



General Assembly First Committee Topic Background Guide
Topic 1: Reducing Military Budgets¹

October 30, 2009

How resources should be allocated in a national budget is always a contentious issue. Even in the richest countries, a dollar spent on the military is usually a dollar not spent on social and economic programs. As US President Dwight D. Eisenhower argued in 1953,

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in a final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists and the hopes of its children.²

For a few years after the end of the Cold War, it appeared that the need for a massive military budget was a thing of the past and that countries could redirect military spending to improve the lives of their people. But the “peace dividend” did not last long.

According to researchers at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which monitors military spending, from 1988 to 1996, world military spending declined about 28 percent in real (inflation-adjusted) terms (about 4.5 percent per year). From 1996 to 2001, it grew about 1.5 percent per year. From 2001 to 2005, spending increased 25 percent (6 percent per year). Thus, “by 2005 it was close to the level in 1988, one of the peak years of military spending during the cold war.”³

In 2007, states spent \$1.339 trillion on military forces and in military conflicts. That was \$202 for each person in the world.⁴ This compared to \$104 billion spent on development aid to less-developed countries (LDCs).⁵ Thus, states spent 13 times more on the military than they did on development aid.

In the Millennium Declaration (2000), UN member states called on developed countries “to grant more generous development assistance, especially to countries that are genuinely making an effort to apply their resources to poverty reduction.” At the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the 2005 World Summit on Sustainable Development, a target of 0.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) was established.⁶

¹ This document was written by Kedra Hildebrand, Teaching Assistant and Karen Adams, Faculty Advisor.

² Quoted in “More Security for Less Money,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September/October 1995, p. 37.

³ Elisabeth Sköns, “Military Expenditure vs. Human Security: What are the Realities, What are the Options?” Presentation at the 24th Annual International Women’s Day Disarmament Seminar of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom: Geneva, March 7, 2007, p. 2, available at http://www.ipb.org/i/pdf-files/Military_Spending_Human_Security_E_Skons.pdf

⁴ Petter Stalenheim et al., “Chapter 5: Military Expenditure: Summary,” *SIPRI Yearbook 2008*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2008, available at <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2008/05>

⁵ UN Development Programme (UNDP), “Global progress: Are we on track to meet the MDGs by 2015?,” available at http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics_ontrack.shtml, accessed 29 October 2009.

⁶ This target actually dates back to General Assembly Resolution 2626 (October 1970). UNICEF, “0.7% Background,” 2006, available at http://www.unicef.ca/portal/Secure/Community/502/WCM/HELP/take_action/G8/Point7_EN.pdf See also MDG Gap Task Force, “Official Development Assistance (ODA),” available at http://www.un.org/esa/policy/mdggap/mdggap_matrix_oda.html, accessed 29 October 2009.

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According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), if all developed countries spent this amount on official development assistance (ODA), there would be sufficient funds to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the target date of 2015.⁷

For the purposes of this target, developed countries are defined as members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which includes the 30 richest countries in the world (measured in terms of GDP per capita). In 2007, just five of these countries (Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden) met or surpassed this target. According to the United Nations, “for developed countries as a group, official development assistance fell to 0.28 per cent of their combined gross national income in 2007.”⁸

In 2002, a group of experts told the General Assembly that development and security are closely related. According to the group, which included foreign ministry and military officials from around the world:

[B]y promoting economic and social progress and by generating opportunities for people, development policies and programmes can contribute to eradicating poverty, promoting economic growth and stabilizing economies and States, thereby creating conditions of increased security and well being. ... Non-military threats to peace and security, which retard development and create social strain, tension and strife, include economic instability, health crises, environmental degradation and resource scarcity, and gross violations of fundamental human rights. The poor are generally more vulnerable to threats of every type. Non-military threats are among the root causes of armed conflict.⁹

Progress on the MDGs has been neither as fast nor as far-reaching as hoped. Even before the international crisis began in 2007, it was clear that it would be difficult to attain their fairly modest targets.¹⁰ Since 2007, two new issues have emerged that threaten to make it even harder to attain sustainable development and security. These issues are the international financial crisis and climate change. To address these new challenges, as well as the long-standing problems of development, it would be helpful for states to redirect some of their spending from military to civilian purposes. But will they be willing to do so?

