

MILITARISM AND THE AGENDA 2030

Even as the implementation of the Agenda 2030 unfolds, questions remain on its enforceability and whether or not such an ambitious development framework can provide sufficient focus on critical issues that need to be addressed in order to transform the world for the better by the year 2030. A particular issue that appears to have been left out is the question of militarism and how it operates to serve the interests of economic elites and transnational corporations at the expense of people's rights and welfare. There is a dearth of evidence and experience from Asia Pacific peoples attesting to the impacts of this emerging threat to sustainable development which begs the question: what should be done? and for whom?

Militarism can broadly be understood as the increasing influence of military institutions over civilian and/or foreign affairs of the State. It is also largely associated with the propensity of the State for military aggression which usually comes along with high levels of military spending.¹ Asia Pacific is no stranger to warfare and militarism – In West Asia, almost half a decade since the Arab spring; attempts to rebuild genuine democratic governments have repeatedly been hampered by US military interventions that consequently install pro-US leaders that would willingly toe neoliberal policies. The Trump administration has expanded these wars, including by supporting attacks on Syria and increasing the US Defense budget. The repositioning of US military assets to East Asia or the “US Pivot to Asia” continues to undermine people's rights and sovereignty by reviving old military bases while ravaging communities especially women and indigenous peoples in the process. Meanwhile, Japan has begun re-militarizing the State by hosting thousands of US military personnel and military bases while increasing its own military capabilities in order to counteract China's military grandstanding.

WHY IS IT AN IMPORTANT ISSUE?

Militarism and Resource Grabs

The intensifying militarism in the region poses one of the most serious threats to our democratic rights. In Asia Pacific, various cases attest to the use of military operations to dispossess wealth and resources from community control. In the mineral-rich island of Mindanao, Southern Philippines, a recent spate of killings perpetrated by military and paramilitary troops has displaced thousands of indigenous peoples fighting for their right to land and life. Since 2014, the alarming incidents of direct attacks, killings, illegal arrests and detention, harassment and vilification of the Lumad indigenous communities where there is strong resistance against environmental plunder have intensified. These areas are also known to have rich minerals and natural resources – a haven for big mining and logging corporations. In Indonesia, the military is similarly being accused of backing a mining company in East Nusa Tenggara province by intimidating the local population into accepting the mining company's operations in their communities.² Meanwhile, military officers in collusion with land speculators and local elites in Cambodia have forcibly confiscated more than 80 hectares of land from the indigenous villagers of eastern Cambodia's Monduliri province driving hundreds of families further into poverty and landlessness.³

Military Spending vs Sustainable Development

According to a report released by the Economic and Social Commission of Asia Pacific (ESCAP) in 2015, “it could cost the region from \$2.1 trillion to \$2.5 trillion per year to close the region's infrastructure gaps, provide universal access to social protection, health and education, and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.”⁴ Around USD 500-800 billion per year until 2030 is needed to close gaps on safety nets, old age pension, income security to all persons with disabilities, universal access to health and education and modern energy access for all.⁵ Elimination of poverty will require USD 300 billion while the unmet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will need USD 100 billion per year until 2030 in financing. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimated that 1.5 trillion per year is needed to meet the region's infrastructure needs. Adjusting this cost for climate mitigation would need USD 200 billion per year. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimated that around USD 14.3 billion

¹ Dreze, J. (2000). “Militarism, Development and Democracy,” Economic and Political Weekly. Vol. 35, No. 14 (Apr. 1-7, 2000), pp. 1171-1183

² UCA News (March 2016). Indonesia Military Accused of Backing Mining Company. Available online: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesia-military-accused-of-backing-mining-company/75408>

³ Radio Free Asia (October 2015). Ethnic Minority Villagers in Eastern Cambodia File Court Case Over Land Grab. Available online: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/ethnic-minority-villagers-in-eastern-cambodia-file-court-case-over-land-grab-10152015140617.html>

