

# Security for the Common Good

A Christian challenge to military security strategies



Fellowship of  
Reconciliation

Churches should be prepared, more than so far has been the case, to promote a civilian and nonviolent understanding of security; in their exercise of public responsibility and in dialogue with political partners they should condemn the growing militarization of international politics and the proliferation of small arms. Every attempt to use violence and fear as legitimate tools in politics needs to be rejected.

**World Council of Churches,  
*Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, 2006***

Given that we are two-thirds of the way to the Millennium Development Goals, many wonder whether the international community will ever achieve these goals, when, for example, military expenditures for 2008 increased to some US \$1.464 billion. And this in the year of the most acute economic crisis.

The world is watching while we are entering once again into discussions on disarmament issues. Can ordinary people expect more progressive, concrete and courageous changes from their leaders? The answer is in our hands, and will show the determination of the international community to pursue world peace and security based on the promotion of integral human development.

**Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Permanent Observer  
of the Holy See to the United Nations, UN General Assembly, 8  
October, 2009**

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# Addressing the real wounds of the human family: a call to action

*'They dress my people's wound without concern: "Peace! Peace!" they say, but there is no peace.*

*They should be ashamed of their abominable deeds. But not they!' (Jeremiah 6:14-15)*

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen increased global polarity. Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Israel-Palestine, Congo, are just some of those countries that continue to be torn apart by war and conflict, many in the name of the 'war on terror', others in the drive to secure access to and control of natural resources. As well as the obvious human costs, the opportunity costs of these wars are incalculable: lack of investment in social and development projects, the displacement of people, the destruction of essential infrastructure within countries, the fuelling of suspicion and hatred within and between communities. As with the people at the heart of Jeremiah's cry, millions today are offered a false and dangerous peace which not only ignores but often exacerbates the real suffering of the human family and the very planet.

For decades the discussion on peace and security has been dominated by proponents of the 'might is right' model, arguing that national self-interest and the protection and security of others is best achieved by military means. The time has come to turn away from this false and short-sighted model in favour of a model of sustainable human security that puts people – and especially the poor - at its centre. Such a model is consistent with the social teachings of many churches which seek to build global solidarity between peoples – solidarity that heals the wounds of war, the violation of rights, poverty and the destruction of the environment.

- We call upon churches, dioceses, congregations, parishes, groups, and all individuals of goodwill, to join our appeal to build security for the common good where the pursuit of love and justice set the political, economic and social agenda.
- We call on the Government, as it undertakes its Defence Review, to use this opportunity for a radical evaluation of security policies. It is not enough to tinker with budgets, to choose between 'boots or bombs'. Now is the time to redirect military spending, research and development into life-giving projects that address our real security needs today.
- We call on all political parties in the run-up to a General Election to reframe their approaches to defence and security in favour of security for the common good.

# Introduction

In the summer of 2009 a sharp increase in UK casualties from the war in Afghanistan led many media commentators and opposition politicians to call for greater expenditure on ‘basic’ military equipment as opposed to large-scale military projects like aircraft carriers and Trident submarines. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009, and under pressure, the Secretary of State for Defence, Bob Ainsworth, announced a strategic defence review to examine, amongst other issues, UK military spending. The review began in Autumn 2009 and will produce a Green Paper in early 2010.

For many Christians the vast resources devoted to war and military spending are scandalous, particularly at a time of global economic turmoil. It is not enough to tinker with budgets, to choose between ‘boots or bombs’. The time has come for a genuine rethink about security. For decades the discussion on security has been dominated by proponents of the ‘might is right’ school, arguing that national self-interest is pre-eminent and can only be secured by military means. Today, in the midst of a global economic crisis where the poor become ever more vulnerable, and with climate change threatening humanity as a whole, we need to jettison narrow self-interest and ever-increasing military spending in favour of a sustainable human security strategy that puts people – and especially the poor - at its centre.