History and Current Events

Military spending can be analyzed in a number of ways, each of which provides insight into how military spending could be redirected to other purposes. One approach is to consider which countries spend the most on their militaries and whether they could redirect these funds. Another approach is to consider which conflicts are responsible for the most spending and try to resolve those conflicts so spending could be reduced and redirected. A third approach is to analyze how much countries spend on the military compared to the size of their economy and urge those with heavy defense burdens to reduce military spending to reduce citizen dissatisfaction and the likelihood of civil war.

⁷ UNDP, “Tracking the MDGs: Global Partnership Progress,” available at http://www.undp.org/mdg/tracking_donorcountryreports2.shtml; accessed 21 October 2009.

⁸ United Nations, “Millennium Development Goals Report 2008,” p. 45, available at http://www.undp.org/publications/MDG_Report_2008_En.pdf

⁹ UN General Assembly, “Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development,” A/59/119, 23 June 2004, p. 8-9, 12 available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/402/50/PDF/N0440250.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁰ United Nations, “Millennium Development Goals Report 2008.”

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Option 1: The Largest Military Spenders Could Divert Some Spending to Development Purposes

For many decades, the United States has spent far more on the military than any other country. In 2007, US spending accounted for 45 percent of the world total. Each of the next largest spenders -- the United Kingdom, China, France and Japan -- accounted for just 4 to 5 percent.¹¹ Thus in 2007, just five of UN's 192 member states were responsible for 65 percent of world military spending.

In 2007, four of the top five military spenders -- US, UK, France, and Japan -- were developed states. As developed states, they have been urged to spend at least 0.7 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on aid to developing countries. As shown in Table 1, in 2007, none of them met this target.

Table 1
Population, Military Spending, and Development Assistance of Top Five Military Spenders, 2007¹²

State	Population (in millions)	Military Spending (billion US\$)	Military Spending/GDP	Military Spending per person	Development Aid (ODA) (billion \$US)	ODA/GDP
US	302	\$578	4.0%	\$1,914	\$22	0.16%
UK	61	70	2.6	1,148	10	0.36
China	1,318	66	2.1	50	n/a	n/a
France	62	60	2.4	968	10	0.39
Japan	128	40	1.0	313	8	0.17

In 2007, US GDP was \$13.8 trillion.¹³ To reach the target of 0.7 percent of GDP in ODA, the US would need to spend \$96.6 billion per year in development assistance. As shown in Table 1, in 2007, the US spent just \$22 billion in ODA. To meet the target, the US could shift \$74.6 billion of its military spending to development assistance. This would be a 13 percent reduction in US military spending and equivalent to \$247 per American. Similar calculations can be made for the UK, France, and Japan. From 2006 to 2007, the US, UK, and France each increased the dollar amount of ODA they gave by 6 to 10 percent. Japan's ODA did not increase over that period.¹⁴

In 2009, US President Obama proposed a US military budget of \$680 billion for the 2010 fiscal year. The budget includes \$550 billion for the Pentagon's base budget and \$130 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Analysts heralded the budget as a victory over military waste because it cut a number of programs that were very expensive and had little military purpose, including F-22 fighter jets that cost \$150 million per plane.¹⁵ Nevertheless, President Obama has increased, not decreased, US military spending. Moreover, due to the economic crisis, President Obama has "scaled back" his campaign promise to double US foreign aid.¹⁶

¹¹ Stalenheim et al., "Chapter 5: Military Expenditure: Summary."

¹² Data on population are from Population Reference Bureau, "2007 World Population Data Sheet," pp. 7-10, available at http://www.prb.org/pdf07/07WPDS_Eng.pdf Data on military spending are from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2008*, Table 5.A3 and Table 5.A4, pp. 219-232. Data on development aid are from OECD, "Public Finance: Development Aid," *OECD in Figures 2008*, available at http://www.oecd.org/document/32/0,3343,en_2649_34489_41722336_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹³ OECD, "Economy: Gross Domestic Product, 2007," *OECD in Figures 2008*.

