

GETTING THE MILITARY SPENDING ISSUE INTO THE PUBLIC ARENA

How can we get a practical dialogue going about UK Military Spending that forges blue sky vision with practical ideas and has meaning for the UK public

A Labour Party, Trades Union, Green Movement, Student Movement and wider social justice movements effort to get Military Spending into

- the austerity framework
- 'real threats to security' framework
- the int'l development 'structural campaign' framework (debt cancellation, trade, tax and climate justice)
- defence skills transfer to green economy

"Being at the service of dialogue and peace also means being truly determined to minimize and, in the long term, to end the many armed conflicts throughout our world. Here we have to ask ourselves: Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade."

Pope Francis' address to US Congress

A New Economics, Military Spending and the Five Percent Idea

The United Kingdom has the sixth largest military expenditure in the world (SIPRI 2015), at \$61 billion (roughly £40 billion) and more than 2% of its GDP. The current government has committed to maintain military spending of at least 2% of GDP every year until 2015. This is despite the fact that after 5 years of the Conservative-led government, only the services sector (but not arguably more productive parts of Britain's economy, eg. construction, manufacturing and production sectors) has gone back to pre-crisis peak. The economic growth has been lagging behind at less than 2% until last year, with such an unbalanced economy and the implantation of even harsher austerity policies, last year's economic 'resurgence' may soon prove to be a mirage.

We are increasingly in a multi-polar world. With this, tensions have been rising in many parts of the world as we adjust to the new reality of what seems to be the beginning of the end of the 'American Century'. The superpowers (USA, China and Russia), oil-rich countries and NATO as a whole have revived an arms race, with a slight blip after the global financial crisis. Now the pace is gathering again. Britain has been trying very hard to keep pace with the pack to maintain its 'standing in the world' so despite its much diminished size, population and resources, its military spending has consistently ranked among the world's top 5 - 'worthy of its place in the Security Council's permanent 5.' After the recent disastrous military foreign interventions/expeditions, notably Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, that were arguably made possible because of this false sense of military superiority, **we must ask the public to ask this question: 'Is it wise for us to carry on like this?'**

For a medium-sized country like Britain with fragile economy, are we prepared to drain ourselves further of resources and productivity by continuously following the lead of the United States to 'police the world' while also arguing for the need to invest in the madness of Trident?

A military with all its cutting edge and expensive weaponry is somewhat at odds with the reality of the average soldier. British soldiers have been ill-treated by the successive governments. The government sent them to unnecessary (illegal) foreign military expeditions and didn't properly care for them once they became veterans. Thousands of military personnel were made redundant because of austerity while expensive and impractical military equipment and systems were still being procured, notably the £100 billion Trident and the problem-plagued and the most expensive weapons system in history, the F-35 jets (which could not even beat 30-year old F-16s in simulated combats). There is no well thought through long-term strategy and defence policy based on real needs. This is why the RAF still relies on 30-year-old Tornados despite having its newest fighter jets, the Typhoon, in its arsenal because Typhoons are not yet compatible with its most accurate missiles, the Brimstone.

Britain's military spending can be vastly reduced without reducing its ability to defend itself in the face of aggressive invasions by cutting wasteful procurement and decommissioning no-longer fit-for-purpose equipments. All this is in the context of the 'elephant in the room' – climate change.

Climate change has been recognised, even by the Pentagon, as the biggest challenge humanity face today. We have to transform our fossil-fuel economy into sustainable green economy as well as massively reduce our carbon emissions now. Militaries and wars are the biggest unaccounted-for contributor to the climate change. This ongoing emission is sustained by the excessive military spending around the world buying ever more expensive jets, tanks and missiles that create nothing but destruction, profits and greenhouse gases.

The 5% Formula is proposed by the Five Percent Campaign to tackle the problems mentioned above. It is a mechanism to achieve major, year-on-year cuts to global military spending over 10 years and beyond.

It begins with a call to the top 20 spenders (who account for 80% of world spending) to get back to the 'Clinton Levels' of global military spending the mid 1990s – the lowest in recent history by via 5% absolute cuts over 10 years. Then, having reached these 1990s levels (still \$500bn p/a as opposed to our \$1 trillion currently) we suggest a mechanism that will slowly but surely drive spending down via the 5% threshold.

First stage: Years 1-10. We call for Britain to lead the way and to cut its military spending by 5% every year. This is equivalent to a compound 40% cut to annual military spending after 10 years. This may deliver in total £24 billion over that decade, to be redirected to core urgent human and environmental needs, possibly split 50/50 between domestic and international. This £24 billion is on top of the estimated £100bn saving over the 30-year lifespan of Trident if it is *not* renewed.