Building security for the common good will require work on many essential components, starting with the redirection of military spending and research into life-giving projects that address the real security needs of our time. Other components will include:

- strengthening the authority of the United Nations through its democratic reform and renewal;
- developing international law and the structures to police and prevent conflicts from escalating;
- achieving political and economic rights for all human beings and communities;
- educating citizens for a new understanding that our future security depends on global welfare and the common good rather than self-interest and national prosperity

The focus of this short briefing is on the component of military expenditure. We aim to set out a clear picture of what resources are currently being spent on military security and we call on Church leaders and individual Christians to promote a genuinely Christian approach to common global security. Never has it been more apparent that we stand or fall together as one human family on this precious planet.

**Chris Cole, Fellowship of Reconciliation**

**Pat Gaffney, Pax Christi**

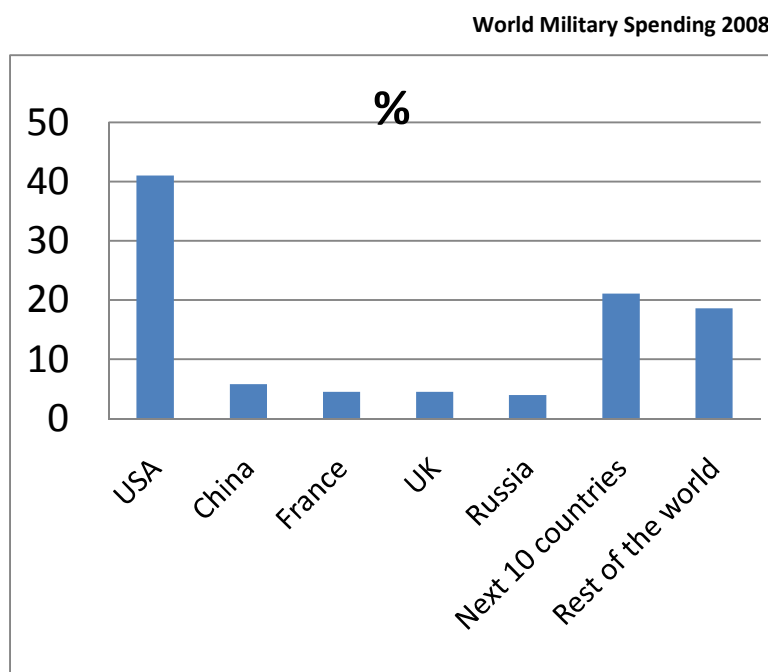
## The Current Picture

In 2008, global military spending reached an astonishing \$1,464 billion - a 45% increase over 1999.<sup>1</sup> The US Defence budget, the largest in the world, is currently \$607bn, slightly less than half of the overall total (41%) distantly followed by China (5.8% of world share), France (4.5%), UK (4.5%), and Russia (4%).<sup>2</sup>

The UK has the world's fourth largest military expenditure after the US, China and France, and has the highest military spending per capita in Europe<sup>3</sup>. However, deciphering the exact amount that the UK devotes each year to military spending is not an easy task. Even parliament's own watchdog, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which examines MoD spending in detail each year, struggles and has accused the Ministry of Defence of 'masking cost increases on projects' by juggling figures.<sup>4</sup>

According to Defence Analytical Service and Advice (DASA), the government agency that provides statistical information on the military, UK military spending for the financial year 2008/9 was £38.6bn (see table 2).<sup>5</sup> This however does not include the cost of military operations in Iraq which in 2008/9 was £1.4bn, nor in Afghanistan which was £2.6bn, giving a total annual military expenditure figure for 2008/9 of £42.6bn (up 6.5% over previous year).<sup>6</sup>

After spending on personnel, the largest expenditure is on military equipment. According to the MoD accounts, the UK spent an estimated £13.4bn on military



equipment in 2008/9 (up £1bn on previous 12 months). This includes capital expenditure, equipment support and research and development. <sup>7</sup>

## Boots or Bombers?

Underlying the current defence review is an ongoing debate over what type of equipment the defence budget should be spent on.

Whilst soldiers on the front line and many of their media supporters want basic protective equipment, defence planners, and in particular the defence industry, lobby for ‘big ticket’ offensive weaponry.

