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***The Human Security Case for Rebalancing Military  
expenditure***

**Summary of 2022 report of Stockholm International Peace  
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By

**Dr Ordy BETGA, eps MBOFUNG**  
Ph.D in Political science  
Researcher at Think Tank CEIDES

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This report is highlighting a series of arguments focusing on the need for balancing military expenditure in order to increase investment in social progress and human security, a goal which per se is not new. For several decades, the United Nations has been the forum for international initiatives with the objective of limiting military expenditure. According to its Charter, one of the main purposes of the UN is to ‘maintain international peace and security’ and this should be pursued ‘with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources’, meaning finding a governance model by which governments should ensure the security of the State without compromising the socio-economic development and well-being of its people . The rapid growth of world military expenditure as a result of the arms race during the early decades of the cold war raised concern among member states, initially about the impact on peace and security and subsequently also about the economic and social consequences.

### **International initiatives to reduce military expenditures**

The 10th special session of the UN General Assembly, in 1978, was the first in a series devoted to disarmament. At this session, the assembly declared that ‘resources released as a result of the implementation of disarmament measures should be devoted to the economic and social development This long process finally prepared the ground for the adoption, in 1980, of a resolution on the reduction of military budgets that reaffirmed ‘the urgent need to reinforce the endeavours of all States and international action in the area of the reduction of military budgets’, and recommended that all member states should annually report their military expenditure to the UN Secretary General, making use of a standardized instrument. One of the remaining results of these efforts is the annual reporting since 1981 by member states on their military expenditure.

International initiatives towards reducing military expenditure did not lead to any significant progress due to been governments’ fear, justified or not, that reducing military expenditure will reduce their security. Fear was also fed by high levels of mistrust between adversaries and concern about being seen as weak. After the end of the cold war, global military expenditure reduced substantially, but public expenditure savings from these reductions were rarely shifted towards national or international development needs. In 2020, world military expenditure reached the historic record of nearly 2 trillion USD, far beyond the heights of the cold war. The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened human insecurity for millions of people with

a negative impact on governments budgets. Russia's armed attack on Ukraine that started in February 2022 has added to the rationales for military spending. World military expenditure is currently at a record level, but the reality of global insecurities adds urgency to calls for reductions of military expenditure and reallocation of money to promote human security.

The steady increase in military spending over the past two decades has revigorated calls for limiting military expenditure. In his recent report, *Our Common Agenda*, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, has called for a New Agenda for Peace 'to update our vision for disarmament so as to guarantee human, national and collective security', 'reduce excessive military budgets and ensure adequate social spending', and 'link disarmament to development opportunities'. We need a more human-centred approach to security.

The reasons that governments put forward to justify the levels of their military expenditure are often based on concern about military threats to their states and peoples. However, a large and increasing number of the threats facing people and states across the world are not military in nature. Extreme poverty, persisting hunger, natural disasters, political and criminal violence, the consequences of armed conflict, climate change and other environmental changes cannot be addressed by military means. The world's states have since recognized the concept of human security and thereby agreed in principle to move beyond seeing security as limited to state security.

While military spending in 2020 corresponded to about 2.4 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) or \$254 dollars per capita of the world's population, there was simultaneously a major gap in the funding available to address threats and risks to the lives, livelihoods and dignity of hundreds of millions of people. As global military expenditure reaches record levels, the threats and risks to human lives are becoming increasingly challenging. Overall, these insecurities are concentrated in low-income countries and regions, and are mainly: **Poverty, hunger and natural disasters, Armed conflict and political violence, and environmental change.** All these global insecurities are addressed by the SDGs with the target of eliminating them by 2030, but there are persistent doubts about the ability of world leader to meet these targets, with current trends.

### **The standard of human security**

A concept of human security was first presented in the UNDP's Human Development Report 1994, where it was argued that an enduring peace required both freedom from fear and freedom from want: 'For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Another root is the concept of 'positive peace': the idea that peace is more than the absence of war, as argued in the 1960s by Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung. The UNDP's broad concept of human security was further developed in the 2003 report Human Security Now by the Commission on Human Security. Based on the UNDP's 1994 report, the commission argued that human security was about the protection of 'the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment, emphasising on prevention, protection and empowerment of individuals and communities.

