Introduction

The only other moment in history comparable to the global spending on military training, weapons of mass destruction, and fighter jets in the modern century is the height of the Cold War. At that time, both the Soviet Union and the United States were depleting their defence budgets during the arms and space race. However, due to the Soviet Union’s sudden collapse in 1991, large scale conflicts largely disappeared, and military spending plummeted while the global economy boomed. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SPIRI), military spending fell by roughly 40% in the decade following the Cold War. This has helped nations restore their economies, especially in the former Soviet Union, where poverty, hunger and lack of education became common as military budgets increased for the sake of public welfare programs.

However, after the September 11, 2001 attacks, former US President George W. Bush launched his ‘war on terror’, in which he drastically increased his nation’s defence budget and occupied areas of Iraq and Afghanistan along with troops from US allies. This lead to another global spike in military spending until war fatigue and pressure from the American public forced former US President, Barack Obama, to reduce the budget again. However, even this cut left the military spending budget at levels higher than budgets prior to 9/11.

The advancement of the Chinese military over the last 20 years has threatened the US over its position of being the world’s military superpower. China’s technological advancements and economic boom during a time when most other countries were recovering from the 2008 crisis allowed them to place a consistently larger amount of money into their military budgets, culminating to over 250 billion dollars in 2018. China recently threatened its neighbours over territorial disputes, leading nations like Japan and South Korea to also increase their military budget. Moreover, the growth of Chinese military has encouraged nations like the US to respond by doing the same in fear of Chinese aggression against their allies.
Reducing global military spending would allow most nations to redirect their resources into more useful areas such as education and healthcare. In addition, they would reduce tensions between nations and save countless lives. It would also satisfy public opinion, which is overwhelmingly against excessive spending in most nations.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Military/Defence Budget**

The value of financial resources dedicated by a nation to maintain its armed forces and researching or purchasing weaponry, fighter jets and warships.

**Conventional Arms**

Any weapons excluding weapons of mass destruction, this includes guns, armoured vehicles, combat aircraft and warships. They can also include small arms, ammunition, and landmines.

**Small Arms**

Also known as light weapons, including pistols, rifles, light machine guns, and other portable firearms.

**Fiscal Year**

A period of time used by governments for accounting and budgets, usually varies from nation to nation.

**Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)**

When two parties agree to not to place any military installations in a particular area. They can be essential in providing time for nations to come to budget-reducing agreements.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction (WOMD)**

A nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon capable of widespread damage to infrastructure and loss of life.

**Background Information**
The recent growth of global defence spending has caused tension to intensify between the aforementioned nations. For example, India and Pakistan have increased military spending due to their overlapping claims to the land in Kashmir; they have also increased them to match China’s expansion as they feel threatened with a large superpower in their region holding views opposed to theirs. This places many nations in a situation where higher tensions lead to more spending in order to fulfill the need for security from neighbouring nations with large military budgets. However, that spending can consequently lead to higher tensions within the region, which may incite an attack from a nation. This is exactly what escalated World War I, where increased tensions and spending lead to an overreaction and outburst. If spending and tensions were low, a solution may have been reached before the issue escalated into a world war. Hence, reduced spending by all member states would help avoid further major international conflict.

Consequences of Large Military Spending

Conflict between member states

Bombings from other member states have become more common and have caused significant damage to other nations infrastructure. For example, bombings from Saudi Arabia and other nations in coalition with them including UAE, Bahrain and Morocco and many other nations have caused hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths in Yemen, leaving the rest of the nation in poverty. This started due to the aforementioned coalition being eager to spend money on their military, giving the United States millions upon millions to in exchange for advanced fighter jets and other military resources, leading to escalating diplomatic breakdowns which resulted in the current humanitarian crisis happening in Yemen right now.

