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Increased security spending doesn't mean increased defence spending

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While Canada should be upgrading its contributions to international peace and security, there are at least three reasons why such measures should not take the form of defence spending increases:

- Canadian defence spending in absolute terms is already substantial by global, rather than US, standards;
- Post-Cold War spending on key non-military contributions to international peace and security has been subjected to deeper cuts than has defence spending; and
- The pre-eminent threats to international peace and security cannot for the most part be mitigated by increased military prowess.

Canada and global military spending patterns

Canada's current defence budget is just over \$12 billion. That puts Canada in the top 10 per cent of military spenders worldwide. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) lists the defence spending of 160 countries in 2001, with Canada ranked at 16 (pp. 277-282). The former US Arms Control and Disarmament, in its last report (1998), used 1997 figures to rank Canada 16th from the top of a list of 167 countries (and 6th from the top in military spending per soldier). The International Institute of Strategic

Studies (IISS) in London ranks Canada as the 7th highest military spender of NATO's 19 member states (within the top third of non-US members). In a list of 46 European and North American states, IISS ranks Canada as 8th from the top – in other words, Canada ranks within the top 20 per cent (IISS 2001, pp. 299-303).

In terms of the personnel strength of the armed forces (regular military personnel), IISS ranks Canada 11th out of 19 in NATO, and 17th out of 46 in Europe/North America (pp. 299-303).

Canadian military spending peaked in the early 1990s, and since then it has dropped by about 14 per cent. However, that decade of declines was preceded by a decade of substantial increases, about 40 per cent after inflation, in the 1980s (from \$10 billion in 1980 to over \$14 billion in 1990 in constant 2001 dollars) (Project Ploughshares 2002b, pp. 20-21). Thus, today Canadian military spending remains about 25 per cent above what it was in 1980, just before the major increases that followed the election of Ronald Reagan and a US-led surge in global military spending.

The Canadian spending pattern mirrors global trends. Worldwide, military spending increased dramatically in the Reagan years, and then went down in the 1990s. SIPRI reports a global decline

of 11 per cent from 1992 to 2000 (p. 225). The Canadian decline in the same period was 12 per cent. The charge that Canada's military spending has shrunk to unconscionably low levels relative to the rest of the world simply does not stand up to scrutiny.

The one measure by which Canadian military spending has ranked well below the global average over the past several decades is as a proportion of Gross National Income (GNI). Measuring spending in relation to GNI is relevant when the principle is one of ability-to-pay. In official development assistance (ODA), for example, wealthy states have a responsibility to contribute to global economic development according to their capacity. But in military spending, the point is not ability-to-pay, but an assessment of national and international security needs; and it would be hard to argue convincingly that international peace and security are threatened by a dearth of global military capacity. To the extent that Canadians regard NATO as a primary bulwark against security threats, they should be reminded that NATO alone accounts for about 60 per cent of all military spending globally. For Canada to add even \$2 or \$3 billion annually, as some suggest, to NATO's \$500 billion annual budget could not credibly be construed as adding to global security.

In absolute levels of military spending, Canada is well above the global average. Whether that money is being spent wisely is quite another question. Is it really buying the most relevant and effective contribution that Canada should be making to international peace and security?¹ Should some of that money, as well as new money, be devoted to funding other, non-military, contributions to international peace and security?

Spending cuts to non-military peace and security measures

During the 1990s, the period during which Canadian military spending declined by 14 per cent, ODA spending declined by 31 per cent (CCIC 2002). The 1990s were also the decade in which Canada elaborated ideas of human security and peacebuilding, adding sharply to the development agenda and to the range of initiatives that ODA should be supporting.

Human security and peacebuilding are based on

two fundamental insights. The first is that the security and well-being of persons where they live and work finally depends much more on the economic, social, and political conditions in their home communities than on the military prowess of their central governments. The second is that the kind of local and regional armed conflict that the international community has become especially aware of since the end of the Cold War is much less likely to be controlled and significantly reduced by more arms or military intervention than by economic, social, and political measures to build the conditions of sustainable peace. That makes human development (a term that must include, in its widest sense, economic equity, human rights, democracy, and a sustainable physical environment) a vital strategic interest – a global strategic imperative that requires a major infusion of new resources. It is above all a prevention agenda and is as relevant to the terrorist threat as it is to regional armed conflict.

