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**Resisting Green Militarism:  
Building Movements for Peace  
and Eco-Social Justice**

**Revitalising Debate on  
The Global Arms Trade**

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# Table of Contents

- About..... 2
- Executive Summary ..... 3
  - Key Insights for Organising..... 4
  - Policy Asks ..... 5
  - Campaign Prompts..... 6
- Part I. Introduction..... 7
- Key Terms ..... 8
  - Militarism..... 8
  - Security ..... 8
  - Nature ..... 9
- Part II. Militarism’s Contribution to Ecological Crises ..... 9
  - Two examples: Agent Orange and Depleted Uranium ..... 10
  - Learning How to Notice Militarism’s Masked Costs..... 12
- Part III. Watch Out for the Eco-Friendly Fire! Selling War Amid Ecological Breakdown .... 13
  - Who is Secured by Climate Security? Deconstructing the Hypertthreat ..... 14
  - Sustainability at Gunpoint? The Arms Industry’s Claim to Fame amid Climate Collapse ..... 17
- Part IV. From a Green to a Military Transition – What about Eco-Social Justice?..... 20
  - No Eco-Social Justice Without Demilitarisation – and Vice Versa..... 21
- Part V. Forging Links, Building Movements: From Policy Action to the Grassroots ..... 23
  - Accountability, Emissions and Divestment..... 24
  - Direct Action, Eco-Social Practice and Community-Building..... 26
- Part VI. Conclusions and Ways Forward: Destroying the World Is Not the Same as Protecting It..... 28
- Appendix: Movement Index..... 30
- Endnotes..... 32

# About

**The World Peace Foundation**, an operating foundation affiliated solely with the Fletcher School at Tufts University, aims to provide intellectual leadership on issues of peace, justice and security. We believe that innovative research and teaching are critical to the challenges of making peace around the world, and should go hand-in-hand with advocacy and practical engagement with the toughest issues. To respond to organised violence today, we not only need new instruments and tools—we need a new vision of peace. Our challenge is to reinvent peace.

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The "**Revitalising Debate on the Global Arms Trade**" (RDAT) program is funded in part by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It aims to invigorate debate and policy about the arms trade through integrating the trade into other areas of policy, research, and activism, and re-energising discussions through the engagement of a younger generation.

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## Executive Summary

The myth that war can be made environmentally sustainable is taking hold around the globe. This has dire consequences for the realisation of just transitions based on non-military forms of solidarity with, and care for, people and the planet.

Between 2020 and 2023, the US, UK, NATO and the EU have published a wide range of military climate adaptation plans and military-industrial sustainability strategies. The agendas respond to narratives around climate change and environmental degradation as “threat-multipliers”, against which the “objective” interests of the nation-state, military and market must be secured. Along the logic of *less fuel, more fight* – or, decarbonising defence to reduce emissions but *not* missions – these military sectors are presenting military action as compatible with climate action. They aim to center the arms industry as a guarantor of democracy and sustainable development.

This occasional paper maps the ongoing militarisation of ecological crises – captured by the umbrella concept of “green militarism” – and its implications for eco-social justice. The paper calls for policymakers, researchers, organisers and members of the public to critically engage with and resist green war and sustainable arms policies. It defines a set of key questions that these actors should pose, including:



- a) **Who or what is secured and made insecure by climate security policy?**
- b) **What kind of sustainability can militaries and arms industries provide?**
- c) **How do green war strategies mask the human and ecological costs of militarisation?**
- d) **What does the promotion of environmentally sustainable war mean for eco-social justice?**
- e) **How is a joint resistance built against eco-social injustices and green war policies?**

Engaging with these questions, the paper finds that the emergence of green militarism across Europe and North America is particularly harmful to eco-social justice movements that view disarmament, demilitarisation and decriminalisation as integral to tackling global ecological emergencies. Military solutions to ecological crises remain surface-level, responding to symptoms and creating new ones, rather than addressing the underlying sources that drive ecological breakdown and social strife. By contrast, peace, anti-militarist and anti-policing, social and ecological justice movements together address the root causes behind organised violence, social inequity and ecological harm.

Movements must come together to critically interrogate the notion of green(able) war to counter military actors’ repositioning as “drivers of climate action” and first-responders in a “war on climate change.” Key avenues of critique and action include revealing the ecological costs of war and military practice, exposing their humanitarian consequences, and uplifting the voices of directly impacted communities. It is imperative to demystify the narratives promoting militarisation as a solution to climate change and its impacts.



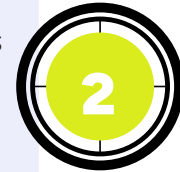
**Today's polycrisis demands that we foster cooperation across social causes, methodologies and locales. Ecologies of harm require ecologies of resistance.**

## Key Insights for Organising



Military sectors argue that war can be made environmentally sustainable. They propose climate-security policies and green military technologies, arguing that a strong military industry is a guarantor of sustainable development. This green militarism is misleading and dangerous as it silences, marginalises and diverts resources from non-military responses to ecological challenges, and increases the criminalisation of eco-social resistance.

It is imperative to build movements that resist green militarism through fostering thought and action dedicated to *demilitarisation*, *decriminalisation*, *decarbonisation* and *decolonisation*. Stronger links between researchers, organisers and communities can be forged through creating campaigns and advancing research that recognise the inseparability of these "Ds" as solutions to the linked harms caused by militarism, criminalisation, extractivism and colonialism.



Resisting green militarism requires multiple methodologies addressing the militarisation of ecological crises from a variety of angles and approaches. Policy analysis, public education and awareness-raising communications work are all valuable avenues of campaigning and critique. Yet it is crucial that this work is integrated with broader movement-building efforts that bridge the divide between elite-driven advocacy and direct or grassroots organising.

Movements must learn from each other. Increased knowledge exchanges can grow public engagement and collective action against policymaking that militarises ecological crises at the expense of eco-social justice. Key to these exchanges are critical engagements with the concepts of militarism, security and nature (climate/environment).



## Policy Asks

It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which policymakers listen seriously to the demands of organisers and communities faced with ecological collapse and armed conflict. While there is an abundance of policy recommendations, the lack of political will remains. It is essential to keep formulating these demands nonetheless. The following are suggestions for policy asks that address green militarism.

- 1) **Close the military emissions gap.** Demand transparent reporting on military emissions and advocate for the inclusion of military emissions in international carbon reduction agreements.

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- 2) **Restructure and reduce military bases, deployments and doctrines** to adequately address the military's impact on climate change and environmental degradation.

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- 3) **Redirect resources away from defence toward diplomacy and development** to address national security concerns. This will require reinterpreting diplomacy and development mechanisms in ways that support eco-social justice, and that alternative security frameworks (common, human, collective, ecological, sustainable) are recognised as trumping conventional security frameworks (national, state, energy, military, market).

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- 4) **Strengthen national and multilateral commitments** to arms control, disarmament and ecological action and justice. Commit to creating new international norms and legal standards.

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- 5) **Reject the myths of resource scarcity/competition and climate conflict.** Adopt policies that promote resource sharing and redistribution, positive peace and conflict prevention.

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- 6) **Centre just transition demands and vulnerable communities bearing the brunt of global war and global warming as foreign policy priorities.** These include marginalised groups made vulnerable by disadvantages such as related to class, race, gender, ability and geographical location.

