UNODA Occasional Papers
No. 35, April 2020

Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending

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This publication is available at
www.un.org/disarmament

UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION
Sales No. E.20.IX.4
ISBN 978-92-1-139181-7
eISBN 978-92-1-005037-1

Printed at the United Nations, New York

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Foreword

The United Nations Charter reflects an explicit understanding of the relationship between disarmament and development in its call for the "least diversion of the world's economic and human resources to armaments". Yet despite this longstanding insight, countries have continued to spend more on their militaries, recently bringing global military expenditure to its highest level since the end of the cold war.

Against this backdrop of burgeoning military budgets, the international community has committed to an ambitious plan for tackling our greatest collective challenges.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the inextricable link between peace and development while providing a common framework for Governments, United Nations entities and civil society to take decisive action for a more prosperous and peaceful world. Through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the Agenda sets out a road map to end hunger, protect the planet, achieve gender equality, improve health and more.

Making this vision a reality requires substantial financial investment, and redirecting resources from militaries to economic and social development can make a key contribution. It is estimated that the cost to achieve quality universal primary and early secondary education for all (Goal 4) would barely exceed 3 per cent of global annual military spending, while eliminating extreme poverty and hunger (Goals 1 and 2) would amount to only about 13 per cent of annual military spending.[a] Reinvesting 5 per cent of global military spending would also exceed the initial annual costs of adapting to climate change in developing countries (Goal 13).[b] So little could do so much.

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[a] United Nations (2017) "Disarmament, A Basic Guide", Fourth Edition., s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Basic-Guide-4th-Edition-web1.pdf

[b] Nan Tian, Diego Lopes and Alexandra Kuimova, "Military spending and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", UNODA Occasional Papers, no. 35 (2020).

In tackling the formidable task of bringing the Sustainable Development Goals to fruition, a reduction in military expenditure could go a long way – not only to provide crucial financial resources, but also to communicate a shift in priorities.

We must consider alternatives to excessive militarization and seek options that address the real challenges of our time, including climate change, epidemics and pandemics, mass refugee flows and extreme poverty.

The Secretary-General, in his Agenda for Disarmament, Securing Our Common Future, emphasizes the need to rethink unconstrained military spending by fostering new dialogue and closer cooperation. In a deteriorating international security environment, trust-building and transparency become even more important.

In support of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda for Disarmament, the Office for Disarmament Affairs is publishing a series of Occasional Papers intended to encourage renewed research on the relationship between military spending and economic and social development. The first volume, UNODA Occasional Papers No. 33, released in October 2019, provided a historical overview of efforts within the United Nations to reduce military spending.

This second volume addresses the issue of military spending from various angles by examining the impact of military expenditures on security; the relationship between military spending and socioeconomic development; the importance of gender perspectives in rethinking military spending; and lessons learned from economic conversion movements.

It is my fervent hope that this research and analysis will support new initiatives to reduce military spending with a view to prioritizing investment in peace and sustainable development.

Izumi Nakamitsu
Under-Secretary-General and
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

I.

How unconstrained military spending harms international security

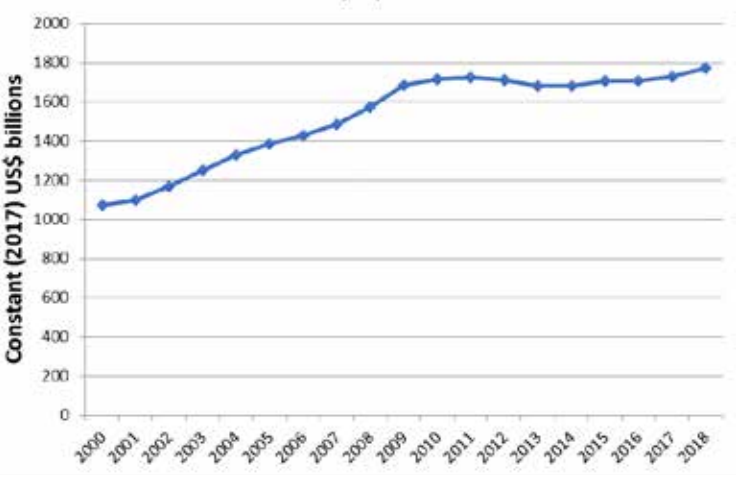
Samuel Perlo-Freeman
Campaign Against Arms Trade

The world devoted an estimated $1,822 billion to its militaries in 2018, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).[1] Yet that staggering figure is probably still an underestimate, as it excludes countries for which comparable estimates are impossible, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and a significant amount of spending that countries have not disclosed.

A protracted rise in global military expenditure stalled after the 2008 financial and economic crisis (see fig. 1), and then resumed several years into the following decade, with recent outlays guaranteeing substantial increases to come. As of this writing, world military spending had increased by around 65 per cent, in real terms, from its post-cold war low in 1998.

[1] SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. Available at www.sipri.org/databases/milex. All military expenditure figures quoted here are from this source, except where otherwise stated.

Figure 1: World military expenditure, 2000–2018[2]



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database

While references to unconstrained military spending are not wholly accurate, as seen from the economic factors that prompted the cuts in western countries after 2008, a clear upward trend in that spending appears to be a persistent phenomenon of international political economy. Historically, that trend has seen only brief interruptions owing either to economic circumstances or to unexpected (and temporary) outbreaks of "peace", as the end of the cold war appeared to promise. Moreover, in many of the highest-spending countries, high and generally rising military spending either enjoys support across most of the political spectrum or faces no meaningful political challenge.[3]

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[2] Figures are in US$ billions, at constant 2017 prices and exchange rates.

[3] In the United Kingdom, for example, all major national political parties committed to spend at least 2 per cent of the country's gross domestic product on the military. While in the United States a recent Defense Authorization Act was passed with strong bipartisan support, legislators authorized a record $738 billion in military spending for fiscal year 2020. See, for example, www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/12/17/congress-adopts-defense-bill-that-creates-space-force/.

But the concept of "unconstrained" military spending holds true in one sense: for most major powers and for the world as a whole, military expenditure appears to follow a long-term upward trend almost regardless of global security conditions, with few effective countervailing pressures towards disarmament and demilitarization. That ongoing rise in spending, in combination with technological developments and the powerful arms industry lobby, promotes the development of ever more advanced and powerful weapons systems.

Although most conventional weapons capabilities are currently also "unconstrained" by international or regional treaties or agreements, there are some exceptions. Most notably, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe of 1990 limits the deployment of certain types of conventional military forces within parts of Europe; provides for transparency in force holdings and structures; and allows mutual observation of military exercises.[4] The Treaty does not, however, limit military spending. Moreover, the Russian Federation suspended its participation in 2007, and the United States of America withdrew from certain obligations in 2011. Meanwhile, the conventions on landmines and cluster munitions – which entered into force in 1999 and 2010, respectively – ban certain weapons that are particularly indiscriminate in their impact on civilians. However, despite these instruments, as well as various confidence-building measures and exchanges of information, there are no agreements requiring general limitations on most conventional forces, and none establishing limits on military spending.

In the following sections, I argue that continuous growth in military spending negatively impacts international security in four ways:

- It promotes self-reinforcing "cycles of insecurity", whereby mutual suspicion and fear spur arms races

[4] See www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/cfe.

between global powers such as the United States, China and the Russian Federation; between regional powers such as India and Pakistan; and between major powers, such as the United States, and their regional rivals, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran. Thus, in the classic "security dilemma", efforts by one country to increase its security by pursuing more powerful military forces creates insecurity in its neighbours and rivals, prompting similar increases in spending that frequently nullify the perception of increased security sought in the first place. Moreover, this process promotes a "military-first" conception of security by which countries seek to solve international problems through threats or use of military force, further exacerbating the cycles of hostility.

- Consistently spending more on military capabilities, particularly through research and development, can contribute to technological advancements in weapons systems with highly unpredictable consequences. Recently, that has been notably seen both in the increasing military use of artificial intelligence and in the development of "lethal autonomous weapons systems", popularly known as "killer robots". Those destabilizing technologies challenge the most basic notions of accountability and decision-making responsibility in international law and the practice of war.
- High military spending is often associated with high levels of corruption and state predation, where military budgets are tapped to finance patronage and kickbacks while military force itself is dedicated to guaranteeing elite control of natural resources, with little regard to the general welfare of the population. In adopting this "rentier-security state" model, Governments significantly undermine the security of their own people, and sometimes the people of neighbouring countries.

- When militaries are considered to be a primary guarantor of security, they absorb political attention and material resources that could otherwise be devoted to far more pressing security challenges, in particular the devastating effects of the climate crisis.

Fundamentally, I argue that prioritizing military power, with the continuously rising levels of spending required to maintain it, reflects a fundamentally distorted view of security that ignores or minimizes many key, non-military security threats. It even fails on its own terms by provoking spiraling tensions both within and between countries. An alternative approach, which puts sustainable human security at the centre, is necessary to halt developing international arms races and redirect resources to tackling the climate crisis and other major non-military security priorities.

Cycles of insecurity

A simple political and economic model of military expenditure assumes that States spend money on their militaries to buy "security" while balancing that priority against other needs. Premised on the idea that more military spending results in greater security,[5] this model treats purchased "security" as an indivisible property that pertains to the country as a whole – or, at least, to the State. Even this simple model allows that in setting military spending levels to maximize their immediate utility, countries may make calculations that backfire in an "arms race" or "security dilemma" with a hostile neighbour or regional power. If one country's security depends positively on its own military spending but negatively on the military spending of another, and if each seeks to optimize its military spending in relation to the spending of the other, the resulting equilibrium will produce lower security and a higher claim on

[5] See, for example, Ron Smith, "The demand for military expenditure", chap. 4, in Handbook of Defense Economics, Todd Sandler and Keith Hartley, eds. (Elsevier, 1995). Available at www.sciencedirect.com/handbook/handbook-of-defense-economics/vol/1/suppl/C.

resources than if both sides were to mutually agree to lower levels of military spending.[6]

However, this simplistic model understates the true dangers of an upward spiral in military expenditure. First, it does not take into account the long-term tendency for spending to increase both with a country's economic growth and with the rising costs of advancing military technologies. Thus, equilibrium levels of military spending will change as national economic and technological capabilities develop, possibly leading to a destabilizing cycle of mutual increases.

Second, by treating security as a monolithic national property that always benefits from higher military spending, this model may ignore profound differences in security needs and perceptions among groups in a given country, some of which may view the military – especially in authoritarian regimes – as a source of insecurity in itself. That is especially true in countries where there are significant tensions between different ethnic groups, some of which may be excluded from power structures and be subject to military repression, or where endemic corruption means that the Government and its security forces are experienced as predatory actors by much of the population.

Third, this simple, static model does not account for how increasing military spending dynamically alters threat perceptions, which can lead to a mutual ratcheting up of tensions and hostility as States engage in regional or global military competition. Thus, there is not in reality any steady-state "equilibrium", even a suboptimal one; rather, it is one that can be shifted by events and perceptions, leading to an unstable spiral of competitive spending and hostile actions.

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[6] See, for example, Dagobert L. Brito and Michael D. Intriligator, "Arms races and proliferation", chap. 6, in Handbook of Defence Economics, note 4.

In seeking security through increased military spending and capabilities, States can instead prompt spirals of insecurity. That phenomenon is apparent in numerous cases, two of which I will discuss here, the first in the Gulf region and the second involving rivalries of China with the United States and with some neighbouring countries in the Western Pacific.

The Middle East is one of the most militarized and conflict-prone regions on the planet, with at least 6 of the 10 countries spending the most on militaries as a share of GDP.[7] Despite accounting for only 5.7 per cent of the world's population in 2019,[8] the region was responsible for 27 per cent of major conventional weapons imports between 2009 and 2018, according to SIPRI.[9] While that divergence is partly due to the limited domestic arms industries of the region, excepting Israel and to some extent Turkey, it may also reflect large off-budget weapons purchases made by some countries using oil revenues.

The direction of cause and effect here is hard to disentangle, but it is clear that the region's high military spending has not fully prevented or deterred threats from armed non-State actors; rather, domestic applications of military force have appeared to spur festering grievances among such actors. Likewise, mutual military build-ups have not cooled but increased tensions among leading regional powers, contributing to their military involvement in the war in Yemen.[10] That

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[7] The top 10 countries for which figures are available in 2018 are Saudi Arabia (8.8 per cent), Oman (8.2 per cent), Algeria (5.3 per cent), Kuwait (5.1 per cent), Lebanon (5.0 per cent), Armenia (4.8 per cent), Jordan (4.7 per cent), Israel (4.3 per cent), Pakistan (4.0 per cent) and Azerbaijan (3.8 per cent). However, based on recent figures and on current ongoing conflicts, it is likely that Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and/or Yemen might be on the list

[8] United Nations, State of the World's Population, 2019.

[9] SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Available at www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers .

[10] The factors behind the Yemen war are complex. For one outline of the events, actors and motivations involved, see Council for Foreign Relations, "Yemen in crisis", backgrounder, last updated 19 Feb. 2020.

conflict, in which all sides have been accused of abuses by a United Nations Panel of Experts,[11] has been described by the Secretary-General as creating the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.[12] Since 2018, those increased tensions have also contributed to destabilizing uncertainties about the future of the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action involving the Islamic Republic of Iran, the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany. By increasing their military spending and adopting more assertive and interventionist approaches to disputes, regional and external powers have arguably succeeded only in undermining their collective security.

The idea that high military spending can ensure peace through deterrence has failed dismally in the Middle East. Instead, it has led to increased suspicion, hostility and risks from armed violence around the region.

Meanwhile, the Western Pacific has become a site of growing military competition.[13] The United States, China and many other countries in the region, especially South China Sea littoral States, have made substantial increases in military

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Available at www.cfr.org/backgrounder/yemen-crisis. For a somewhat different take on the regional power motivations of one key actor, see M. Darwich (2018). "The Saudi intervention in Yemen: struggling for status", Insight Turkey, 20(2). pp. 125–141. Available at http://dro.dur.ac.uk/24514/1/24514.pdf?DDD35+msrp66+d700tmt.

[11] See United Nations Security Council 2140 Sanctions Committee (Yemen) Panel of Experts reports, various years. Available at www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports.

[12] Secretary-General's remarks at a press encounter on Yemen, 2 November 2018. Available at www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2018-11-02/secretary-generals-remarks-press-encounter-yemen.

[13] See, for example, Ankit Panda, "South China Sea: US Littoral combat ship conducts freedom of navigation operation", The Diplomat, (29 January 2020). Available at https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/south-china-sea-us-littoral-combat-ship-conducts-freedom-of-navigation-operation/.

spending which may in part be linked to rising tensions, as well as great power competition for status and influence.

While there is no immediate threat of armed conflict in the Western Pacific, tensions and suspicion have clearly risen, in turn contributing towards the possibility of an eventual armed confrontation. What from one country's point of view may seem a defensive reaction to legitimate security fears, may appear to others as an aggressive effort to gain dominance. Once again, it seems that the efforts by all sides to achieve security through military strength instead seem to have led to increased insecurity all around.[14]

New weapons systems

The logic of military competition, reflected in rising military spending worldwide, requires that States continually seek new technological means to improve their war-fighting capabilities and gain an advantage relative to their rivals. That technological arms race has generally been asymmetric, with numerous countries seeking to get ahead in specific areas, such as information warfare, in an effort to gain an advantage over otherwise more powerful States.

There have been significant efforts at the United Nations to advance discussions on the implications of new types of weapons systems, including through the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and many States have devoted efforts to exploring the legal and ethical issues involved. Those efforts have not led to any new treaties or binding obligations, however. All too often, risks from unintended consequences are widely acknowledged but put aside as a "tomorrow problem",

[14] For a discussion of current tensions in the South China Sea region in particular, see, for example, Wu Schicun, "US-China competition will heat up the South China Sea", The Diplomat, 8 November 2019. Available at https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/us-china-competition-will-heat-up-the-south-china-sea/. For a more in-depth look at these issues, see US-China Competition and South China Sea Disputes, Kai He and Huiyun Feng, eds. (Routledge, 2018).

subordinated to the urgent drive of States to spend their way towards military superiority.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists underscored the consequence of that spending when it recently advanced its "Doomsday Clock", a metaphorical representation of the risks of existential catastrophe to humanity, to 100 seconds to midnight – the closest the clock has ever been to "midnight", representing an apocalyptic calamity.[15] Traditionally, the clock represented the risk of nuclear war; in recent years, the threat of climate change has been added to the risk assessment. But in 2019, while highlighting the retreat from nuclear arms control and the failure of the world to tackle devastating climate change, the Bulletin added a third existential risk factor: "the increased threat of information warfare and other disruptive technologies". Those disruptive technologies include developments in biological engineering, hypersonic weapons, space weapons, and the use of artificial intelligence in weapons systems. On the latter point, they say:

> Artificial intelligence is progressing at a frenzied pace. In addition to the concern about marginally controlled AI development and its incorporation into weaponry that would make kill decisions without human supervision, AI is now being used in military command and control systems. Research and experience have demonstrated the vulnerability of these systems to hacking and manipulation.

International civil society organizations, including the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which includes human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International,[16]

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[15] Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, "Closer than ever: It is 100 seconds to midnight" (23 January 2020). Available at https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/.

[16] See www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/killer-robots-new-global-poll-shows-growing-public-opposition-autonomous-weapons, www.stopkillerrobots.org/ and www.hrw.org/topic/arms/killer-robots.

have led advocacy efforts for controls on lethal autonomous weapons systems – popularly known as "killer robots" – which could enable artificial intelligence systems to select targets for killing without any human intervention. Such systems would severely undermine international humanitarian law restrictions on targeted killings already damaged by the expanding use of targeted drone strikes, as they could undermine perceptions of human agency or accountability for the deaths of non-combatants. The possibility that international norms against extrajudicial executions could become, in effect, a dead letter. By contrast, the risk of lethal technology escaping the control of its human designers is less immediate, though how much so is unknown.[17]

Despite concerns that civil society and some States have expressed in and beyond the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, many States, including several leading world powers, remain reluctant to embrace international controls on such technologies.[18] A November 2019 meeting of the State parties to the Convention failed to produce progress towards a ban.[19] The fundamental problem is that the quest for temporary military advantage is given precedence over considerations of future unintended consequences.

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[17] For a discussion of some of these issues, see, for example, Michael T. Klare, "Autonomous weapons systems and the laws of war", *Arms Control Today* (March 2019). Available at www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-03/features/autonomous-weapons-systems-laws-war and Reaching Critical Will, "Fully Autonomous Weapons", factsheet, accessed 31 January 2020. Available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/fact-sheets/critical-issues/7972-fully-autonomous-weapons.

[18] Sono Motoyama, "Inside the United Nations' effort to regulate autonomous killer robots", *The Verge*. Available at www.theverge.com/2018/8/27/17786080/united-nations-un-autonomous-killer-robots-regulation-conference. See also www.stopkillerrobots.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KRC_CountryViews22Nov2018.pdf for a list of States supporting and opposing negotiations for a ban, as of November 2018.

[19] See www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/no-progress-in-un-talks-on-regulating-lethal-autonomous-weapons/.

Those issues may appear not to be directly related to military spending, except insofar as such technologies require substantial spending on military research and development. However, they represent another, parallel part of the same dynamic of military competition: the assumption that more, and better, weapons will provide greater security, a logic that in recent decades appears to have gained dominance over a logic of mutual restraint and arms control.

The militarized rentier State

Corruption can have a devastating impact on a country's prospects for future development and security.[20] The grievances generated by corruption can not only encourage conflict, but also fatally undermine a State's ability to deal with conflict. When a State's security sector is subject to massive corruption, its ability to respond to terrorism and organized crime is crippled, and the security forces themselves may even prey on the population they are supposed to protect.[21]

In the most extreme cases, corruption essentially is the system, enabling elites to use State institutions to divide among themselves a nation's wealth – typically from natural resource revenues – as security forces protect the elites' control over that wealth.

In general, high natural resource dependence is often associated with high military spending.[22] By providing an easy

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[20] See, for example, Patrick Keuleers, "Fighting corruption for global peace, development and security", United Nations Development Programme, 7 December 2017. Available at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2017/fighting-corruption-for-global-peace--development-and-security.html.

[21] See, for example, Transparency international, "Tackle instability and terrorism by fighting corruption", 4 February 2015. www.transparency.org/news/feature/tackle_instability_and_terrorism_by_fighting_corruption

[22] See, for example, Hamid E. Ali and Omnia A. Abdellatif, "Military expenditures and natural resources: evidence from rentier States in the Middle East and North Africa", Defence and Peace Economics vol. 26, No. 1 (January 2015). Available at www.researchgate.net/publication/271856892_Military_Expenditures_and_Natural_

alternative to taxation for Government finances, natural resource revenue can reduce the need for a State to develop the broader national economy.

An existing regime thus may use high military spending to strengthen its control by various means:

- It can use military resources as a source of patronage, including by rewarding key allies and supporters with important military positions. In some countries, the military may also play a substantial economic role through the ownership of businesses (as well as participation in illicit economic activities), providing the holder of a senior military position with substantial side opportunities for economic enrichment.
- The State can use arms import agreements to conceal corrupt spending owing to their size and complexity, the secrecy of the broader arms trade and the close involvement of top political actors in major arms deals. The kickbacks associated with such corrupt deals are used not simply for personal enrichment but frequently also for political finance, providing funds for political parties, election campaigns, and decision makers' patronage networks within the political and economic elite.[23]
- A Government can use high military spending to protect its control of natural resource revenues from internal and external threats. Naturally, such use can breed grievances that develop into violent challenges to the State's control of these revenues.

Resources_Evidence_from_Rentier_States_in_the_Middle_East_and_North_Africa.

[23] Xiaodon Liang and Sam Perlo-Freeman, "Arms trade corruption and political finance", World Peace Foundation, 9 July 2018. Available at https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/arms-trade-corruption-and-political-finance/.

Military security or sustainable security

Perhaps above all else, unconstrained military spending harms international security by diverting resources from tackling climate change.

Most Governments traditionally tend to think of "security" primarily in terms of national security – the ability of the State to defend the nation's borders, exert control over its territory and waters, combat external and internal threats to the State's monopoly on violence and, for larger nations, project power and influence overseas to defend and promote the nation's interests. The military lies at the heart of that notion of security, alongside police, intelligence, counter-terrorism and diplomatic services. In this model, the nation is seen as a unitary actor, with interests that are definable, if not always clearly defined in practice.

In recent decades, this model of security has often been challenged or complemented by the notion of human security, which focuses on the security of individuals, families, and communities from a wide range of threats to their well-being, including those related to armed violence, but much more broadly as well. General Assembly resolution 66/290 defined human security as "...an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people." It calls for "people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people."[24] Human security encompasses things such as food security, the right to secure housing, security from disease and natural disasters, as well as security from crime and violence, including violence from forces of the State. While human security includes factors related to national security, in that external invasion or internal organized

[24] General Assembly resolution 66/290 (10 September 2012). Available at www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/290, cited by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. Available at www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/.

armed violence can have a devastating effect on human security, it does not conceive of security as a monolithic property of the nation as a whole; rather it recognizes that security varies according to gender, ethnic group and wealth, among many other factors. The means of providing human security include the military and security forces, but also equitable economic development and adequate provision of health care, education, infrastructure and housing. While security forces have a role, that role may also be interrogated in terms of its impact on marginalized groups within society, such as ethnic minorities, for whom they may appear more as a threat than as a source of protection.

In an age of climate crisis, the notion of human security must be expanded to one of sustainable security – which considers the ability of national and global systems of governance, economics, industry and infrastructure to provide human security in a sustainable manner that remains within the bounds of the Earth's natural support systems, in particular the carrying capacity of the atmosphere for greenhouse gases, without causing devastating global heating.[25]

Indeed, climate change represents the world's most urgent and powerful threat to both human security and national security today. It is already causing massive loss of life and displacement of peoples owing to natural disasters, while also exacerbating conflicts through its effects on food production, water security, migration and more. Many military establishments regard climate change as a major "threat multiplier" and are intensively planning for its likely impact on national security and State interests in the near future, as they foresee a rising tide of

[25] The concept is discussed in depth in The Ammerdown Group, "Rethinking security", May 2016. Available at https://rethinkingsecurityorguk.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/rethinking-security-a-discussion-paper.pdf.

instability and conflict resulting from global heating.[26] But the potential impact on human security is even more devastating.

Thus, if the "first duty of government" is to provide for the security of the nation and its people, then any understanding of that first duty that does not place climate change at its core is sorely wanting. Without intense efforts by countries worldwide to change their economic systems and energy use in a way that rapidly reduces global greenhouse gas emissions to zero, there can be no security in any form for large proportions of the planet's people – or for its nations.[27]

Most Governments at least formally recognize the acute threat of climate change, and many have introduced targets to substantially reduce carbon emissions, including through the Paris Agreement, aiming in some cases to reduce them to net zero by 2050 or earlier. But practical policies to make that happen, and the economic resources to make such policies a reality, are generally lacking.

A 2018 report by the Climate Policy Initiative found that global climate finance flows in 2015 and 2016 amounted to $463 billion per year,[28] in contrast to world military spending of $1,715 billion in those years, according to SIPRI. Yet that direct comparison provides an incomplete perspective, as all Government priorities must compete for resources; beyond budgetary allocations, I contend that the failure to devote sufficient resources to climate change stems from a fundamentally distorted understanding of security itself, which

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[26] See, for example, Michael T. Klare, "Insignia, badges, and medals for a climate-wracked era", Salon.com, 14 December 2019. Available at www.salon.com/2019/12/14/insignia-badges-and-medals-for-a-climate-wracked-era_partner/.