Next stage: Year 10 and onwards. We call for Britain to be brave, lead the way and adopt the *5% threshold rule* where military spending growth (% change) in a given year is limited by previous year's economic growth (measured as % increase in gross domestic product or GDP), less 5 percentage points (5%). FOR example: 2% growth = 3% cut to annual military spend. The 5% threshold rule is designed to be mainstreamed into budgeting beyond the first 10 years, acting as both a military expenditure 'dampener' and a economic growth 'accelerator', while facilitating and enabling the public to more deeply interrogate the many inter-linked issues of the military spending debate. **The 5% threshold rule in practise means that no country allows any increase in military spending to outstrip economic growth. The savings will be divided equally to fund both domestic and international needs**

Hugely inflated military spending budgets are a major part of the problems we face today – they too must be more prominently factored in to its contribution to global inequality and climate change. Excessive military spending must be challenged, reduced and redirected. **Through the 5% Formula, the Five Percent Campaign**

therefore aims to (i) reduce the power and influence of the defence industry over governments and society (ii) divert military spending into a transformative funding stream delivering social justice and meaningful investment in conflict prevention and peacekeeping (iii) divert military spending to deliver a sustainable, non-fossil fuel, green economy that addresses the many dimensions of climate (in)justice.

Particularly, in the context of Jeremy Corbyn's policies, the Five Percent Campaign proposal complements Corbyn's policies:

- **Economic growth not arms trade profits.** Military spending is one of the least efficient ways of investing our limited resources to advance economic growth and prosperity; thus, the significant outpacing of its increase to the economic growth is harmful to the real economy and consequently the society. To paraphrase James Tobin, there is therefore the need to 'throw some sand in the wheels' of our excessively efficient military-industrial complex. For this purpose, our proposed *5% threshold rule* will serve as a break mechanism embedded in the budgeting process, deliberately intended to slow down the runaway military-expenditure increases. In the meantime, the money thereby saved will be redirected to productive areas to further economic and societal advancement. The *5% threshold rule* is our first step towards a prosperous economy based on sustainable *sensible defense* and the efficient use of our precious but finite resources.
- **Investment not austerity.** Savings from cuts to annual military spending may be diverted to fund the National Investment Bank alongside Corbyn's People's Quantitative Easing programme.
- **Peacekeeping, Defense Diversification, ending Trident renewal.** Ending Trident renewal alone can save almost £2 billion a year - this can contribute massively to the 5% cut to annual military spending we called for. By putting diplomacy first in our foreign policy, we will reduce the need to oversized military and its budget. The Military will be made smaller and more efficient and veterans will be trained to work in other productive economic sectors. Workers in the defence industry have transferrable skills and expertise equally suited to more economically productive industries. All these will further reduce the military spending and the savings may be partly diverted to fund UN's peacekeeping work.
- **Green economy and sustainable future.** Savings from military spending cuts may also be diverted to fund the transition to green economy. By recognising military as a major carbon emitters even in their day-to-day running without wars (with their petrol-guzzling equipments), cutting military spending by removing unnecessary equipment and weaponry is the first step towards reducing military's carbon footprint.

The language of defence, and of security, is inevitably loaded, depending on who may be defining it or defending it. Spending (mis-directed) billions on 'defence' has not delivered security in the post 9/11 world. And while security means one thing to national intelligence services, it means quite another to pastoral farmers in climate-challenged communities. Beyond the world of extremes exemplified by PRISM or the billions spent on the F35 Strike Fighter there is a genuine and fundamental question that underpins the debate on military spending – how much is 'enough' when the public's understanding of its security needs is so profoundly shallow (through no fault of its own)? The question society is prevented from asking is how should be how do we fund our *true* security needs? This is a much marginalised debate in the mainstream media, which in turn closes down opportunities for wider society to comprehend 'alternative' ways of understanding what 'defence' and 'security' can mean.

If – as we hope – we can extend the initial proposed first 10-year framework, then the British public could call upon the government to continue a sustainable downward trend in military expenditure, saving further monies for constructive reallocation to areas of greater human need. This campaign concept is fair, proportionate, just – and long, long overdue. It speaks to a multi-polar world where reduced military spend equates to a safer world, and where the notion of non-offensive defence and sustainable security are a powerful combination.

Redirecting funds saved from excessive military spending towards more vital areas – domestically and internationally – we can deliver a much more real and tangible security than we have at present, and in doing so, see a rebalancing and redistribution of resources.

The European refugees crisis

UNHCR has recently estimated that there is 60 million people forcibly displaced worldwide - among them 20 million refugees and 2 million asylum-seekers. Out of all refugees worldwide, 5 million are Palestinian, 3.9 million Syrian, 2.6 million Afghans, 1.1 million Somalis and 0.37 million Iraqis - they alone accounts for almost two thirds. Syria is currently the country producing most refugees.

Europe is facing its biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War and how to accommodate them has suddenly became the biggest political issue. However, these refugees do not appear in a vacuum - they come from countries and regions that are mired in civil wars and military conflicts, where USA and NATO have a long history of (military) interventions. It started with Afghanistan, where the war is still on-going and the Taliban has again gained a foothold. Next is Iraq, where at least a million people have died because of the war. The military occupation, the weak government and sectarian infighting directly led to the rise of ISIS. We then had the US-led NATO bombing of Libya. The government was destroyed and the whole governance structure collapsed into warring tribal factions. The lack of rule and stability has made Libya a key launch-pad for refugees to embark their dangerous journey into Europe. Finally, there is Syria. The western backed rebels have been overtaken by ISIS. The power-balance between ISIS and the Assad regime is so fine that neither side is willing to even negotiate a ceasefire.