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## Campaign Prompts

Prompts for building movements resisting green militarism:

- **Abolish ecocide, decriminalise systems change.**
- **Combat is not the answer to climate change.**
- **War is not greenable.**
- **Green war is still war is still warming.**
- **Biodegradable bombs still kill.**
- **Don't decarbonise defence, dismantle green militarism**
- **Destroying the world ≠ protecting it.**
- **Demilitarise for eco-social justice.**
- **People and planet over power and profit.**
- **No to the green military transition, we demand just transitions.**

**DEMILITARISE**

**DECOLONISE**

**DECARBONISE**

**DECRIMINALISE**



# Part I.

## Introduction



Human activities are now confirmed to unequivocally cause global warming alongside mass species extinction.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the 2021 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, the United Nations Secretary General declared a “deafening ... code red for humanity.” A year later he stated, “We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.” In 2023, he affirmed, “Humanity has opened the gates of hell.”<sup>2</sup> Estimates suggest that the total military carbon footprint accounts for around 5.5% of global emissions.<sup>3</sup> Still, the latest IPCC climate change research synthesis report makes no mention of military and armed conflict emissions.<sup>4</sup> In a sign of the irony and despair of the current moment, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a petrostate, is hosting the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (known as COP28) – the same year that global temperatures were the highest ever recorded. The conference president is the chief executive of the UAE’s national oil company.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, global military spending set a new record high in 2022<sup>6</sup>, just as the demand for climate funding has never been greater.

Military sectors around the globe are waking up to the impacts of ecological crises on military capabilities and national security priorities. Emblematic of the increasing attention paid to the links between ecological and military issues is a long list of military environmental sustainability strategies published mainly by European and North American sectors between 2020 and 2023. The narratives put forward in these documents posit that military and climate action are compatible.

The notion of compatibility is directly opposed by resistance movements. Instead, these groups highlight the compounding negative impacts of ecological destruction and social injustice caused by military practice and military forms of security. Across the globe, campaigners and communities are rallying against the emerging myth that *war can be made environmentally sustainable*. Aiding in these efforts, I ask: What kind of security and sustainability can militaries and arms industries provide? What does the promotion of *environmentally sustainable war* mean for ecological and social (hereafter eco-social) justice? How is a joint resistance against eco-social injustices and green war policies built?

I set out in this occasional paper to accomplish two major goals. First, I detail the militarisation of ecological crises<sup>7</sup> – military and security sectors’ growing involvement in climate action and environmental sustainability – captured by the umbrella concept of “green militarism.” To this end, I interrogate the emergence of green military policy among leading actors across Europe and North America, and challenge the refashioning of military sectors as “green” by juxtaposing promises of ecological care with the realities of war and militarism’s ecological-humanitarian costs.

Second, I analyse the implications of green militarism for eco-social justice movements. I discuss ongoing work that resists the ecological impacts and injustices caused by military institutions and practices. These initiatives map onto a useful typology of resistance, spanning from grassroots to policy, direct to indirect, local to transnational, individual to mass action. The nexus between militarism and eco-social injustice offers plenty of opportunities for innovation and expansion of collective action. To help connect the dots, I outline existing research and suggest novel knowledge exchanges between peace, justice and ecology advocates. The overarching aim of the paper is to strengthen cooperation across movements and lay the foundations for new campaigns. I hope to aid in public education efforts and inspire continued policy research, such as by pointing to areas of shared concern and creating a common vocabulary. The purpose is to assist policymakers, researchers, organisers and members of the public to tackle “green war” and “sustainable arms” policies head-on.

Responding to a world in the simultaneous grips of global war and global warming, there is great momentum to build movements tied together by a shared dedication to *demilitarisation*, *decriminalisation*, *decarbonisation* and *decolonisation*. The time is now to foster thought and action that recognise the inseparability of these four Ds as solutions to the linked harms caused by militarism, criminalisation, extractivism and colonialism.

## Key Terms

### Militarism



Militarism can be understood as “the preparation for war, its normalisation and legitimisation.”<sup>8</sup> How do societies prepare for the potentiality of war in times of peace? How do public and private actors normalise and legitimise the need for a national army, a military industry, a bloated defence budget? Helping in this preparation process are “attitudes and social practices which regard war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable social activity.”<sup>9</sup> Patriarchy, racism, capitalism and extractivism are all systems of power, harm and exploitation that inform the attitudes and practices that make war desirable. War normalises those systems in turn. So does the human exceptionalism that has enabled the rise of global industrial society at the expense of the ecosystems that sustain humanity. Militarism and militarisation processes thus include the whole “social system of values and practices which promote and underpin the use of military approaches to a vast range of [non-military] situations.”<sup>10</sup> Ecological change and action is an especially obvious such situation.

### Security



The value systems that favour war and military interests – power and profit over people and the planet – are dependent on particular mobilisations of *security*. Security is a social construct. Asking how conceptions of security differ and evolve, not only across time and space, but also within seemingly bounded entities like nation states, has proven to be a key mechanism for exposing

systems of harm and their intersections. Who defines security? Who sets the security agendas that become hegemonic, and receive the greatest share of resources? A broad range of scholar-practitioners have engaged these questions from diverse theoretical approaches including feminist, Queer, decolonial, Black studies, as well as disciplinary frameworks, like political economy, ecology, critical war, security and international studies, anthropology and sociology.<sup>11</sup> These approaches highlight the continued hierarchy by which security agendas are determined, over the heads of the citizenries and communities in whose name militarised inter/national security policies are implemented. Problematizing dominant policy uses of security is thus a crucial exercise in identifying the gap between policy discourses and their resultant practices.

## Nature



Similar to how we can learn how to probe definitions of security that inform policy and practice according to particular interests, much can be uncovered by interrogating what we mean by nature, including 'climate' and 'the environment'. The reduction of nature to an inert backdrop to human progress has been central in justifying both the rise of industrial modernity and the military machineries that protect and promote it. Ecofeminist and decolonial thought highlight how the subjugation of nature serves the same interests as the social differentiation and subjugation of women, racialised communities, people with disabilities or working classes and the poor.<sup>12</sup> The military sectors that currently present themselves as enablers of environmental care are rooted in and depend on those systems of subjugation; on generations of scientific, political, economic and social privileging of extractive and exploitative relations to nature and people. By naming the military's ecological impacts we bring attention to nature as an agent in war, both acted upon and acting back. Without making visible this relationship we remain ill-equipped to identify the military's true human and ecological costs. Through making it visible, we can better challenge the military's strategic rhetorics, including the myths that arms are guarantors of peace, war and militarism are solutions to insecurity, and militarised security is a precondition for sustainable development.