[27] This argument is developed more fully by the author in "Fighting the wrong battles: how obsession with military power diverts resources from the climate crisis", Campaign Against Arms Trade, February 2020.

[28] Climate Policy Initiative, "Global climate finance: an updated view 2018", November 2018. Available at https://climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-climate-finance-an-updated-view-2018/

still puts State security at the centre, and military security in particular, while treating other aspects of human and sustainable security at best as "add-ons" – desirables to be achieved, where possible, but lower in priority than the sacrosanct need to protect traditional national security.

Thus, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its member states insist that 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) is a bare minimum for countries to spend on their militaries if they are to be considered good alliance partners, that is, "global citizens", if one will. Yet that portion of GDP would likely provide most countries with more than enough resources to achieve the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions necessary to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, and spending on this crucial goal falls far short. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the national Committee on Climate Change estimated in 2019 that reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 would require an annual resource cost to the economy of 1 to 2 per cent of GDP, with a central estimate of 1.3 per cent.[29] A coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) later in 2019 estimated current spending on "climate change and nature" to be £17 billion a year, roughly 0.8 per cent of GDP, and called for that to be increased to £42 billion.[30] But while such calls fall on deaf ears, meeting NATO's target of committing 2 per cent of GDP to the military is considered an absolute essential, supported by all three of the country's major political parties at the last election. Similarly, in Sweden, the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society (Svenska Freds och Skiljedoms Föreningen) pointed out the

[29] Committee on Climate Change, "Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming", 2 May 2019. Available at https://bit.ly/2OP5BZl.

[30] CAFOD, Friends of the Earth, Green Alliance, Greenpeace, Islamic Relief, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), "Government investment for a greener and fairer economy", September 2019 Available at https://bit.ly/35xvX98.

discrepancy between spending 60 billion kronor ($6.3 million) on "military security", compared to just 12 billion kronor ($1.3 million) on climate change.[31]

Thus, the most important harm to international security from unconstrained military spending may come from the resources that such spending diverts from tackling climate change as well as the mindset it perpetuates – one that continues to place traditional military security at the centre over all else. Security for the planet and its peoples depends on a fundamental shift both of resources and in the framework for understanding security, placing this most pressing and devastating threat at its core.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this paper, I have argued that high and rising military spending, along with the accompanying rapid development of new military technologies, frequently fail in their intended aim to strengthen security; indeed, such spending may lead to greater insecurity. In other cases, high military spending may create security for a ruling elite at the expense of the security and well-being of the population. In any event, high military spending diverts attention and resources from pressing non-military security threats, most notably the climate crisis.

The reasons for high military spending are manifold, and in some cases relate to genuine security concerns. The military spending choices of different countries are also highly interrelated. It is therefore not possible to make universal prescriptions for particular levels of military spending, in absolute terms or as a share of GDP, or for levels of cuts to current spending. However, a number of key broad recommendations may be advanced.

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[31] Agnes Hellström and Isadori Wronski, "Klimatkrisen hotar säkerheten i Sverige" [The climate crisis threatens security in Sweden], Aftonbladet, 14 Jan. 2020. Available at www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/wPpwKA/klimatkrisen-hotar-sakerheten-i-sverige.

- States should question the assumption that higher military spending will necessarily lead to higher security, or that regional problems and tensions with other States can be resolved through greater military strength. Instead of seeking security through military dominance (or countering the military dominance of others in kind), States in regions of tension should engage, or re-engage, in cooperative security efforts, confidence-building measures and arms control, with a view to mutual limits and reductions to military spending and capabilities.
- States, especially the most powerful, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, should renew efforts at international and multilateral arms control and disarmament, especially in relation to nuclear weapons and potentially destabilizing and unpredictable new and developing military technologies, including cyberwarfare and lethal autonomous weapons systems, with a view to negotiating an international treaty banning the latter.
- State importers and exporters of arms should both increase efforts to tackle corruption in the international arms trade, and to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity in their military and security sectors. Exporting States in particular should increase due diligence, denying export licenses in the presence of serious corruption risks, and ensuring robust investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution of suspected corruption cases.
- All States, especially those with high levels of military spending (in absolute terms or as a share of GDP) should refocus their security priorities and resources towards promoting sustainable human security, most importantly by tackling the climate crisis.

II.

Military spending and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a grand enterprise, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals that include ending poverty, improving health and education, achieving gender equality, reducing inequality, tackling climate change and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. Those aims, while admirable, represent a herculean undertaking: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that meeting the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries will cost about $2.5 trillion per year.[1] Yet as Governments around the world express commitment to pursuing the Goals, global military spending is at its highest since the cold war, absorbing a significant share of the financial resources that could instead be used to directly promote sustainable development. Achieving the Goals will demand rethinking the size and opportunity costs of those military expenditures.

[1] UNCTAD, Investing in the SDGs: an action plan, World Investment Report 2014, Overview.

The relationship between military spending and development has always been at the heart of United Nations disarmament efforts. Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations sets forth the promotion of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.[2] In 1976, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament adopted a declaration affirming that "in a world of finite resources there is a close relationship between expenditure on armaments and economic and social development".[3] It further regarded military spending as a "colossal waste", diverting scarce resources urgently needed in developing countries.[4] More recently, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there has been renewed interest in the effects of military spending on development.[5] For instance, in support of the Goals, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs has encouraged a revival of the issue of reducing military budgets as a central disarmament objective.[6]

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, total world military spending rose to $1.92 trillion in 2019, the highest level since 1988, equating to 2.2 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP), or $249 per capita. A decrease in that spending could release funds for other public causes, such as providing health care or improving access to

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[2] Charter of the United Nations, Chapter V – The Security Council, Article 26 (1945).

[3] Final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (A/S-10/4), May–June 1978.

[4] For more information on the work by the General Assembly in reducing military spending, see Michael Spies, *United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditures: A Historical Overview*, UNODA Occasional Papers, No. 33 (New York, United Nations, 2019).

[5] Nakamitsu Izumi, "Global military spending has doubled but the world is no safer", *Time*, April 2018. Available at https://time.com/5250773/global-military-spending-security-arms-race/.

[6] Michael Spies, *United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditures: A Historical Overview*, UNODA Occasional Papers, No. 33 (New York, United Nations, 2019).

water. It is estimated that the cost to achieve health-related Goals in low-income countries is $85.7 per capita,[7] about 34 per cent of what is currently spent on the military. While proposed decreases in military spending must be pondered alongside a myriad of other concerns, most related to security, reining in excessive military budgets can help enlarge the fiscal space of States to increase their development-related investments.

Global economic challenges further underscore the need to rethink the relationship of military spending to efforts under the 2030 Agenda. Economic growth in coming years is expected to be slower than the historical average of previous decades, and rising indebtedness in developing countries will contribute to financial instability.[8] Against that backdrop, official development assistance from developed countries has stagnated in recent years.[9] To make progress towards achieving the Goals with those constraints, States must devise better strategies to effectively allocate their resources, including by prioritizing critical areas. That will require Governments to assess wasteful and excessive military spending and integrate their findings into discussions on development financing.

In the present paper, we will discuss the possible impacts of military spending on development and how spending reductions can contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While it has been argued that military spending can potentially contribute to economic growth and development, we will examine how recent empirical evidence has highlighted

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[7] Sustainable Development Solutions Network, "SDG costing & financing for low-income developing countries", September 2019. Available at https://resources.unsdsn.org/sdg-costing-financing-for-low-income-developing-countries.

[8] United Nations, Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2019–2021.

[9] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Development aid drops in 2018, especially to neediest countries", April 2019. Available at www.oecd.org/newsroom/development-aid-drops-in-2018-especially-to-neediest-countries.htm.

the negative effects that excessive military spending can have in those areas. Also addressed is the concept of opportunity costs in military spending to development, and discusses how a reduction in military spending can release resources to finance and achieve sustainable development. Then, we will propose how improving transparency, accountability and civilian control over the budgeting process can ensure that resources once dedicated to the military are reallocated to promote social and economic development. The final section offers some concluding remarks.

The impact of military spending on economic and social development

To understand the relationship between military expenditure and development it is important to explore the various theoretical approaches and their related channels of influence. Based on varying theoretical approaches, a large body of empirical research has examined the economic effects of military spending with no consensus on the results. This lack of consensus or varied results can be due to the absence of reliable and consistent statistical data on military spending, differing theoretical approaches and the need for improved sophistication in econometric techniques.[10] However, recent improvements in the above-mentioned areas have led to a shift in the general findings on the relationship between military spending and economic development, moving from no consensus to the likelihood of it having a negative developmental effect.

Theoretical approaches and channels of influence

Analyses of the broader economic impacts of military spending generally employ three theoretical approaches rooted in two main views. While one of those views holds that military spending negatively impacts long-term economic growth by

[10] R. Smith, "Defence expenditure and economic growth", in *Making Peace Pay: A Bibliography on Disarmament and Conversion*, N.P. Gleditsch and others, eds. (Claremont, California: Regna Books, 2000), p. 15–24.

crowding out civilian spending, the other frames military spending as a contributor to aggregated demand that stimulates broader economic development.

The dominant *neoclassical approach* sees Governments as rational agents trying to harmonize the opportunity costs[11] and security benefits of military spending in maximum service to their interests.[12] Through that lens, military expenditure is seen as a public good, with economic effects weighed mainly against opportunity costs for consumption, investment and other public spending in the civilian sphere.[13]

In contrast, the *Keynesian approach* regards military expenditure as one type of Government spending that can increase capabilities to satisfy existing demand in other areas.[14] In other words, increased military spending can lead to increased production capacity, increased profits and hence increased investment and economic growth.[15] An additional strand of Keynesian analysis accounts for the effects of industrial inefficiencies and the development of powerful interest groups, such as the military-industrial complex, which exerts pressure within the State to increase military expenditure – even in the absence of a security threat to justify an increase.[16]

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[11] The opportunity cost of military spending can be defined as the value of the best option foregone by that choice; it could be obtained with the best alternative use of the spending.

[12] J.P. Dunne and M. Uye, "Military spending and development", in T*he Global Arms Trade*, Andrew Tan, ed. (London: Europa, 2009).

[13] J. Brauer, J.P. Dunne and N. Tian, "Towards demilitarisation? The military expenditure-development nexus revisited", in *The Political Economy of Defence*, R. Matthews, ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 94.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] J.P. Dunne, "Military Keynesianism: an assessment", in C*ooperation for a Peaceful & Sustainable World - Part 2*, L. Junsheng, C. Bo and H. Na, eds. (Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013), p. 117–130.

Finally, according to the *Marxist approach*, military spending plays an important but contradictory role in capitalist development. Marxists emphasize that the capitalist mode of production is prone to "economic crisis" as production runs ahead of demand, leading to low wages and falling profits. That idea led to "underconsumption" theory, in which Baran and Sweezy posited military spending as an important component of the capitalist system serving to increase aggregate demand.[17] In that way, military spending is useful because it absorbs surplus production, does not harm the powerful interest groups (i.e., military-industrial complexes) and stops profits from falling.[18]

The above-mentioned theories enabled the identification of channels by which military expenditure generates impacts on economic and social development. The military can generate varying effects on development through those channels – which include labour, capital, technology, external relations, sociopolitics, conflict and demand[19] – and empirical analysis is necessary to ascertain the relative importance of those impacts, as well as their overall effects on growth, whether positive, neutral or negative. For example, while military expenditure may boost demand, output and profits and contribute to increased investment (as per the Keynesian approach), taxpayer-funded military spending may also affect economy-wide savings. Additionally, should military expenditure result in reduced public spending on education and health, the need for private provision in those areas may lower private savings and investment.[20]

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[17] Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy. *Monopoly Capital* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1966).

[18] See also Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[19] For more information, see J.P. Dunne and M. Uye, *Military Spending and Development. The Global Arms Trade*, Andrew Tan, ed. (London: Europa, 2009).

[20] J. Brauer, J.P. Dunne and N. Tian, "Towards demilitarisation? The military expenditure-development nexus revisited", in *The Political Economy of Defence*, R. Matthews, ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 94.

Empirical literature

The empirical debate over the impact of military spending on development and economic growth began in 1973 with the publication of studies, in which Benoit described a positive relationship between military expenditure and development in developing countries.[21] Those findings led to a plethora of econometric studies intended to contradict and show flaws therein. The results of the econometric studies were mixed, with no consensus on the impact of military spending on economic growth.[22]

In surveys of that literature conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, Chan,[23] Ram[24] and Dunne[25] showed either a lack of consistent empirical results or a paucity of evidence of a positive effect between military spending and economic growth, suggesting that an effect was likelier to be negative. Then, in 2000, Smith[26] further emphasized a lack of empirical regularity

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[21] See E. Benoit, "Growth and defense in developing countries", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 26, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 271–280.

[22] For more information, see J. Brauer, J.P. Dunne and N. Tian, "Towards demilitarisation? The military expenditure-development nexus revisited", in *The Political Economy of Defence*, R. Matthews, ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 98–105.