⁴ ESCAP. (2015). Financing for Transformation: From Agenda to Action on Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. Retrieved from <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Financing-for-Transformation-Final.pdf>

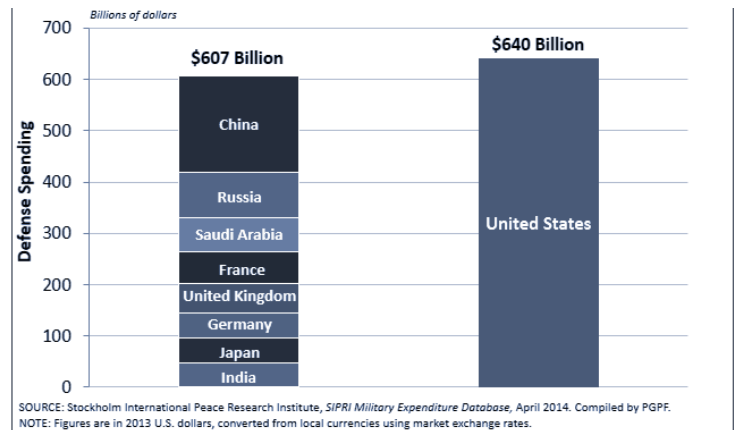
⁵ ESCAP. (2014). Asia-Pacific: Landscape and State of Sustainable Financing. Retrieved from <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/20140610%20SA%20Sust%20Dev%20Financing%20Presentation%20Final.pdf>

annually is required to achieve universal energy access by 2030 for the Asia-Pacific region. According to World Bank (2010) estimates, the costs for the region's adaptation to climate change would amount to USD 25 billion annually.

Governments and multilateral bodies are looking towards the private sector to fund the implementation of the SDGs through measures such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Civil society and grassroots movements in the region are wary because corporate control of health, education, energy, water, and transportation made these services inaccessible by transforming them into profit-making ventures.

While governments are saying money for the SDGs is not enough, Asia and Pacific countries' collective military spending in 2016 amounted to 452 billion. Adding the military spending of West Asia and ESCAP members states United States of America (USA), Russia, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom, the total amount balloons to an estimated USD 1326 billion.⁶ While this amount is definitely just a fraction of what Asia Pacific needs to meet the SDGs, rechanneling military spending to meet sustainable development will have lasting effects. Below are a few examples of costs of meeting SDGs versus military spending.

The US spends more on defense than the next seven countries combined



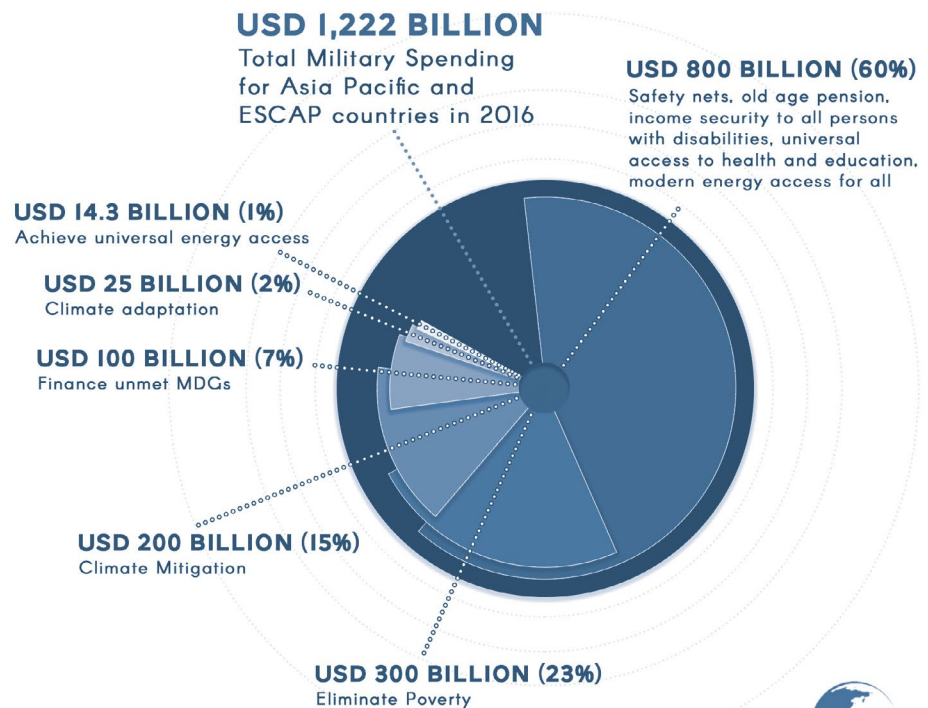
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MILITARY SPENDING COMPARED TO COSTS OF MEETING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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<http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Financing-for-Transformation-Final.pdf>