## Part II.

### Militarism's Contribution to Ecological Crises

Militaries consume vast amounts of energy and natural resources. As such, they are prominent shapers of global energy and extraction relations.<sup>13</sup> They are also key generators of fossil fuel emissions, toxins and hazardous wastes, deforestation, soil erosion, wetland and habitat loss, water contamination, noise and dust pollution associated with mining and military training activities.<sup>14</sup> The negative ecological impacts from militaries and military industries are thus many and varied, spanning across peace and wartime

and on and off active battlefields. Direct forms of harm include destruction of natural areas, disrupted ecosystems and reduced biodiversity both in active war zones and across military bases and estates. It also includes damage to environmentally sensitive sites like fossil fuel power stations during conflict. Slower forms of violence include legacy contamination from mineral extraction, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and unexploded ordnances making farmlands and urban areas uninhabitable years after conflicts end.<sup>15</sup>

In the recent surge in public, academic and policy attention to militaries' ecological costs, the carbon emissions generated across the life-cycle of military practice and armed conflict have received the most attention by far. The United States (US) Department of Defence (DOD) is the largest institutional consumer and emitter of fossil fuels in the world.<sup>16</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is responsible for more than 50% of global military spending, which is one of the key drivers of military carbon emissions.<sup>17</sup> The British military-industrial sector has an annual carbon footprint of more than 60 smaller-size countries.<sup>18</sup> Estimates suggest that if the world's militaries were a country, its national carbon footprint would be the world's fourth highest – bigger than Russia's.<sup>19</sup> Still there is a huge gap in military emissions data.

Because public and policy debates are often overwhelmingly focused on emissions issues, this reduces the role of militarisation to its exacerbation of a climate crisis rather than a plurality of ecological *crises*. This overlooks another significant contributor to the joint human-ecological costs of militarism that comes from the toxicity and radioactivity generated by the production, testing and use of different weapons systems. There are plenty of present-day manifestations of this, but to make a point about the longevity of militarism's negative eco-social legacy I focus on two paradigmatic indiscriminate weapons: chemical and radiological. These weapons of mass destruction<sup>20</sup> are too easily dismissed as part of our past while their violent legacies continue, and their use in conflict, or to prop up security doctrines, has not ceased.

## Two examples: Agent Orange and Depleted Uranium

The US' use of chemical weapons and defoliants in the Vietnam War incinerated forests, fields and people alike. The so-called Rainbow Herbicides infused croplands, roads and whole villages with the toxic pollutant *dioxin*.<sup>21</sup> Once reaching soils, food chains and groundwater, dioxin can remain for over 100 years. In terms of casualties, this means that the Vietnam War is not really over. At least not for the millions of Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, and hundreds of thousands of US veterans and their families, who have been exposed to or inherited dioxin during and long after the war's official end. Almost five decades later, Vietnamese communities are still documenting birth defects from the intergenerational intake of dioxin. Nevertheless, it took the US government twenty years to break with its well-oiled narrative that Agent Orange was a "prototype smart weapon", a benign herbicide, variously ignoring and silencing evidence to the contrary.<sup>22</sup>

Another harm that military policymakers have obscured for generations, is the permanent damage to the Earth's atmosphere, the environments and whole communities affected by almost a century of uranium mining and nuclear weapons production, testing and use. Besides the exacerbation of global warming from the carbon already released from nuclear testing, scientists hypothesise that even a smaller nuclear war would transform the entire planet, making it uninhabitable within only a few years.<sup>23</sup>



## **The eco-social history of nuclear weapons development is another example of how militarised national security generates more insecurity.**

The eco-social history of nuclear weapons development is another example of how militarised national security generates more *insecurity*. To the communities and ecologies directly affected by or just living downwind from any of the 2,056 (recorded) atomic weapon “tests” carried out across the globe there is no potential nuclear confrontation looming on the horizon. To them, nuclear war has been waged without pause since the first ever explosion in New Mexico (US) 1945. References to the alleged international security afforded by seven decades of the geopolitics of mutually assured destruction pale in comparison to lived experiences of genetic deterioration and mutation, spiking cancer rates and scorched, uninhabitable landscapes.<sup>24</sup>

A significant side-effect of nuclear militarism is the use of depleted uranium (DU). DU has been used in tanks and ammunition most notably by American and British forces in the two Iraq Wars, as well as by the US in Syria 2015, by NATO in the 1995 and 1999 bombings of Yugoslavia and by Israeli forces' shelling of Gaza. DU is a by-product of nuclear power and testing, which the US DOD was happy to offer European and American arms manufacturers after half a century of accumulated nuclear waste. Though 'depleted', it still contains traces of plutonium and has a radioactive half-life of 4.51 billion years. After being used, the radioactivity from these weapons thus continues to alter and destroy the genetic makeup of all life it touches, for (what to the human brain feels like) all time.

“Ironically,” notes environment and humanities Professor Rob Nixon, “the increasing reliance of American and British forces on the discourse of ‘precision’ coincides with the integration of ‘depleted’ uranium into their missiles, bullets, and tank armour.”<sup>25</sup> The 1990-91 Gulf War is the world's first encounter with DU-war, but is known by most as a clinical, smart, humanitarian “war of speed.” Attention to these less visible forms of violence paints a rather different picture of the war's actual eco-social aftermaths, from the chemical and radiological legacies still plaguing Iraqi lives and regional waters, soils and air, crops and animals, to the returning American troops suffering from DU-generated Gulf War Syndrome.<sup>26</sup> Like Nixon, we need to ask: Who counts these casualties? Chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons all have abhorrent transgenerational

consequences for the environments, people and non-human worlds – the ecologies – in the war zones where they are used, at home where they are developed and tested, as well as among the communities where military minerals are mined. The uranium needed for nuclear energy and weapons is overwhelmingly mined in vulnerable low-income regions and by marginalised communities from the Sahel to Kazakhstan to occupied territories across Canada, the US and Australia.<sup>27</sup>

How is all this relevant to the green militarism or militarisation of ecological crises unfolding today? To begin with, it provides the necessary context against which to start questioning green war promises and practices. With this context in mind, it becomes harder to swallow the fact that side by side with their military greening agendas, the US and the United Kingdom (UK) are re-centralising the role of nuclear weapons in their national security doctrines. The UK has even increased the number of nuclear warheads the nation is allowed in its stockpile, while the US has almost 2,000 nuclear warheads in ready-to-launch mode.<sup>28</sup> Both states are providing depleted uranium ammunition to the Ukrainian army – leading to Russia saying that they will respond “accordingly”<sup>29</sup> – and both governments continue to call DU a “safe” “conventional” weapon despite the 33 years of proof we now have of DU’s indiscriminate intergenerational human-ecological harm. As the cherry on top of the green war paradoxes, the US is also set to provide the Ukrainian army with internationally banned cluster munitions – another unconventional weapon of mass eco-social harm known for its disproportionate impact on non-combatants, littering their environments with unexploded ordnances.<sup>30</sup>

## Learning How to Notice Militarism’s Masked Costs

Military powers, including those in democratic states like the UK and the US, have systematically withheld knowledge of the carbon costs of their wars and military activities, and the severe dangers from the production and use of un/conventional weapons. As members of the public, organisers, scholars and practitioners we need to recognise this history of omission and employ it in our critique of the present. Otherwise, military actors will meet little resistance as they claim to be drivers of climate action, natural conservationists and environmental protectors. Learning how to notice the masked ecological costs of war and military practice, and their humanitarian consequences, we stand a better chance at critically interrogating the notion of green(able) war to identify the disconnect between what is promised in military climate rhetoric and the practices it refers to. So, how are major militaries and military alliances currently attempting to “go green”?

