

Forum: 1st Committee of the General Assembly
Issue: The Question of Reduction of Military Budgets
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Position: Deputy - Chair

Introduction

Currently, approximately \$4,500,533,291 USD worldwide are being spent arming, modernizing, and supporting militaries around the world. There are 10 countries in the world who possess nuclear weapons. Both the United States and the Russian Federation have around 6600-6800 nuclear warheads. That's enough to drop on every sovereign state 34 times.¹

During the 20th century, the military spending of almost all military adversaries and combatants in both World Wars doubled with the United States ahead by \$650 Bn. By the 1980s, military spending decreased significantly due to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but has significantly risen since.²

This poses a serious threat not only to diplomacy and the promotion of peaceful relations, but the environment as the disposal, detonation, and storage of explosive ordinance leaves traces of chemicals such as arsenic, lead, and mercury for at least 15 years after use.

Currently, the United States is the largest weapons producer in the world, with the highest military spending. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), 300 million guns were sold in 2013,³ although household gun ownership has decreased, the gun manufacturing industry still finds business in foreign governments.

This brings about the question, is all this firepower really necessary to protect a nation's sovereignty? This all boils down to the core, the money. How much is too much? Throughout history technology has consistently developed to match our needs and requirements, likewise, reconsidering the budget and possibly placing a limit on how

¹ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/>

² <https://ourworldindata.org/military-spending>

³ <https://www.npr.org/2016/01/05/462017461/guns-in-america-by-the-numbers>

much is too much could potentially avert another arms race and reduce tensions between adversary countries.

Definition of Key Terms

Military Budget - An annual or regular estimate of national revenue and expenditure to determine amount of currency required for a specific purpose, in this case military.⁴

Adversary Nations - As defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, an adversary is an opponent in a contest, conflict, or dispute. In this case, a political, economic, and military competitor.⁵

Arms - As defined, are weapons, such as explosives, firearms..⁶

Arms Race - As defined by Oxford English Dictionary, a competition between nations for superiority in the development and accumulation of weapons.⁷

United Nations Report on Military Expenditures -

A United Nations survey conducted on military growth and development to establish how much is being spent on defense relative to other expenses.⁸

Sovereignty - A sovereign state is a state that can govern itself, and likewise sovereignty is the authority, the supreme power to govern itself.⁹

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⁴ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/budget>

⁵ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/adversary>

⁶ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/arms>

⁷ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/arms_race

⁸ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/milex/>

⁹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sovereignty>

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Milex/>

¹¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272473/us-military-spending-from-2000-to-2012/>

¹² <http://large.stanford.edu/courses/2017/ph241/kogan1/>

¹³ <https://ourworldindata.org/military-spending>

In the last 100 years, the world has undergone very drastic changes. As technology continued to advance, so did the budget of those buying the technology. Military budget has been a major indicator for who is the true super power on the global scale. It dictates how much countries can spend, how much they can subsidise, and how much of a priority is national security. Post-World War 2, the world has entered the nuclear age. The United States raised its budget to 700 Billion from 1940 to 1945 just to fund such a weapon. Now 8 countries in the world possess nuclear weapons. Their military budgets are greater than most Least Developed Countries's (LCDs) gross domestic products (GDP). Such a military expenditure even by countries who do not possess nuclear weapons could be catastrophic as the lack of subsidiaries, improper budgeting, and the neglect of other priorities could lead to economic collapse in nations who are the world's producers of weapons, like the US.

The increase in military spending could result in a international arms race similar to the pre-World War 1 race with Germany and England, and the Cold War race with the United States and its allies versus Russia and their allies.¹⁴ An arms race on such a scale of such an arms race would result in the creation of long term storage options and stockpiling of explosive ordnance. This can be extremely dangerous for human wellbeing and the environment.

During the Croatian revolution against Yugoslavia, artillery shells were produced en masse and stored in underground armories in areas with high population densities. Studies have found traces of lead, zinc, and copper in the soil, all elements used for the coating and fabrication of the shells.¹⁵ This is all due to the overproduction of these armaments which is in direct correlation to an excessive military budget. Although, the United State only used 4.5% of its GDP for its defense, which is substantially less than it was during the cold war, is still spending more than initially planned under the Obama administration.¹⁶ Meaning, although global superpowers are spending minor fractions of their taxpayers currency, excessive spending is occurring. The exorbitant cost to maintain such militaries posses a massive threat not only to the stability of influential global leaders in politics and economics but to global security and the promotion of a sustainable peace.