[23] S. Chan, "Military expenditures and economic performance", in *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1986*, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 29–37.

[24] R. Ram, "Defense expenditure and economic growth", in *Handbook of Defense Economics*, vol. 1, K. Hartley and T. Sandler, eds. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1995), p. 251–274.

[25] J.P. Dunne, "Economic effects of military expenditure in developing countries: a survey", in *The Peace Dividend*, N.P. Gleditsch and others, eds. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1996), p. 439–464.

[26] R. Smith, "Defence expenditure and economic growth", in *Making Peace Pay: A Bibliography on Disarmament and Conversion*, N.P. Gleditsch and others, eds. (Claremont, California: Regna Books, 2000), p. 15–24.

in earlier literature and pointed to a need for greater empirical sophistication. While older studies indicated a lack of consensus in the empirical debate, newer studies based on better data and improved econometric techniques have increasingly found military expenditure to have a harmful impact on development.

In a 2019 survey that assessed the results of 196 studies that analysed the economic effects of military spending, Brauer, Dunne and Tian found little evidence of a positive effect on economic growth and determined that military expenditure is more likely to have a negative effect.[27] While that finding was profound, there is further interest in assessing studies that focus particularly on developing countries.

That interest stems partly from remarkable differences that Brauer, Dunne and Tian found between studies of developing and developed countries, specifically with respect to the types and results of studies conducted. Cross-country studies are more commonly used than case studies (a ratio of 2.5 to 1) to assess the impact of military expenditure on economic growth in developing countries. More importantly, 47 per cent of studies on developing countries found that military spending hampers economic growth, whereas only 22 per cent showed a positive effect. The remaining 31 per cent of studies showed unclear results. Meanwhile, only 27 per cent of studies on developed countries saw military spending producing a negative impact on economic growth. Thus, military spending was more commonly found to have a harmful economic effect in developing countries.

Given the increasing evidence of an inverse relationship between military spending and economic growth, there is a

[27] J. Brauer, J.P. Dunne and N. Tian, "Towards demilitarisation? The military expenditure-development nexus revisited", in T*he Political Economy of Defence*, R. Matthews, ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 102–105.

growing need to discuss the potential benefits of reducing military expenditure. To help advance the 2030 Agenda, funds released through reductions in military spending could be diverted towards social and economic spending in support of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Diverting military expenditure to economic and social development

Military expenditure and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

While the idea of reallocating resources from the military for civilian use was discussed in the 1990s in the context of "peace dividends", the sustained increases in military spending during the new millennium have renewed that debate.[28] In 2019, the issue orbits around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: how much could be achieved by reducing world military spending if the saved resources were directed to development – in particular to achieving the 2030 Agenda?

Although it can be argued that military expenditure contributes to the economy through output or production (i.e., the Keynesian perspective), the most important consideration is its opportunity cost (i.e., the neoclassical perspective). Currently at $1.92 trillion, a 5–10 per cent cut in military spending would equate to $96 billion to $192 billion in savings in 2017 dollars. If those saved resources were spent instead on achieving any of the individual Goals, such as eliminating poverty (Goal 1), improving healthcare standards (Goal 3), ensuring inclusive and quality education (Goal 4), promoting inclusive economic growth and employment (Goal 8) or tackling climate change (Goal 13), the true scale of the opportunity cost of military expenditure would be apparent.

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[28] M. Knight, N. Loayza and D. Villanueva, "The peace dividend, military spending cuts and economic growth", Policy Research Working Paper 1577 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 1996).

A 2019 report by the Overseas Development Institute estimate that about 430 million people will be living in extreme poverty by 2030. The report states that even though most countries can afford to invest in human development (i.e., education, health, nutrition and social protection) in order to alleviate extreme poverty, 46 of the poorest countries cannot afford such investments and face a funding gap of roughly $200 billion per year in 2017 dollars.[29] While the report recommends funding the shortfall via maximizing taxation, diverting 10 per cent of global military spending in 2019 would almost completely cover the funding shortfall for the 46 poorest countries in the world.

To achieve target 4.1 – universal completion of primary and secondary school education by 2030 – Education For All of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimated in its 2015 Global Monitoring Report that an annual average expenditure of $365 billion (in 2017 dollars) would be required between 2015 and 2030.[30] That cost is divided into $54 billion for low-income countries and $311 billion for lower-middle income countries, amounts respectively equivalent to 2.8 and 16 per cent of the world's military expenditure in 2019. Thus, diverting 5–10 per cent ($96 billion to 192 billion) of military spending towards achieving target 4.1 will cover more than the total annual cost for low-income countries and substantially contribute towards the annual cost for lower-middle-income countries.

In a similar assessment done in 2016 for Goal 13, tackling climate change, the United Nations calculated that the true cost of adapting to climate change in developing countries was $56

[29] M. Manual and others, "Financing the end of extreme poverty, 2019 update", Overseas Development Institute briefing note, September 2019. Available at www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12907.pdf.

[30] UNESCO, "Pricing the right to education: the cost of reaching new targets by 2030", Education for All Global Monitoring Report, policy paper 18, July 2015.

billion to $73 billion per year and could reach $140 billion to $300 billion per year by 2030.[31] Shifting 10 per cent of global military spending (i.e., $192 billion) towards Goal 13 could cover the initial adaptation cost by almost threefold and would exceed the lower range of estimated adaptation costs needed in 2030.

Reducing military spending and diverting the saved resources towards socioeconomic development is one of the first and most important steps in addressing human needs. Except in situations of active armed conflict or severe security threats, reducing military expenditure and reinvesting in causes like those listed above will have a positive impact on society in almost all cases.[32]

Comparing impacts of military- and development-related activities

The benefits of reducing military expenditure become even clearer when comparing government policies for military-related activities with policies for economic growth and sustainable development.

A country's defence policy specifically addresses its national security, dictating initiatives in the military or defence sector. Prime examples are policies concerning military modernization, by which a country upgrades or replaces weapons and equipment. Many countries devote around one-third of their total military spending to equipment, and that proportion can become much higher during periods of military modernization.

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[31] UNEP, The Adaptation Finance Gap, 2016.

[32] C. Archer and A. Willi, "Opportunity costs: military spending and the UN's development agenda", International Peace Bureau, November 2012.

While military expenditure related to modernization can promote some economic growth (e.g., through improved security and alternate applications of developed technology), skills transfer (e.g., training soldiers in skills that can be valuable to the civilian sector) or job creation (e.g., creating new positions following military modernization), it is important to note that those are indirect effects that may have negative consequences (see below) that might blur the overall impact on society.[33] For example, highly specialized military technologies may not be transferable or convertible to the civilian sector. Likewise, some worker skill sets are of limited value outside of military contexts (e.g., research and development for nuclear and major conventional weapons, as well as training in areas such as military doctrine). Moreover, the military sector is a poor job creator compared with other sectors. In a 2011 study of how military and domestic spending priorities affected employment in the United States of America, Pollin and Garrett-Peltier found that $1 billion in investments in sectors such as health care, clean energy and education created substantially more jobs than if the same amount had been spent on the military.[34]

In contrast, government policies designed to promote economic growth, job creation or socioeconomic development do just that. Growth or development plans such as Cambodia's National Policy on Green Growth 2013–2030 and its National Strategic Plan on Green Growth 2013–2030 directly create jobs, enable industrial development, reduce poverty and allow adaptation to climate change.[35] According to the Global Green Growth Institute, the plans have thus supported Cambodia's progress towards achieving Goals 8 and 13.

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[33] J.P. Dunne and M. Uye, "Military spending and development", in *The Global Arms Trade*, Tan Andrew, ed. (London: Europa, 2009).

[34] R. Pollin and H. Garrett-Peltier, "The U.S. employment effects of military and domestic spending priorities: 2011 update", University of Massachusetts, Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), 2011.

[35] Global Green Growth Institute, "Cambodia country planning framework 2016–2020".

Still, it must be acknowledged that despite evidence highlighting the benefits of reducing military expenditure in favour of socioeconomic development, there is still the question of generating the necessary political will and international trust or agreement between States. With global military expenditure at its highest level since the end of the cold war, it is necessary to consider approaches to reducing military expenditure, mitigating action–reaction spending and, in the optimal case, reallocating funds from militaries to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

From guns to Sustainable Development Goals: reducing military spending to finance sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda provides an opportunity to renew efforts to reduce military spending, but the task remains arduous owing to the diverse determinants at play. Conflict and threat perceptions are a major driver of military spending: it is estimated that military spending as a share of GDP increases by nearly 50 per cent during civil wars.[36] After a conflict ends, government military spending tends to be excessive, as armed forces may be reluctant to accommodate shrinking budgets.[37] Reducing military spending requires assurance that conditions are sufficiently safe, as well as an ability to resist parties with a vested interest in maintaining large budgets. Economic considerations also play a role; business actors often lobby to maintain military spending for its alleged economic outcomes. Finally, civil–military relations and the political role of the military are an important determinant of military spending.[38] Reducing military spending requires a comprehensive means of addressing those determinants.

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[36] Paul Collier and others, B*reaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, D.C., World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003).

[37] Ibid.

[38] Vincenzo Bove and Roberto Nisticò, "Military in politics and budgetary allocations", J*ournal of Comparative Economics*, vol. 42, No. 4 (2014).

The United Nations has a key role to play in that regard. Although its efforts to reduce military expenditures have produced several tangible outcomes, the issue has lost momentum since the end of the cold war. The fourth and last study commissioned by the United Nations on the matter was published in 1988.[39] The United Nations must revamp that agenda under the Sustainable Development Goals framework, promoting dialogue and cooperation among Member States, with the primary aim of financing sustainable development. Conditions for reducing military expenditure are more propitious now than during the cold war, when proposals for reduction in military spending were frequently vetoed.[40] Today, political conditions are relatively more favourable for achieving progress.

Efforts to reduce military spending dovetail with other existing development-related initiatives. In 1970, the General Assembly adopted a resolution urging donor countries to provide at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income as official development assistance. Yet despite some advances, particularly in the wake of the Monterrey Consensus in 2002, most donors still fall short of that target. The importance of official development assistance in financing sustainable development has been underscored by the 2019 Financing for Sustainable Development Report.[41] Reducing military spending could release resources to be given as aid, bringing donors closer to the 0.7 per cent guideline. That possibility has been raised before: addressing the General Assembly in 2016, the Government of Kazakhstan proposed that Member States

[39] United Nations, Study on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and military expenditures. Report of the Secretary-General, A/43/368, May 1988.

[40] João Augusto de Araújo Castro, "The United Nations and the freezing of the international power structure", *International Organization*, vol. 26, No. 1 (1972).

[41] United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019.

contribute 1 per cent of their military spending to fund the Sustainable Development Goals.[42]

Another path to reducing military spending is improved management. Governments often stress the exceptional character of military budgets, arguing that, owing to national security concerns, military spending should be exempted from the same scrutiny applied to other sectors. That is a mistake. Military expenditure, like any other type of State expense, should be subject to the same standards of oversight and control. The alleged exceptionality of the military sector permits a rather careless and opaque management of resources, ultimately leading to excessive spending.

Military budgets, like other public budgets, should be subject to the principles of public expenditure management, which provide clear guidance for best practices on prioritizing transparency and civilian control over the budgeting process.[43] Consider the practice of making "off-budget" allocations to the military. Off-budget spending – that is, expenditure not included in the State budget – is common in the defence sector, but it infringes upon principles of public expenditure management such as fiscal discipline, transparency and comprehensiveness.

Owing to its opacity and lack of oversight, off-budget mechanisms often lead to misuse of funds and corruption. Reforming such systems is a major step towards a better use of funds. In that regard, Chile's recent repeal of the Copper Law, an off-budget military funding system in force since 1958, is a good example of improvement. The Copper Law allocated 10 per cent of copper export revenues to arms procurement and

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[42] A. Nurbekov, "Kazakh President outlines MDG successes, calls for portions of defence budgets to be diverted to development", *Astana Times* (30 September 2015).

[43] Wuyi Omitoogun and Eboe Hutchful, *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Process and Mechanisms of Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Available at www.amazon.com/dp/0199262667.

equipment maintenance. Transactions involving the Copper Law were conducted outside the State budget, without congressional approval or scrutiny from oversight institutions. In 2019, Chile finally reformed its military funding system, officially ending off-budget allocations.[44]

Adhering to the principles of public expenditure management is also a way to ensure that any savings stemming from a reduction in military spending are better invested. As transparency improves and the full extent of military investments becomes clear, civil society can better understand opportunity costs linked to the military sector. In Chile, the end of the Copper Law meant that the funds that were once automatically allocated to the military are now open to other ministries, making them available for areas critical to sustainable development.

Conclusion

Sustainable development is underfunded. The funding gap to meet the Sustainable Development Goals is substantial, and countries will need to devise better strategies to rise to the occasion. In 2019, countries spent the highest sums on their militaries since the end of the cold war, calling into question the true extent of their commitment to achieving the Goals. In this paper, we argued that a reduction in military spending could contribute to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries, and we suggested possible paths to achieving such a reduction.