## Part III.

### Watch Out for the Eco-Friendly Fire! Selling War Amid Ecological Breakdown

Since 2020, there has been a frenzied release of military climate action plans and sustainability agendas across Europe and North America. This is a fast moving field, cutting across parliamentary, government, military, civil and industry actors, public and private, national and international. “The imperative could not be clearer: Defence must and will act now” writes Jeremy Quin, British Minister for Defence Procurement, in the UK’s Sustainability Strategic Report.<sup>31</sup> The report provides the basis for greening the British Armed Forces and wider military sector, positing the UK as a soon-to-be global leader in military greening. In fewer than four years, the US has launched a Climate Strategy for its Army, Navy and Air Force respectively, alongside a Climate Adaptation Plan for the DOD.<sup>32</sup> “Planning for today and into the future *is our business*, and we would not be doing our job if we weren’t thinking about how climate change will affect what we do” affirms the US Secretary of Defense.<sup>33</sup>

This rhetorical coupling of climate change with geopolitics and security is equally visible across the European Union (EU) and among NATO member states. The EU’s military and security machinery, from Frontex to the European Defence Agency, have developed strategies for contributing to the Green New Deal for Europe, positioning the EU “at the forefront in addressing climate change as a threat-multiplier.”<sup>34</sup> The EU launched a Climate Change and Defence Roadmap in 2020, followed by an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security and a “ground-breaking” 2023 study detailing the links between EU “defence, energy and climate change.”<sup>35</sup> As more allied states weave climate change into their military policies, NATO is likewise ramping up its climate engagements. The Alliance has published several climate security strategy reports, including a comprehensive Climate Change and Security Action Plan, while also opening a Centre of Excellence to platform and harness military-civilian cooperation around climate security risks and solutions. It hopes to become “the leading international organisation when it comes to understanding and adapting to the impact of climate change on security.”<sup>36</sup>

In short, these military actors are putting their noses to the greening grindstone. And should they not? The world is at a breaking point. Surely a green(er) military is a step in the right direction. However, this holds true only if you accept the proposition that military practice can indeed become environmentally friendly and that the military is the right institution to tackle what is in essence not a military problem. How has it become possible to sell the idea that war is greenable? That the military sector can become a driver of climate action or military practice be made compatible with international climate commitments? NATO is a military alliance whose security guarantees are based on the mutually assured destruction of its members and enemies (and potentially, the whole planet) from nuclear weapons.<sup>37</sup> Understanding NATO as having a role in addressing climate change hinges on the uncritical acceptance of a set of narratives, interests and relations that make such an equation possible. These are easy to miss for all of the Alliance’s pro-planetary hyperbole.

## Who is Secured by Climate Security? Deconstructing the Hyperthreat

There is a clear thread running through the green military agendas that explains how the military can masquerade as the answer to the crises of climate change. The agendas effectively define and fix climate change as a security issue, a threat-multiplier, or a “hyperthreat”, with grave geostrategic and national security implications.<sup>38</sup> “The effects of climate change ... proliferate and amplify other threats ... such as resource access and trade competition, socioeconomic inequality, fragile governance, and inter-group tensions” writes the Climate Change and (In)Security (CCIS) Project, a research and policy program coordinated by Oxford University and the British Army.<sup>39</sup> This position corresponds with climate and environmental security narratives developing across academia and politics over the last two decades and that have come to dominate public, industry

and political perceptions of climate change and environmental risk.<sup>40</sup> Climate security reduces thinking and action around ecological crises to a concern with the security implications of a changing climate, assuming that the effects of global warming “will cause disruption to economic, social and environmental systems – and therefore undermine security.”<sup>41</sup> As predecessors to climate security, environmental security perspectives are equally reductionist, promoting deterministic understandings of ecological “limits” and resource “scarcity,”<sup>42</sup> assuming that there is an essentialised link between conflict and ecological change. The idea of global resource limits and the need for formulating policy to secure control over resources became hugely influential in US Cold War politics.<sup>43</sup> Climate security discourses today are reproducing this reading of global relations, binding resource use to national security underlined by assumptions of “ecoscarcity.”<sup>44</sup>

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**Climate and environmental securitisation frameworks depoliticise both the causes and the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation.**

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Why is this problematic? climate and environmental securitisation frameworks depoliticise both the causes and the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. Through decontextualising the effects of ecological change from their root sources, both securitisation frames reproduce apolitical understandings of economy and ecology.<sup>45</sup> Such a view normalises a state’s interest in natural resources and rationalises the deployment of military power to secure that interest in the name of securing the nation. This perspective obscures key questions: What if conceptions of national interest were different? What if they prioritised the preservation of ecosystems and the wellbeing of people over zero-sum-style profit and power? Effectively, it leaves out the political-economic and social-cultural relations and structures that shape ecological conditions – and the potential for conflict – to begin with.<sup>46</sup> Depoliticising the issues enables states like the US and the UK to consolidate strategic military interests and international climate obligations in the same policy documents, without addressing the paradoxical relation between the two.



What kind of security is invoked in climate and environmental security policies? Most often it involves a conflation of national security priorities such as energy and macro-economic or market security, presented in military terms. As such, these policy frames are ultimately concerned with securing national and corporate access to, control over and an unimpeded flow of energy (e.g. oil, coal, natural gas) and other industry-critical natural resources (e.g. metals, stone, sand, rare earth minerals<sup>47</sup>). Climate and environmental security frames thus reproduce the linking of economic, energy and military interests and relations under a national security umbrella. This is cause for concern for a number of reasons.

In the first instance, it overlooks the history of human and ecological destruction from the nuclear, chemical and radiological weapons produced and used in the name of American and British national security, as noted in the above section. Further, as pointed out by researcher and organiser Nick Buxton, the kinds of solutions made available through securitising ecological breakdown “seek to secure what exists” – that being “an unjust status quo.”<sup>48</sup> By framing ecological challenges as a security issue, we end up reinforcing, as Buxton notes:

**... a militarised approach to climate change that is likely to deepen the injustices for those most affected by the unfolding crisis ... [viewing] as ‘threats’ anyone who might unsettle the status quo, such as refugees, or who oppose it outright, such as climate activists.**<sup>49</sup>

This framing makes it possible for defence departments and military institutions to position the military as a necessary actor in an inevitable “war on climate change” as well as a first-responder in the impending “climate wars.” “NATO must combat climate change” writes Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg<sup>50</sup>, confirming just how the military alliance sees itself as equipped to respond to non-military challenges like environmental degradation: through combat. Media often reiterate this framing, helping to rationalise green militarism with headlines like “NATO wages war on climate threat” and “It’s time to shift from a ‘war on terror’ to a war on climate change.”<sup>51</sup> Policy think-tanks like the Royal United Services Institute – who enjoy close relationships to the British state and military sector – similarly call for NATO to “enhance” its response to climate change through stepping up as “carbon warriors.”<sup>52</sup>

What is particularly striking about the military greening agendas is how they take for granted dystopic worst-case scenario understandings of ecological change and societies’ and peoples’ assumed inability to respond to ecological insecurities in nonviolent ways. By fixing climate change as a threat-multiplier and declaring war against it, climate security policies promote military security doctrines and military-industrial solutions as natural responses to the presumptively worsening global insecurities and conflicts. “The threats of our modern world, made worse by rising seas, extreme weather and creeping desertification, will almost certainly lead to more conflict” writes the General behind the UK’s green military agenda.<sup>53</sup> As the effects of climate change kick in and multiply “pre-existing vulnerabilities”, Oxford’s CCIS Project reiterates, “the result is that certain parts of the world are fast becoming ‘climate conflict hotspots.’” The proposition of

inevitable violence reinforces investments in the military as the leader in *adapting to* and *preparing for* worst-case scenarios, rather than focusing on *preventing* them from becoming true.

