

Position paper

GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING: AN URGENT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

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KEY POINTS

- Runaway global military spending must be added to the list of structural issues undermining international development (unjust debt, trade and tax relationships).
- The UK is committed to international development, but is also a leading arms manufacturer and military spender. These activities can collide. It is now incumbent on the UK to face up to this
- UK civil society and the Labour Party are already joining forces – by addressing this issue, we can build even further on those elements of Labour's new and progressive *Vision for International Development* that address issues of funding peace and a renewed role for the UK at the UN.

Combined, global military spending, war and conflict undermine if not reverse development gains, and the attainment of all SDGs will be impacted by it. Alongside environmental degradation, it is now recognised that the carbon footprint of conflict is hugely underestimated. At the same time, the P5+1 (permanent members of the security council plus Germany) – charged with keeping the peace – account for 80% of world arms sales. More than 80% of arms are sold to raise tension and volatility in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Oceania. (SIPRI 2018). Global military spending is inching towards a runaway \$2 trillion per year – creating a huge drain on countries' resources and making military spending an urgent international development issue.

“The arms trade drives the gargantuan amount spent on ‘defence’ every year – \$1.6 trillion in 2010 alone... It accounts for almost 40 per cent of corruption in world trade...

... President Thabo Mbeki claimed we did not have the resources to provide life-saving medication to the over five million people living with HIV/AIDS, (yet)we spent \$10 billion on weapons we didn't need and barely use today.. BAE Systems contributed \$180 million of the bribes...

The time has come to lift the veil on this shadow world, to demand that our taxes are not used to develop another deadly weapon for the material benefit of a tiny self-serving elite, but are rather employed to enhance the lives of those who go hungry, who are without work or who suffer the deadly consequences of the trade in arms.”

Andrew Feinstein, author and former ANC MP

Now is the time to address it.

COUNTRIES RICH AND POOR, NORTH AND SOUTH ARE INCREASING THEIR MILITARY SPENDING

As Trump increases US military budgets, so NATO countries are pushed to increase their budgets to 2% of GDP (and middle income countries –BRICS- are likewise under pressure to increase their military spending). For many countries including the UK, it is becoming more and more apparent that big ticket, overpriced projects are often of contentious defence merit (eg the F-35 fighter jets and the Trident nuclear deterrent) denying the public value for money. At the same time, basic military needs are often left poorly funded (many military experts believed that UK government's prioritising of investment in big-ticket new hardware for the navy and air force has left the army too under resourced for real defence needs) while much needed UN Peacekeeping operations often struggle to be adequately funded.

It is true however, that conflict is good for UK defence company shareholders.

Many of the world's poorest countries and fastest growing economies (both measured in terms of GDP per capita) spend much more on their military than on education or on health. Such excessive military spending impedes economic development (SDG 8) and significantly impacts on efforts to reduce poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2), and improve health (SDG 3)¹ and education (SDG 4).

\$1.7 TRILLION PER YEAR ON MILITARY SPENDING IS ERODING COUNTRIES' CAPACITY TO FUND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

While poverty and hunger are widespread and climate catastrophe unfolds, global military expenditure is higher than at height of Cold War (SIPRI), with trillions of tax-payers pounds, dollars and euros flowing into defence and arms industries. This constitutes a massive loss of funds for real development and public investment, while the post-conflict costs of reconstruction fall on nation states.

As with unpayable debt cancellation, the Robin Hood Tax and other measures related to tax avoidance and evasion, savings from military spending could be regarded as a significant "new" revenue stream, redirecting captured funds to serving the needs of the global community.

MILITARY SPENDING UNDERMINES SDG 16

SDG 16 is "To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." The twelve targets within SDG 16 are wide-ranging, from the rule of law, corruption and accountability, to transparency, access to justice and extended participation in democratic processes. In relation to conflict there is one target that specifically references the arms trade. It reflects the work undertaken by civil society on the Arms Trade Treaty to significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows by 2030. This is a good starting point. But when 80% of arms sales are made by the P5 members of the security council plus Germany and those same five nations charged with keeping the peace of the world while the majority of their arms sales go to the global south, SDG 16 is sorely lacking.

ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: THE MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

This under-researched subject that it is only just coming to the fore focuses on the use of military vehicles (aircraft, ships, rockets, tanks, armoured vehicles) and munitions in exercises and military operations that potentially constitutes the largest

"Consider Britain's role. According to the Campaign Against Arms Trade, our government has supplied the grotesque Saudi dictatorship with £4.7bn worth of arms since the war in Yemen began. Aircraft, helicopters, drones, bombs, missiles: all supplied by UK plc to be quite possibly dropped on the heads of children laughing on the way back from a picnic. Just months ago, the British government feted the Saudi dictator Mohammed bin Salman unveiling a joint £100m aid deal, granting this tyranny humanitarian PR, while BAE Systems announced the sale of another 48 Typhoon jets. It gets worse: British military personnel are directly involved in helping the Saudi war effort – to what extent remains intentionally murky."

*Owen Jones, author and journalist,
10 August 2018*

¹ Medact believes that 'militarisation is an underlying and root cause of poor health worldwide.

single global contributor to carbon emissions and climate change.² It's a vicious circle – high military spending markedly increases the likelihood of wars and armed conflicts, which not only are a key driver of climate change but also disproportionately harm women and children.

TAKING A LEAD: THE UK'S CHANCE TO SHIFT THIS PARADIGM

The March 2018 Labour policy paper 'A World for the Many Not The Few' laid down a new *Vision for International Development* led by Shadow Secretary of State Kate Osamor.

It called for the replacement of '*the opaque Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, widely criticised for securitising aid and neglecting human rights, with a transparent, human rights-focused peace fund*' and to '*take action with other government departments and with international partners, such as 'stepping up efforts across government, through an integrated human rights-based foreign policy, and with international partners, through renewed commitment to multilateralism, to prevent conflict and build peace, including by better using our influence at the UN Security Council*'. These intentions already reflect the need for a long-overdue rebalancing of the relationship between international development (or rather global social justice delivery) with ethical foreign policy-making. With the courage to go even further, the UK could *roadmap* how to secure *savings* from runaway global military - that would then start to look like a paradigm shift.

The report also makes clear that, contrary to the current Conservative calls to shift money from the development budget to the Ministry of Defence, the UK may have a far better security outcome if policies supporting international social justice secured more funding, not less. Re-thinking how taxes directed to military spending could reflect a different type of security policy-making that delivers more and better progressive international development, is the policy of the future – and we need it now.

FIND OUT MORE

For more on our groundbreaking, GDP-based formula for reducing and redirecting military spending visit <https://thefivepercentcampaign.org/full-report-the-five-percent-campaign/the-5-formula-what-is-it/>

Submissions to Labour Party

- <https://thefivepercentcampaign.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/tpns-submission-to-intl-dev-taskforce-jan-2018.pdf>
- https://thefivepercentcampaign.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/tpns_labour_nation_policy_forum_consultation_2018_final.pdf

About the campaign

<https://thefivepercentcampaign.org/military-spend-is-a-development-issue/>

MILITARY SPENDING, DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN NUMBERS

Annual Global Military spending is higher now than at peak of the cold war. \$1.7 trillion in 2017. At \$610 billion, the USA spends more on its military than the next seven highest-spending countries combined. (SIPRI)

The P5+1 accounts for 80% arms export (by volume) between 2013-2017. The 10 largest importers alone (all in the global south, except Australia) accounts for 52% of global arms imports during the same period. 32% of global arms sales went to the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and UAE, fuelling conflicts in the Middle East and resulting refugee movements of a scale not witnessed since WW1. (SIPRI)

² Because of the US government's intervention, the militaries around the world have been enjoying exemptions from any required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Pentagon is known to be the largest institutional user of petroleum products and energy, before we even consider its unreported emissions from weapon testing and overseas activities in 1000 overseas bases, military operations and wars. It is not just the US military, every other military, particularly the top 20 military spenders, in the world is doing the same, albeit in smaller scale. Taken together, militaries around the world are arguably the biggest driver for climate change and 'any talk of climate change which does not include the military is nothing but hot air.'