The social and economic impact of reducing military spending has become particularly relevant within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However,

[44] Diego Lopes da Silva and Nan Tian, "Ending off-budget military funding: lessons from Chile," SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 2019. Available at www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2019/ending-budget-military-funding-lessons-chile.

while empirical evidence on the negative effects of military spending on economic growth and development accumulates, global military spending continues to increase. The divergence between evidence and government policy may have three explanations: inability of Governments to act collectively to mutually reduce military spending; a lack of political will among States to cut military funding; and a lack of understanding of the negative effects of high military expenditure.

In this paper, we showed not only that a 5–10 per cent cut in military spending would release funds to cover costs of Sustainable Development Goals such as alleviating extreme poverty (Goal 1), improving health-care standards (Goal 3) and tackling climate change (Goal 13), but also that it is possible to address the challenge of redirecting military spending to social and economic development. In that regard, the United Nations plays an important role in building trust among Member States, while academia and policy advisors hold significant responsibility for communicating findings about the best use of scarce resources. Finally, improving civilian control and adopting good military budgeting practices is crucial to pushing back against institutional interests seeking to maintain large military expenditures. With only one decade left to fulfill the 2030 Agenda, reducing military expenditure and investing the saved resources towards the Sustainable Development Goals should be a key priority.

III.

A feminist approach for addressing excessive military spending

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Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Examining the concept of "excessive military spending" from a feminist perspective first requires investigation and contestation of the concept itself. The notion of excessive spending suggests that some level is normal or acceptable, beyond which it becomes excessive. Where does that boundary lie? Who sets it? Which actors get to determine what spending is reasonable and what is excessive?

The Charter of the United Nations refers to the right of Member States to individual or collective self-defence, the regulation of armaments and the "establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources."[1] The McCloy-Zorin Accords, reached in 1961 by the former Soviet Union and United States of America to guide negotiations on general and complete disarmament, note that any such programme of disarmament "shall ensure that States will have at their disposal only those non-nuclear armaments,

[1] Charter of the United Nations (1945), Article 26, 51. Available at http://legal.un.org/repertory/art26.shtml.

forces, facilities, and establishments "as are agreed to be necessary to maintain internal order and protect the personal security of citizens."[2] That language assumes that some amount of armament and expenditure on weapons is necessary for international, national and internal security. It envisages certain roles for weapons at national and international levels, and even frames weapons as necessary for the personal security of citizens within States.

Thus, regarding the question of who sets the boundary between reasonable and excessive spending, the answer is: (a) representatives of States, who cooperate internationally to set forth rules and regulations for the accumulation of weapons; and (b) the Governments of those States, which govern their citizens' possession of weapons. Where those actors set the boundary depends, then, on their perspectives about the role of weapons in providing security. Those views impact their rulings on what volumes and types of weapons are "necessary" or "reasonable". The perspectives or approaches employed are affected by the relationship of those actors to violence and power, and their understanding of possible alternative means of non-militarized or non-weaponized security.

A feminist perspective on military spending, such as that of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), is intensely critical of the notion that weapons provide security. That perspective recognizes that militarism and its associated expenditure had already become excessive since before the First World War, that they had made war inevitable and that they are inimical to peace, justice and equity between peoples and between States. In its first resolution in 1915, WILPF

[2] Letter dated 20 September 1961 from the Permanent Representatives of the Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics and the United States of America to the United Nations, addressed to the President of the General Assembly, A/4879 (emphasis added). The agreement was welcomed by consensus by the General Assembly in resolution 1660 (XVI) in December 1961.

saw "in the private profits accruing from the great armament factories, a powerful hindrance to the abolition of war."[3]

It is in that tradition that we argue that military spending – not its volume or level, but rather the absolute nature of it, the roots of it and the consequences it has had for ordering our societies and international relations – has thus far condemned us to live within systems of violence and exploitation. We argue that from a perspective that recognizes the intersection of the harms caused by military spending – harms that, while leveled disproportionately by and against men in the immediate term, are inflicted differentially and devastatingly upon those who have the least to do with creating those systems: marginalized populations including women, indigenous groups, LGBT+ persons, ethnic and religious minorities, the poor and disenfranchised. Such populations tend to have little or no role in shaping the discourse on military spending, let alone establishing the limits or creating the budgets.

Military spending is the practical application of the philosophy of militarism. That philosophy rests on the idea that the willingness and capacity to use force and violence are the way to ensure power and domination. Hence militarism is the reason and justification for Governments or other armed actors to spend money on weapons. It is inherently linked to its twin, the philosophy of capitalism; militarism has provided capitalist societies with "the answer to the 'on what' question: On what could the government spend enough to keep the system from sinking into the mire of stagnation? On arms, more arms, and ever more arms."[4] Rather than saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, as was hoped with the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the political economy of violence has

[3] Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) resolutions, First Congress, The Hague, Netherlands, 1915. Available at https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/WILPF_triennial_congress_1915.pdf.

[4] Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 213.

meant that each succeeding generation has been locked into the machinery of war. From a feminist perspective, the Charter of the United Nations itself is not sufficiently designed for its stated end, but rather for preserving the militarist structures and thinking that led to the need for its creation in the first place. From its implications that some level of armament and military spending is necessary to its embedding the right of the victors of the Second World War to dominate and to each have a veto over questions of international security, the Charter failed to set out the institutional structures and philosophical or intellectual approach to prevent war and weaponization.

Knowing that war is the ultimate form of human insecurity, feminists advocate for long-term solutions to conflict and support a peace and security agenda that protects all peoples. Alternatives to militarism and military spending include disarmament, demilitarization, investments in economic and social rights and environmental protection. This approach puts people and the planet above profits – it centres a feminist practice and policy that exposes the dominant militaristic narrative as one perspective, not the only credible perspective.

What does gender have to do with it?

We argue that, for the current system to succeed and flourish, underlying the political economy of militarism there has to be an insidious form of social organization and control: patriarchy. A feminist perspective looks at how patriarchal and gender norms are involved in any given situation. Military spending is no different; a feminist approach seeks to articulate the connections between gender and militarism and then to use that information to transform or create alternative approaches to the issue.

Gender does not refer to biological sex, but rather to socially constructed ideas that attribute meaning to and differentiate between sexes. Gender is a process constructed by human societies, and thus ideas and norms related to gender can change over time. Socially constructed understandings of gender affect perceptions of social roles, behaviour and

identity, with implications for relations between individuals. As individuals act out gender norms – which in the mainstream are broken down into a binary of masculinity and femininity – they not only reinforce the gender essentialisms built up by societies and cultures, but also contribute to the establishment and reinforcement of power relations between gender categories.[5]

In many cultures, the dominant ideation of masculinity is a heterosexual man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, physically tough, courageous, rational and unemotional.[6] In many countries where militarism is celebrated, war and weapons are marketed and normalized through toys, stories, films and social norms.[7] Myths of militarism and the military way of life have shaped mainstream ideals of the adult male role model.[8] Those constructed ideals of what is heroic, honourable, brave and selfless – in particular the male as

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[5] Judith Lorberg, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994).

[6] See, for example, Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Franck Barrett, "The organizational construction of hegemonic masculinity: the case of the US Navy", *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 3, No. 3 (1996); Maya Eichler, "Militarized masculinities in international relations", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. XXI, No. 1 (Fall/Winter 2014); and R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[7] See, for example, Lisa Wade, "Tough Guise 2: the ongoing crisis of violent masculinity", The Society Pages, 15 October 2013. Available at http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2013/10/15/tough-guise-2-a-new-film-on-the-ongoing-crisis-of-violent-masculinity. Trends in the cultural mythologization and celebration of war and the masculine warrior hero could be analysed along with contemporary trends in military spending and levels of militarism as a follow-on study.

[8] William Arkin and Lynne Dobrofsky, "Military socialization and masculinity", Journal of Social Issues, vol. 34, No. 1 (1978), pp. 151–168. Also see Saskia Stachowitsch, "Military privatization and the remasculinization of the State: making the link between the outsourcing of military security and gendered State transformations", *International Relations,* vol. 27, No. 1 (March 2013) and Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

protector of helpless women and children – mean that war, fighting, the use of weapons and violence come to define how to be a "real man". Consciously or otherwise, many women are also socialized to support that "ideal masculinity", which is promoted in various sites, including through the policies of States, security discourses, education, media debates, popular culture and family relations.[9]

This "ideal" of violent masculinity harms everyone and everything: the "constructed" male himself, but more particularly, all who do not comply with that gender norm – women, trans and queer-identified persons and non-compliant men. It requires oppression of those deemed weaker and results in violence against women and LGBT+ persons. It also results in violence against men. Idealizing men to be inherently violent and inclined to participate in violent acts makes them more expendable and vulnerable. In armed conflict, men are often targeted or counted as militants simply because they are men,[10] and are frequently subject to forced recruitment, unlawful detention, and extrajudicial killing on that basis.[11]

However, women and LGBT+ persons are disproportionately impacted by armed conflict and armed violence. That is, relative to men, the number of women and LGBT+ persons who are harmed by the use of weapons is much higher in proportion to the number who use weapons

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[9] Maya Eichler, "Militarized masculinities in international relations" (2018) .

[10] See, for example, Ray Acheson and others, *Sex and Drone Strikes: Gender and Identity in Targeting and Casualty Analysis*, WILPF and Article 36, 2014. Available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/sex-and-drone-strikes.pdf.

[11] See, for example, R. Charli Carpenter, "Recognizing gender-based violence against civilian men and boys in conflict situations", *Security Dialogue*, vol. 37, No. 1 (March 2006), pp. 83–103; R. Charli Carpenter, "Women, children and other vulnerable groups: gender, strategic frames and the protection of civilians as a Transnational Issue", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 49, No. 2 (June 2005), pp. 295–344.

themselves.[12] Experiences of conflict are also differentiated on the basis of multiple identities both innate and ascribed, with particularly severe consequences for women and LGBT+ persons. For example, gender discrimination and gender-based violence are often exacerbated during and after armed conflict, as guns are used to facilitate sexual violence, femicide and the murder of trans and queer persons.[13] The use of explosive weapons in populated areas leads to forced displacement, and displaced women, girls and LGBT+ youth face a higher risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, including harassment, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution and other crimes.[14]

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[12] Women are combatants in some militaries and situations, but in far lower numbers than men, and they have different experiences during and after conflict. For more information on this and the disproportionate impacts of weapons on women, see, for example, *Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons*, Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (New York: United Nations, 2018). Available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MOSAIC-06.10-2017EV1.0.pdf; *Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killings of women and girls* (Vienna: United Nations, July 2019), p. 10. Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet_5.pdf.

[13] See, for example, "TMM Update Trans Day of Remembrance 2018 Press Release," TvT Trans Murder Monitoring, Transgender Europe (12 November 2018). Available at https://transrespect.org/en/tmm-update-trans-day-of-remembrance-2018; Adam P. Romero, Ari M. Shaw, and Kerith J. Conron, *Gun Violence Against Sexual and Gender Minorities in the United States: A Review of Research Findings and Needs* (Los Angeles, California: The Williams Institute, April 2019); *Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons*, Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (United Nations, 2018). Available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MOSAIC-06.10-2017EV1.0.pdf.

[14] See, for example, WILPF, *Women and explosive weapons* (United Nations, 2014). Available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/WEW.pdf; Rasha Jarhum and Alice Bonfatti, *We Are Still Here: Mosulite Women 500 Days After the Conclusion of the Coalition Military Operation*, WILPF, 2019. Available at www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ENG_We-Are-Still-Here_Mosulite-Women.pdf.

Women and LGBT+ persons are not simply victims, however. They are, as will be shown below, leaders for driving forward changes in thinking and approaches to questions of weapons, war and military spending. But violent masculinities work against such change, portraying the concept of disarmament and non-weaponized security as effeminate and weak.[15] Those perpetuating the dominant systems of thought also portray proponents of disarmament and alternatives to militarism as emotional, unrealistic and irrational.[16] As the argument goes, there will always be those who want the capacity to wield power through violence; therefore, the so-called rational actors need to retain the weapons for protection against the irrational others. That approach not only undermines disarmament and reductions in military spending, but also perpetuates a social acceptance of human beings intentionally put in harm's way, viewed within an abstract calculus of casualty figures. It stands in stark contrast to the principles that form the bedrock of human rights law and international humanitarian law, and poses a serious challenge to global justice.

The system of patriarchy is insidious. In essence, by equating violence and power with masculinity, it prevents those who identify as men from performing gender differently. Cultural norms of gender are taught, learned and exercised through daily practices[17] – violent masculinity, as described above, is a particularly dominant performance. In that way, patriarchy prevents strength, courage and protection from being understood from a non-violent perspective. It makes it

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[15] Carol Cohn, Felicity Hill and Sara Ruddick, *The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Stockholm: Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, 2006).