¹⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/arms-race>

¹⁵ <http://www.trwn.org/use-of-weapons/>

¹⁶ <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-and-where-to-cut-defense-spending/>

Relevant member states and NGOs ¹⁷

United States of America (USA) - The United States of America is a western democracy with a population of 325.7 million and the single largest military expenditure in the world. Spending around \$610 bn annually, it's military budget is roughly the equivalent of the next nine countries combined, seven of whom are allies. The US is currently part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and is believed to possess between 6600-6800 nuclear warheads. This number is expected to be lower after signing the NPT in 1968. The United States military expenditure accounts for 3.29% of its GDP. The United States economy is largely based around oil exports and imports along with firearms manufacturing.¹⁸

Russian Federation - The Russian Federation is a constitutional republic with democratic elections. It has a population of roughly 147,000,000 and has the fourth largest military expenditure in the world. Spending roughly 66.3 Bn dollars a year, the Russian Federation also possesses between 6600-6800 nuclear warheads. Russia is currently part of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), an association of countries with emerging economies. Around 5.4% of Russia's GDP goes to military spending. Russia's economy is largely based around oil exports and weapons manufacturing.¹⁹

The People's Republic of China - China has a population of 1,379,302,771 and is a communist party-lead state. With a military budget of 228 Bn dollars, about 1/3 of the United State' total military expenditure. Currently 1.9% of their GDP is devoted to military spending. China is suspected to have around 260 nuclear warheads. China is also a member of BRICS, and has one of the largest economies in Southeast Asia and the world. China's economy is centered around manufacturing and exports. China is one of the world's most populous countries.²⁰

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia is a middle eastern country which is an absolute monarchy with a population of 33,091,113. The country possesses 16% of all the oil on the planet and has an economy heavily centered around the export of the resource. The country has a GDP of 1.775 Trillion Dollars with roughly 9.5% of their

¹⁷ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/>

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰ Ibid.,

GDP devoted to the military. It spends around 69.4 Bn dollars on defense and does not have any know nuclear weapon program.²¹

India - India is a federal parliamentary republic with a population of 1,281,935,911 people. India is one of the world's most populous countries. India's GDP is 2.611 Trillion dollars as of 2017. The major exports include; petroleum products, apparel, and precious refined minerals. They import crude oil, pharmaceuticals, and various types of machinery. It uses 2.47% of its GDP on military spending account for 52.1 Bn dollars. India is believed to have between 110-120 nuclear warheads. India is a very prominent member of BRICS. ²²

Germany - Germany is a federal parliamentary republic with a population of 80,594,017. Germany is also a member of NATO. Germany's GDP is 4.712 Trillion dollars as of 2017. The country is the highest quality producer of pharmaceuticals, vehicle production, ship construction, and construction materials. It exports vehicles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and various machinery which accounts for 1.4 trillion dollars of its GDP. While importing refined and crude oil, electronics, and metals which accounts for 1.1 trillion dollars of it's GDP.²³

United Kingdom (UK) - The United Kingdom is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with a population of 65,105,246 people. The UK is part of NATO. The GDP of the UK is 2.925 trillion dollars. It uses 2.2% of its GDP on defense spending equaling about 47.2 Billion dollars. The UK economy is largely based around machinery manufacturing, chemicals, and tobacco account for about 441 Bn dollars of their GDP. It has a stockpile of 215 nuclear warheads.²⁴

France - France is a semi-presidential republic with democratic voting. With a current population of 67,106,161, it has a GDP of 2.836 Trillion dollars. France is also an active member of NATO. France spends 57 Bn on defense spending account for 2.26% of the GDP. The main exports include metals, chemicals, airplane parts, and various mechanized machinery account for 551 Bn dollars annually. It imports vehicles, plastics,

²¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>

²² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>

²³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html>

²⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/uk.html>

and various chemicals which roughly 664 Bn dollars. It is believed France currently has fewer than 300 warheads.²⁵

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)²⁶ - The United Nations office responsible for monitoring disarmament agreements and reports to the UN Secretariat. Provides base setting in the area of disarmament. It promotes peace through civil discourse, mutual understanding, and transparency.²⁷

Demilitarization Organization, Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCoMS) - The Demilitarization Organization or GCoMS, is a non-governmental organization and a non-profit which advocates for reduced military spending and more societal and economic aimed spending. The Non-profit's goal is to reduce military spending to promote peaceful relations and disarmament, achieve sustainable development goals, and provide humanitarian aid and development.²⁸

