



Global military spending, sustainable human safety and value for money

Cutting the cake differently

Executive Summary

TIPPING POINT NORTH SOUTH

A co-operative that supports and initiates creative, campaign-driven projects that advance the global social justice agenda

MILITARY SPENDING: A HIDDEN DRIVER OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The global military is a major driver of climate change. At UN level it is exempt from reporting its carbon emissions despite some countries' militaries being among the largest consumers of fossil fuels in the world. This is a scandal that needs exposing.

These emissions are a direct result of runaway global military spending since the former cannot happen without the latter. Combined, they ensure that international development and human safety is harmed in myriad ways: *As a matter of urgency* we need this issue addressed as an international development, environment and human safety concern.

Last but not least, policy-makers concerned with *Green New Deal* economic thinking (in the UK, Europe, the USA and elsewhere) must take account of the links between these closely linked issues: military spending, climate change and sustainable human safety.

Global military spending, sustainable human safety and value for money is one of Tipping Point North South's ***Transform Defence*** series of reports and briefings that offer a framework and a formula for progressively converting military spending into funding for development, strengthening sustainable human safety, and averting climate catastrophe.

This briefing is also pertinent to Tipping Point North South's *Green New Deal Plus*, designed to complement all current variations of Green New Deal economic proposals.

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Tipping Point North South is a 'for the benefit of community' co-operative, supporting and initiating creative, campaign-driven projects that advance the global social justice agenda.

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FOREWORD

REDEFINING SAFETY

“The mandarins who are managing this pandemic are fond of speaking of war. They don’t even use war as a metaphor, they use it literally. But if it really were a war, then who would be better prepared than the US? If it were not masks and gloves that its frontline soldiers needed, but guns, smart bombs, bunker busters, submarines, fighter jets and nuclear bombs, would there be a shortage?”

Arundhati Roy, April 2020¹

‘What does safety mean to you?’ we recently asked Greenpeace supporters over Instagram, as part of our ‘Thursday series’ where we pose different questions to followers and invite them to engage.

We deliberately did not use the term ‘security’. We wanted to use a word that had a clear meaning but which was equally relevant across the spectrum of worries, concerns or threats that people experience or perceive. We felt ‘safety’ was a term people could more easily relate to, connect to their own experiences.

We received hundreds of responses. Safety clearly meant different things to different people. But there were many commonalities. Responses varied but with some repeated themes – having a home and a job, being able to provide for one’s family, having access to clean water and air, being able to walk safely at night free from harassment, living in an equal society, being healthy, not having to wear a mask, being free from the multiple threats of runaway climate change.

People’s lived experiences matter. This was clearly a small, non-representative sample but nevertheless, the answers came together to represent a vision which I believe is shared by many around the world – a vision of living in a healthy, just society and the desire to have basic needs met. Practically none of the responses we got were related to traditional threats commonly associated with ‘national security’ or ones that could be resolved by military power.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that military prowess and power cannot deliver the safety we actually need. It is inappropriate and inadequate to task. The COVID pandemic has resulted in billions of citizens in lockdown simultaneously around the globe watching in horror as health systems worldwide are reaching the limits of their capacity or beyond. The COVID crisis has exposed the truth: how ill-prepared our systems are in dealing with real threats and, linked to this, how government finance priorities are alarmingly detached from what the real needs are, coupled with the actual dangers facing our societies. New figures on military spending released in April showed that as the pandemic was peaking in parts of the world, spending on guns and bombs actually grew while hospitals were lacking basic life-saving supplies, such as masks and ventilators.

¹ Arundhati Roy: ‘The pandemic is a portal’, <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>

Throughout history, keeping society safe has been equated with military might. Today, that has led us to the belief that massive, runaway military expenditure is the only lens through which to frame society's safety, its well-being. This well-established myth, disseminated and sustained by the weapons industry with support from governments, is vital in justifying disproportionate expenditure and lucrative profits.

The reality is that unnecessary and massive military spending comes at the expense of health and other crucial services for the people. It also comes at the expense of financially dealing with catastrophic climate change. While governments boosted military budgets year on year, they ignored pandemic warnings and cut healthcare-investment, all the time watching the clock tick on the climate emergency.

This report *Global Military Spending, Sustainable Human Safety and Value for Money by Tipping Point North South* challenges us to reflect on these exact questions and demonstrates how deeply inadequate the concept of 'national security' is in light of the ongoing pandemic and the rapidly unfolding threats of climate change. It asks what we can learn by looking at the policy and spending priorities of governments, and argues that, unquestioned and at our peril, governments are massively outspending on weaponry compared to the climate emergency or global health protection.

The pandemic is far from over but the COVID crisis has given us a preview of shocks to come as our climate crisis continues to unfold while in regard to the looming global economic crisis post-COVID, governments will have to choose their spending priorities wisely and carefully.

And we need civil society to become much more vocal in demanding governments work for real safety.

We must speak up against excessive military spending and in favour of a better, smarter allocation of national budgets for the citizens and the greater good for the planet.

