



# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Policy Briefs 2024

## Rethinking Security: No Justice, No Peace

*Inspired by the gospel and Maryknoll missionaries' commitment to stand with vulnerable communities around the world, we offer See-Judge-Act briefs as resources on the intersection of global policy and Catholic social thought.*

### See

Current events call into question traditional approaches to security. A national security paradigm based on military defense has repeatedly failed to bring about just peace, and cannot keep us safe from pandemics, [food insecurity](#), or [climate change](#). When communities in other countries suffer from these disasters, we feel the effects at home, too: migrants flee to our borders, violent conflict erupts over scarce resources, pandemics bring death and hardship, and the changing climate impacts us all.

The very notion of "[national security](#)" places undue emphasis on preparedness for war. Budget appropriation debates present national security, or defense, as one concern, vying for funds against global health initiatives, international development and humanitarian aid, and diplomacy. "Homeland Security" and border protection are promoted as national security concerns, while environmental regulations and public health initiatives are not.

Multipolar geopolitics and global phenomena like climate change, pandemics, and mass migration remind us that our own security is bound up with that of people in other countries and that promoting true security requires an integrated approach. Addressing the interrelated issues that threaten human security – from ethnic conflict to food insecurity, threats to health and to the environment, poverty and lack of essential freedoms – requires an approach that is proactive, cooperative, and nonviolent.

Through constant preparations for war, the national security model fails both by heightening tensions between nations and by draining resources that could otherwise be invested in more effective, nonviolent means of building just peace. The United Nations offers "[human security](#)" as an alternative model. But member states continue to employ a national security approach, leading to the "[security dilemma](#)," by which one nation, attempting to increase its security by building up military defenses, prompts other countries to do the same, thereby making everyone less secure.

Meanwhile, research indicates what truly makes people more secure. Societies that are more equal, free,

and democratic are [more resilient](#) to both [conflict and disaster](#). Addressing the root causes of conflict, such as [fragility](#) born of resource scarcity and [extremism](#), can prevent violence and atrocities. Nonviolent tools, from multilateral diplomacy to [unarmed civilian protection](#), effectively decrease violence. Peacebuilding is [more effective](#) and peace [more durable](#) when [women](#) are at the fore. [Nonviolent social movements succeed more often](#) than violent ones and bring about more durable change. By contributing to these efforts around the world, and working with allies and global organizations to build trust and foster dialogue with adversaries, the United States can more effectively collaborate on global health and environmental efforts that make everyone more secure.

### Judge

For decades, Church leaders have advocated for policies that promote nonviolence, dialogue, and cooperation over threats and violence, and directly link human security to development and mutual aid. Over fifty years

### \$\$ Follow the money \$\$

- United States defense and military 2025 budget: **\$895 billion - \$920 billion**, or, depending on how it's calculated, close to **\$1 ½ trillion**.
- Non-military international affairs 2025 budget request: **\$64.4 billion**
- Approved annual spending for Global Fragility Act: \$200 million
- Actual amount allocated by Congress in 2024: **\$135 million**
- Amount Unarmed Civilian Protection advocates request: **\$25 million**
- Amount allocated in 2024: **\$0**

ago, [Pope Paul VI](#) called for the establishment of a “world fund,” through which all countries would set aside a portion of their military budgets for impoverished countries to use toward their own socio-economic development. “Is it not plain to everyone,” he asked, “that such a fund would reduce the need for those other expenditures that are motivated by fear and stubborn pride?”

The prophet Isaiah’s proclamation, “Justice will bring about peace; right will produce calm and security” (Is.32:17), inspired Pope Paul VI’s famous rephrasing: “[If you want peace, work for justice.](#)” Indeed, he did not just connect the two realms, but equated them, calling development “the new name for Peace.” [Catholic social teaching](#) has since then [built upon](#) Paul VI’s insights, urging a [positive, just peace](#) approach that focuses on care for the [common good](#) and integrates social justice, ecological, and other security concerns.

**Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, that we might turn swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks, that nation not lift up sword against nation, and that we train for war no more. Amen.**

Pope Francis follows previous [popes](#) in [emphasizing](#) the [inseparable nature](#) of peace, economics, and the environment, promoting “[integral ecology](#)” and “[integral human development.](#)” In his encyclical, [Fratelli Tutti](#), Francis teaches that “inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible. Indeed, without equal opportunities, different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode.” He describes both war and preparations for war, including military spending and the possession of nuclear weapons even for the purpose of deterrence, as threats to true human security. A Catholic approach to peacebuilding should reflect an integral security approach that builds on positive peace and human security models.

The Holy See puts these teachings into action through diplomacy aimed at “[humanitarian and integral disarmament.](#)” The [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#), a project of [Pax Christi International](#), works closely [with the Vatican](#) to promote a fuller understanding of [nonviolence](#) and just peace.

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## Maryknoll Experience

Maryknoll [Lay Missioner Sami Scott](#) has worked for years in Gros Morne, Haiti, helping foster sustainable jobs and income for her neighbors. In 2024 she was forced to leave due to the threat of street gangs who have taken over large parts of the country. While she anxiously waits to return to her community in Gros Morne, Sami has been working with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns to [stop the flow of guns](#) and ammunition from the United States to criminal gangs in Haiti. [Experts agree](#) that by depriving the gangs of these weapons, security would be improved and Haitians could turn to the crucial work of reconciliation and building a stronger, Haitian-led democracy and economy.

## Act

While most political leaders continue to think in terms of national security, we can seek policy commitments from politicians that move us toward integral security:

- Engage in diplomacy and multilateral processes: Negotiate a replacement for the [New START Treaty](#), support [international climate finance](#), promote meaningful reform at the [United Nations](#).
- [Decrease](#) military [spending](#) and increase funds for nonviolent alternatives and conflict prevention, such as [Unarmed Civilian Protection](#) and the [Global Fragility Act](#).
- When considering candidates’ positions on security, consider also what they are doing to address healthcare inequity, climate change, and [other policies](#) that contribute to human security.