¹⁴ OECD, "Public Finance: Development Aid."

¹⁵ Christopher Drew, "Victory for Obama Over Military Lobby," *New York Times*, 28 October 2009, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/29/business/29defense.html?ref=us> See also Lawrence J. Korb, "Getting the Defense Budget Under Control," Center for American Progress, 9 April 2009, available at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/04/gates_budget.html

¹⁶ Jackie Calmes, "Obama Planning to Slash Deficit, Despite Stimulus Spending," *New York Times*, 21 February 2009, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/22/us/politics/22budget.html>

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Option 2: States Could Resolve Their Conflicts So Spending Could Be Reduced

Another option for reducing military spending is to resolve the conflicts towards which spending is directed. Over the past decade, the most expensive military conflict has been the war on terrorism. The vast majority of funds spent in that conflict have been spent by the US. From 2001 to 2007, US military spending increased by 59 per cent.¹⁷ According to the Congressional Research Service,

[as of] June 30, 2008, Congress has approved a total of about \$864 billion for military operations, base security, reconstruction, foreign aid, embassy costs, and veterans' health care for the three operations initiated since the 9/11 attacks: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Afghanistan and other counter terror operations; Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), providing enhanced security at military bases; and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).¹⁸

As mentioned, the 2010 US budget includes \$130 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the UN Development Program, it would take just \$200 billion per year to attain the MDGs by 2015.¹⁹

In addition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, recent international wars have included Eritrea-Ethiopia (1998-2000), India-Pakistan (1999), and US/NATO-Yugoslavia (1999). In 2007, there were 34 civil wars, including Iraq, Afghanistan, India (Nagaland), Sri Lanka, and Somalia.²⁰

From 1998 to 2007, the regions in which military spending grew the slowest were Western Europe (an average of 0.6 percent per year) and Central America (1.4 percent per year). The regions in which military spending grew the fastest are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Regions with the Highest Average Annual Growth in Military Spending, 1998-2007²¹

<u>Region</u>	<u>Average Annual Growth in Military Spending</u>	<u>States that spent the most in 2007</u>
Eastern Europe	16.2%	Russia, Poland
North America	6.5	United States, Brazil
Middle East	6.2	Saudi Arabia, Israel
South Asia	5.7	India, Pakistan
Africa	5.1	South Africa, Algeria
East Asia	5.1	China, Japan

¹⁷ Stalenheim et al., "Chapter 5: Military Expenditure: Summary."

¹⁸ Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," Congressional Research Service, 15 May 2009, available at <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>

¹⁹ UNDP, "Tracking the MDGs: Global Partnership Progress."

²⁰ Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "A Revised List of Wars within and between Independent States, 1816-2002," *International Interactions* 30 (2004), Table A, p. 250. Lotta Harbom, et al., "Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946-2007," *Journal of Peace Research* 45:5 (2008), p. 697.

²¹ Derived from Stalenheim et al., "Chapter 5: Military Expenditure: Summary" and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2008*, Table 5.A3, pp. 219-225.

Option 3: States with Heavy Defense Burdens Could Reduce their Spending to Avoid Future Wars

A third option for reducing military spending is for states with high defense spending relative to the size of their economies, populations, or overall government budgets to redirect spending from military to civilian purposes within their own borders. According to many analysts, this could increase citizen satisfaction with the government and reduce the likelihood of civil war. Since 1945, most wars have been civil wars. Thus, averting future civil wars is a way to reduce military spending over the long term.

The experience of the Soviet Union provides support for the idea of minimizing the “defense burden” on an economy. During the 1980s, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated that the Soviet Union’s military budget was much as 17 percent of its GDP.²² At other times, it may have reached 25 percent of GDP.²³ GDP measures the total value of goods produced in an economy in a given year. Thus during the Cold War, as much as 25 cents of every dollar of value produced by the entire Soviet economy was spent on the military. This was a very heavy defense burden. By comparison, at its Cold War peak in 1963, US military spending as a percentage of GDP was 9 percent. In the 1980s, when Soviet spending was estimated to be at 17 percent of GDP, the US was at 6 percent.²⁴ This difference between Soviet and US defense burdens contributed to the inability of the USSR to keep up with the US in terms of computerization, industrial output, and civilian standards of living and played a large role in the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Table 3 lists the states in each region that spent the largest percentage of their 2006 GDP on the military.