Terrorist Organizations

Growth of global military spending has also led to a larger circulation of weapons, some of which have fallen into the hands of terrorist organizations in countries such as Sudan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria. SIPRI and Amnesty International claim that an 87% increase in the flow of arms in the Middle East from 2014-2018 is directly linked to roughly 78,000 violent deaths in 2018. Increased spending in LEDCs due to unstable or corrupt governments such as the ones mentioned before allow terrorists to gain access to territories and weapons due to those member states being unable to keep their arms secure from terrorists. Therefore, reduced spending and those nations could contribute to reducing the availability of arms to said terrorists. Furthermore, corrupt leaders tend to focus more on their military over education and healthcare. For example, Sudan’s former dictator, Omar AlBashir, placed 5% of his budget into defense spending while only delegating around 3% to public healthcare and education.
**Economic Ramifications**

A study conducted by Luisa Pieroni and her colleagues comparing multiple nations of different wealth levels in a 45 year time frame has found that increased military spending tends to negatively impact economic growth. The authors of this study have used SIPRI data to find that, over a 20 year period, a 1% increase in military spending decreases potential economic growth by around 9%, the study also states that this stagnation of growth is especially detrimental to More Economically developed Countries (MEDCs). Furthermore, increasing spending leaves less money available for healthcare and education, meaning current military spending growth poses short-term and long-term consequences such as reducing GDP growth and stagnating medical advancements.

On the other hand, while there haven't been as many accurate studies on the effect of reducing spending consistently over a long period of time, some studies have shown that spending is decreasing as a percentage of global GDP, in most advanced nations that are usually large spenders are also decreasing spending as a percentage of GDP but increasing it in terms of US dollars. Furthermore, many other MEDCs such as Sweden, Norway, and other scandinavian nations are increasing military spending in terms of US dollars but decreasing military budgets as a percentage of GDP.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)**

The UNODA was established on January 1, 1998, and has ever since attempted to develop new methods to encourage disarmament. For decades on end, UNODA has worked on denuclearization, disarmament, and treaties focused on stopping weapons from getting into terrorists’ hands. Furthermore, UNODA is comprised of multiple branches including the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) branch, which is designated to follow all trends related to WMD and encourage nonproliferation accordingly. In addition, the Conventional Arms Branch (CAB) is focused on transparency and maintaining the control of conventional weapons. The Regional Disarmament Branch (RDB) also focuses on regional cooperation in high-risk areas to reduce the circulation of weapons, along with regional and sub-regional levels to encourage peace treaties and ceasefires.

Their High Representative, Izumi Nakamitsu, has recognized deteriorating geopolitical relations, such as the aforementioned tensions between The United States, China, and countries within their sphere of influence, as a major cause of the rapid growth of global defence spending. This is because high tensions and deteriorating relations encourage nations to increase defence spending on new
military technology in fear of aggression from neighbouring nations. UNODA has launched funds and initiatives such as ‘The Saving Lives Entity’, known as Salient, whose main focus is developing already existing small arms regulators to make them more proficient.

However, the UNODA has been unsuccessful at getting large military spenders such as the United States to reduce their spending. This has been a major reason for escalations in global conflicts in East Asia and the Middle East. Moreover, they have been unsuccessful at securing long term ceasefires or securing demilitarized zones (DMZs) effectively in areas such as North Syria.

**United States of America**

The United States’ large military spending and inconsistent intervention in the Middle East has led to some major geopolitical conflicts in areas such as Northern Syria, and has allowed for certain terrorist organizations to take control of crucial cities in that area. For example, their recent withdrawal from Northern Syria has allowed the Turkish intervention that led to the death of thousands of Kurds. Furthermore, global trends tend to follow the United States’ trends due to their major political influence on their allies and enemies. The United States has been in a state of consistent increase in military spending since 1997. However, that increase skyrocketed in the early 2000s with the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and has since been steady.

**China**

China has seen it's 24th consecutive increase in military spending in 2018, culminating to 250 billion in 2018. This is going into the modernization of China’s People’s Liberation Army. President Xi Jinping has stated that the army will be fully modernized by 2035 and complete a transformation into a world-class force by 2049, with aims to make China a regional superpower on par with the United States. China has spent billions developing new conventional weapons such as fighter jets, including their new Shenyang FC-31, designed to compete with America’s newest generation F-22 Raptor fighter jets.