Unfortunately, while Canada was actively leading the international community toward political recognition of the centrality of human security and peacebuilding to global security, Canada was also cutting funding of such measures much more radically than it was cutting military spending – cuts that also undermined our capacity in diplomacy and international political engagement.

Canadian arms control and disarmament efforts and capacity also took a hit.

The Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security was another early victim. The Trudeau-legacy institute, subsequently shut down by the Mulroney Government, was intended to build Canadian expertise in disarmament affairs, conflict prevention, and related peace and security efforts.

An example within the Foreign Affairs Department was the termination of the internationally recognized Verification Research Unit (VRU). This Unit housed a team of technical experts who combined technical/scientific expertise with diplomacy to develop international capacity for, and confidence in, independent verification of arms control agreements. The team, disbanded as part of the Government's cost-cutting measures, was internationally respected and made an important contribution to the transformation of arms control verification from an excuse not to

reach agreements (because verification was claimed to be unreliable) into a sound basis for agreements (as the technical reliability of verification was increasingly demonstrated by centres like Canada's VRU).

Controlling arms, resolving conflicts, and peacebuilding are resource- and skill-intensive activities central to the pursuit of human security, and they must be front and centre when Canada contemplates upgrading its contributions to international peace and security.

Responding to contemporary threats to security

Responsible attention to contemporary security threats must include re-examination of traditional military capacity for its relevance to the way in which people actually experience insecurity. Just as urgent is the need to define non-military avenues for enhancing the real, day-to-day security of people in their homes and communities.

On the military side, the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), in its report (IDRC 2001), built on the urgent international imperative that there must be "no more Rwandas," identifying the protection of vulnerable civilians as a basic obligation of the international community. The Commission recognized the now obvious reality that the most immediate threats to the security of people come in the form of unmet basic needs, social and political disintegration, and attendant escalating violence. The urgent need to provide protection to people caught in these circumstances is reflected in the title of its report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, and the commission included conflict prevention and post-conflict rebuilding efforts in its recommendations.

Its primary focus, however, was on the role of military intervention in protecting civilians. In the process, the Commission posited a specialized military role between traditional peacekeeping and even more traditional war-fighting: "The challenge in this context is to find tactics and strategies of military intervention that fill the current gulf between outdated concepts of peacekeeping and full-scale military operations that may have deleterious impacts on civilians" (p. 5). The commission envisioned military interventions to protect vulnerable civilians as restrained

operations that are "not a war to defeat a state but an operation to protect populations in that state from being harassed, persecuted or killed"(p. 63).

The implementation of that protection mandate awaits extensive exploration of the military doctrines, rules of engagement, training, and equipment appropriate to that role, and any move to add to or reconfigure Canada's own military capabilities should include a thorough review of Canadian policies and priorities with regard to Canada's contributions to protecting the vulnerable in particular, as well as to international peace and security in general. Yet, Defence Minister John McCallum has been reluctant to commit to a comprehensive review of Defence policy. In his first major policy speech, to the Toronto Board of Trade in October, he did commit to restructuring, with the "overall aim ... to redirect resources away from areas that are no longer essential and towards capabilities that will be needed in the future"(McCallum 2002, p. 5). That is a sound principle, but it begs the question that only a thorough and public review can answer – how do we define and prioritize future needs? Without further clarity on that question there should be no infusions of new funds for the Department of National Defence.

In the meantime, on the non-military side, there are widely agreed and urgent peace and security requirements. The United Nations Millennium Declaration identifies "Millennium Goals" in disarmament, development, and poverty eradication that are essential to building sustainable peace. "Every step taken towards reducing poverty and achieving broad-based economic growth," says UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "is a step towards conflict prevention"(p. 45). The Declaration recognizes that armed conflict is rooted in a broad range of circumstances and conditions, but identifies disarmament, including "preventive" arms control, along with economic development, respect for human rights and minority rights, and inclusive political arrangements (democracy) as essential components of international peace and security.