Table 3
States with Highest Military Spending/GDP by Region, 2006²⁵

<u>Region</u>	<u>State with Highest Military Spending/GDP</u>	<u>Military Spending/GDP</u>
Africa	Burundi	4.7%
Americas	US, Colombia (tie)	4.0
Asia	Singapore	4.7
Europe	Greece	3.8
Middle East	Oman	11.2

In 2006, the Middle East was the only region in which any state spent more than 5 percent of its GDP on the military. Six of the 14 states in the region did so. In addition to Oman (11.2%), these states were Saudi Arabia (8.5), Israel (8.0), Iraq (7.8), Syria (5.1), and Jordan (5.0).

Another way to assess the defense burden is to consider states’ military spending per capita (per person). Figures for the top five military spenders are shown in Table 1 (above). According to some analysts, spending per capita is a better measure of defense burden than spending as a percentage of GDP because it shows the effect of military spending on individual citizens. This statistic is especially significant in times of economic downturn because states do not automatically reduce military spending when GDP falls.²⁶

²² “Russian Military Budget Expenditures,” GlobalSecurity.org, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/mo-budget-expenditures.htm>, accessed 29 October 2009.

²³ David Francis, “Recession for Russia? Sounds Like Good News,” *Christian Science Monitor* 89:166; July 23, (1997), p. 8.

²⁴ Pamela Hess, “Defense Spending approaching Cold War high,” United Press International, 8 February 2006, available at http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Defense_Spending_approaching_Cold_War_high.html

²⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2008*, Table 5.A4, pp. 226-232.

²⁶ Pamela Hess, “Defense Spending approaching Cold War high.”

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A final way to assess national defense burdens is to compare government spending on the military to government spending on economic and social programs such as education and health care. There is usually a trade-off between these types of spending because tax revenues can only be increased to a certain point before taxpayers start to complain. This trade-off is why analysts often talk about “guns versus butter.”

States facing potential domestic instability, such as China, often spend relatively little on their militaries compared to social programs.²⁷ By contrast, states that are more stable internally are able to spend more on international military operations. For example, in 2008, the US spent 55 cents of all income tax dollars on the military. The remaining 45 cents were split among education and other social and economic programs such as agriculture, commerce, justice, foreign aid, and health and human services (not including Social Security and Medicare, which are funded by payroll taxes).²⁸ In addition, Congress approved special appropriations for Iraq and Afghanistan, which were financed by issuing US government debt. The US has been able to do this because investors have confidence in the value of the US dollar and the long-term prospects for growth in the US economy. If their confidence fell, the US would either have to pay higher interest rates on its debt or reduce its spending to levels that could be covered by tax revenues.

When the British, French, and Japanese empires broke up at the end of World War II, many new states emerged in Africa and Asia. Like Latin American states, which attained independence earlier, they began to create national militaries and spent considerable sums to assure their continued independence and retain domestic authority. At the end of the Cold War, it became obvious that these states could not maintain their rates of military spending and continue to develop socially and economically. To reduce developing countries’ emphasis on military spending, major donor countries began to tie development aid to agreements on military budget reduction.²⁹ Despite such efforts, according to SIPRI researchers, developing countries continue “to have the highest military burden, give the lowest priority to social expenditures and have the greatest development needs.”³⁰

New Reasons to Reduce Military Spending: Economic Crisis and Climate Change

State stability has long depended on reasonable levels of military spending compared to social and economic programs. In addition, developing countries have long depended on development aid to realize progress for their people. In the current context of economic crisis and climate change, reductions in military spending and increases in social and economic spending and development aid have become even more important.

