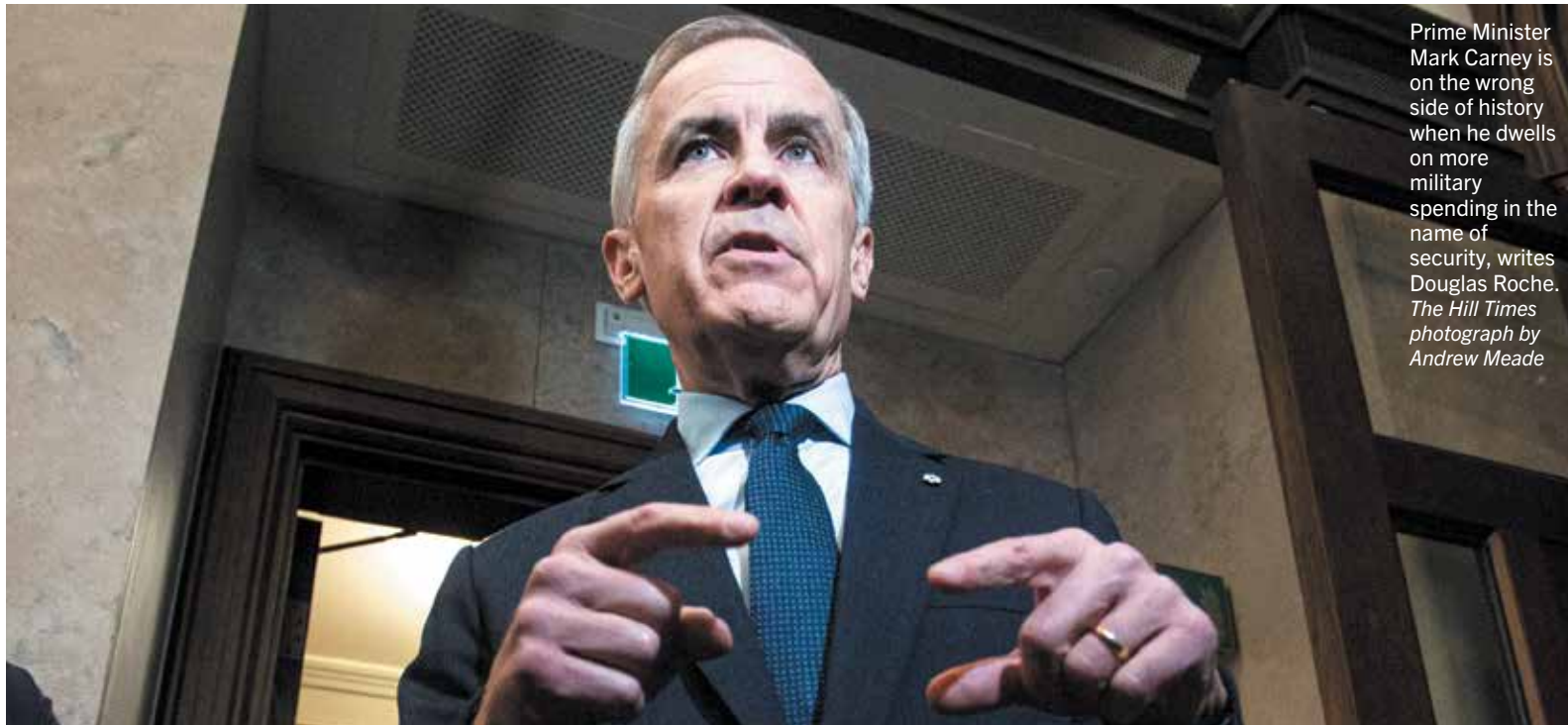


Diplomacy now plays second fiddle to Canada's voracious military



Prime Minister Mark Carney is on the wrong side of history when he dwells on more military spending in the name of security, writes Douglas Roche. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Mark Carney, who revealed himself as a man of conscience on his way to the Prime Minister's Office, now needs to push back against the militarists demanding never-ending increases in defence spending and start pushing the UN's agenda for peace.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—It is a regrettable juxtaposition that Prime Minister Mark Carney's triumphal announcement that Canada is now spending two per cent of its GDP on defence came in the same week that United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned, "The world is staring down the barrel of a wider war, a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock," and Pope Leo lamented that the death and pain caused by today's wars "are a scandal for the entire human family, and a cry that rises to God."