Global implementation of the Millennium Goals, according to the Secretary-General, requires an additional annual increase in ODA of US\$50 billion. The Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) calculates that Canada's

share, based on our ability-to-pay relative to the rest of the donor community, would be an additional \$2.5 billion a year – and even if we were to meet that obligation (representing roughly a doubling of current Canadian ODA), we would still be well short of meeting the Canadian-supported UN ODA target of .7 per cent of gross national income from each donor country.

States on the bottom half of the human security index are three times as likely to suffer from widespread internal armed conflict as are states in the top half (Project Ploughshares 2002a). In other words, development is another name for conflict prevention and thus security. Funding development is funding peace and security, and since defence must draw from the same fiscal pot as development and other non-military approaches to security, Canadian policy-makers have some tough choices to make. The most imminent and widespread threats to the security of people do not come from threats of military attacks but from internal political and social disintegration in underdeveloped states. A rational response to that reality, and a concrete contribution to the peace and security of people, would be to use some of the US\$800 billion-plus the world now spends on military priorities each year to augment the roughly US\$60 billion it spends annually on ODA.

Disarmament is another international security measure that will require increased funding from Canada. For example, a major source of instability and insecurity is the diffusion of small arms and light weapons within regions of political instability. The 2001 UN conference on the same theme articulated an extensive program of action, and the key to its implementation is money. Funds are urgently required for gun collection programs, for the social and economic reintegration of former combatants back into society, for the training and reform of police forces charged with dealing with illicit gun use, for the destruction of surplus stocks, and for a host of other measures agreed to by Canada along with all the other participating states (virtually all UN member states).

Gaining control of small arms is just one part of the challenge of cleaning up after the profligate weapons spending of the Cold War. Of particular urgency and relevance to Canadian peace and security priorities must be a multi-faceted response to the Cold War's nuclear weapons legacy. Among

the requirements are resources for environmental clean-up of nuclear weapons manufacturing sites, the dismantling of nuclear weapons along with the management and storage of recovered nuclear materials (including preventing their being diverted to non-state terrorist use), and the completion of the nuclear disarmament agenda mandated by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Specific programs, with identifiable price tags, need to become central to Canada's peace and security agenda. For example, at the G8 Summit Canada already committed itself to significant political and financial support for the "Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction," a program initially focused on Russia and some of its former Soviet partners, designed to destroy chemical weapons, dismantle nuclear weapons and submarines, dispose of fissile materials, and employ former weapons scientists to reduce the risk of their recruitment for clandestine nuclear weapons programs. Another example is the International Atomic Energy Agency's requirement for increased resources to meet its obligations related to the implementation of nuclear safeguards and especially its new mandate to combat nuclear terrorism. Then there is the matter of verifying implementation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, once it comes into force, and verifying the voluntary testing moratorium in the meantime. While Canada is already contributing to the international monitoring system to detect nuclear explosions, it is a commitment that should grow and must be sustained indefinitely.

Re-shaping Canadian security spending

The above are all essential contributions to international peace and security, and our willingness to meet those obligations and commitments is at least as important to international peace and security as is our level of military spending. The current public debate has focused all attention on boosting a vaguely defined military capability, but enhanced security through development, human rights and democratic governance, environmental protection, and arms control and disarmament needs significantly enhanced attention as Canadians decide the shape and size of their security dollar.

Canada has the capacity and the duty to expand its

contribution to international peace and security, but it is imperative that increased security spending does not simply get translated into formulaic increases in military spending – especially military spending increases not guided by a thorough re-assessment of the basic international roles and functions of Canada’s armed forces.

1 While defence policy and spending also involved the defence of North America and Canadian sovereignty, the focus here is on international peace and security.

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Project Ploughshares is an ecumenical agency of the Canadian Council of Churches, formed to implement the churches’ imperative to pursue peace and justice. The mandate given to Project Ploughshares is to work with churches and related organizations, as well as governments and non-governmental organizations, in Canada and abroad, to identify, develop, and advance approaches that build peace and prevent war, and promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict.

“and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4)