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) - NATO is a military alliance which includes allies of the US. NATO aims to provide financial, militaristic, and humanitarian aid to its member states. Each decision made by NATO is done by a democratic vote and expresses the will of the member states.²⁹

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) - The Collective Security Treaty Organization is a group of ex-soviet republics which are now independent and cooperating together. CSTO prioritizes military aid, financial assistance, and economic partnership. The organization operates in a similar fashion to NATO as it is, at heart, a military alliance. It is on a much smaller scale, and much more localized as it only includes republics which were once part of the soviet union.³⁰

Timeline

August, 1942 - Manhattan Project established,³¹

July, 1945 - United States successfully develops and performs first nuclear test,³²

²⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html>

²⁶ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/20140423/>

²⁷ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/about/>

²⁸ <http://demilitarize.org>

²⁹ <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html>

³⁰ <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/csto.htm>

³¹ <http://www.icanw.org/the-facts/the-nuclear-age/>

August, 1945 - United States drops nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, the only time a country has ever used a nuclear weapon in warfare,³³

January, 1949 - United Nations calls for elimination of nuclear weapons and reduction of military budgets to prevent the development of weapons and nuclear stockpiles,³⁴

August 1949 - Soviet Russia develops and tests first nuclear weapon,³⁵

October 1950 - UK develops and tests first nuclear weapon,³⁶

February 1958 - UK Disarmament Campaign founded,³⁷

December 1959 - Antarctic Treaty signed enforcing a zero tolerance policy to military action, mining, and or any other environmentally compromising activity on the continent. Only exception being scientific research. ³⁸

February 1960 - France develops and tests first nuclear weapon,³⁹

October 1961 - Largest nuclear weapon, The Tsar Bomba, a 58 Megaton nuclear bomb detonated by Soviet Russia,⁴⁰

October 1962- Cuban Missile Crisis,⁴¹

August 1963 - Partial Test Ban Treaty proposed banning nuclear detonation in High Earth Orbit, outer space, and or under water,⁴²

October 1964 - China develops and tests first nuclear weapon,⁴³

February 1967 - Latin America becomes nuclear weapon free,⁴⁴

July 1968 - Nuclear Proliferation Treaty signed stating 'Non-Nuclear Weapon States' must not develop and or test nuclear weapons,⁴⁵

³² Ibid.,

³³ Ibid.,

³⁴ Ibid.,

³⁵ Ibid.,

³⁶ Ibid.,

³⁷ Ibid.,

³⁸ Ibid.,

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ Ibid.,

⁴¹ Ibid.,

⁴² Ibid.,

⁴³ Ibid.,

⁴⁴ Ibid.,

May 1974 - India develops and tests first nuclear weapon,⁴⁶
August 1985 - South Pacific declared as being nuclear weapon free,⁴⁷
September 1986 - Israel announces nuclear program,⁴⁸
October 1986 - Soviet and US leadership host conference on abolishing nuclear weapons,⁴⁹
July 1991 - South Africa signs NPT,⁵⁰
December 1995 - South East Asia declared as being nuclear weapon free,⁵¹
April 1996 - Africa Becomes nuclear exclusion zone preventing the stockpiling, production, and detonation of nuclear weapons,⁵²
June 1996 - Ukrainian leadership hands over last Soviet nuclear missile to Russia for disposal,⁵³
July 1996 - International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded the possession of nuclear weapons and utilization of them is a violation of international law,⁵⁴
September 1996 - Test Ban Treaty signed prohibiting the testing of nuclear weapons,⁵⁵
May 1998 - India and Pakistan test nuclear weapons violating the Test Ban Treaty,⁵⁶
October 2006 - North Korea launches nuclear program with one successful nuclear test,⁵⁷
July 2017 - United Nations signs Nuclear Ban Treaty,⁵⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid.,
⁴⁶ Ibid.,
⁴⁷ Ibid.,
⁴⁸ Ibid.,
⁴⁹ Ibid.,
⁵⁰ Ibid.,
⁵¹ Ibid.,
⁵² Ibid.,
⁵³ Ibid.,
⁵⁴ Ibid.,
⁵⁵ Ibid.,
⁵⁶ Ibid.,
⁵⁷ Ibid.,
⁵⁸ Ibid.,

Relevant UN Legislation/Treaties/Resolutions

A/RES/39/64 - December 12, 1984 ⁵⁹

Requests the agreement upon a basic guideline by which all parties can agree upon. A seizure or freeze of the increase of military budget should be monitored by the Disarmament Committee and are convinced such an agreement should be transparent and a mutually agreed basis for the benefit and favor of stability and global security. Recommends more Member States start reporting their spending to the UN for more transparency and more statistics from different regions of the world using different budgeting systems. Requests the creation of a proper framework for filing reports and providing incentives for Member States.

