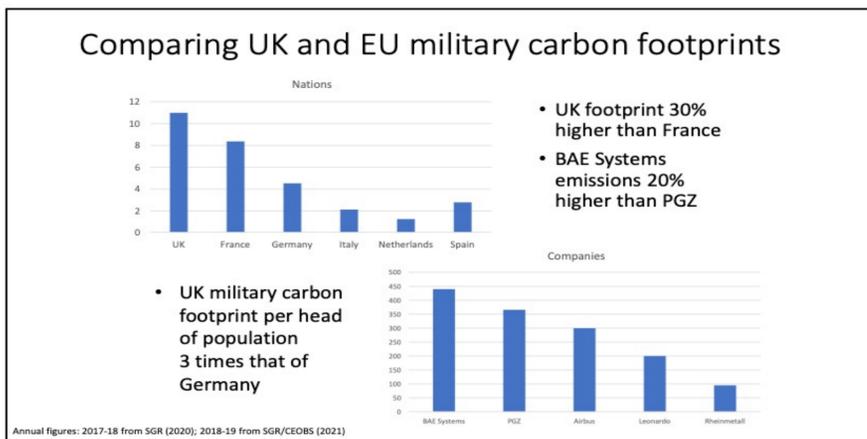


THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN CREATING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The role of the military in creating the climate crisis and making it worse
 The world's militaries are major carbon emitters - comparable in size to the global civil aviation sector - yet there is not even any official requirement to report their emissions, let alone reduce them. The UK's military is the most polluting of the European democracies. Global military spending is increasing - as major powers pursue arms races in nuclear, cyber, robotic and space technologies. Not only is this a huge waste of money and skills, it makes it hard to make meaningful cuts to military carbon emissions. We need political leaders to realise this, and pursue policies that lead to demilitarisation, releasing resources to help tackle the climate emergency. However, when asked to declare their carbon footprint at COP 26, countries are still not required to include their military carbon footprint and consumption.



- UK military carbon footprint per head of population 25% higher than France – other three nations broadly similar to Germany
- Companies: PGZ based in Poland; Airbus - mainly France; Leonardo - Italy; Rheinmetall - Germany

The graph is from Scientists for Global Responsibility. Scan the QR code below for more information.

The Impacts of Militarism on Climate Change by Florian Polsterer

Nearly all aspects of military activity affect our natural environment, yet the relationship is often neglected. “The world’s armed forces consume enormous amounts of fossil fuels, produce vast quantities of toxic waste and have exceedingly high demands for all kinds of resources to support their systems and infrastructures.”

Florian argues that competition for resources, often found in poorer countries, is what drives the highly militarised states to war and arms races, “further contributing to the climate crisis and creating a self-perpetuating cycle of destruction”.

He concludes that “we are witnessing a clear imbalance: global military spending is at an unprecedented high since the Second World War while pledges for funding climate mitigation and adaption initiatives look petty in comparison. Furthermore, the world’s militaries are largely exempted from emission measurement and reductions as well as any other environmental restrictions or transparency standards in national and international law.”

The military contributes significantly to the climate crisis, it does not protect us from the crisis and its contribution to it continues to be ignored.

A sustainable world is one in which the human security needs of all (livelihood, health, homes and education) can be met.

For this to happen we believe money spent on militarism needs to be used to counter the climate crisis, and ensure those most affected by it are protected.

What do we mean by security?

Real security means being prepared for real risks. The UK Government was woefully underprepared for the Covid-19 pandemic which was known to be a high security threat. It has inadequate plans to counter the climate crisis and no effective preparations for the increasing probability of a nuclear war or incident (as we will see later).

Human security depends on safe homes, clean air, food and water, sustainable energy, jobs and incomes. The recently published Defence Review sets out the Government’s idea of security and prosperity through to 2030 as spending an extra £24bn on the military over the next four years (an increase of 14%). We do not believe, as they do, that changing our military from a force of last resort, to becoming more “present and active around the world, operating below the threshold of open conflict to ... secure our interests” is the right type of international collaboration to address the climate crisis.



Photo by Terence Burke on Unsplash

The global fleet of military aircraft is more than double the size of the total civilian aviation fleet in the UK. Military aviation accounts for two-thirds of the Ministry of Defence’s fuel consumption.

An alternative is possible

Shifting towards a human security approach would require the creation of a comprehensive ‘arms conversion’ programme that includes funding for retraining workers in all parts of the supply chain. The arms industry employs many of our most skilled people. Transition away from militarised security to a green economy would release large funds of money and expertise creating a wealth of new opportunities.

In 2010, when the government was making cuts to military expenditure, the CEO of the West of England Aerospace Forum, was quoted as saying, “This is a perfect opportunity for diversification and renewable energy presents a massive new market”. He added “A turbine blade is not dissimilar to a helicopter blade. It’s electrical and mechanical engineering.”

For the industries currently involved in arms manufacturing to transition to a green economy there needs to be a pivoting of manufacturing priorities towards tackling the climate crisis. An attempt to reduce carbon emissions is not enough.

A better world can be created for all if human wellbeing is prioritised.

