8 MYTHS ABOUT THE ARMS TRADE AND DEFENCE

MYTHS THAT PREVENT FOCUS AND INVESTMENT IN PEACE BUILDING
Do you know who is pulling the strings?
Who is making a profit?
Cessez d’alimenter la guerre

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Illustrations: h.dries@live.nl
The arms industry is a key employer and job-creator good for workers and the economy.

**Fact:** Its success depends on huge government subsidies to help it export arms. Research and create new weapons, and lavish entertainment and gifts for potential clients, whatever their regime. If these subsidies were instead invested in wind and marine energy, they could create more jobs than the entire arms industry and help prevent conflicts around resources.

**Fact:** The arms industry pays professional lobbyists and influential ‘expert advisors’ (often ex-ministers, officials and retired senior military figures) to drum up bigger arms budgets in the name of employment and national security.

The powerful arms lobby promotes military approaches to foreign policy issues. The result, time after time, is more violence, more refugees, more conflict.
WE REAP WHAT THEY SOW

IF WE DON'T DEVELOP/SELL ARMS, SOMEONE ELSE WILL
THIS EXCUSE DOES NOT BRING ABOUT WORLD SECURITY,
IT IS A BROKEN SYSTEM THAT NEEDS CHANGING!

FACT: As part of the contract, the seller transfers skills and technology and the right to manufacture to the purchasing country who then can start their own arms industry. Where is the security in that?

FACT: Governments want to fund their military machinery, companies want profit and civilians suffer.

FACT: Many great inventive minds, fascinated by their journeys into new sciences deeply regretted their well-funded work when the weapons were actually used.

THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS IS DETRIMENTAL TO GLOBAL SECURITY. THE FOCUS SHOULD BE PEACE NOT PROFIT.
WE ONLY SELL WEAPONS TO OUR ALLIES.

YESTERDAY’S ALLIES ARE SEEN AS TODAY’S “PROBLEMS” - IRAQ • SYRIA • LIBYA - YET FEW ARMS LICENCES ARE DENIED, EVEN TO REPRESSIVE REGIMES.

FACT: In 2016, France granted around 99% of arms export licences, despite knowing that weapons meant for ‘national defence’ are routinely used against civilians.

FACT: Saudi Arabia remains one of France’s biggest clients, despite revelations that French-made weapons are being used in the war in Yemen, where civilians have been targeted and face a terrible humanitarian crisis.

FACT: Once sold, the governments lose control over how their weapons are used. Arms deals should not be considered legitimate tools of foreign policy. International laws regulating the trade in weapons are often ignored and there are more international laws regulating the trade in foods than weaponry.

UNDER THE BANNER OF “NATIONAL SECURITY” THERE IS LIMITED OR NO PUBLIC OVERSIGHT.
Drones make targeted killings and are therefore OK. Air strikes are targeted and effective.

Armed drones - today’s method of executing suspects without trial - are supposed to be precision weapons, but they seldom are. When they kill innocents and destroy homes and livelihoods, desperate people are forced to move, anger and conflict spreads.

FACT: Oxford Research Group says: “the technology of remote-control warfare is impossible to control... drones will be used as simple, affordable and effective airborne improvised explosive devices”.

FACT: Thales, in partnership with the Israeli company Elbit (both present at the Eurostatory arms fair) developed the Watchkeeper 450, a surveillance and reconnaissance drone for the British army. In 2007, The UK ordered 54 Watchkeeper drones for £800 million. The project significantly went over budget, and in 2015 the drones were expected to cost 1.2 billion, despite being used for the equivalent of only 2 days of active service per drone.

We need a profound rethink on how we approach security rather than continuing to develop extremely expensive and technologically advanced ways of injuring, incapacitating and killing.
There is no alternative to the machinery of war. There are many alternatives, but rather than adding more weaponry, they involve a deep understanding of the context, inclusive peacebuilding and investing in local people.

FACT: Billions are spent on arms that gather dust in hangars or are too dangerous to use. Arms costing yet more billions are used which in turn requires more billions to pay for security against retaliations, repairing infrastructure and support for the displaced. War cannot end unemployment, ill health, poverty, lack of education, intolerance or injustice. As climate emergency creates new conflicts, it would be wiser to invest in renewable energy sources, lowering carbon emissions and support for those who will be first affected by climate emergencies.