According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the international financial crisis that began in 2008 imperils development and realization of the MDGs:

Forecasts for the global economy in 2009 are bleak. The current financial crisis has already pushed most developed countries into a recession that is likely to have negative consequences for LDCs’ future economic prospects. Global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 is now expected to fall... This is likely to undermine [LDC] achievements of the present decade in lowering poverty and improving social welfare... The human and social costs of the present crisis are considerable everywhere, but for the poorest countries, they will include not just the loss of employment but also rising levels of poverty, spreading malnutrition and higher mortality rates for children and other vulnerable groups. There will also be

²⁷ Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century : China, Britain, France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

²⁸ US Office of Management and Budget, “Summary Table S3,” Budget of the US Government, Fiscal Year 2010, Updated Summary Tables, May 2009, p. 6, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2010/assets/summary.pdf>

²⁹ Robert. S. McNamara, “Reducing Military Expenditures in the Third World,” *Finance and Development*, September 1, 1991, available at <http://www.allbusiness.com/government/257673-1.html>

³⁰ Sköns, “Military Expenditure vs. Human Security: What are the Realities, What are the Options?” pp. 13, 7.

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increased pressure on the skilled and able-bodied to emigrate. For many LDCs, there is thus a real risk that this economic crisis will turn into a social and humanitarian disaster.³¹

In addition, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “over the next half-century, climate change could impede achievement of the MDGs” by creating severe weather patterns, reducing agricultural production, contributing to health problems, and requiring resettlement of coastal populations.³²

The economic crisis and climate change pose problems not only for development, but also for security. As explained by the group of experts commissioned by the GA in 2002, “economic instability, health crises, environmental degradation and resource scarcity” threaten international peace and security because they “create social strain, tension and strife.”³³

Sometimes it is argued that military spending has a stimulating effect on economies and is therefore beneficial during economic crises. In the present situation, this argument has three flaws. First, military spending will not address climate change. Second, military spending is not development aid. In 2007, 60 percent of world military spending was carried out by just the US, UK, France, and Japan. Thus increasing military spending is unlikely to help developing countries, unless it does so by helping developed countries emerge from economic crisis so they will increase trade and aid. But (and third), there are more efficient ways to stimulate developed countries’ economies. In the 21st century, a dollar of military spending has fewer direct benefits to civilians than a dollar of social and economic spending. According to researcher James Hecht, in the US \$1 billion spent for military procurement creates about 25,000 military jobs. By contrast, \$1 billion spent on education would create 40,000 jobs, and the same amount spent on health care would create 45,000 jobs.³⁴ Moreover, in addition to creating jobs, this spending would improve individual quality of life and state stability.

Evidence for the economic benefits of reduced military spending is provided by post-Cold War Russia. From 1990 to 1997, Russia suffered a slump much worse than the US’s Great Depression. Economic output (GDP) plunged 40 percent, compared to 30 percent in the US between 1929 and 1933. The situation finally turned around in 1997, when Russian military spending fell to just three percent of GDP from its Cold War high of 25 percent.³⁵

Evidence for the security benefits of development aid and reduced military spending is provided by Liberia. In 2003, after 14 years of civil war, the UN and international donors proved aid to demobilize combatants and meet emergency development needs. In 2005, a new government was elected, and additional aid for post-conflict reconstruction was received. This benefited not only Liberia but also other countries in the region, which had been burdened by refugees and other effects of the Liberian civil war.³⁶

Why Is It So Hard to Reduce Military Spending?

Despite the benefits of reducing military spending, it is often hard to persuade states to do so. The first reason often cited for this is the desire to provide for an adequate national defense in an uncertain international

³¹ UNCTAD, *LDC Report 2009*, pp. 1-7, available at http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ldc2009_en.pdf

³² IPCC, “Summary for Policy Makers,” *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, pp. 11-12, 20.

³³ UN General Assembly, “Report of the Group of Governmental Experts,” p. 12.

³⁴ Hecht, “Immodest Proposal: Cutting Military Spending,” pp. 539-40.

³⁵ Francis, “Recession for Russia?”