[16] For examples, see Ray Acheson, "Patriarchy and the bomb: banning nuclear weapons against the opposition of militarist masculinities", in *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs State Security*, Betty A. Reardon and Asha Hans, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 392–409.

[17] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

impossible to achieve gender justice and keeps men and women in binary boxes based on biological sex, with a strict hierarchy between those boxes. We have become trapped in a desperate narrative of our own complicit making – and one that serves the arms industry extraordinary well. But for the pre-eminence of that philosophy, how could we make rational the spending of trillions of dollars a year on weapons and war? How else could we make disarmament seem weak, and peace seem utopian, or make protection without weapons seem absurd?[18]

Such thinking is embodied through the structures that have been created to sustain the system, including those related to military spending. Hence we cannot reduce the problem to an uncritical binary analysis concluding that women are good, men are bad. Even a cursory review of our current structures necessitates a critique of "liberal feminist" discussions on so-called gender equality. The theory is that ensuring women's equal participation and equality of access to power within the system will change the structures. Reinforcement of the gender binary aside, the evidence of that is not exactly compelling.

Mainstreaming efforts for women's participation, which is often called gender equality but really means binary sex equality, has not led to anything resembling systemic change. In terms of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year,

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[18] See, for example, Carol Cohn and Sara Ruddick, "A feminist ethical perspective on weapons of mass destruction," pp. 405–435; Maya Eichler, "Militarized masculinities in international relations", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. XXI, No. 1 (2014), pp. 81–93; Cynthia Enloe, "Beyond 'Rambo': women and the varieties of militarized masculinity", *Women and the Military System*, Eva Isaakson, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 71–93; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Kimberly Hutchings, "Making sense of masculinities and war",in *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 10, No. 4 (June 2008), pp. 389–404; and David H.J. Morgan, "Theater of war: combat, the military, and masculinities," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, eds. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1994).

most Governments have limited its prescription for action to the inclusion of more women in the military or peacekeeping operations. The resolution itself lacks "any reference to the causes of war, let alone ending war", notes Cynthia Cockburn.[19] In that context, women leaders are conditioned to prove their capacity to lead by adopting the requisite values through support for militarism, military spending and military solutions.[20] Rather than abolishing social hierarchy, liberal feminism aims to feminize it, ensuring women at the top can attain parity with the men of their own class.[21] Gender equality is a vital part in change, but we have to be more insightful as to what we mean and move away from mere binary notions. As Cynthia Enloe says, "You can militarize anything, including equality."[22]

Feminist analysis of the impacts of military spending

And so we enter the perfect storm: social strata based on gender norms and relations, cultural assumptions regarding identities and their relative value and a resultant distorted and unequal political economy. All are mutually reinforcing and

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[19] Cynthia Cockburn, "War and security, women and gender: an overview of the issues", *Gender & Development*, vol. 21, No. 3 (2013), pp. 433–52. On this point, see also *Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (2000), (New York: United Nations, 2015).

[20] We need only to look at the policies of women political leaders to understand that the problem is not men or women per se, but rather the system that identifies strength with violence and military power. That is also reflected in the fact that, as of the beginning of 2019, the CEO of four of the five biggest weapon producers in the United States are now women. Those women are not challenging the patriarchal structures and systems that have created the militarized world order. They are actively maintaining it and profiting from it.

[21] Nancy Fraser, Tithi Bhattacharya and Cinzia Arruzza, "Notes for a feminist manifesto", *New Left Review*, No. 114 (Nov–Dec 2018), p. 117.

[22] Julian Hayda, "Women now at top of military-industrial complex. A feminist reaction," WBEZ 91.5 Chicago, 8 January 2019. Available at www.wbez.org/shows/worldview/women-now-at-top-of-militaryindustrial-complex-a-feminist-reaction/900b5028-9f25-4fe0-b778-24b04f4a6115.

interrelated. All are given expression through the evil twins of militarism and capitalism.

The statistics speak for themselves. Oxfam has found that the richest 1 per cent of the world's population have more wealth than the rest of the world combined.[23] In 2018, the organization reported that 82 per cent of global wealth generated in 2017 went to the 1 per cent, while 3.7 billion people saw no increase to their wealth.[24] How does that relate to military spending? Take BlackRock for an example. That firm is the largest asset manager in the world, managing more than $6.5 trillion in assets.[25] In 2018, the chief executive officer wrote an open letter calling on corporations to be accountable when it comes to the environment, community welfare and increasing diversity in their workforce.[26] Yet, BlackRock is the top investor in weapon manufacturing companies such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, investing many billions of dollars in each company.[27] Weapons made by those companies are used in conflicts waged around the world, resulting in human rights abuses, war crimes, environmental destruction and exacerbated insecurity and instability. There is a wide gulf between the lip service such corporations pay to social responsibility and their actual actions, which allows those companies to reap profits while people suffer.

In 2018, global military spending reached approximately $1.7 trillion. In addition, estimates from experts suggest that

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[23] Deborah Hardoon, Sophia Ayele and Ricardo Fuentes-Nieva, *An Economy for the 1%: How privilege and power in the economy drive extreme inequality and how this can be stopped* (Oxfam International, January 2016). Available at https://oxf.am/2FKbYYL.

[24] Diego Alejo Vázquez Pimentel and others, *Reward Work, Not Wealth* (Oxfam International, January 2018). Available at https://oxf.am/2rkjVkf.

[25] Julie Segal, "The race to replace Larry Fink", *Institutional Investor* (28 May 2019).

[26] See www.blackrock.com/corporate/investor-relations/larry-fink-ceo-letter.

[27] "What is BlackRock?", CODEPINK, accessed 4 October 2019. Available at www.codepink.org/what_is_blackrock.

nuclear-armed States spend from about $2 billion to $30 billion each per year.[28] The cost of modernization of nuclear forces in nuclear-armed States is budgeted to run into billions – and in one case, over $1 trillion.[29] Corporations profit from that. It is private companies that build nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, and manage nuclear weapon laboratories. Most of those companies also produce other goods and are open to public investment. Three hundred and twenty-five financial institutions around the world are investing hundreds of billions into the companies that generate and sustain nuclear arsenals.[30]

In order to secure our continued complicity, an economic justification, as well as a security justification, is deployed: employment rates. Yet, despite the myth that jobs are created and retained in the sustenance of the military industrial complex, studies have shown that the weapons industry creates fewer jobs per dollar than the median manufacturing industry.[31] Military spending further benefits the 1 per cent – the wealthy few rather than the general public – because it further redistributes wealth; most of the money invested in weapons and other aspects of militarism come from government revenue through taxation. Compare the increases in military spending

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[28] WILPF, *Assuring destruction forever: 2018 edition* (New York, 2018). Available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/modernization/assuring-destruction-forever-2018.pdf.

[29] See Jon Wolfsthal, Jeffrey Lewis and Marc Quint, "The one-trillion-dollar triad – US strategic nuclear modernization over the next thirty years", (Monterey, California, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, January 2014). Available at www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/140107_trillion_dollar_nuclear_triad.pdf; and Robert Alvarez, "Yesterday is tomorrow: estimating the full cost of a nuclear buildup," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 3 November 2017. Available at https://thebulletin.org/yesterday-tomorrow-estimating-full-cost-nuclear-buildup11264.

[30] Susi Snyder, *Shorting our security – Financing the companies that make nuclear weapons* (Utrecht, Netherlands, PAX and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, 2019).

[31] Robert W. DeGrasse, *Military Expansion, Economic Decline* (New York: Council on Economic Priorities, 1983), p. 32.

to decreases in social spending in many countries engaged in weapon production and warfare. There are social costs associated with the development and production of weapons, the major burden of which will always be borne by the most vulnerable sections of society.[32] Austerity in one nuclear-weapon State, for example, decimated public-sector jobs – the majority of which are occupied by women – as well as social welfare. It is estimated that women have borne the brunt – approximately 86 per cent – of the cuts.[33] Those cuts were implemented at the same time that the Government decided to renew its submarine-launched ballistic missile system, which is projected to cost $256 billion.[34]

Military spending, in a very direct way, undermines human rights and well-being, as well as peace, security and environmental sustainability. Investment in weapons, and their inevitable use in conflict, reinforces the belief that weapons are necessary to protect. That cycle is inextricably bound up with political and economic crises. Perceived threats to military

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[32] Kumkum Sangari and others, "Why women must reject the bomb", *Out of Nuclear Darkness: The Indian Case for Disarmament* (New Delhi, Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament, 1998).

[33] Philip Alston, the United Nations rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, said, "If you got a group of misogynists in a room and said how can we make this system work for men and not for women they would not have come up with too many ideas that are not already in place." See Robert Booth and Patrick Butler, "UK austerity has inflicted "great misery" on citizens, UN says", *The Guardian*, 16 November 2018. Available at www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/16/uk-austerity-has-inflicted-great-misery-on-citizens-un-says. Also see Diane Elson, "The impact of austerity on women", Women's Budget Group, 3 December 2018. Available at https://wbg.org.uk/resources/the-impact-of-austerity-on-women; and Dawn Foster, "Britain's austerity has gone from cradle to grave", *Jacobin*, No. 9 (April 2019). Available at www.jacobinmag.com/2019/04/britain-life-expectancy-austerity-conservative-party-tories.

[34] Elizabeth Piper, "UK nuclear deterrent to cost $256 billion, far more than expected," Reuters, 25 October 2015. Available at www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-defence-trident-exclusive/exclusive-uk-nuclear-deterrent-to-cost-256-billion-far-more-than-expected-idUSKCN0SJ0EP20151025.

power, national security and the global economy result in military build-up, which is ironic, given that the drain on the capitalist economy over the past decades has been caused, at least in part, by military build-up. "The possibility of allocating more and more resources for increasingly otiose ends can become a reality. The manufacture of warfare can overtake the society which it theoretically serves," writes Mary Kaldor.[35] A pertinent example: military spending has a huge and direct role in the major threat to peace and security of our times – the climate crisis. The largest industrial military in the world is also the single biggest polluter.[36]

Feminist solutions to military spending

A feminist approach to peace and security is one that defines true human security not by stockpiling weapons or issuing threats, but by dismantling structures of oppression and injustice through negotiation, cooperation and redistribution of resources. Knowing that war is the ultimate form of human insecurity, feminists advocate for long-term solutions to conflict and support a peace and security agenda that protects all people. Alternatives include disarmament, demilitarization, investments in economic and social rights, and environmental protection. Such an anti-militarist approach puts people and the planet above profits, and centres a feminist practice and policy that exposes the dominant militaristic narrative as one perspective, not the only credible perspective. In that way, it seeks to turn

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[35] Mary Kaldor, "Warfare and capitalism", in *Exterminism and Cold War*, E.P. Thompson and others, eds. (London: New Left Books/Verso, 1982), p. 262.

[36] Neta C. Crawford, *Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change, and the Costs of War* (Brown University, 12 June 2019). Available at https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/Pentagon%20Fuel%20Use,%20Climate%20Change%20and%20the%20Costs%20of%20War%20Final.pdf. See also Murtaza Hussain, "War on the world: industrialized militaries are a bigger part of climate change than you know", The Intercept, 15 September 2019. Available at https://theintercept.com/2019/09/15/climate-change-us-military-war.

from a political economy of conflict to one of construction, from endless war to sustainable peace and non-violent conflict resolution.

To actually challenge the current inequitable system, it is imperative to create space for engagement – inside and outside of existing institutions –, where women and others of diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, backgrounds and experiences, who are willing and able to approach the issue from different perspectives, including feminist and human security perspectives. A lesson learned from feminist, queer and indigenous struggles is that appealing to the establishment for rights or equality or a seat at the table is, at best, insufficient to achieve change and, at worst, serves to reinforce existing injustices, by making problematic institutions or processes appear more palatable or equitable, without actually changing anything that those institutions do.

In order for true alternative perspectives to be treated as relevant, credible and expert, we need diverse participation, spaces and relationships to build new narratives and options. That means creating new forums – local and transnational – with diverse leadership and participation, in which people from non-normative or non-dominant perspectives and experiences can discuss issues, build discourse and create solutions. Just as indigenous struggles refuse to centre or appeal to the white community, and queer struggles refuse to centre or appeal to the cisgender or straight community, we need to work with others whose beliefs are outside of the dominant, mainstream narrative of militarized security, and generate a new sense of what is normative and credible.[37] We also need to challenge existing institutions and frames of thought as insufficient, unrepresentative and illegitimate, and to point out the interests

[37] For more information, see Ray Acheson, "Feminist solution: draw feminist, queer, and indigenous theory and experiences to support movements to end nuclear weapons", in *Feminist Solutions for Ending War*, Megan Mackenzie, ed. (forthcoming),

– such as profits and power – that lie behind establishment thinking and structures.