The world's wealthy nations are sounding the climate security alarm, scrambling to ensure state, military and industry actors start bracing for the tidal wave of perils that is returning to the epicentres of industrial modernity. "Increased pest and disease presence, spikes in food prices and shocks to food production and food logistics" will force "the recalibration of diplomatic alliances, displacement and dispossession of people, border disputes, endemic famine and armed conflict."<sup>54</sup> Ironically, for the world's front-line communities these dangers are not impending eventualities, the looming consequences of unhinged ecological change.<sup>55</sup> To them, dystopia is already reality: manifesting in their double exposure to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and to the wealthy nations who simultaneously obstruct global ecological action and respond to migration with policing and violence. Climate security and green war policies produce and reproduce dystopias accompanying ecological collapse and militarisation as a reality for the secure and the dispossessed alike.

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**Climate security and green war policies produce and reproduce dystopias accompanying ecological collapse and militarisation as a reality for the secure and the dispossessed alike.**

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By closing off other ways of thinking about and acting on ecological challenges, green war policies decrease the chances of reversing and repairing what has already been lost to climate change. Yet, the idea that ecological change necessarily leads to conflict and so has to be securitised is an argument as self-affirming as it is depoliticising. It is easily weaponised (and marketised) by actors who perversely stand to gain from worsening ecological conditions and rising conflict.<sup>56</sup> By contrast, there is a growing body of research that instead documents how communities turn to increased cooperation during times of environmental hardship.<sup>57</sup> As the authors of *Divided Environments* note, "the scholarly *evidence* on the links between climate change and security is weak and divided, and when it departs from dominant policy framings is routinely ignored."<sup>58</sup> Challenging green war policies' reproduction of climate-conflict assumptions is not the same as entirely dismissing climate change's potential to exacerbate conflict. However, the lack of consensus among researchers and practitioners as to the correlations between climate change and conflict, clarifies a key point: climate change does not *cause* conflict. What causes conflict are rather the political, economic, social and structural conditions in which the impacts of climate change hit. The omission of these underlying conditions – in short, root causes – in the green war agendas is thus both dangerous and misguided.

Even more striking is how the agendas not only suggest military remedies to ecological emergencies, but also position the military sector itself as a frontrunner in the green

transition. “The time to address climate change is now and the Army will lead by example” professes the US Secretary of the Army in their Climate Strategy.<sup>59</sup> The UK sustainability strategic approach confirms how “Defence will play a leading role in supporting wider UK objectives for climate change”, “leading the debate in militaries about climate change and security” and “leading by example” globally, to “build international coalitions for greener and more sustainable militaries, and ultimately multiply the impact of the UK’s emissions reduction.”<sup>60</sup> Equally bold, the US Secretary of the Navy states, “the Department of Navy will take on the urgency of the climate crisis and harness our power to make change – as an environmental leader and a market driver.”<sup>61</sup> NATO’s Climate Change and Security Action Plan has already afforded the military alliance the title as “an unexpected *driver* of climate action.”<sup>62</sup> Some even go as far as hypothesising NATO “as a Climate Alliance Treaty Organization.”<sup>63</sup>

It is imperative that policymakers, researchers, organisers and members of the public push back against narratives promoting militarisation as a solution to climate change and its impacts. To this end, they need to ask: What would a sustainable military look like? What kind of sustainability would it promote, and who would a strategic sustainability transition aim to protect? What kind of world – with what human-animal-nature relationships – is envisioned and favoured when a military alliance is tasked with driving action against ecological harms?

## **Sustainability at Gunpoint?**

### **The Arms Industry’s Claim to Fame amid Climate Collapse**

To make the green war narrative credible, defence ministries and armed forces rely heavily on close collaboration with military industry to drive research, development and production of green military technologies. Rhetorically, the main aim is for these technologies to reduce the military’s reliance on fossil fuels and to decrease pollution and toxic remnants from weaponry and warfighting. Emission reduction initiatives include powering fighter jets and navy vessels with cooking oil, household waste and algae, increasing virtual wargames and simulations to decrease real-world military training, and developing low-carbon directed energy weapons, from microwaves to lasers. To address pollution from weapons systems, the sector is also developing biodegradable explosives, lead-free bullets, solar powered drones and submarines, lithium-ion battery tanks, toxin-reduced rockets and solutions for turning waste explosives into compost. In short, there is a lot of money to be made on selling the idea that war is greenable.

Capturing this point, next to the proliferation of military sustainability strategies and the positioning of European and North American military sectors as climate action pacemakers, there is an ongoing push by arms industries to be recognised as sustainable investment options. That is: environmentally and socially responsible businesses. Financial investments in arms have become increasingly unattractive to investors with a concern for environmental and social sustainability. This trend is facing a dangerous U-turn as weapons lobbies are putting minds, money and manpower toward co-opting sustainability in theory and practice. This is made painfully clear by The AeroSpace and

Defence (ASD) Industries Association of Europe, who define military security as inextricable from sustainability.<sup>64</sup> The Association writes that, “there is an intrinsic, but often neglected link between sustainability and defence: Defence is a crucial component of security, and security is the precondition for any sustainability.” Cementing this link, the Association situates the European arms industry as the guarantor not only of peace and prosperity, but also of a sustainable future: “Helping to ensure security, European defence manufacturers de facto make a vital contribution to a more sustainable world.”

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has given this narrative wings. One month into the war, Swedish bank SEB backtracked on its celebrated blanket ban against weapons investments, to include parts of the arms industry in their brand-new sustainable investment policy.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in March 2022, Citi Bank noted that “We believe defence is likely to be increasingly seen as a necessity that facilitates [Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)] as an enterprise, as well as maintaining peace, stability and other social goods”<sup>66</sup> – foreshadowing the growing acceptance of military sectors’ “ESG credentials.”<sup>67</sup> In the summer of 2023, the British government economic secretary to the Treasury and the defence procurement minister convened a meeting with executives of BAE Systems, Babcock International and QinetiQ to brainstorm how the government could help British arms companies “overcome the barriers” that ESG guidelines are posing to investments in the arms industry. “The government does not support campaigns of disinvestment of those helping to defend peace and rule-based order” comments an anonymous source to British media.<sup>68</sup> Despite these “barriers”, research suggests that Europe’s six largest military manufacturers saw their share prices rise up to 136% since the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>69</sup> The signal rings clear: with the return of total war to Europe, investing in arms and dual use systems is our only hope to protect democracy and so achieve sustainability. “The conflict in Ukraine has driven greater recognition of the value of the defence industry” affirms a BAE Spokesperson.<sup>70</sup>