A/RES/44/114 - December 15, 1989 ⁶⁰

Named the “Transparency and Reduction of Military Budgets” resolution. Reminding member states that continuous military spending and the sale of weapons to war and poverty stricken nations hurts the economies of developing nations and threatens world peace. Calls for the disarmament committee to monitor the progression of military budgets and encourage decreased military spending with assistance from the General Assembly promoting transparency. States encouraged to file reports in favor of transparency and reporting any suspicious activity which potentially could pose a threat to regional stability and global peace.

A/RES/37/95 - December 13, 1982 ⁶¹

Reiterating world peace cannot be achieved by continuous cycle of rearmament. Requests international action be taken towards encouragement and the eventual reduction of military budgets, weapons stockpiling, and the reprioritization of funds, especially in developing countries. Encouraging rebudgeting to prioritize on other neglected expenses.

A/RES/36/82 - December 9, 1981 ⁶²

Concerns brought about by the arms race and its impact on global economies and world peace. Urges UNODA to attempt to ‘freeze, reduce, or restrain’ military spending.

⁵⁹ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r064.htm>

⁶⁰ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r114.htm>

⁶¹ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/37/a37r095.htm>

⁶² <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r082.htm>

Evaluates economic and social consequences brought about by the sale of weapons to unstable governments and crippled social structures. Requests to 'cease and desist' the sale of firearms and explosive ordnance to 'failed states' as a means to end conflict in developing nations. Proposes a means of facilitating agreement on reducing and restraining military spending, a means agreed on by all parties in which a foundation can be set for the future.

Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - July 1st, 1968 ⁶³

The Non Nuclear Proliferation Treaty was created to discourage the spread of nuclear weapons and the technology needed to produce them. Currently this treaty has 191 signatory states. This treaty has forced countries to reduce their military spending to comply with the treaty's request to decrease nuclear technology accessibility. The International Atomic Energy Agency, (IAEA), monitors military spending to safeguard the peaceful use of nuclear technology and to ensure transparency to further promote denuclearization.

Possible Solutions

In the last century, humanity has learned to fly, fought two world wars, traveled to the moon, and developed a piece of technology that inevitably altered the course of modern history, the atomic bomb. The technological development in the last century has been monumental and yet, so very tragic. Although great technological developments have occurred, this all came at a very steep price, massive global conflict.

As technology advanced, so did the budget to purchase and manufacture this technology. The problem, an excessive military budget, has been brought out numerous times within the last 50 years. Yet we still grapple with the problem, how much is too much?

A possible solution to reduce military budget would be to establish a maximum threshold based upon the average GDP of a country to ensure that overspendature is not occurring and that other expenses are not being neglected. A maximum should be set on the yearly spending on production of arms to reduce stockpiling. Setting a fixed budget could force countries to sell or dismantle their old machinery to reduce

⁶³ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>

stockpiling of unneeded equipment. This limit can be established by the size of its reserve force and its active force along with the country's GDP to set a spending limit corresponding to its total annual budget.

Another possible solution could be to re-negotiate price reduction deals with manufactures such as Lockheed Martin, Colt Firearms, Boeing, and other government contractors in exchange for government bonds and war bonds. A government bond is a grant of sorts which states that the government is entitled to pay out interest or any other compensation over time, either til the bond expires, or the requirement is fulfilled. This could help governments buy more equipment but pay less for it as a bond would allow them to postpone the payment indefinitely, depending on the agreement. This would allow governments like the US, who spend roughly 300,000 - 900,000 outfitting one armored vehicle,⁶⁴ to focus resources on other civil projects. Effectively reducing spending but increasing the amount of equipment a government can acquire.