Each year the National Audit Office (NAO) examines in detail the major military equipment projects for which the main investment decision has already been taken (known as Main Gate Decision) and ten projects that are still in the assessment phase (although this assessment phase can mean spending hundreds of millions of pounds on development).

The latest National Audit Office report <sup>8</sup> shows that the top fifteen UK military projects now under construction will cost the taxpayer £55.7bn. This enormous figure does not include the cost of the proposed replacement for the UK’s nuclear deterrent, Trident, currently estimated by the government to cost between £15bn and £21bn, although others, such as Greenpeace, estimate the true lifetime cost to be around £97 billion<sup>9</sup>. The cost of renewing Trident is also not included in the figures as the final ‘main gate’ decision has yet to be taken.

UK Defence Spending 2008/9

Expenditure item	£m
Armed forces personnel	8,937
Civilian personnel	2,786
Cost of capital	3,626
Equipment support	4,292
Stock consumption	1,181
Property management	1,508
Movements	975
Accommodation and Utilities	866
Professional fees	391
Fuel	695
Hospitality & entertainment	4
PFI service charges	1,482
IT & communications	852
Other costs	2,226
Intangible assets	1,311
Land and buildings	163
Single Use Military Equipment	552
Plant, machinery & vehicles	30
IT & communications equipment	336
Assets under construction	6,515
Transport	239
Capital loan repayment	(65)
Capital income	(323)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,579</b>

Source: MOD Directorate of Performance and Analysis.

### Current top 15 major military projects under construction

Project Name	Brief Description & amount being built	When approved (i.e. Main Gate)	Budgeted cost at approval	Current estimated cost to complete
A400M	25 heavy lift transport aircraft	May 2000	2,628	3,285
Astute	3 nuclear-powered attack submarines	March 1997	4,102	5,522
Beyond Visual Range	Air-to-Air missile	May 2000	1,240	1,282
Falcon	Deployable communication system	March 2006	307	354
Future Joint Combat Aircraft	Joint Strike Fighter (Lockheed F35 II)	Jan 2001	2,672	2,451
Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft	Air-to-Air refuelling aircraft	May 2007	12,326	11,963
Future Lynx (Wildcat)	80 Helicopters	June 2006	1,901	1,669
Merlin capacity programme	Avionics upgrade to 30 helicopters	March 2006	837	830
Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier	2 Aircraft Carriers	July 2007	4,085	5,133
Support vehicle	5,000 heavy cargo vehicles	Nov 2001	1,367	1,272
Terrier	Armoured vehicle	July 2002	295	322
Type 45	6 anti-air war destroyers	July 2006	5,000	6,464
Typhoon (aka Eurofighter)	232 combat aircraft	Nov 1987	17,115	17,962
Military Flying training System	Flying training capability	Feb 2008	877	841
Watchkeeper	54 unmanned aircraft	July 2005	907	895

Source: National Audit Office MoD Major Projects Report 2009

Large complex weapons systems take many years – sometimes decades - to get from the design stage to in-service. We have seen over the past few decades that by the time these large projects are at the point of completion, circumstances have changed so much that the weapons are already obsolete. This is the case in particular with the Typhoon aircraft which was designed in the 1980s to repel a mass attack by Soviet bombers, but is coming into service now, at a time when no military planner envisages such a scenario. However, rather than terminate the project, the government decided

that the aircraft should continue to be built and paid for as, it is argued, the UK's defence industrial capability would be damaged if the contract were to be cancelled.

## **Exporting Military security**

Although not directly connected to the military budget, a related area is the amount spent on subsidising the export of military equipment, estimated to be up to £900m each year.<sup>10</sup> Each year the UK exports around £5 billion of military equipment around the globe, often to countries with poor human rights records or serious development problems. Experts say many of these sales are to the very same countries that church groups up and down the country are supporting financially through donations to aid agencies like Christian Aid, CAFOD and Tearfund.

One example is India, ranked 128<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index, with an estimated 40% of the country living in abject poverty, and with intra-communal violence causing serious problems. Nevertheless the UK exported £90m of military equipment to India in 2006 and £130m in 2007. And that figure seems likely to increase, as BAE Systems, the UK's largest arms manufacturer, sees India as a key market which it will target, according to the Chairman, Dick Olver, 'remorselessly'. In November 2009 it was reported that the government plans to sell a new Royal Navy aircraft carrier, being made by BAE Systems and valued at £2bn, to India. This is described as a cost-cutting exercise.