What we are witnessing is a concerted effort across European and North American state, finance and military sectors to cement the link between the arms industry and sustainability. Multinational Airbus’ website – who produces the Eurofighter Typhoon and Tornado fighter jets used in Yemen<sup>71</sup> – meets you with, “Pioneering sustainable aerospace for a safe and united world.”<sup>72</sup> The French torpedo-specialist Naval Group boasts that the company “is actively participating in the collective effort to preserve the planet.”<sup>73</sup> The meaning of sustainability for “defence and industry” is also becoming increasingly recognised at the biennial Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) in London, one of the world’s largest and most significant arms fairs, bringing together almost 2,000 arms companies and just under 40,000 public, private, academic and third sector attendees.<sup>74</sup> In 2023, Sustainability and Climate Change was one of the fair’s organising themes, for the first time ever. Companies paraded with slogans like “Protecting People and Planet”, “We Defend People, We Defend Nature” or “Sustainability in Action.”<sup>75</sup> Addressing this trend, Babcock International – responsible for the submarines carrying the UK’s nuclear missiles – hosted a panel titled “Delivering global support in a sustainable, environmentally compliant, cost-effective manner.”<sup>76</sup> A study by Action on Armed Violence, a London-based research organisation, on 25 of the world’s largest arms companies, found that 52% used environmental sustainability in their company bios and

sales pitches to increase marketability.<sup>77</sup> The majority of companies doing this were European and North American. Another 2023 DSEI panel explicitly looks into how to employ data-driven technologies to help “Western militaries” operate in a climate changed world. In November 2023, the Netherlands is hosting the first ever arms fair entirely dedicated to “sustainable security.”<sup>78</sup>

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**Military actors’ claims to sustainability are destined to be reactive and superficial, not preventative and profound.**

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The link between arms production and sustainability is justified through naturalising military security as intrinsically linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The ASD Industries Association of Europe makes this argument the most clearly. “... security constitutes the prerequisite for peace, prosperity, international cooperation, economic and social development. This is recognised by the [UN SDGs] Goal 16, relating to ‘Peace, justice and strong institutions’.”<sup>79</sup> With little detail on these relations, ASD equates security with peace, peace with sustainable development and defence (military industry and capabilities) as the precondition for all three: security, peace and sustainable development. As such, “defence companies are part of a diverse ecosystem that already today supports sustainability in many ways.” Or better yet, defence industries have “a fundamentally positive role ... for sustainability.”

ASD’s argument is only possible in a world where militarised forms of security are so normalised that we accept the arms industry’s usage of security and sustainability at face value. Unless we ask what kind of security is invoked here, we will fail to apprehend the limited sustainability that military industries can offer.

Security frameworks modelled on arms production, sales and exports were never meant to put an end to armed violence, nor to bring about *positive* peace.<sup>81</sup> The same is true for their promises to drive climate action. How will the production and export of ever-more arms pave the way for practices that protect the environment? The military sector is wired towards maintaining control – securing that unjust status quo – and reacting to symptoms rather than addressing root causes behind conflict. This predisposes the sector’s understanding of sustainability to serve the interests of those with power and resources to the detriment of those without. Military actors’ claims to sustainability are destined to be reactive and superficial, not preventative and profound. While industry profits from increased investments in green weaponry in the name of forestalling or preparing for climate wars, a more obvious way to prevent conflict would be to decrease the reliance on weapons production for national and international security. All in all, the green turn in military policy communicates a simple message: that there is such a thing as *environmentally sustainable warfare*. Or so these European and North American military sectors are trying to have us believe. What does this mean for eco-social justice?

## Part IV.

### From a Green to a Military Transition – What about Eco-Social Justice?

The military has to cut emissions and make progress towards greener options if nations are to meet their climate commitments. This point is highlighted by many on-going campaigns against the exemption of military emissions' reporting. Yet, there's a second message that comes across in European and North American military sustainability agendas that raises several red flags: these military sectors will only work towards climate change adaptation and mitigation as long as this work helps maintain or boost their nations' military superiority. The US DOD climate adaptation plan clarifies that "climate change adaptation must align with and support the Department's warfighting requirements."<sup>82</sup> The UK sustainability approach makes explicit that "Defence will seek to use the green transition to add to capabilities."<sup>83</sup> The Secretary of the US Air Force puts it in plain text: "Make no mistake – the department's mission remains to fly, fight, and win, *anytime* and *anywhere*."<sup>84</sup>

Within the myth of greenable war, it becomes possible to present climate action and environmental care as compatible with military action. It also enables the military to promote itself as going green without being challenged on the fact that it is doing so only so far as a greener practice allows these nations to become better at war. The myth thus upholds greening the military as a value in and of itself, separate from any endeavour to save the planet.

The US Air Force Secretary makes this clear: "We must prioritize air and space *dominance* in a security environment shaped by a changing climate, yet also recognize and reduce the department's role in contributing to climate change."<sup>85</sup> Another 2023 DSEI panel echoes this notion of the "twin challenge" of "meeting global commitments to climate change whilst *exploiting* opportunities to further [military] operational advantage."<sup>86</sup> Hosted by the British Royal Air Force and featuring BAE Systems and the UK Ministry of Defence, the panel asserts that "we must embrace the duality of our mission", before boasting that "we have the power to shape a more sustainable future for all, while also safeguarding our nations from emerging security challenges." The notion that military dominance and climate mitigation can go hand in hand hinges on the belief that green-tech solutions – in this case green fuels – will allow military doctrines and deployment rates to go on unchanged. Instead of rethinking the extent of present-day warfighting, restructuring and downsizing militaries and their missions, greening the military aims to maintain the status quo. "Decarbonization is a warfighting opportunity" confirms Rolls-Royce executive, Tom Bell, crystallising the green militarism at work across European and North American military sectors.<sup>87</sup> A militarism boiling down to a strategy that Scientists for Global Responsibility named so succinctly: *less fuel, more fight!*<sup>88</sup>

## No Eco-Social Justice Without Demilitarisation – and Vice Versa

“Everyone talks climate but skips the justice part” notes the Berlin-based Black feminist and intersectional environmentalist Sheena Anderson.<sup>89</sup> The green sustainability turn among military institutions exemplifies this tendency all too well. What happens when we add ‘the justice part’?

Those working on environmental justice and climate colonialism highlight the distributive *injustices* – of costs and harm, life and death as much as resources and responsibility – that are built into ecological emergencies.<sup>90</sup> They ask: who emits the most, and who suffers the consequences? Whose luxury consumption fuels the militarised extraction relations intensifying both global war and global ecocide? Many argue that existing climate action frameworks are in the thrall of the same forces, something which indigenous and environmental activists keep highlighting at each UN climate conference. Many of the so-called multilateral “climate solutions” perpetuate colonial relations and interests through the continuation of land grabs, extraction, displacement, and dispossession of Indigenous and racialised communities. The only change being that it is also done in the name of renewable energy.<sup>91</sup> Instead of committing to drastic reductions in carbon emissions, we now trade and displace carbon emissions by kilogram.<sup>92</sup>

While less attention and organising have thus far focused on efforts to green the military – at COP and in climate action debates overall – the patterns around false climate solutions emerging from the military sector mimic trends in other sectors. Mining provides an example that can inform how policymakers, organisers and members of the public can adopt a more critical lens to evaluating military claims.

We can look to the critical metals explorer, RT Minerals Corp<sup>93</sup>, for an example of how the industrial scale green transition is premised on false solutions like continued economic growth. In a sales email, RT urges me to get in on the critical mineral market’s “multi-decade runway of growth”, utilising RT’s “strategic” position to “capitalise” on this market to help me get rich on the world’s move towards a “greener future.” This perfectly captures the extent to which the green revolution promised in the transition to industrial scale renewables is more a continuation of green colonialism.<sup>94</sup> Economic growth, though a green or sustainable version as and when business allows, is still the ethos and telos of contemporary politics. Despite all the ‘climate awareness’, meaningful alternatives like feminist economies and degrowth that require a complete rethinking of market power and consumer society<sup>95</sup>, remain sidelined, even parodied. The mantra of modernity mills on: there is no alternative to growth.