Furthermore, China has invested heavily in cyberwarfare to attempt to undermine its western competitors due to its reliance on information systems, for example, many cyberattacks on computer systems have been traced to China, however, they deny any claims of espionage. They have also invested in Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), including nuclear-warhead tipped hypersonic missiles and anti-satellite weapons. China has also started placing military bases in other nations such as Djibouti. In addition to China’s antics in the South China Sea disputes and military exercises around Taiwan and the South China Sea, many of the United States’ allies around China such as Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam to increase their spending, mainly on their naval ships and troops, in reaction to China’s actions in the South China Sea.
Russia

According to Dr. Nan Tian, a researcher at the SIPRI, there is a current Russian resurgence due to their large military spending growth in 2011, this has led to a military modernization program that started in 2016 and is now coming to an end, meaning Russian spending is slowly levelling off. However, this program allowed Russia to annex Crimea and cause political unrest in Ukraine. In addition to election meddling, advanced cyber capabilities, and cutting edge hypersonic missile technology, Russia has used this program to improve its global military presence. This has caused many former Soviet nations increasing defence spending in fear of an aggressive Russian invasion, nations such as Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania, which have all increased spending between 18% to 25% more on their military budgets.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

SIPRI is a research institute, founded on the 6th of May 1966, that specialises in disarmament, demilitarization, and global conflict resolution. They provide data, analysis, and expert opinions based on open source data to policymakers and researchers. They have had a fundamental role in disarmament as they publish reports and organize events related to peace and disarmament on global, regional, and local levels.

Recently, SIPRI has partnered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This collaboration agreement is predicted to provide new fact-based initiatives and innovative policies on international peacekeeping and disarmament. SIPRI has also published a ‘yearbook’, originally meant to cover methods of stopping the arms race during the Cold War. However, it is now being used to cover a variety of different topics in disarmament, armament, and international security. Their yearbook has been a basis for many studies published on disarmament, which has been crucial for researchers and UN representatives that have used their data and based initiatives, resolutions, or treaties on the data SIPRI presents in their yearbooks.

Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 25, 1991</td>
<td>The Soviet Union collapses, leading to a global drop in military spending</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 11, 2001</td>
<td>9/11 causes ‘War on Terror’, which raises military spending globally</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1, 2013</td>
<td>China starts raising military spending substantially</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2013</td>
<td>China deploys bases in the South China sea to claim it</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 January 2014</td>
<td>China forces a fishing permit in the South China Sea against requests from The United States, The Philippines, Vietnam, and South Korea</td>
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The US, Vietnam, and other allied raise military budgets over South China Sea disputes.

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

- Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control 5 December 2013 *(A/RES/68/33)*
- Prevention of an arms race in outer space 5 December 2013 *(A/RES/68/29)*
- Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East 7 December 2013 *(A/RES/68/27)*
- Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures 2 December 2011, *(A/RES/66/20)*

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

**UN International Arms Trade Treaty**

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a multilateral treaty that regulates the international circulation of conventional arms and it is the first international, legally binding instrument that establishes national standards for regulating the trade in conventional arms and preventing their illicit trade. It entered into effect in December 2014 as an attempt at stopping conventional arms from entering areas where they could be used in human rights abuses or terrorism. They also mention the exclusion of interference with domestic arms commerce and member states’ rights to bear arms. Despite this, many nations and groups still oppose it as they see its clauses as ‘violations of national sovereignty’. However, the treaty has been unsuccessful at tackling the problem of conventional arms after they’ve been smuggled to terrorist groups.

This treaty reduces military budgets by decreasing conflict in areas that have a high demand for small and conventional arms by stopping guns from reaching terrorists, this makes them less of a threat for LEDCs, meaning some nations such as Nigeria that spent a significant amount of their budget fighting organizations such as Boko Haram can now repurpose some of those funds as the organization grows weaker. This also makes sections of military budgets dedicated to foreign interference mostly obsolete, as the organizations become weaker, meaning nations, especially large spenders such as Russia and the US, can now reduce their budgets.
Furthermore, under the program of action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms And Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA), in which governments agreed to stricten import/export laws on small arm, in addition to the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), which requires states to clearly report, record and mark or imported or exported light weapons, have worked hand in hand with the ATT to trace imports/exports of such weapons and stop them from falling in the wrong hands or being mismanaged. Reports on PoA and ITI are also combined to better coordinate those efforts.