The relentless machine of military spending seems to be unstoppable and unquestionable. But there is another way and perhaps this time of economic crisis offers the perfect opportunity to step off the military spending merry go-round.

## **What's the Alternative?**

Two thousand years ago the Roman military commander Flavius Vegetius Renatus wrote 'If you want peace, prepare for war'. In contrast, and at roughly the same time, Jesus and the early Christians were urging people to love their enemies (Matt 5: 44-45) and



extolling the virtues of what we now call 'nonviolent peacemaking' (Matt 5: 4-12). Whilst one philosophy hailed armed might as a means of security, the other suggested that real peace and security lies in the practice of love and justice.

This 'debate' over how to achieve real security in our world is as valid today as it was 2000 years ago. The lesson of the past century is that war and armed violence do not bring peace. The war to end all wars did not end all war; the war on terror has not ended terror – in fact many security experts have argued that the situation has been made worse; the proliferation of weapons around the globe has not made the world safer, and nor has the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan brought peace, human rights and democracy to the people of those countries. Putting our trust in the ability to inflict more death and destruction on others, than they can inflict on us through weapons of mass destruction, hasn't made us safer. The lesson of the past century is that wars cause further wars, create lasting hatreds and rarely if ever solve the deep-seated problems of injustice.

The reality is that justice brings peace and security (Isaiah 32:17). If we as a nation wanted to improve our own security and the security and peace of everyone in the world we need to do more to bring justice to the poor of the world rather than investing in more weaponry and flawed military solutions. We need to work for an end to poverty and the inequitable distribution of the world's resources.

After decades of ever increasing military spending perhaps it is time to take Jesus' message seriously and focus our resources and talents on working cooperatively across the globe to build genuine human security.

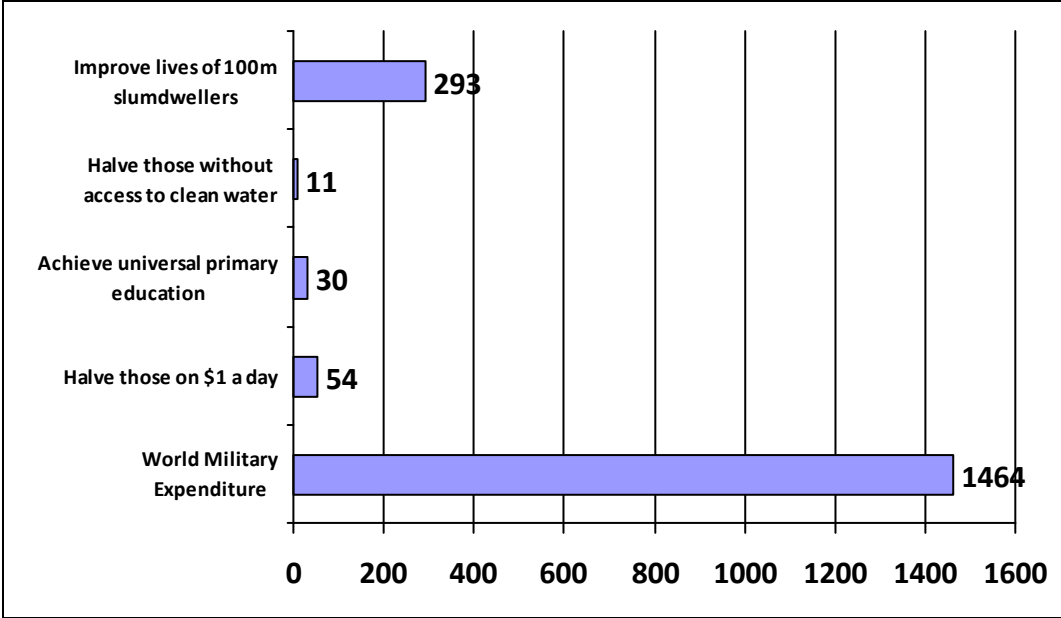
## Human Security

*'Security in the biblical worldview, is an outcome of pursuing a more comprehensive vision of shalom. When shalom is established through the pursuit of justice, then true security is found. Security is a state of being that flows from the inclusion of all in the bounty of the earth.'* **Rev Brian Massingale, Marquette University**