FACT: Civilians are the primary victims of the irresponsible commerce in armaments. They are often the first affected by conflict.

The future needs inspired solutions allying the genius of scientists and engineers with that of psychologists and peacebuilders. We should hear and act upon the ethical recommendations of scientists and engineers who are not funded by the arms industry.
It is not in the national interest to promote low-tech alternatives to the arms industry. The arms industry, unsurprisingly, is not enthusiastic about low tech solutions to conflict. Even those which have been proven to work. Low tech usually means low-cost, which of course is good for most of us, but won’t pay the huge commissions of arms sales people.

**FACT:** Successful ideas include ceasefire monitoring; early warning and early response systems; community-based security; support for former combatants; sports projects; interfaith projects and many, many more.

**FACT:** As of April 2019, the EU has adopted the Regulation for the European Defence Fund, moving towards €13 billion being put aside for research and development of military equipment, whilst planning reduce the budget for violence prevention and peace building.

We know enough about successful alternatives to militarisation but these other solutions need investment.

Stop fuelling war
There will always be conflict, terrorism, greed and corruption.

This is an excuse really, not a myth. We are humans. We will always need peacekeepers and total disarmament is not feasible. But supplying weapons to people with unaddressed grievances makes violence inevitable.

FACT: More and more people alive today have known nothing but war. Sexual assault and rape become weapons of war, women and girls their forgotten victims.

FACT: Continuing to treat armaments as a legitimate business like any other - by selling arms indiscriminately to anyone who will pay and allowing arms fairs like Eurosatory - we are promoting death, degradation and the destruction of the very values we are supposed to hold most precious.

Gandhi said: “When violence appears to do good, the good is short term. The evil it creates lasts forever.”
Defence is more important than saving the environment, health or education.

The military industrial complex should not be untouchable and a special case. We all face the consequences.

FACT: Arms sales and militarisation are bad for the environment and harm civilians. Many environmental treaties contain exemption clauses for defence activities. These include the treaty banning the use of mercury, the European Chemicals Framework “REACH” and the Paris Climate Change Agreement.

FACT: Conflict can result in indirect damage due to the collapse of environmental governance. While armed conflict causes massive biodiversity loss and leads to much higher rates of deforestation and precious resource depletion.

FACT: Extensive destruction by aerial bombing requires rebuilding infrastructure, using scarce resources the world can no longer afford. Remember Agent Orange!

The time is now to stop destruction, to save resources and to use new sustainable solutions to save our beautiful world.
Knowing that the global threats we face include terrorism, resource scarcity, cyber warfare, forced migrations, together with many more, we are sure that conventional and advanced military approaches will not bring us security. Military intervention has already proven in the 21st century that violence breeds violence. Wars might seem to offer a solution, but it is short lived at best, the long term legacy being: continuing resentments, infrastructural damage, the seeds for future terrorism and trauma.

Justifying military intervention (as in liberation and humanitarian wars and the right to protect ‘just wars’) could be countered by developing systems and structures for non-violent interventions, including swift response teams, with the same (or much less) investment as a military response.

The military-industrial complex is old-fashioned, outdated and propped up by vested interests in business and governments. We need and have different non-violent solutions.

Different actors in society at international, national and local levels can work together to build security and peace to answer these threats. For example: context-specific solutions using diplomacy, inclusion of marginalised groups, economic justice, security, a trustworthy and impartial communication and media systems, education, business, culture...

WE ALL WANT PEACE AND SECURITY, LET'S SHIFT THE PARADIGM.
“War is ours, we buy it, sell it, spread it and wage it. We are therefore not powerless to solve it”
Dr Samantha Nutt, founder of War Child

START FUELLING PEACE

WHAT CAN I DO?

Be confident that what you do as an individual will have an impact. Actions such as non-violent conflict training for yourself, your college, your workplace. Help organise the 2.5% tax on global arms trade. Ask if your city is a United Nations Peace Messenger City. Support local peace initiatives (for example: www.insightonconflict.org or www.peacedirect.org). Question your national media about only featuring stories of war and terror but not brilliant stories of peace builders. Create your own ideas or simply add your support to others...

Join us at STOP FUELLING WAR / CESSEZ D’ALIMENTER LA GUERRE

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FURTHER READING

• Business Plan for Peace, Dr Scilla Elworthy
• Building Peace Together, QCEA,