**Promoting Transparency**

UN organizations such as UNODA promote transparency as they claim it shows “domestic confidence” and “mature readiness by authorities”. They also affirm that reporting arms exports and imports creates trust between nations. To promote transparency, they have set up the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) as an attempt to make registering conventional arms as easy as possible, even creating seven categories including battle tanks and attack helicopters for major conventional arms and LMGs and ARs for small arms and light weapons.

While some nations have taken it upon themselves to submit clear, accessible reports to UNROCA on a yearly basis, most nations are unable or unwilling to send accurate and detailed reports, and seeing as there are no apparent consequences to those countries for not submitting reports, this current situation is unlikely to change. Moreover, transparency has not been effective at promoting trust between most nations, especially Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs).

If promoted effectively, transparency between nations leads to improving geopolitical relations, which could reverse the side effects of deterioration relations over the past few years. Furthermore, having to report spending yearly to the UN may get nations to reconsider the amount of money they place in their budgets. However, the current implementation by UNROCA minimizes the possible benefits.

**Possible Solutions**

**Military Reorganization**

Many nations’ militaries spend unnecessarily large amounts on new weaponry, despite already being powerful and advanced. Many practices in militaries today are outdated due to new technology and advancements in healthcare. For example, retirement ages were set when life expectancy was 60 years instead of 80 in the USA, in addition to the fact that military officers tend to have safer, usually more diverse jobs in areas such as intelligence and communications nowadays as opposed to the 1900s (when most rules practiced today were written). Therefore, military officers can retire later than they
currently do, cutting pension costs and decreasing the new salaries of replacements. Another example is
the US’ forces, many of which carry extremely similar tasks, so reorganization of military structures and
hierarchies would allow them to reduce budgets and be more efficient. Updating some outdated military
policies may also allow them to reduce costs further. For example, military schools in the US cost 50,000
per student, while using localised civilian school near military bases would cut costs for every new
inductee.

Investing in more efficient ways of management and redirecting the resources within the military
organizations to plan for more strategic advancements is worth more than investing in larger troops or
updating weaponry. However, while reorganization of hierarchy may reduce costs and allow more funds
to be placed in healthcare and education, it does not solve the issue of international tensions,
overspending on weaponry, and deteriorating geopolitical relations.

**Summits**

According to Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative of UNODA, “deteriorating geopolitical
relations” are the main cause of the growth of military budgets. Furthermore, they were also the cause of
the last spike in defence spending (The Cold War). Peace Summits can be effective at getting nations to
agree on similar initiatives and implement them within their borders, for example, a permanent
anti-racism unit was established at the U.N. as a result of the World Conference Against Racism in 2001,
in addition, within three years of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, 130 countries had
developed national action plans based on the Beijing Platform for Action, and 22 countries had enacted
new laws on women’s political participation.

While summits are currently being implemented globally, after hours upon hours of negotiation, some
don’t achieve their intended results. Therefore, a change in the way peace summits are held may allow
negotiations to be more efficient to produce more treaties or initiatives that give nations a common goal
and ease political tensions.

**Cut Weaponry Costs**

A majority or defence resources are currently being placed into conventional arms such as fighter
jets and warships, for example, a single F-35 fighter jet costs about 300 million USD, this is without
factoring inspections, tests, oil changes, refuels, etc. therefore, a logical solution to the issue would be to
coordinate large scale reduction of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction internationally.
This was also achieved in the Cold War. As a tactic to reduce spending and save their economies, both
the Soviet Union and the United States welcomed a detente (easing of hostility). Nixon became the first
US president to set foot on Soviet soil and the favour was returned by the Soviet a year later. Treaties
such as the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) of 1972 limited spending by both nations.
Furthermore, limitation of arms and arms trade make negotiations more of a priority, as opposed to threatening war or occupation, this can also play a role in reducing hostility, further reducing military spending and cutting budgets globally.

**Guiding Questions**

1. How may your delegation tackle deteriorating geopolitical relations?
2. What effect does your delegation have on easing international tensions?
3. What effect does your issue have on your delegation’s citizens?
4. What limitations do DMZs have that make them ineffective in some situations?
5. How can UNODA set up agreements between opposing superpowers?

**Bibliography**