The air is filled with war, the tragedies of war, and preparations for more war.

There is no doubt that Carney is riding a wave of public opinion supporting the government's jump to \$63-billion for defence



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this fiscal year. Canada does face real pressures: Russian aggression, rising Arctic vulnerability, instability in Europe and the Middle East, and the growing unpredictability of the United States. But recognizing those dangers does not require accepting militarization as the primary expression of Canadian leadership.

Carney is on the wrong side of history when he dwells on more military spending in the name of security. He is misleading the Canadian people by pointing to more military equipment as the way to increase this country's influence in the new groupings of nations trying to fend off the political and eco-



Pope Leo recently lamented that the death and pain caused by today's wars 'are a scandal for the entire human family, and a cry that rises to God.' Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

nommic coercion of U.S. President Donald Trump.

It is not a stronger military that will enable Canada to be heard in the councils of peace, rather it is raising our voice and diplomatic work to exercise a rising global conscience against war. It is not Trump's zeal for militarism Canada should be imitating, rather it is the secretary-general's and the pope's pleas to save humanity by addressing the root causes of conflict and strengthening international law.

What happened to the Canada that invented peacekeeping, created the Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty, developed the International Criminal Court,



UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned, 'The world is staring down the barrel of a wider war, a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock.' Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

and stayed out of the infamous 2003 Iraq war? I find it shocking that the Carney government is actually imposing a 20-per-cent cut in this year's budget for Global Affairs Canada, charged with implementing his vision of middle-power countries forging a new consensus for a more equitable world, yet posting unheard of sums for the military. Contrast the \$7-billion Global Affairs receives with the \$63-billion for the Defence department: that's nine times greater.

Diplomacy is now second fiddle to the voracious military, despite Foreign Minister Anita Anand's protestations at Chatham House in London that it is

this country's "mission" to provide leadership that benefits the world and "this is our moment to lead." The contradictions in Canada's priorities are puzzling.

Canada is accused of being a "laggard" because it has taken so long to reach the two per cent NATO target. This charge is a canard. Even before Carney's announcement, Canada was the seventh highest spender by volume in the 32-nation NATO. Moreover, our country, with one-half of one per cent of the world's population, ranks 16th in world military spending.

Some laggard.

Carney claims that our economy will be greatly strengthened by forthcoming military production and, therefore, domestic benefits are an important reason to make the quantum jump in the defence budget. However, economic studies in both the U.S. and the United Kingdom show that defence expenditure is among the least effective forms of government spending for economic growth. Economists at the University of Massachusetts found that a billion dollars spent on a variety of domestic priorities—mass transit, green energy, education, and health care—would each produce more jobs than the same amount spent on the military.

Of course, Canada needs a military force, particularly to strengthen the ever-vulnerable Arctic, but following Trump's imperious demands for huge jumps in military spending—the goal is now five per cent of GDP by 2035—will wreck havoc on Canada's health, education, housing, and other social needs.

For all his talk of values on the way into office, Carney has instead made a virtue out of pragmatism in promoting his new credo: "values-based realism." I don't really know what that means except perhaps as the basis for his quick statement of support when the U.S. and Israel struck Iran in contravention to the UN Charter.

The global conscience, which shows up not just in religious efforts, but in the struggle to regain a standing for international law and norms, is best expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. Building up the sustainable development of peace, as outlined in the UN's *The Pact for the Future*, is a surer route to stability in the world than following the demands of NATO.

The world is now in a truly epic struggle of the consciences of untold millions of people who reject war and all its trappings versus the power structures of the world. Carney, who revealed himself as a man of conscience on his way to the Prime Minister's Office, now needs to push back against the militarists demanding never-ending increases in defence spending and start pushing the UN's agenda for peace.

It takes courage to lead political processes of dialogue to strengthen international law today. Carney must show that courage.

Douglas Roche is a former Canadian Senator whose forthcoming book is *Discovering Mark Carney in a Chaotic World*.

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