This coming year 2021 must be the year when military spending starts to drop to more realistic proportions with savings redirected towards essentials for actual human safety – providing universal healthcare, combating poverty and protecting the environment. For the first time in decades there is a real chance for us to achieve this. If all this is ignored in our post-pandemic recovery plans it would be a tragedy on many levels – not least because it would mean that we have failed to call to account the trillions of tax-payers' money wasted on the military industrial complex, for many more years to come.

Jen Maman, Senior Peace Adviser, Greenpeace International

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING, SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SAFETY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The nations of the world spend more today on their militaries than at the height of the Cold War. Of that \$1.9 trillion, the USA accounts for 40%. It spends almost as much as the next top 10 spenders combined and three times as much as China, the second highest spender.²

Geopolitical threat – real, perceived, exaggerated or invented – will likely always be with us. But there are other, equal if not greater threats to our local, national, regional and global security which are not accorded the same order of attention, urgency or resources as conventional security threats – they are climate change, habitat loss and mass species extinction, global economic instability (poverty and inequality) and now, pandemic.

“What we urgently need now is a rethinking of the entire concept of security. Even after the end of the Cold War, it has been envisioned mostly in military terms. Over the past few years, all we’ve been hearing is talk about weapons, missiles and airstrikes... The overriding goal must be human security: providing food, water and a clean environment and caring for people’s health. To achieve it, we need to develop strategies, make preparations, plan and create reserves. But all efforts will fail if governments continue to waste money by fueling the arms race... I’ll never tire of repeating: we need to demilitarize world affairs, international politics and political thinking.”

Former President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, April 15, 2020³

CLIMATE CHANGE: AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO OUR SHARED HUMANITY AND PLANET

We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction.⁴

Yet *the* most socially and economically damaging threat to our collective global security/safety – climate change – is nowhere near centre stage in defence/security policy-making.

² https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/fs_2020_04_milex_0.pdf

³ <https://time.com/5820669/mikhail-gorbachev-coronavirus-human-security/>

⁴ *What is a ‘mass extinction’ and are we in one now?*, <https://theconversation.com/what-is-a-mass-extinction-and-are-we-in-one-now-122535>

According to USA-based Climate Policy Initiative's analysis, total public expenditures on climate change, both international and domestic, amounted to \$141 billion in 2016, compared with military expenditures of \$1.66 trillion.⁵ On average, the expenditure of national governments on climate change amounted to 8.5% of what they spent on defence, a ratio of 12:1.⁶ The G7 and other industrialised countries committed in 2015 to spend \$100bn a year under UNFCCC to support climate action in developing countries.⁷ In truth, they didn't and what they spent in International Climate Finance is completely overshadowed by their military spending (\$21bn versus \$845bn spent by G7 in 2016).

Since 2016, global military spending has gone up significantly.

Professor Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz are directors of Brown University's Costs of War project and although writing here about the USA and the COVID-19 pandemic, their lesson could be applied to all big defence spending nations. They make a powerful case:⁸

"Now is the time for fundamental change premised on the value of real security as human security. We can make our infrastructure both green and good for the economy. We can finance public education, public health, and high-quality veterans care. But, to do so, we have to reduce the Pentagon budget, invest in the programs actually keeping us safe and end the post-9/11 wars. Otherwise we'll just be sleepwalking back toward another version of the mess we're in now."

WE HAVE OUT OF DATE DEFINITIONS OF DEFENCE AND WE ARE PAYING A TERRIBLE PRICE

Every person, community, society, nation, region needs protection from aggressors and terrorists and it is the job of government to defend its citizens from such threats. We argue that these threats need to be in their place, proportionately, alongside much greater but entirely marginalised human security threats such as climate breakdown and pandemic.

And, it would appear, some in the most powerful military might agree.

*"Rosa Brooks, a Counselor to Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Obama Administration, suggests the US military's future leaders agree national security threats are centered on the economy and the environment rather than threatening global powers with massed battalions. She reports a session with majors and lieutenant colonels at the Army's School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, where she asked what they saw as the most serious threats facing the US in the next two decades. When she offered North Korea, Iran, or Al Qaeda, no hands went up, Islamic terror more generally elicited only one or two in agreement, along with weapons of mass destruction. The far more popular answers were resource scarcity and conflict driven by climate change alongside global economic collapse. This suggests that many officers must be suffering some existential doubts: the big threats are not ones the military can do much about."*⁹

⁵ <https://climatepolicyinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-Global-Landscape-of-Climate-Finance.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/a-tale-of-two-puzzles-accounting-for-military-and-climate-change-expenditures>

⁷ <https://www.odi.org/blogs/9611-g7-take-climate-finance>

⁸ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/06/07/opinion/too-much-military-spending-got-us-into-this-mess/>

⁹ *Close the Pentagon: Rethinking National Security for a Positive-Sum World*, Charles Kenny, 2020

Yet, climate change funding is absolutely the poor relation to military spending, as is pandemic preparedness. In 2010 the UK government had identified pandemic as a Tier 1 security threat in 2010 and again in its 2015 National Security Strategies (NSS).¹⁰ During this time, however, little was done to turn the plan into action, whether in terms of infrastructure preparation or raising public awareness to deal with this particular threat, compared to other Tier One threats such as terrorism and wars.