In the context of military spending, that will mean decentring the Security Council. In the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council was tasked with formulating a system to regulate armaments "in order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources."[38] Yet the five permanent members of the Security Council have not curtailed their own military spending nor their production and proliferation of weapons, because the values and structures of power that underpin their domestic institutions and the Security Council itself undermine the development of alternatives to militarism. Within existing structures, that responsibility should be given to the General Assembly, which is, at least, more representative and democratic. Regional bodies such as the European Union, African Union and Caribbean Community should also take greater responsibility for ensuring member States' implementation and negotiation of disarmament and arms control agreements, with attention paid to gender diversity, gendered impacts and the roles of gender norms. Discourse and decisions about military spending and the regulation of armaments should involve more than nation State representatives. Community-based forums and transnational networks should be engaged in articulating security concerns and non-militarized approaches to addressing them.

The bottom line is that appealing to the so-called military powers in discussions and negotiations for disarmament has failed, and we should stop making them the focus of our advocacy. Even referring to "military powers" or "militarily significant States" gives those countries a position of privilege and prestige that is detrimental to the pursuit of anything other

[38] Charter of the United Nations (1945), Article 26. Available at http://legal.un.org/repertory/art26.shtml.

than armed violence and warfare. Those are not the States that will set the rules or limitations on militarism and military spending. The rules and limitations will have to come from elsewhere.

Just as it was non-nuclear-armed States that negotiated the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons against the rancour and pressure of the nuclear-armed States; just as it was women suffragists – not male political leaders – who won women's right to vote; just as it was abolitionists – not slave owners – who outlawed the most horrific practice in human history, it is not the military powers that will end militarism or constrain military spending. It will have to be others who believe in the rule of law, international cooperation and integration, human security and environmental sustainability who push for and create alternatives through developing new norms, laws, agreements and commitments.

Ultimately, the Governments that produce and sell weapons and wage wars of domination and occupation will need to be brought on board, but the leadership for an alternative future will not come from them without a fundamental reorientation towards concepts and understandings of security within those countries. They will have no alternative than to change when it becomes clear that the status quo is no longer tenable, when the tides have turned against their weapons and warfare, when other Governments have forged ahead with new plans, and when their own citizens demand redistribution of resources away from weaponized security to security based on human rights, justice and environmental sustainability.

As was noted in the Declaration devoted to disarmament that was adopted in 1978 by the General Assembly, "the hundreds of billions of dollars spent annually on the manufacture or improvement of weapons are in sombre and dramatic contrast to the want and poverty in which two-thirds of the world's population live." Member States argued that "the economic and social consequences of the arms race are so detrimental that its

continuation is obviously incompatible with the implementation of the new international economic order based on justice, equity and cooperation." They urged that "resources released as a result of the implementation of disarmament measures should be used in a manner which will help to promote the well-being of all peoples and to improve the economic conditions of the developing countries."[39]

That is the programme of action that the General Assembly needs to pursue now. Building on studies from 1970 to 1988 on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and military spending, which are described in detail in volume I of this Occasional Papers series,[40] Governments and peoples need to take up the task provided for in article 26 to develop a system to reduce military spending and to regulate the production and possession of weapons. As WILPF recommended in 1915, the privatization of military production must end: the influence of corporate interest over national policies undermines disarmament and precludes a rational analysis of weapons and war. As with the climate crisis, we are past the point where we can allow those interested in maintaining their privilege at the expense of the rest of the world to dictate our terms of engagement and the possibilities of what we can do to make our world safer, more secure and sustainable. That means centring those whose lives have been harmed by the weaponization of our world: women, LGBT+ persons, ethnic and religious minorities, developing nations, the poor, those living with disabilities, as well as our planet, which has suffered immensely from the production and use of weapons.

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[39] Final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (A/S-10/4), para. 16.

[40] Michael Spies, *United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditures: A Historical Overview*, UNODA Occasional Papers, No. 33 (New York: United Nations, 2019).

IV.

From swords to ploughshares: lessons learned from conversion movements

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After the Second World War, the normal cycle of war preparation followed by disarmament was broken as the two post-war superpowers committed themselves to a new cold war arms race. Many private companies that had converted their operations to supply the world war now found it more lucrative to sidestep the return to civilian production and begin supplying the escalating demands of the cold war. Some 75 years later, the private interests thriving on continuous war preparation are still thwarting progress towards a less militarized world.

While most high-level considerations of military requirements and disarmament focus mainly on demand-side considerations of national security, the supply-siders – that is, those profiting from escalating arms expenditures – can have a decisive impact on the world's military posture. Most obviously, sowing the world with exported weapons increases the chances of armed conflict.

During the 1980s, the biblical injunction to turn swords into ploughshares became part of an international movement. The prospect of a nuclear nightmare galvanized mass resistance, particularly in Western Europe and the United States of America. That resistance came to focus on the first-step goal of a "nuclear freeze" – that is, a mutually-agreed pause by the two superpowers in the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. The best strategists of that movement realized that the case for nuclear disarmament would need to include a strategy for reorienting the economies that had come to depend on the nuclear build-up.

Organizers knew that resistance to disarmament would be immovable in the absence of a road map pointing the way for defence-dependent workers, businesses and communities to make an orderly transition to other lines of work. Therefore, advocacy for strategic as well as conventional disarmament began incorporating insights into the technical, political and economic ways and means of converting military resources to civilian use. That part of the movement became known either as "defence conversion" or, adverting to the breadth of the challenge, "economic conversion".

The real momentum behind the conversion movement only took hold at the end of the decade, when the Berlin Wall fell, and military spending around the globe came down with it. Conversion suddenly became an urgent priority for governments, businesses and civil society groups, and that urgency produced a wave of creative thinking and some investment aimed at accomplishing it.

In the post-cold war period, conversion movement-building took many creative forms and produced numerous individual success stories. This paper will therefore look closest at the post-cold war period to derive its lessons on conversion. And because the military budget of the United States dwarfs that of the rest of the world, the paper will focus mostly on the experience of the United States while evaluating the extent to which those lessons apply internationally. The paper argues

that four key conditions are necessary for conversion success. First, reductions in military spending must be accompanied by reinvestment of the resulting savings to spur new economic growth, including in manufacturing, that will compensate for losses in the military sector. Second, countries must develop programmes offering technical and financial assistance for firms, workers and communities to adapt to commercial marketplaces and overcome the inertial drive to keep doing what they are doing. Third, civil society must support conversion through a multiplicity of approaches, including research, education, advocacy, legislation, attention to key constituencies, and efforts to connect conversion to other salient issues. Fourth, countries must develop robust industrial policies to support and organize the transition to a less militarized economy.

A fiscal shift is key

The most crucial catalyst for the process of converting swords into ploughshares occurs when substantial funds are cut from the "swords" budget and transferred to the "ploughshares" account. Conversion success is scarce when military budgets are stable or rising.

But such reductions alone are not enough. They must be accompanied by the reinvestment of defence savings on the civilian side of national budgets. That is necessary to spur the growth of new economic activity, including in manufacturing, that will compensate for losses in the military sector. If military budgets are simply cut without reinvestment, the resulting slack in the economy will threaten economic recession, placing extreme pressure on defence-dependent actors to force the military budget back up.

The post-cold war period in the United States is instructive. As its superpower rival collapsed, the United States cut its military budget by about one third and, in varying degrees, most countries around the world followed suit. That triggered an explosion of energy and ideas about how to reclaim the fruits

of the massive cold war military build-up to serve the neglected needs of the world's populations.

But towards the end of the twentieth century, the fiscal balance began to swing back in the direction of higher levels of military spending. Several contributors to that international trend were reflected in the experience of the United States:

- There was insufficient new civilian investment in national budgets to take up the slack created by defence cuts and create the demand pull to alternative new civilian markets;[1] in the absence of sufficient investment on the civilian side of the budget, accompanying defence budget cuts, conversion on a large scale does not happen;
- There was determined resistance by defence industries around the world, and particularly in the United States – the world's leading military spender – to converting from military to civilian production, including through political techniques that have continued to orient national budgets towards greater defence spending;[2]
- Defence-oriented business actors and foreign policy elites waged a largely successful campaign after the cold war to develop new rationales for high military budgets;[3]
- Military contractors began marketing a more aggressive push into arms export markets as "conversion"; and

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[1] Much of the "peace dividend" in the United States was spread out and diluted by tax cuts. That experience underscores the reality that conversion on a large scale does not happen if defence cuts are not accompanied by sufficient investment in the civilian side of the budget.

[2] Those tactics can include financial contributions to the re-election campaigns of influential legislators as well as the distribution of subcontracts to benefit the constituencies of a large number of lawmakers. See, for example, William D. Hartung, "Promising the sky: pork barrel politics and the F-35 combat aircraft" (Washington, D.C., Center for International Policy, January 22, 2014).

[3] See United States, National Defense Strategy Commission, *Providing for the Common Defense* (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace, November 2018).

- The 9/11 attacks spurred a long period of increases in global defence spending as part of the "global war on terror",[4] resulting in defence conversion taking a back seat to a build-up of the defence sector.

Government programmes are needed to help the defence sector adapt to civilian production

The defence sector's inertial drive to keep doing what it is doing is powerful. In response, the United States developed programmes after the cold war that offered modest technical and financial assistance for firms to adapt to commercial production. Those included technical assistance for small and medium-sized defence manufacturers to adapt to the different demands of the commercial marketplace; retraining programmes for defence-dependent workers; and grants to underwrite the work of defence-dependent communities to plan a transition to civilian production.[5]

No comprehensive accounting of conversion success rates exists, but several studies done in the United States early in the post-cold war period found that "successful conversion was surprisingly common among small to medium-sized defense contractors," which often credited government programmes with offering key retraining, marketing, financial and technical assistance. Several large prime contractors had considerable success reducing their dependency on military spending by applying their defence aerospace and electronics skills to production in other fields, including commercial satellites,

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[4] For historical figures on defence spending by the United States, see United States, Sustainable Defense Task Force, *Sustainable Defense: More Security, Less Spending* (Washington, D.C., Center for International Policy, June 2019).

[5] The flagship programme in the United States, called the Technology Reinvestment Project, funded consortia of defence and commercial companies teaming up to commercialize defence technologies. Among the successes was the adaptation of a fighter jet's hydraulic system to power the drive train of a hybrid electric bus. Thousands of those buses are still on the streets of cities, including New York, Chicago, London and Tokyo. See www.hybridrive.com.

telecommunications, and automotive projects such as designing intelligent vehicle information systems. The evidence also suggested that "firms with robust diversification strategies were enjoying higher profits, greater productivity growth, and healthier rates of R&D investment than contractors more entrenched in defense markets".[6]

Conversion plans for federal facilities were also created during that period. Commissions set up by both the United States federal government and civil society groups drew up plans for turning many national laboratories, including the original nuclear bomb-making factory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, towards peaceful purposes like environmental protection and nuclear non-proliferation.

Initiatives outside the United States included an October 1992 United Nations conference in Moscow convened to help the new Government of the Russian Federation grapple with the challenges of converting its militarized economy to civilian production, in the face of resistance from major economic sectors.[7] The following year, the European Commission set up the KONVER programme to provide financial assistance to member States responding to the challenge of defence spending cutbacks and military base closures across Europe.[8] And the United States and the Russian Federation crafted the Cooperative Threat Reduction Agreement to secure nuclear materials and assist nuclear scientists in adapting their skills to civilian problems.

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[6] Michael Oden, Laura Wolf-Powers and Ann Markusen, "Post-cold war conversion: gains, losses, and hidden changes in the US economy," in *From Defense to Development? International Perspectives on Realizing the Peace Dividend*, Sean diGiovanna and Ann Markusen, eds., (London, Routledge, 2004).

[7] United States, National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament, "The Russian tug-of-war over conversion", *The New Economy* (fall 1992).

[8] "European Commission addresses conversion," *The New Economy* (summer 1993).

This complex challenge requires a multi-pronged approach

Conversion is a technical, political and economic process involving numerous actors and interests. The military economy involves a vast nexus of public and private enterprises, including bases, national laboratories, and government-owned and private contractors. Converting military resources to civilian use can free up resources that countries can use to make life better for their citizens. Investments on the civilian side of national budgets – in domains including education, health care and infrastructure – will improve the productivity, and therefore the long-term health, of national economies currently burdened by excessive military spending. In addition, studies have repeatedly shown that investing in those areas creates more jobs than spending an equivalent amount on the military.[9]

In other words, the process is worth it. But overcoming the formidable obstacles in its way requires strong support from civil society. That support reached its most intense point after the cold war, when civil society pursued conversion through a multiplicity of approaches that included research, education, advocacy and legislation.

Research and education

Two United States-based non-governmental conversion organizations – the National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament, in Washington, D.C., and the Center for Economic Conversion, in northern California – provided frequent updates and analysis on national and international conversion policy, conversion case studies, and developments at the state and local levels. Those initiatives built on previous efforts undertaken during the build-down

[9] Robert Pollin and Heidi Garrett-Peltier, *The US Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: 2011 Update* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts, Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), 2011). Available at www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published_study/PERI_military_spending_2011.pdf.

after the United States military withdrawal from Viet Nam; they were devised by Seymour Melman, a professor of engineering at Columbia University, and supported through legislation, sponsored first by Senator George McGovern and then by Representative Ted Weiss, to mandate that military contractors conduct advanced contingency planning for conversion. During the post-cold war period, a United States research centre at Rutgers University, the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics (PRIE), conducted numerous important studies of the response of defence-dependent regions around the country to the conversion challenge.