Human security puts people rather than the nation state at its core and seeks to address threats to security not by attacking the symptoms but by attempting to tackle the root causes of injustice, poverty and environmental destruction in a pro-active and nonviolent way. The concept of human security is rooted in some of the most basic principles of our faith tradition: that every human person has intrinsic dignity and is of equal value before God; that we are called into right relationship with each other and with all of creation. Therefore the security of one person or nation cannot be guaranteed while ignoring or undermining the security and well-being of other people in the global community.

The UN Millennium Development Goals are one significant attempt to tackle some of the root causes of conflict and insecurity in the world. Agreed in 2000 by the world’s leaders, these eight goals committed the nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out a series of time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015. More than half of the time until the deadline has now passed and there is widespread acknowledgement that many countries, especially on the African continent, have almost no chance of reaching these goals. The Millennium Goals Development Report 2009 suggested in fact that major advances in the fight against poverty and hunger have begun to slow down or even reverse. Genuine and lasting human security will emerge only from a ‘globalization of solidarity’ that honours the kind of commitment that the Millennium Development Goals represent.

Annual World Military Expenditure in comparison to annual amount needed to achieve four key Millennium Development Goals according to the World Bank



Here then is an opportunity to invest in and develop real human-centred security rather than continue with the ever-spiralling investment in military security. Rather than invest £300m in developing a new armoured earth-moving vehicle as the UK is currently doing, we could be investing in technologies to alleviate climate change, which is a real and serious threat to the planet. Rather than spend £2.6bn in purchasing 25 heavy lift aircraft to transport tanks around the globe, we could supply clean water and sanitation to save the lives of the 4,000 under-fives who die each day from diarrhoeal diseases. Rather than spend £3.6bn on 12 Nimrod reconnaissance aircraft we could be investing in genuine conflict prevention strategies that involve local communities, such as the London Citizens' City Safe project for young people.

## Conclusion

This brief examination of British military spending in anticipation of the forthcoming Defence Review, shows that the UK is spending enormous sums on military security - indeed the UK has the fourth largest military budget in the world. According to MoD figures, some 35% of the defence budget is spent on equipment, the vast majority of which goes on large-scale weapons intended to project British power around the globe.

The reality is that genuine peace and security will only emerge if we commit ourselves to a common security. That means devoting resources to measures designed to seriously tackle inequality and injustice in the world - such as the Millennium Development Goals - rather than investing in ever more lethal technology.

Today, in the midst of a global economic and environmental crisis, we need to jettison narrow self-interest and ever-increasing military spending in favour of a sustainable security strategy that puts the people – and especially the poor - at its centre.

## Further Reading

**Welfare or Warfare? Disarmament for Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**, International Peace Bureau, 2006. [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org)

**Military Spending and Development Aid**, Jana Panakova, Pax Christi International, 2008, [www.paxchristi.net](http://www.paxchristi.net)

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**Hearts and Minds: Human Security Approaches to Political Violence**, Scilla Elworthy & Gabrielle Rifkind, Demos, 2006, [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Military expenditure figure for 2008 used by International Institute for Strategic Studies, SIPRI and the US Department of Defense.

<sup>2</sup> SIPRI Yearbook 2008, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

<sup>3</sup> SIPRI Yearbook 2008, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Defence Major Projects Report 2007, Committee of Public Accounts, HC433, published July 2008

<sup>5</sup> UK Defence Statistics 2009, published September 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Defence website

<sup>7</sup> UK Defence Statistics 2009, published September 2009

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Defence Major Projects Report 2009, National Audit Office, published December 2009

<sup>9</sup> In the Firing Line, Greenpeace, 2009

<sup>10</sup> Arms Export Subsidies, Campaign Against Arms Trade, 2004