WIN WITHOUT WAR

Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief
Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Refund the WHO

The WHO's not perfect. But Trumpian unilateralism only makes things worse.

The Takeaway:
- Trump's decision to cut funding for the World Health Organization was motivated by a desire to distract from his own failings and scapegoat two of his enemies of choice: multilateral institutions and China.
- The WHO is not without its flaws. Swayed by political pressures and over-reliant on private donations, there is plenty of room for reform.
- But the COVID-19 crisis reveals that we need *more* multilateralism, not less. We must continue funding the WHO and recommit to international cooperation to address global problems.

Donald Trump's decision to defund the World Health Organization (WHO) in the middle of a global pandemic is cruel beyond measure. It's also a blatant attempt to distract from his own failures by stoking nationalist fervor and scapegoating foreign actors. We must not let him succeed.

Global Solutions for Global Problems
The WHO is a vital institution. It coordinates public health measures across countries, monitors and advocates on global health issues, sets norms and best practices, and provides technical support to countries that require assistance. In the face of diseases that know no borders, there is no substitute for an intergovernmental, multilateral body capable of coordinating across borders. The ~$400 million that the United States finances every year is critical to it continuing to provide these vital public goods at a pittance compared to, say, the more than $750 billion (with a B!) the U.S. government spends on warmaking.

The WHO Has its Flaws
There's no doubt that the WHO is imperfect. Early in the COVID-19 outbreak, it uncritically repeated misinformation from the Chinese government, and many have criticized it for being too slow to respond to the 2013 West African Ebola outbreak. As an international body reliant on

contributions and participation from its member countries, the WHO is occasionally guilty of capitulating to political concerns and reliant on information provided by its member governments. The WHO's dependence on private donors like the Gates Foundation is also deeply problematic — subjecting public health decisions to the undemocratic interests of private actors. But on counts of spreading misinformation and exacerbating the spread of COVID-19, the Trump administration is in no place to point fingers. And the fact that the WHO's mistakes have cost lives in no way justifies cutting off funding and endangering countless more.

Trump's Nationalist Scapegoating

Trump's decision was clearly not motivated by legitimate critiques of the WHO's bureaucratic shortcomings, in fact, he initially praised the WHO's handling of the outbreak. Rather, this was an undisguised attack on his favorite target: a "foreign" enemy. From withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council to attacking the legitimacy of the International Criminal Court, multilateral institutions have long been in Trump's crosshairs. China, too, is often a preferred scapegoat. While there is plenty to criticize about the Chinese government's human rights record, the Trump administration — and in fact, many in both parties — have turned the entire country into a bogeyman. In the WHO, Trump saw a perfect combination of two of his chosen enemies, and an opportunity straight from the authoritarian playbook: distract from your own failings by scapegoating foreign actors.

Multilateralism, Now

If the COVID-19 crisis has taught us anything, it's that we can't go it alone. In the 21st century, the greatest threats to human security, from pandemics to the climate crisis, are global in scope. Safety for one country is simply not possible — addressing the threats to our security will require unprecedented levels of international cooperation, particularly with China. If there are failures in an international body, the solution is not to reject that organization altogether but to constructively engage while pushing for much-needed reforms. Trump's self-serving decision to cut funding comes right as the organization is needed most — as we write, over 2.1 million cases have been confirmed and at least 143,175 have died worldwide. We must not let his decision stand. Renewing funding for the WHO is a necessary first step, but we must go even further: the U.S. should rededicate itself to multilateralism on all fronts.

BURIED LEDES

Sanctions on Iran have exacerbated a deadly pandemic. "Maximum pressure" has undermined nuclear nonproliferation efforts. And decades of U.S. antagonism have only strengthened the

hold of the regime. But that didn't stop **Foreign Affairs from running a reprehensible [piece](#) arguing that the U.S. should push for regime change in Iran.**

Win Without War joined the Project on Government Oversight and other partners in a [letter](#) urging the rejection of **the Pentagon's [outrageous request](#) to reverse important parts of a key Defense Department anti-lobbying law**. Are we draining the swamp yet?

In response to the Afghan government's decision to release 300 Taliban prisoners, **the Taliban has released 20 Afghan security personnel** — a [welcome step](#) in a long peace process.

After coronavirus concerns caused delays in military exercises, **North Korea [reportedly](#) launched several short-range, anti-ship cruise missiles earlier this week**.

The Trump administration's irresponsible immigration policies [continue to do serious harm](#) — **Guatemala's health minister says deportations are causing a spike in the coronavirus caseload**. Nearly 75% of passengers tested positive for the virus *on a single flight*.

[In Colombia](#), an increase in violence has threatened the work of humanitarian groups and undermined the country's ability to respond to the pandemic — further proof that we should heed the UN's (and [Win Without War's](#)) calls for a global ceasefire.

As the number of COVID-19 cases rise, so do global temperatures. **2020 is on track to be the hottest year on record**. The United States' National Center for Environmental Information and NASA [confirmed](#) that March was the second-warmest March in recorded history.

And finally — we're feline good about this [Cheetah Cub Cam](#), a live stream that monitors Echo the cheetah and her four newborn cubs.