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Toronto Star-Letter to the Editor

India can afford its military budget

Priorities all wrong

Letter, Oct. 15.

Syed Ahmed suggests that India and Pakistan should scrap their weapons and spend money on the poor. While I applaud Ahmed's humanitarian vision, it must be pointed out that India and Pakistan are in very different situations.

According to the American State Department, India's military expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product is 2.5% per cent, which is far lower than its neighboring adversaries as well as most nations. By contrast, Pakistan spends 5.8 per cent and China 4.1 per cent. Furthermore, unlike Pakistan, India has enjoyed one of the highest economic growth rates in the world for the last decade, driven by its booming automotive parts, software and pharmaceutical industries. Pakistan by contrast is a military dictatorship with minimal industrialization, negligible foreign investment and home base to thousands of domestic and imported fundamentalists from Kashmir and Afghanistan.

It is extremely misleading to lump these two nations together. India can well afford its modest military budget; Pakistan clearly cannot.

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