Militarism and Violence Against Women

Violence against women is inextricably linked with militarism. On top of the military violence perpetrated by state forces, women experience another layer of violence out in the streets and even inside their homes. In Gaza, the Intensive Israeli military operations in 2014 resulted in the highest civilian death toll – a total of 2,251 Palestinians 551 of which were children and 299 were women. A recent study among women in the Gaza strip established a clear link between the prevalence of domestic abuse on one hand and the occupation violence on the other hand. The research further stresses the deteriorating economic situation in Palestine as a significant factor that further exposes women to physical domestic violence.⁷

HOW DOES THE AGENDA 2030 RESPOND TO THE ISSUE?

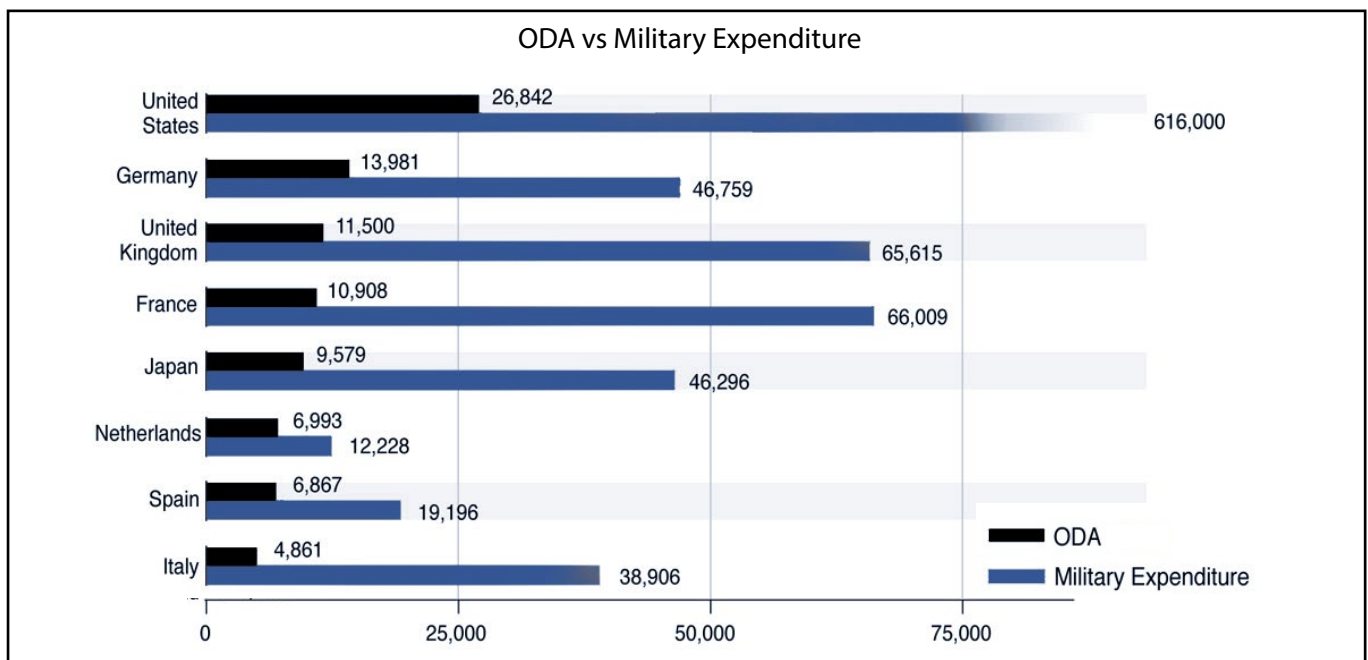
⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>