The British government's response is a classic example of hypocrisy – indeed madness. It's position it to both offer more aid and start bombing *both sides*. While more aid is much welcome for humanitarian purpose, fundamentally, it only treats the symptom of the crisis while doing little to solve the crisis. But aid is vital, and right now, **the UN's World Food Programme has been forced to cut food aid to Syrian refugees (due to lack of funding from member states)** and is struggling to find even £8 per head *per month* - that's three Big Macs - to last a whole month. There is money for weapons and insufficient funds for food aid.

The Middle East conflicts have been extremely profitable to arms dealers and arms producing countries. Russia has been supplying a great deal of arms to the Assad regime. On the other side, agreed arms sales to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Algeria, Egypt and Iraq surge to \$18 billion this year, up from \$12 billion last year, with USA, France and UK among the biggest exporters. Sunni Gulf states have been supporting Islamist group in Syria, even ISIS, whose biggest early supporter was Saudi Arabia. Turkey, a NATO member is also known to be supporting ISIS. ISIS funds its expenditure through selling oil and looted antiquities. Who are they selling these products to? Where do they buy weaponry from? The hypocrisy of countries supporting the bombing campaign is overwhelming.

While the world's attention is on Syria, Saudi Arabia has been bombing Yemen to pieces without regard to civilian lives and infrastructure. The UK, in particular, has been one of the leading arms suppliers to Saudi Arabia, providing 11 Typhoon fighter jets just months before the beginning of its Yemeni campaign in March and granting 37 export military licenses since then. UN has recently warned of a massive humanitarian crisis, especially possibly deliberate starvation of civilians. If the bombing continues, it will only be a matter of time before Yemen joins the rank of Syria as one of the biggest sources of refugees in Europe.

It is reported that according to former Finnish president and Nobel peace prize laureate Martti Ahtisaari, that the USA, UK and France failed to take Russia's proposal in 2012 for Assad to cede power as part of a peace deal. The disregard for a political solution while pursuing their single-mindedly military options, has proved to be disastrous and with terrible consequences. As Jeremy Corbyn has said "Every war ends with a political agreement. Why not start with a political agreement and cut out the middle part?"

A political settlement requires a powerful mediator and committed and purposeful diplomacy involving all key parties. Additionally, as demonstrated by the aftermath of the retreat of the ISIS from Kobane, despite being ruined by heavy shelling and bombing, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees in Turkey have been gradually returning to the city rather than seeking asylum in the EU. Once the city was secured by the Kurdish forces, the Kurdish refugees did not hesitate to go home. Therefore, one of top priorities to resolve Syria's refugee crisis should be restoring security as soon as possible, and to do that, we need a properly managed and clearly instructed peacekeeping ground force.

And is the international community adequately investing in peacekeeping forces? No.

An ill-funded peacekeeping force lacks authority and ability to bring forward peace and enforce security. **The money saved from annual military spending by the 5% formula may be diverted to fund UN peacekeeping forces.** Countries have chosen to make cuts to military personnel, while increasing spending on high-tech weaponry, such as missiles, fighter jets and drones. Such weaponry minimises damage on 'our' side while maximising 'other side's' suffering, therefore significantly increasing our willingness to deploy aerial military expeditions. This increases the volatility rather than making us more secure.

The 5% Formula will tackle major root causes of military conflicts - cutting military spending and diverting money saved to fund economic social justice programmes both domestic and international, while enhancing the means to resolve conflicts ie funding UN's peacekeeping forces

Surely, now is the time to try something different.

Who we are

Tipping Point North South (TPNS) is a co-operative that supports and initiates creative, campaign-driven projects that advance the global social justice agenda. It is a 'for the benefit of community' co-operative, set up to work in the film and creative industries as well as within the not-for-profit sector ie with colleagues and partners in the international NGO campaign community. Its primary interests are to serve 'community' at all levels – from local to national to international – through these two key routes and with a particular focus on global social, economic and environmental justice issues.

TPNS was founded by former Trade Justice campaigners and was set up with funding from The Co-operative. The Five Percent idea has been developed over the past 2-3 years as a response to the absence of military spending in the policy and campaigning of the major international development agencies.

<http://tippingpointnorthsouth.org/5percent/team/>

The new Corbyn appointment gives hope that the issue will get much more oxygen of publicity.

TPNS recent work

- Funder and Exec Producer We Are Many cinema documentary
- Funder and Co-Producer Open Bethlehem cinema documentary
- Co-Producer Bethlehem Unwrapped Event: WALL and Festival, St James Piccadilly
- Co-Founder Make Apartheid History campaign
- Co-Founder From Pink to Prevention Campaign
- Developer Five Percent Campaign

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