Lastly, governments can refurbish aging assets for a fraction of the price. The average cost to purchase the most popular armored vehicle, the Humvee, unarmored will cost around \$160,000, after outfitting the price rose to \$220,000⁶⁵. After use, the vehicle depreciates to \$70,000.⁶⁶ Instead of scrapping used war vehicles, they can be refurbished and reoutfitted. The cost the manufacture a Light Armored Personnel Vehicle (LAPV) like the Mine Resistance Attack Protected vehicle (MRAP) is \$430,000 before armoring,⁶⁷ if these vehicles were not scrapped after use, this would greatly decrease the cost the purchase another one instead of updating the current. This would help countries prioritize their spending instead of purchasing new vehicles after use in combat.

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⁶⁴ <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/01/27/army.vehicle.costs/index.html>

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*,

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Appendices

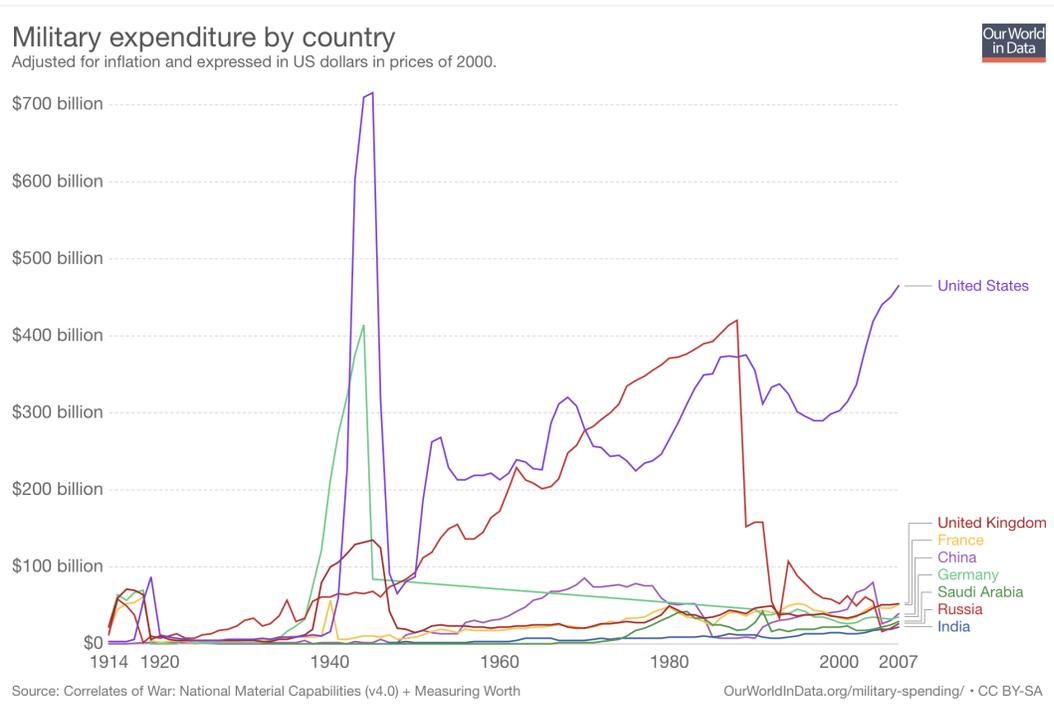


Fig. 1 - The Trend of Military Budgets Through the Last Century (Above)⁶⁸

⁶⁸ <https://ourworldindata.org/military-spending>

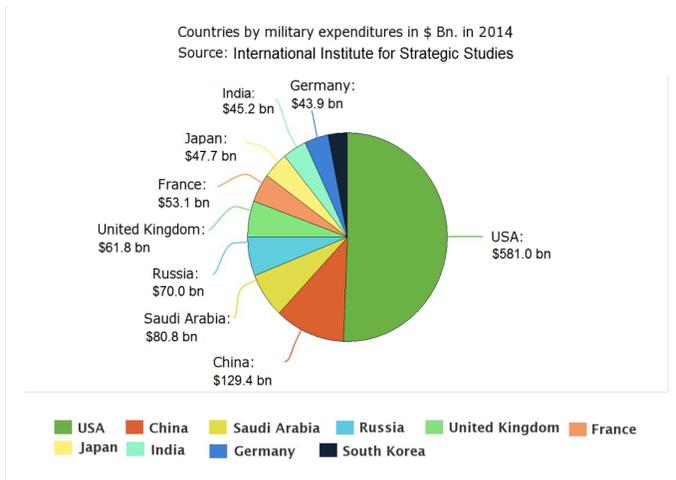


Fig. 2 - A visualization of the 9 next largest military budgets compared to the United States, 2014. (Left)⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Ibid.,