⁷ Muller, Catherin and Barhoum, Laila (2015). Violence Against Women in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli Military Operation Protective Edge. Available online: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/StudyVAWGazaafterIsraeliMilitaryOperationProtectionEdge2014ApSAActionAid.pdf>

The Agenda 2030 does not mention militarism even once throughout the 15,000-word document. The closest effort to address the issue can be seen in paragraph 35 that talks about Goal 16 on building peaceful and inclusive societies:

*We call for further effective measures and actions to be taken, in conformity with international law, to remove the obstacles to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social development as well as their environment.*⁸

Despite the inclusion of this watered down language on foreign occupation, none of the 12 targets under Goal 16 indicate any form of commitment to end military occupation and the use of military forces for resource grabs. In addition, despite calls to stop illicit financial and arms flows, the A2030 fails to recognize supposedly legal, government-imposed militarist policies that often lead to human rights violations especially of women and erodes democratic values including institutions which it purportedly aims to strengthen. The environmental impacts of increased militarism in the last decades is also notably absent in the A2030 despite the fact that the U.S. Department of Defense remains the top industrial consumer of fossil fuels in the world. In a perverse irony, US military operations worldwide remain exempted from greenhouse gas emissions calculations.⁶ Lastly, the A2030 is blind to the fact that military expenditures divert huge amounts of resources away from sustainable development spending and is even more than three times bigger than the unambitious official development assistance (ODA) commitments of developed countries which up until this day remain unfulfilled.



WHAT ARE WE DEMANDING?

We demand development justice – a development framework that recognizes militarism as a threat to our democratic rights and an impediment to sustainable development. We demand an agenda that aims to foster global peace and security based on justice and protects communities from the devastating impacts of militarism and wars. Specifically, we are demanding to:

- 1) RE-CHANNEL MILITARY EXPENDITURE TO SOCIAL SPENDING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
- 2) END FOREIGN OCCUPATION AND RECOGNIZE, RESPECT AND UPHOLD THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION
- 3) ENSURE THAT ALL DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE AND SECURITY PROCESSES RESPECT INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS OVER THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND UPHOLD THEIR RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION
- 4) PROVIDE REPARATIONS FOR COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES RAVAGED BY MILITARISM
- 5) RECOGNIZE AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, ESPECIALLY RAPE, AS A WEAPON OF WAR IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES

⁸ United Nations (2015). Transforming Our World: The Agenda 2030. Available Online: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The demand for peace and security based on justice is vital toward achieving Development Justice. With the current development model allowing aggressive military policies as a legal recourse to aide profit accumulation, it becomes imperative for us to organize our ranks and resist the growing threat that is militarism. We need coordinated global actions and awareness-raising activities to get our message across. Join the global campaign to resist militarism and wars!

Here's what you can do:

SPREAD THE WORD

Help us spread the word by conducting awareness-raising activities in your area such as seminars, workshops and fora.



ORGANIZE ACTIONS

Reach out to and co-organize actions and protests with existing campaigns and platforms against militarism

REACH OUT TO MEDIA

Share materials through print & social media and engage the press by writing an opinion piece or organizing a media conference



For more information and to keep us informed about your work on militarism, please contact: secretariat@aprnet.org



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