



Foreign Aid = Domestic Gain

President Obama's budget request for fiscal year 2011 contains \$58.5 billion in international affairs spending. At little more than one percent of total federal spending, these programs are an essential, cost-effective tool for promoting American interests abroad and supporting important allies such as Israel, who would receive \$3 billion in vital security assistance under the request.

This sum reflects the third year of a 10-year security agreement reached by the United States and Israel in 2007. Subject to congressional approval, the plan pledges \$30 billion in security assistance to Israel over a 10-year period. This agreement was negotiated in order to meet the growing threats to Israel of a nuclear Iran, rocket attacks by Hamas and Hizballah and conventional threats from Syria.

In fact, Israel is forced to spend more as a percentage of GDP on defense than any other industrialized country in the world (close to 7%)—almost double what the United States spends—and needs to buy more sophisticated and expensive technologies to help defend its citizens. U.S. security assistance to Israel is the most tangible manifestation of American support for Israel and the best way to ensure that Israel maintains a qualitative military edge over its potential adversaries and feels secure in taking risks for peace. Moreover, Israel spends 75 percent of its aid in the United States, supporting American jobs.

President Obama's budget views foreign aid as part of overall "security spending," on par with defense and homeland security programs. The president is right. Foreign aid is an essential, cost-effective tool for promoting American interests abroad and supporting our vital allies. Spending a little more than one penny of every federal dollar on preventing wars and the spread of terrorism, disease and poverty is a wise investment that ultimately saves the taxpayers money. A robust international affairs and foreign aid budget also reflects our humanitarian and democratic values by supporting programs to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and fighting poverty.

Foreign aid is also a crucial component of U.S. national security strategy that advances economic development and political stability around the globe and helps keep threats from our shores by supporting international efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, stopping narcotics trafficking, fighting terrorism and thwarting other criminal activities.

As the threats to Israel's security continue to rise, so does the Jewish state's defense budget. Fortunately, thanks to our shared values, the United States helps support Israel maintain her qualitative military edge, all while helping to promote American interests in the region.