³⁶ Pureterra Witcher, “Development Helps Peace Take Root in Liberia,” UN Chronicle Online Edition, November 3, 2006, available at <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2006/issue3/0306p44.htm>

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world. This reason is illustrated by a recent US public opinion poll in which 72 percent of Americans felt that it was better to have too much defense than too little.³⁷

A second reason states are reluctant to reduce their military spending is the influence of what US President Eisenhower referred to as the “military-industrial-Congressional complex.”³⁸ This reason is illustrated by the fact that countries with big militaries (such as Russia and the US) continue to have large militaries, while states with smaller militaries (such as Sweden) consistently have smaller ones. In each country, certain corporations, politicians, and workers benefit from the status quo and work hard to preserve it. For example, although Russia has fallen from great power status and today spends far less on its military than it did during the Cold War, due largely to domestic pressures it has significantly increased its military spending over the past 10 years. In doing so, Russia has made Eastern Europe the region with the fastest growth in military spending.

In practice, these two reasons interact. Although states may claim that their spending is used only to build up defenses, other states may fear that these militaries will be used against them. This situation, known as the “security dilemma,” can lead to cycles of increased military spending (arms races).

Previous Committee Work on This Topic

The General Assembly first urged UN member states to reduce military spending in the 1980s. In Resolution 35/142B, entitled “Reduction of Military Budgets,” the GA argued that the first step should be achieving transparency of military expenditures. Specifically, the GA urged member states to report their annual military expenditures in a standardized format to the UN Secretary-General. From 1980 to 1990, when the Cold War was ongoing, fewer than 30 states participated. Since then, the year with the largest number of reports was 2002, when the Secretary General received 82 reports.³⁹

In 1984, the GA passed Resolution A/RES/39/64, which argued that military expenditures “constitute a heavy burden for the economies of all nations and have extremely harmful effects on world peace and security.”⁴⁰ In 1989, the GA reaffirmed the 1984 resolution and further stated that it was, “convinced that the reduction of military expenditures as a result of the progress in disarmament negotiations will have favorable consequences on the world economic and financial situation.”⁴¹

In November 1996, the GA First Committee released a statement reaffirming the 1980 resolution.⁴² In 1999, the First Committee again discussed the reduction of military budgets and the need for objective information on military matters. To keep military spending from increasing, the GA-1 also proposed a “prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destructions and new systems of such weapons.”⁴³

³⁷ Hecht, “Immodest Proposal: Cutting Military Spending,” p. 539.

³⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Address to the Nation,” 17 January 1961.

³⁹ UN Peace and Security through Disarmament, “United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures,” United Nations, 2007, available at <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/milex.html>

⁴⁰ General Assembly, “Reduction of Military Budgets,” A/RES/39/64, United Nations, December 12, 1984, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r064.htm>

⁴¹ General Assembly, “Reduction of Military Budgets,” A/RES/44/114, United Nations, December 15, 1989, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r114.htm>

⁴² General Assembly First Committee, “Press Release GA/DIS/3066 16th Meeting,” United Nations, November 6, 1996, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1996/19961106.gads3066.html>

⁴³ General Assembly First Committee, “Documents of the First Committee: Note by the Secretariat,” United Nations, 26 October 1999, available at <http://www.un.org/ga/54/first/add1.pdf>

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The GA-1 passed similar draft resolutions in 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2007, all of which were ultimately passed by the General Assembly.⁴⁴

In the 2007 resolution (A/RES/62/13), the GA once again called on member states to annually report their military expenditures for the latest fiscal year and encouraged various UN bodies and other international organizations to cooperate to improve the reporting system to make it easier for member states.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Previous General Assembly work on reducing military budgets is not promising. Little discussion regarding reductions in military spending has occurred. Instead the focus has been on achieving compliance with the reporting provisions of Resolution 35/142B (1980).

The right of each state to decide how to allocate its spending is protected by Chapter I, Article 2 of the UN Charter, which states that the UN “is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.”⁴⁶ Thus the GA cannot make member states reduce their spending. Instead, it must rely on arguments about the costs of such spending. At present, these costs seem very high. With small reallocations of military spending, developed states could help developing countries achieve the MDGs.⁴⁷ Without these reallocations, it would be difficult to meet the 2015 targets, even before the effects of the economic crisis and climate change are considered.