The richest source of international data came from a non-profit centre funded by the Government of Germany called the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). In addition to preparing briefing papers on a range of conversion-related topics, BICC's activities during the 1990s included publishing an annual conversion index that tracked every country's demilitarization progress or regress, according to measures such as numbers of military personnel, numbers of weapons and military spending. The arc of progress quantified in those volumes turned to regress as global military spending began to rise in the late 1990s.

Advocacy on behalf of a fiscal shift

Calculating the trade-offs between military spending and domestic priorities such as health care, education, clean energy and transportation has proved to be a potent tool. The leading non-governmental organization in the United States doing work in that area is the National Priorities Project of the Institute for Policy Studies. Its interactive web tools allow citizens and advocacy groups to calculate trade-offs at the state and local levels, as well as by congressional district, bringing home to citizens the local impact of excessive military spending.

Each year, on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending, countries compile photographs and videos of multifarious local actions pushing for military cuts on every

continent. It is timed to coincide with the release of the most authoritative global military spending data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. More recently, the Poor People's Campaign, an advocacy network modelled on a similar campaign mounted by Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, has called for substantial cuts in defence spending by the United States, with the proceeds to be invested in urgent domestic needs.[10]

Legislative advocacy

After the cold war, advocates worked with legislators on a spate of legislative proposals designed to facilitate conversion. In the United States, those efforts succeeded in producing federal support for retraining displaced defence workers; modest funding to help create new markets in a few domains, including commercial shipbuilding; demonstration grants for innovative conversion projects; and assistance to communities needing to replace lost defence production with new sources of economic activity.[11]

Grassroots advocacy: building models to catalyse broader action by focusing on specific targets

Other efforts have focused on individual contractors, individual communities, or specific weapons systems. In the United States, one group in Maine focused on one of the country's main military shipbuilding enterprises, Bath Iron Works, which ultimately opened new commercial lines of business. A group in St. Louis, Missouri, secured a piece of a federal grant to survey the city's prime and subcontractors on their defence dependency and interest in conversion. In Tucson,

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[10] Shailly Gupta Barnes, Lindsay Koshgarian and Ashik Siddique, eds., *Poor People's Moral Budget: Everyone Has a Right to Live* (Washington, D.C., Poor People's Campaign, Institute for Policy Studies, Kairos Center and Repairers of the Breach, June 2019).

[11] Greg Bischak, "US conversion after the cold war, 1990–1997" (Bonn, Bonn International Center for Conversion, 1997).

Arizona, another group employed a number of laid-off defence engineers to consult with small local businesses on plans to reduce their defence dependency.[12]

Advocacy for base conversion

Some conversion advocates have focused on repurposing military bases, work that has some advantages over trying to change the behaviour of private contractors. Whereas private contractors guard their proprietary rights to make their own decisions, bases are public assets over which the public is understood to have a say.

The Government of the United States has designed an orderly and effective process for transferring control of closed military bases for use by local communities. It involves setting up a reuse committee with all community stakeholders, including government officials, economic development experts, organized labour and non-profit groups. While bases located in rural areas tend to have a harder time replacing the economic activity generated by the base, the record of successful reuse, particularly in urban areas, is quite good.[13]

The Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, for example, closed during the post-cold war period. It is now home to a lively mixture of retail enterprises, housing and light industry with a particular emphasis on clean technology start-ups. While job losses were heavy when the base was closed, more people now work there than when the military occupied the space.[14]

The Office of Economic Adjustment of the United States Department of Defense has identified numerous other cases in

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[12] Miriam Pemberton, "Acting locally", *The New Economy* (April/May 1991).

[13] United States, Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment, "Civilian reuse of former military bases, 1961–1993" (September 1993).

[14] Colin Woodard, "The coolest shipyard in America", *Politico Magazine* (July 21, 2016). Available at www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/philadelphia-what-works-navy-yard-214072.

which converted bases have ultimately generated more civilian jobs than existed when the base was used for military purposes. Uses of former military facilities included repurposing as industrial parks, commuter airports, educational institutions, and even public parks.[15]

The overriding problem with base conversion is that communities that have come to rely on bases over decades as a locus of jobs and economic activity tend to mobilize intensely to protect the bases in their communities from closing. Though the military itself declares that its base structure has about 30 per cent excess capacity and requests a new closure process every year, Congress has not authorized one since 2005.

In the international context, the United States is the only country with multiple military bases on every continent. Advocacy on the part of Governments and civil society on those continents involves pressing for closure of United States-owned bases; for clean-up of the environmental damage the bases have caused; and for economic development assistance to help the host countries make the former bases usable for their own national purposes. A new international coalition, the Overseas Base Closure and Realignment Commission Coalition has formed around those goals.[16]

Involvement of key constituencies

Primary among the constituencies relevant to conversion are, of course, defence workers. At the end of the Second World War, the members of the United Auto Workers were widely represented in the defence industry workforce that would be most heavily impacted by post-war defence spending cuts. The powerful head of the United Auto Workers union, Walter

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[15] For examples of successful base conversions, see the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) section of the web site of the United States Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment. Available at www.oea.gov/how-we-do-it/base-realignment-and-closure.

[16] For more information, see www.overseasbases.net.

Reuther, drew up a visionary and detailed plan to convert the war plants owned by the Government of the United States to produce modern railroad equipment and low-cost housing for returning military personnel.[17] He tied that proposal to building grassroots coalitions on such issues as civil rights, as well as breaking new ground on worker health and safety issues, and connecting wage increases to productivity gains. Similarly, as the cold war wound down, conversion work was supported by William Winpisinger and the International Association of Machinists, another major player in the defence sector.

During the post-cold war period, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) passed strong resolutions in support of conversion planning, involving partnerships with the labour movement, and government support. One union in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and one in the United States gained national attention for setting up alternative use committees to examine the feasibility of new civilian manufacturing at their facilities, and work with management to implement conversion plans.[18] Ultimately, their respective managements undermined those initiatives and asserted their prerogatives to instead shut down production and lay off workers.

One ambitious labour-civil society coalition in the United States drew up a set of key principles to guide conversion advocacy: support for alternative use committees and worker involvement; incentives for companies to stay in place and accountability for results; and federal, state and local purchasing to foster conversion.[19]

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[17] UAW-CIO, "Are War Plants Expendable?" *Willow Run Local 30* (1945).

[18] Lance Compa, "Economic Conversation: Conversion and the Labor Movement," *Cornell University Labor Research Review* (1985); Pemberton, "Acting locally".

[19] Northeast Citizen Action Resource Center and the Commonwealth Institute, "A call to action: a primer on defense conversion and economic rejuvenation", *UAW Region 9A* (1994).

A few labour groups, including US Labor Against the War and Veterans for Peace, now favour conversion planning, while most are far more guarded. The problem is as it always has been. Military spending, when high, tends to support higher wage rates than civilian work. And defence executives have suppressed labour organizing for conversion by threatening to move production elsewhere if it occurs. As elevated military spending is equated with patriotism, and obliquely promoted through displays such as military flyovers at popular non-military events, building public support for conversion becomes even more challenging. The message therefore deserves to be underscored: a more balanced investment agenda in national budgets is necessary to overcome challenges to conversion.

A successful conversion strategy requires a robust industrial policy

There are numerous examples of successful conversion: companies that have drastically reduced their dependency on the defence market; former defence contracting sites now engaged in producing for the commercial market; former military bases repurposed for civilian life; communities whose economies are no longer dependent on military contracting. But they are scattered.

Conversion on a scale large enough to serve as the foundation for substantial disarmament needs a large-scale industrial policy, both to overcome the forces of resistance and to organize national resources, talents and energies around that shift and propel it beyond a set of isolated examples.

The post-cold war period created the most favourable conditions for such a policy in the United States. For 40 years, the Government had one de facto industrial policy: focusing vast resources on the mission of winning the cold war. Once that goal had been accomplished, a new national mission was possible. The hazards of pollution were evident nationally and internationally, and the evidence of global warming and its potentially catastrophic consequences was beginning to be

understood. Revamping energy and transportation systems in the United States to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions would be a challenge of sufficient magnitude to absorb much of the scientific, engineering and workforce talent that had been applied to winning the cold war.

The United States paid some attention in its national conversion policy to the potential of harnessing the fruits of its 40-year military build-up to tackle the challenges of restoring the environment and arresting catastrophic climate change. But it was the State of California that came closest to building an industrial policy around that goal.

Its two catalysts were the region's major smog problem and the unusually severe downturn in the defence market, focused particularly on the southern California aerospace market. California instituted the most stringent emissions standards in the country, providing incentives for developing a regional industrial base in such technologies as alternative fuel vehicles and high-speed rail. In 1992, a consortium called CALSTART brought together 84 entities, including state and local air quality boards, public utilities, engineering and environmental research firms, and defence and commercial companies to draw on public research-and-development funds to develop the technology and infrastructure for the nascent alternative fuel industry. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors secured federal Commerce Department funds to map a comprehensive strategy for supporting those new industries, building on existing regional strengths.

That policy push was not enough to overcome such factors as the resistance of the majority of prime defence contractors to putting in the work of serious restructuring, retooling and retraining for new markets; the resistance of major automakers to learning how to produce electric vehicles, and of consumers to buying them; and piecemeal, insufficient and fragmented government support for industrial change. But seeds were planted: CALSTART has now successfully helped launch

a major fleet of electric buses in cities across the country, and is working on doing the same for trucks and other heavy equipment. And as climate change becomes a daily experience, as well as a future peril, all the major automakers are working on launching electric vehicle models of their own.

Military conversion efforts may benefit from synergies with other industries that will need to diversify to deal with impending changes in public policy. The most obvious analogue is the need to find alternative jobs for individuals currently employed in the fossil fuel industry. The Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts has crafted a detailed plan for re-employing all workers who may be displaced due to shifts in energy sources and production methods designed to address the pressing issue of climate change.[20] Tools to be used include a major shift in resources into the alternative energy sector, drawing on public and private sources; shoring up pensions for workers in the fossil fuel sector who leave via attrition (i.e., retirement); and skills training for workers whose jobs involve skills not easily transferable to the new industries that will be spawned by efforts to address climate change. The cost of such a programme would be a small fraction of the sums transferred to alternative energy initiatives, and would have the benefit of substantially reducing political opposition to shifts in production towards more environmentally-friendly activities. There could be useful synergies between what has been called a "just transition" from fossil fuel production and the conversion of military industries and activities to civilian uses. Those efforts would benefit greatly from a redefinition of security to include addressing climate change, which, along with the spread of nuclear weapons, represents the greatest current challenge to humanity. Despite that reality, thus far investments in military security by major nations like the United States have

[20] Robert Pollin and Brian Callaci, *The Economics of Just Transition: A Framework for Supporting Fossil Fuel-Dependent Workers and Communities in the United States* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts, Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), October 2016).

far outstripped investments in climate security. Those priorities must change.

Conclusion

Disarmament and conversion must be linked: the world cannot achieve significant disarmament unless it pays attention to the economic underpinnings of militarism that stand in the way. The United Nations has consistently called on Member States to reduce their military expenditures, and has linked those efforts to the urgent need for resources to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to address the climate crisis. Connecting defence conversion to sustainable development may in fact be the most potent strategy in the current moment. A plentiful constellation of civil society groups exists in countries around the world to push for more government support for domestic needs: health care, education, environmental protection and infrastructure, as well as security spending on diplomacy and other forms of international cooperation. The kind of increased civilian spending that will be required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals needs a bill payer. While increasing taxes on the wealthy beneficiaries of widening global inequality, including through such international financing mechanisms as a financial transaction tax, are part of the answer, a quick look at the budgets of many countries reveals disproportionate funds going to the military. Rebalancing those accounts requires confronting the powerful interests marshalled to perpetuate the status quo. To free up resources from military accounts, the constituencies advocating for increased civilian expenditures need to join forces and link their common agenda to the conversion cause.

The United Nations should incorporate conversion into its disarmament priorities, including by calling on Member States to prioritize civilian reinvestment that will take up the slack in the economy left by reduced military industrial production, and to develop their own industrial policies to organize that effort. Additionally, international development banks should be

encouraged to prioritize the kind of investment that creates new markets available to industrial enterprises formerly focused on military production. An international agenda on infrastructure, particularly focused on transitioning to clean energy and transportation, would harmonize the goals of conversion and sustainable development. Finally, the United Nations, Member States and civil society should support and promote work on conversion, including research, education, advocacy, legislation and cross-issue solidarity.

ISBN 978-92-1-139181-7

20-05109