Military sectors already rely heavily on the extraction of different minerals, from tungsten to copper to aluminium. If joining the green transition, these sectors will increase the global reliance on extracting the range of critical minerals marketed by companies like RT, including lithium and rare earths.<sup>96</sup> This demonstrates the extent to which militarism and extractivism are bound up, and will remain so even as the military “goes green.” The irony of these injustices is perhaps most apparent in directly impacted communities.

They have long paid the price for compounding ecological crises with only a nominal return from the growth-processes that broke this planet, despite accounting for “the blood, sweat and tears”<sup>97</sup> that built a global industrial society. Yet, every instance of assault on people and environments across this history have and continue to be met with resistance. Different struggles have engineered different means of resisting, laying distinct claims to justice and reparations, and birthing distinct alternatives to “what is” and visions of “what could be.”<sup>98</sup> Though they need to be contextualised, ecological justice frames provide a shared understanding for how ecological crises – their causes, embodiments and solutions – are systemic. These crises are structurally bound up with other distributive injustices (social inequity) and intersecting forms of violence, oppression and exploitation (as much against humans and non- and more-than-human worlds). This recognition builds on the ecofeminist and decolonial analysis demonstrating that the strategic social subjugation of various population groups is akin to the subjugation of nature. Race is as intimately connected with ecological issues as it is with the global economy or global militarism.<sup>99</sup> If there are lines that continue to separate the haves from the have-nots, the same lines separate those most vulnerable and exposed to climate shocks and environmental degradation from those who are predominantly causing them – separating the emitters from the direct consequences of their emissions.

As such, addressing ecological crises requires intersectional forms of both social critique and holistic thinking – again, the very antithesis to mono-directional military approaches reducing ecological emergencies to their (national, market, energy, military) security implications. Where is the holism in taking environmental care through, say, perpetuating the Global War on Terror with all its racialised dimensions but now bombing persons or infrastructure with biodegradable explosives? Which future generations benefit from this equation?

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**Addressing ecological crises requires intersectional forms of both social critique and holistic thinking ... the very antithesis to mono-directional military approaches.**

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Initiatives like the *Climate Justice Alliance* make it clear that the kind of alternative holistic regenerative economy that we should work towards to stand a chance against ecological change, is based on collective, community-based and eco-social forms of security and practices of radical connectivity and solidarity.<sup>100</sup> These stand in direct opposition to the extractive economy that is causing ecological crises, and the militarised national security frame that protects it. Militaries are both dependent on industrial-scale extractivism – green and non-green – and tasked with defending the actors that benefit from its perpetuation. Together, climate security policies and military sustainability agendas silence non-military responses to ecological change. As a result, they foreclose other ways of understanding ecological crises, as challenges that cannot be resolved by investing in more weapons or militarising new geostrategic “risk” zones like the Arctic Sea.



What's more, a continued reliance on military security doctrines and the militarisation of ecological action they enable, directly worsen conditions of violence and insecurity. This happens for instance through directing resources away from just eco-social solutions, increasing carbon emissions, perpetuating harmful global energy, fuel and mineral extraction dependencies, exacerbating geopolitical tensions and undermining the possibilities of international dialogue. These conditions have a disproportionate effect on already vulnerable communities. If the kind of security that the arms industry or NATO can provide is anything to go by the most probable answer is that the kind of world a militarised green transition promises to secure is the same as that which came before: void of the social equity, justice and respect for human, non- and more-than-human interconnectivity that actual security requires.

At COP26 in Glasgow 2021, civil society held a parallel People's Summit for Climate Justice demanding nothing short of systems change.<sup>101</sup> The Summit, along with movements like *Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice*, highlight the violence built into the false solutions favoured by industries and policymakers globally, from carbon offsetting to geoengineering. Instead, they demand solutions oriented – as much in practice as in promise – toward the protection of people and the preservation of ecological interdependencies.<sup>102</sup> The analysis, knowledge and experience of these movements, alongside myriad other initiatives from the anti-militarists to the anti-extractivists to the prison abolitionists, are central in making the links between militarism and eco-social injustices, setting the stage for a joint resistance against green war policies and the green militarism that feeds them. How is this resistance built?

## **Part V.**

### **Forging Links, Building Movements: From Policy Action to the Grassroots**

Social movements coalesce around overlapping and intersecting issues. When done well, action in one area will strengthen another. Communication across movements is imperative, not only to counter social fragmentation, but to recognise the joint systems of harm to which movements respond. Like many of my peers in the peace movement, I woke up very late to issues of climate change, environmental sustainability and ecology. As recently as 2020, it was obvious that cooperation between peace and eco-social justice movements in European and North American contexts was still lacking. Since then efforts to build bridges and connect the dots have grown fast, and in meaningful ways – mirroring the overall increase in policy awareness and public interest in spiralling ecological challenges paralleled by a return to Cold War-style arms races and geopolitical strife. The enduring repression, policing and criminalisation visited upon vulnerable communities and resistance movements are further proof of how these issues are linked and of the urgency for movements to join forces.

The last two years saw a veritable boom in initiatives bringing war, militarism, social justice, criminalisation and policing, climate change and wider ecological challenges

together as joint causes. The movements I have encountered working on this nexus map onto a typology of collective action, featuring various methodologies for, approaches to and contexts of resistance work. These include (but are not limited to): civil society-led research; public education and awareness raising; multilateral and parliamentary advocacy; participation in political and judicial processes; divestment and boycott campaigns; civil disobedience and direct action; storytelling and creative practices; and local or community-based eco-social practices and relations-building.

Some are elite-driven, others are grassroots-based. Some promote direct forms of physical or economic disruption; others focus on indirect mechanisms to disrupt the abstract processes that structure social relations, like language and knowledge. Some target virtual mass audiences, drawing on digital media of communication; others are entirely tactile and practical, such as working and caring for the land or sharing food, stories and embraces. Of course, most initiatives are not reducible to policy-driven versus grassroots or indirect versus direct action, but often involve aspects of all types. In this section, I examine several of these initiatives, focusing on how they draw attention to the intersection of green militarism and eco-social (in)justice.

## **Accountability, Emissions and Divestment**

There is a broad span of international advocacy campaigns addressing the military-ecological nexus multilaterally, drawing on political, legal and economic avenues for action. Three key themes addressed by these campaigns are: 1) the lack of accountability for ecological harms from military practice; 2) militaries' exemption from carbon emissions reporting and reduction frameworks; and 3) the need for divesting from military industries to invest in just transitions.

