Last year China, the world's second-largest military spender, increased its defence budget by 5.4 per cent.

To cover increases to military spending, Trump plans to drastically cut domestic aid programs, foreign aid, medicare and environmental regulations. His budget cuts are already adversely affecting many international organizations.

Americans are more willing to spend government money on defence compared to other priorities. The U.S. military's share of government spending hovers around 9.4 per cent, while Canada, Finland, France, Germany, and Hungary earmark 2.4 per cent of government spending for defence.

It's a classic guns-or-butter debate that tells us a lot about priorities and the kind of society people want to live in.

Now Trump is blasting NATO allies for not spending enough on defence. On his first foreign trip, he pressured many NATO leaders to double their defence spending to two per cent of their country's GDP.

Canada's defence spending had been around 1.1 per cent of GDP since 2011 but under the Trudeau government it has fallen to one per cent. During the Cold War, it was at its highest at 7.4 per cent in 1953, but since 1991, has hovered between 1.1 to 1.8 per cent of GDP.

When spending is expressed as a percentage of GDP, we look like laggards, but if we look at per capita defence spending, Canada ranks higher because of our small population. Last year Canadians spent about US\$417 per person. Still, Americans spent \$1,886 — a four-to-one differential that has stayed fairly constant since 1990.

Canada's defence budget in 2016-17 is \$18 billion, but with the defence review have been made public by Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan Wednesday, the Liberals are promising it will go much higher. Spending would double over the next decade, including new 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.

On his first foreign trip, the U.S. president weakened a long-held commitment to Article 5 of NATO's 1949 Washington Treaty — which declares an attack against one member-country is considered an attack against all. By seeming not to endorse the alliance's fundamental premise, he incited widespread confusion and despair.

Europe's aging population — many of whom suffered through the Second World War and are now pressured by history's worst humanitarian refugee crisis — do not want to increase defence budgets, purchase more conventional weapons, and modernize NATO's tactical nuclear weapons.

But the U.S. plans to spend \$1 trillion over the next 30 years to modernize its air, land and sea triad of nuclear weapons.

Taken together with Trump's shocking disavowal of the Paris climate agreement, Trump is acting more like a unilateralist — an isolationist — and a bully.

Countries like Germany, France and Canada must continue to pursue multilateral and co-operative agendas.

Chrystia Freeland, the minister of global affairs, is thinking strategically about how to honour Canada's multilateral commitments without directly criticizing Trump. As a member of more international organizations than any other country in the world, Canada needs to continue to have a seat at the table during NATO negotiations as well as in other important European forums.

The corridors of NATO and the G-7 are full of diplomats from all over the world who are committed to multilateralism. These international institutions are not obsolete, although NATO's out-of-area wars in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Libya have been expensive and problematic, and Russian President Vladimir Putin's pull-out from the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction was a serious setback.

On the same inaugural foreign trip, Trump sealed an arms deal with Saudi Arabia worth US\$350 billion over 10 years. The Saudis are the largest per capita spenders in the world at a rate of \$1,978 per person. Canada is also profiting from Saudi profligacy through a C\$15-billion deal to build light armoured vehicles for the Saudi government, a deal that negotiated under the Harper regime and was endorsed by the Trudeau government.

Isn't it time for the U.S. and Canada to consider devoting 0.7 per cent of GDP to development and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals? The noble goal recommended by former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson is being honoured by the Scandinavian countries and the UK. If we were to spend more on development and the environment on an annual basis, North America's security might be better enhanced and terrorism more effectively fought.

*Erika Simpson teaches international politics in the department of political science at Western University and is the author of NATO and the Bomb. These comments are based on her contribution to a panel on Trump and NATO that was featured on TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin on June 1, 2017.*

*Brantford Expositor, "A better use for the money", available at*

<http://www.brantfordexpositor.ca/2017/06/09/simpson-investing-in-sustainable-development-and-environment-may-do-more-for-north-american-security-than-military-increases>

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*Chatham Daily News*<http://www.chathamdailynews.ca/2017/06/09/simpson-investing-in-sustainable-development-and-environment-may-do-more-for-north-american-security-than-military-increases>

*Digital and print readership: 4,932*

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<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/kingston-whig-standard/20170612/281560880774070>

*Digital and print readership: 17,085*

*-see hard copy, page A5, above the fold with large picture*

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*Pembroke Daily Observer (around Ottawa)*

<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/the-daily-observer/20170610>

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*Sarnia Observer*

<http://www.theobserver.ca/2017/06/09/simpson-investing-in-sustainable-development-and-environment-may-do-more-for-north-american-security-than-military-increases>

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<http://www.stthomastimesjournal.com/2017/06/09/simpson-investing-in-sustainable-development-and-environment-may-do-more-for-north-american-security-than-military-increases>

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*The Sun Times (Owen Sound), “Money better spent”*

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