In recent months, developing countries have “made it clear that they will not sign a treaty [to reduce greenhouse gas emissions] unless they get money to help them adapt to a warmer planet.” The cost of making needed changes is steep -- at least \$1 billion and as much as \$1 trillion per year.⁴⁸ In 2007, worldwide military spending was \$1.339 trillion. Can and should the GA-1 encourage member states to reallocate military spending to climate change and development purposes?

To develop your country’s position on this topic, consider the following questions:

- How much does your country spend on its military? How has this changed in recent years? What is its defense burden? Consider military spending relative to GDP, per capita, and compared to spending on social and economic programs.
- Why does your country spend this amount on the military? Consider its recent and current military conflicts, as well as its regional situation and military-industrial complex.

⁴⁴ General Assembly First Committee, “Documents of the First Committee: Note by the Secretariat,” United Nations, 26 October 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/ga/56/first/ac156i1a1rev1.pdf> United Nations General Assembly, “Reduction in Military Budgets: Report of the First Committee,” United Nations, 8 November 2007, available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/543/90/PDF/N0754390.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁵ General Assembly First Committee, “Documents of the First Committee: Note by the Secretariat,” United Nations, 26 October 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/ga/56/first/ac156i1a1rev1.pdf> United Nations General Assembly, “Reduction in Military Budgets: Report of the First Committee,” United Nations, 8 November 2007, available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/543/90/PDF/N0754390.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁶ “Charter of the United Nations,” “Chapter I, Article 2, available at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter1.shtml>

⁴⁷ United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service Roundup, “Copenhagen + 10: 43rd Session of the UN Commission on Social Development,” United Nations, April 2006, 5, available at <http://www.un-ngls.org/orf/pdf/RU-ONLINE-Copenhagen+10.pdf>

⁴⁸ “Times Topic: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,” *New York Times*, 15 October 2009, available at http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/u/united_nations_framework_convention_on_climate_change/index.html

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- How has your country been affected by the international economic crisis?
- How is your country likely to be affected by climate change?
- Which is the most severe security threat to your country: military conflict, lack of development, or climate change?
- If your country is a developing country, how much aid does it receive? If it is a developed country, how much aid does it give? It is meeting the 0.7 percent target?
- How could the GA convince states to reduce their military budgets?

Recommended Reading

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "IPCC Fourth Assessment Report 2007." 2007
Available at <http://www.ipcc.ch>

This is the most detailed, documented, and up-to-date statement of the climate change problem and possible policy responses. The "Summary for Policy Makers" (<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-spm.pdf>) provides a concise statement of the challenges in each world region.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). "Public Finance: Development Aid." *OECD in Figures 2008*. 2008. Available at
http://www.oecd.org/document/32/0,3343,en_2649_34489_41722336_1_1_1_1,00.html

This table provides information on the development assistance granted by each of the 30 developed-country members of the OECD in 2007.

Shah, Anup (13 September 2009). "World Military Spending." *Global Issues*. Available at
<http://www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-military-spending#Spendingforpeacevsspendingforwar>

This site provides an overview of many aspects of world military spending, using data from the 2009 *SIPRI Yearbook*. It is a good place to find out more about the issues discussed in this guide.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database." Available at
<http://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>

SIPRI is the most reliable source for information on military spending. From this page, click on "Enter the Database" to review data on your country's military spending and military spending as a percentage of GDP.

United Nations. "Millennium Development Goals Report 2008." Available at
http://www.undp.org/publications/MDG_Report_2008_En.pdf

This report provides an overview of the MDGs and progress on their attainment to date. Reading this report will help you evaluate whether it is necessary to increase development funding.

United Nations. Peace and Security through Disarmament. "United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures." Available at <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/milex.html>

This web site provides background information on UN actions related to military spending. In addition, it has links to each year's report by the UN Secretary General, which compiles the information submitted by member states. Reviewing the most recent report will tell you whether your state is in compliance with the GA's resolutions urging states to report. If so, you can also see some detailed information about its military spending.