The 'risk' pyramid needs up-ending. Climate chaos should no longer be kept in the environmental and/or humanitarian 'box' issue and pandemic left at the door of austerity hit, privatised public health services and an underfunded World Health Organisation.

There are other ways to slice the 'defence spending' cake.

THE F-35: A MASSIVE PUBLIC TO PRIVATE WEALTH TRANSFER

The Lockheed Martin F-35 weapons system, described as a "flying credit card,"¹¹ is probably the single most successful programme of public wealth extraction ever devised by a private company. It is currently projected to cost more than \$1.7 trillion during its 50-year lifetime for the United States¹² and the total lifetime cost for all the countries that bought F-35s could be as high as \$2 trillion.

The Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II, apart from being the most expensive military weapons system in history, is pretty inadequate at anything it is supposed to excel.¹³

"Well, this is what I say about the Joint Strike Fighter; you pay for it five times. You pay the capital costs, you pay the operating costs, you then pay the opportunity costs of what you could have bought with the money. You pay for it diplomatically because having a good capable military changes the calculus in international relationships. And finally, if push comes to shove, when your air force is defeated, you can lose sovereignty. And that is the ultimate price to pay."

Chris Mills, former Wing Commander with the RAAF¹⁴

VALUE FOR MONEY: THE F-35 PROGRAMME VS EVERYTHING ELSE

The research in this 'Value for Money' report provides detailed evidence that helps us to make the case for why the time has come to update and modernise current defence and security thinking – and spending – in order that we can better deal with the greatest threats to our collective safety: climate change and pandemic.

¹⁰

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61936/national-security-strategy.pdf;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478936/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_PRINT_only.pdf

¹¹ *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex*, William Hartung, Nation Books, 2012

¹² <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/2020/10/selective-arithmetic-to-hide-the-f-35s-true-costs/>

¹³ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/the-military-industrial-complex-how-i-learnt-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-f-35-lightning-jet/>

¹⁴ *Is the Joint Strike Fighter the right plane for Australia?*

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/7224562#transcript>

This extends to other inter-related issues of critical importance to human and ecological survival, also grossly underfunded ie climate financing (local, national or transnational financing to address climate change); disaster response and disaster risk reduction; habitat protection and conservation of global biodiversity; the protection of global health and the role of the WHO; global pandemic surveillance and control; conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, UN peacebuilding and peacekeeping; poverty and inequality.

The F-35 is as good as any to make this 'value for money' case. Had the \$2 trillion estimated global total lifetime cost of F-35 programme been applied to the activities/areas/agencies listed above, this is what the global community would be receiving instead:

- Climate finance for 20 years
- UN disaster response for the next 400 years
- UN disaster risk reduction for the next 4,000 years
- Global biodiversity conservation at \$100bn per annum for the next 20 years
- WHO funding at \$2bn per annum for the next 1,000 years
- WHO's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for 2,963 years
- Global pandemic surveillance and control at \$8bn per annum for the next 250 years
- Money for 4 years to lift the poorest people in the world above extreme poverty (UBI for the 700 million poorest)
- UN peacekeeping operations at current \$5bn per annum for the next 444 years
- UN peacekeeping at \$15bn per annum for the next 133 years

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SAFETY BETTER DESCRIBES OUR 21ST CENTURY DEFENCE AND SECURITY NEEDS

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Rev Martin Luther King Jnr

Both the UN's 'human security' framework¹⁵ and the Oxford Research Group's 'sustainable security' framework¹⁶ effectively brought security together with wider issues, including and especially, climate change, causing a major shift in how security is perceived and defined.

We can expand even further on this and aim for a *sustainable human safety* framework that reshapes the foreign and defence policy framework of the 19th and 20th centuries. The word 'safety' is now starting to be used in some contexts, as a replacement for security.¹⁷ It far better describes what we need. It also speaks more directly to people in a way that 'security' does not.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-1994>

¹⁶ <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sustainable-security-global-ideas-for-a-greater-britain>

¹⁷ <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/30235/security-military-spending-war-covid-coronavirus/>

¹⁸ *Clear and Present Safety: The World Has Never Been Better and Why That Matters to Americans*, Michael A. Cohen and Micah Zenko, 2019, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

For many people – citizens and leaders alike – this is a tough debate. But as we tip into runaway climate change and as we are warned that COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic,¹⁹ our shared humanity is facing an existential threat.

If not at the 11th hour, when *will* be the time to redefine, redesign, repurpose the ‘terms of reference’ for our collective foreign and defence policy-making?

And if sustainable human safety is a better term for what we should be aspiring to, then to achieve it, we need to ***transform defence***.

In this report ‘*Global military spending, sustainable human safety and value for money*,’ the word ‘safety’ replaces ‘security’ in many contexts.

¹⁹ <https://ipbes.net/covid19stimulus>; <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/coronavirus-pandemic-virus-disease-wildlife-environment-farming-infectious-a9487926.html>



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