

## Opinion



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, right, at Ādaži Military Base together with the President of Latvia Egils Levits, left, Canada's Minister of Defence Anita Anand and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on March 8, 2022. Stoltenberg is calling for 'major investments' from NATO partners as it draws up plans for a significantly larger long-term deployment of Western forces in Eastern Europe. Photograph courtesy of NATO/Flickr

went after her for down-playing military power.

Obviously, the cabinet is split, and the defence establishment, blatantly beating the drum for more money, is bearing down on Prime Minister Trudeau. Whether he can stand up to the NATO bosses when he attends the NATO summit in Brussels in a few days is a big question. The NATO leadership is currently drawing up plans for a significantly larger long-term deployment of Western forces in Eastern Europe. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg is calling for "major investments." The real winners here are the arms manufacturers, who, as U.S. defence expert William Hartung pointed out, stand to make "tens of billions of dollars, which is no small thing, even for these big companies."

Canada already spends 20 times more on its military than diplomacy. The government's present plans to spend \$553-billion on defence in the next 20 years, for fighter jets and warships, dwarfs our contribution to the UN's sustainable development programs. Canada clings to NATO, but NATO's policies are increasingly outmoded.

The UN, hobbled by the veto system, which enabled Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, to literally get away with murder, also needs reforming. But the vision of the UN to build the conditions for peace is a far better approach than strengthening an already-bloated NATO.

Canada alone cannot be blamed for the aggrandizement of NATO, but, as an important middle power, can help to change

# War in Ukraine has placed the West at a crossroads: pursue war or peace?

Canada is made to feel like a laggard because the \$22-billion we're already spending annually on defence falls short of NATO's magic number of two per cent of GDP (Canada is at 1.39 per cent).

Once again, the powerful voices calling for more money for the military have far more resonance in the media and Parliament than those advocating stronger political and economic measures to build the conditions for peace.

Clearly, the present political system that relies so heavily on seeking peace through military strength has failed—again—tragically, as the heart-wrenching photos of innocent people slaughtered and uprooted in Ukraine show.

Of course, the Russian invasion must be repelled, but the failed political system that led to the Ukraine disaster must be exposed. The suffering in Ukraine has touched a raw nerve in the West. Will we learn from this terrible experience?

Human security today does not come from the barrel of a gun. It comes from preventive planning. At the end of the Cold War, the world had a marvellous chance to overhaul the international system to head off the rise of future despots. The UN Secretary-General at the time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was commissioned by the Security Council to write *An Agenda for Peace*, which called for new structures to solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. Such steps would include disarming the previously warring parties, the destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, training security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing the protection of human rights, and reforming government institutions. He asked for a \$1-billion UN peace endowment fund to finance the initial cost of new conflict resolution measures.

The publication of *An Agenda for Peace* launched an extended debate. While the smaller states liked it, the major states saw it as an encroachment on their sovereignty. The move to build new peace structures fizzled out. Boutros-Ghali was denied a second term, and NATO start-

ed to enlarge. Defence budgets climbed, and today, governments spend \$2-trillion annually on arms. The UN, though valiantly expanding its humanitarian programs, was deliberately weakened in carrying out its primary mission of maintaining the peace and security of the world.

Ukraine has brought us to another crossroads for humanity. Which path will we choose now: put more resources into building human security to prevent war, or build anew the modern means of warfare in a misguided effort to keep the peace?

The current UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has produced a successor to the *Agenda for Peace*. It is called *Our Common Agenda*. It is a blueprint for dealing with the enormous risks facing humanity today ranging from the prolonged pandemic and climate deterioration to a renewed nuclear arms race and the new move into cyber warfare. In short, Guterres is calling for a serious effort to improve global governance, manage risks and safeguard the global commons and global public goods. He wants a Summit of the Future, to be held in 2023 at which states would plan together joint steps to build peace.

This requires a common vision of peace and security in the face of new threats and vulnerabilities. Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly tried to widen the discussion by suggesting that Canada, in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, should step up its aid and diplomacy. "We're a middle-sized power and what we're good at is convening and making sure that diplomacy is happening, and meanwhile convincing other countries to do more," she said. Immediately, hard-line generals



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly has suggested that in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, Canada should step up its aid and diplomacy, but received criticism for the remark from hard-line generals who said she was down-playing military power. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

the climate of thinking about a better way to build new security arrangements. Prime Minister Trudeau should invite Secretary General Guterres to Ottawa to explain to Canadians the greater value to be obtained by investing in the programs of *Our Common Agenda*.

A slight glimmer of hope about future thinking for peace is offered by a new organization, Coalition for the UN We Need, a consortium of 3,300 civil society groups in 110 countries working on programs to advance *Our Common Agenda*. The co-ordinator of the coalition is Fergus Watt, a Canadian, and the Canadian Pugwash Group and Project Ploughshares are members. The people who work on these programs do not have guns.

Douglas Roche is a former Senator and author.

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Human security today does not come from the barrel of a gun, it comes from preventive planning. As a middle power, Canada should encourage its NATO allies to think about a better way to build global security.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—It's a safe bet Canada's defence spending will get a huge boost in the federal budget soon to be presented to Parliament. Defence Minister Anita Anand, reeling from the demands of the Ukraine war, is openly campaigning for more money and will present "aggressive options" to boost spending to cabinet.

The NATO leadership is demanding more resources, and