States have the primary responsibility to protect people from vital risks and threats. This has been politically accepted on the international level by all UN member states. The 17 SDGs to be attained by 2030 address a wide range of human security risks and threats, within five broad areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet: ending poverty and hunger; protecting the planet from degradation; ensuring a prosperous and fulfilling life for all human beings; fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies; and mobilizing a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

### **Human security and military expenditure**

Human security is concerned with vital threats to individuals and communities. Such threats can be caused by both military and non-military factors. This can lead to the assumption that military security—the security that can be achieved through military means—and human security are two different issues. However, such a view ignores the fact that military security, in addition to securing states and their preferred internal organization and functioning (i.e. state order), is also about securing individuals and communities who are threatened by outside military force or terrorist attacks. In this way, human security and military security overlap. Secure livelihoods, can be more difficult to attain during times when military security is low, such as during armed conflicts.

Military and human security can be seen as part of a 'single security space', comprising the universe of efforts to protect all that is valuable from vital threats. Human security thus broadens the focus from the security of borders to the lives of people and communities inside

and across those borders. However, at the same time, there is competition between military and human security for resources, in particular government funding. The observation that there is a single security space implies a view on security spending that covers both military and non-military elements. Then reductions in military expenditure are an obvious source of additional funds to address non-military risks and threats.

International donors are already helping states that lack sufficient resources to improve human security in several ways. One is through development assistance, which although not always efficient and well targeted, aims to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and communities to vital risks and threats. Another important financial-support mechanism is international humanitarian assistance

Despite considerable efforts, however, the international donor community is falling behind relevant commitments. Only a few countries have ever spent more than 0.7 per cent of their national income on official development assistance (ODA), a goal agreed to by the international donor community more than 50 years ago. Shortfalls also mark international commitments in other fields with direct relevance to human security. This is the case for funding for the SDGs of the internationally agreed Agenda 2030, which is substantially more demanding than the efforts to substantially improve human security.

Another study estimated that there was a shortfall of \$222 billion per year in the funding for eliminating poverty by 2030 in 46 countries that were not capable of funding this themselves, in addition to the \$86 billion per year that these countries would be able to finance themselves if they raised income to the maximum possible and redistributed government spending to the priority areas for eliminating poverty. There is a growing need for resources to reduce threats and risks to human security, particularly in those countries where the levels of human security are the lowest. Mobilization of additional international sources of finance is needed, as also recognized in SDG 17.

## **Recommendations**

This report proposes three priority fields of activity in which financial resources can be reallocated from the military without harming a state's security, in order to improve human security, and they are not new, namely:

### **1) Arms control and disarmament negotiations and agreements**

Military expenditure confirms the importance of the security dilemma: what one side sees as an improvement in security is seen as a threat in another, leading to arms races in extreme cases. Albeit making the diversion of the world's human and economic resources for military security a core concern does not diminish the importance of current arms control and disarmament efforts that have other objectives. Current international relations are marked by growing distrust among states, erosion of international agreements and increased military efforts. Increases in militarization, in turn, lead to the further deterioration of relations among states. Arms control and disarmament are of overwhelming importance in stopping and reversing such trends.

## **2) Sector-wide security sector reform for conflict prevention**

A more effective and less expensive approach in ending conflict-engendered insecurities is prevention. Security sector reform as a process of enhancing effective and accountable security for the State and its people has been a major policy instrument for addressing the fundamental causes of armed conflict and political violence, related to security forces abuses. Reforms—such as professionalizing the forces through training and providing effective governance of security institutions through democratic control and oversight are essential.

## **3) Financial responsibility in military expenditure and arms procurement.**

Financial responsibility implies that government operates efficiently and effectively in raising revenue and in spending taxpayers' money. It entails honesty and discipline in financial planning as well as transparency and accountability in the use of resources. As argued above, the military expenditure of pairs or groups of countries in rivalry, in competition or even war cancel each other out. Rather than reducing risks and threats, their spending may even increase them if rivals enter into dangerous arms races. The New Agenda for Peace, suggested by the UN Secretary General in his 2021 report *Our Common Agenda*, would be a good forum to begin discussions on linking arms-limitation and conflict-prevention measures to military expenditure.

These priority fields of activity to start rebalancing security spending are however not meant to be exclusive, but rather to stimulate further debate.

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**ceides**  
Centre africain d'Etudes Internationales  
Diplomatiques Economiques et Stratégiques

B.P. 35147 Bastos-Yaoundé/Cameroun

Tél : (+237) 243 105 872

[www.ceides.org](http://www.ceides.org)      Email : [infos@ceides.org](mailto:infos@ceides.org)



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