CONTINUED ...

In terms of value sold, the UK is the 2nd largest exporter of military products and services, with exports of \$120bn between 2007 & 2016, according to UK government's own figures.

The Iraq war was responsible for 141m tonnes of carbon releases in its first four years, according to an Oil Change International report. On an annual basis, this was more than the emissions from 139 countries in this period, or about the same as putting an extra 25m cars on to US roads for a year.

UK military spending was around £48.7 billion during 2016/17 (HM Treasury). The UK's defence budget is the 5th biggest in the world; in terms of spend per person, it is also the third highest in NATO. Defence is the 4 largest government department by expenditure, behind Work and Pensions, Health and Education only.

Diverting only 10% of world military spending would be enough to achieve major progress on key SDGs:

Over 900 million people in the world are hungry; 1.5 billion people subsist on less than US\$1.25 per day. Furthermore, over 40% of people in the world live on less than US\$2 per day. And this is not just confined to the global south – 40 million Americans are on food stamps (US Census Bureau). **A 2015 report from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization suggests that eliminating extreme poverty and hunger sustainably by 2030 (SDGs 1 and 2) would require an estimated additional \$265 billion a year on average (2013 prices). This amounts to 16% of global military spending in 2015 (SIPRI).**

The 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report found that **providing universal primary and early secondary education** of adequate quality by 2030 (SDG 4) **would require an additional \$239 billion a year in spending (2012 prices). This is 14% of global military spending in 2015 (SIPRI).**

A 2015 report by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network found that achieving the SDGs in health, education, agriculture and food security, access to modern energy, water supply and sanitation, telecommunications and transport infrastructure, ecosystems, and emergency response and humanitarian work (SDGs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 15), including additional sums to allow for climate change mitigation and adaptation, **would require further spending from public sources of \$760–\$885 billion a year between 2015–30 (2013 prices). This amounts to 46–54% of world military spending in 2015 (SIPRI).**

80% of the world's 20 poorest countries have suffered a major war in the past 15 years. Nine of the 10 countries with the world's highest child mortality rates have suffered from conflict in recent years. (War on Want: Banking on Bloodshed 2009)

Military Kit vs People (Share The World's Resources): One aircraft carrier (\$5 billion) = reforesting an area three times the size of Costa Rica in the Amazon (\$300 per hectare). One battle tank (\$780,000) = 26,000 people could be treated for malaria (\$30 per person). One B-2 Stealth Bomber @ \$1,000,000,000 = 1,150,510 Clean Water Wells OR 31,466,331 Child Immunisations OR 713,318 Houses for family's currently living in cramped, unsanitary and dangerous conditions OR 270,196 Schools Furnished with desks, chairs, tables, blackboards.

ABOUT US

Tipping Point North South's founders, current staff and board, include former senior Christian Aid debt, trade and tax justice campaigners who still work in the sector. TPNS work to date includes **cinema documentaries** [We Are Many](#) (about global anti-Iraq war movement) & [Open Bethlehem](#) (Israel's Separation Wall impact on the iconic Christmas town), **cultural/political events** ([Bethlehem Unwrapped](#), [Attlee Nation](#), [MLK Global](#)) and developing our own **campaigns** ([Make Apartheid History](#) Palestine) and [Five Percent Proposal](#).

The Five Percent Campaign offers a roadmap to get to sustainable, equitable, global reductions in military spending with a considered proposal to re-direct to global social need (eg to health and education). This work is funded by Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation. TPNS is a member of the Progressive Development Forum.