Global civil society actors, alongside legal practitioners, have laboured for decades to remedy the lack of legal or multilateral mechanisms to hold states and other actors accountable for the ecological harms caused by armed conflict. There is a gap built into the laws of war and the multilateral systems designed to protect civilians and reduce the humanitarian costs of armed conflict, where ecological harms and their humanitarian aftermaths are not adequately acknowledged.<sup>103</sup> Yet in 2022, NGOs won a hard-fought victory as they pushed the UN General Assembly to adopt a new framework on the Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (PERAC). Doug Weir from the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) confirms that the "principles are a huge step forward."<sup>104</sup> Still, like most international frameworks, PERAC has no real teeth in terms of steering state action either towards disarmament or ecological mitigation. Such frameworks nonetheless can constitute meaningful platforms for demanding and raising awareness around state accountability and responsibility in regard to the joint existential challenges of global war and ecological crises. Finding ways of ensuring formal implementation mechanisms for PERAC is now a top priority for NGOs like CEOBS. Other organisations utilise UN human rights bodies to challenge states' nuclear weapons policies as violations of the Right to Life through contributing to climate change and environmental degradation. Some work through the International Court of Justice

to enshrine in international law states' obligation to act for climate justice, including through demilitarisation. Yet others take oil and military mining companies to court on the basis of their ecological destruction and practices of social warfare.

The magnitude of military emissions and the lack of mechanisms to report, regulate and hold states accountable for the carbon costs of their military activities, makes this emissions category an essential aspect of climate injustice, exacerbating what resistance movements have labelled CO2lonialism<sup>105</sup>. Coalitions of civil society groups and academics are driving research on military emissions data, counting and reporting methodologies, attempting to close the "military emissions gap."<sup>106</sup> They also advocate for military emissions reporting and reduction commitments in parliament and multilateral climate action bodies, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, while raising public awareness of the military's carbon free-pass and its detrimental effects.<sup>107</sup>



**As the climate security narrative's grip on policymaking hardens, the representation of armed forces, military alliances, arms companies and defence ministries risk becoming a normal sight at climate negotiations.**

New research makes clear how military spending and arms sales work as direct drivers of climate disaster both through increasing GHG emissions and through draining resources, capacity and knowledge that could otherwise address ecological challenges. The top carbon emitters globally are also the top military spenders. The world's wealthiest nations are investing 30 times more in their armed forces than in climate finance.<sup>108</sup> Still, military spending – like military emissions – is not being addressed as part of the issue in international climate negotiations. The nations most affected by ecological crises – such as Chad, Somalia, Syria, Bangladesh and Pacific Island States – look to upcoming COPs for further guarantees from wealthier nations that the loss and damage fund agreed upon at COP27 will start generating overdue reparation funds.<sup>109</sup> They risk being sourly cheated, as the climate summit is unlikely to foreground – or even mention – the need to demilitarise international relations. More likely, delegations of military actors will boast of their algae-fuelled fighter jets and eco-tanks. As the climate security narrative's grip on policymaking hardens, the representation of armed forces, military alliances, arms companies and defence ministries risk becoming a normal sight at climate negotiations. NATO's first ever appearance at a COP in Glasgow 2021 attests to this.

We know where the resources will go if climate security and green war policies are allowed to dominate narratives of ecological crises. What if the underlying narrative was one of eco-social justice? Where would the resources go then? There are plenty of divestment and conversion campaigns that offer answers to this. *From Warheads*

*to Windmills, Climate Not Trident, The New Lucas Plan* and *Move the Nuclear Weapons Money* are examples of civil society initiatives that suggest how divesting from fossil fuels and nuclear energy, and the military industry that depends on them, can generate investments in ecological solutions and reparations, enable community-scale green energy projects and strengthen local social fabrics.<sup>110</sup> Shifting resources would entail reskilling the labour and refitting the infrastructure currently used for the production of weapons and military equipment to science and technology with positive eco-social applications. In short, realigning production from the dictates of a militarised extraction-dependent market to instead follow the dictates of social need and ecological protection.<sup>111</sup>

## **Direct Action, Eco-Social Practice and Community-Building**

*Fight Toxic Prisons, Stop Cop City, XR Peace* and *Stop the Arms Fair* are initiatives exemplifying more direct forms of action targeting the intersections between militarism, arms production, policing and social injustice, ecocide and ecological injustice. Actions range from resource-sharing, mutual aid and solidarity network-building, to organising mass demos, disrupting military and corporate logistics chains, and occupying factories and infrastructure or natural areas at risk of destruction.

Vulnerable and marginalised communities across the world demonstrate another side to grassroots action. Living at the frontlines of both global war and global warming, these communities practice myriad forms of eco-social resistance in their everyday lives, embodying what it can mean to act towards just decolonial eco-social transitions. These include indigenous land defense, worker's rights and social justice struggles against military bases and weapons testing grounds, fossil and renewable energy extraction projects, military minerals' mining and chemical industries. From Mexico, Peru and Colombia, to Germany, Canada and the US, to Congo and Nigeria, Egypt to India to Montenegro, eco-social justice actors are resisting military occupation, corporate dis-possession, ecocide and social warfare all at once.

The below offers some examples of this resistance work.

Efforts where resistance work meets community-building can be found among the large number of territorial “luchas” (struggles) in the Caribbean, a region marked by centuries of colonial extraction, imperial occupation and militarised industrialisation. In Puerto Rico, a wide array of environmental justice movements emerged from the 1960s onwards in opposition to an intense process of simultaneous industrialisation, militarisation and urbanisation as part of the US’ Operation Bootstrap.<sup>112</sup> Broad coalitions of communities and organisers came together in successfully resisting toxic military-industrial projects such as an open-pit coal mine and a US Navy military training range.

Other key contexts are the generations of eco-social justice movements among uranium mining communities from Niger to aboriginal Australia to Native America, fighting the assault on their communities’ health, lands, social and economic conditions by multinational mining and nuclear weapons companies. In the US, community members and advocacy groups from the Navajo Nation, like ENDAUM<sup>113</sup>, keep raising public awareness around and taking the United States of America to human rights’ courts over its radioactive contamination of the territory’s soils and water reserves. These struggles are similar to the generations of opposition to nuclear weapons testing, marking the lives of local communities from Guam to the Marshall Islands.

Crystallising resistance work that practically addresses the intersecting harms of military occupation and ecological injustice at the community-level, is the Palestinian practice of eco-sumud. Eco-sumud represents the everyday steadfastness of Palestinians in their efforts to stay on their lands combined with environmentally sustainable ways of relating to and living through the land – simultaneously acting toward self-determination and ecological justice.

Casa Pueblo in Puerto Rico is another powerful example of how to bridge the gap between theorising and practising eco-social resistance and transformation. Building a movement organising around the pillars of science, culture and community, Casa Pueblo effectively linked the need for producing and sharing knowledge with a conscience that is grounded in local culture and rooted in as well as geared towards building a thriving community. The movement brings these pillars together in projects ranging from a “Forest School” that protects the National Forest from exploitation by mining companies to an ecological guesthouse and a solar-powered radio station and movie theatre. It bases its operations out of a house that doubles as a community centre and refuge during natural disasters.

Illustrative of the full typology of resistance methods is the Save Sinjajevina campaign in Montenegro, bringing together farmers, scientists, international NGOs, politicians and ordinary citizens. The network is tasked with resisting the NATO-led takeover of the Sinjajevina-Durmitor mountain range as a military training ground, and works to protect local ownership and sustainable uses of the land, as well as the unique biodiversity that makes Sinjajevina vital to wider European ecological systems.<sup>114</sup>

The above examples demonstrate a wide range of actions that directly or indirectly tie together war making, extractivism, ecocide and ecological injustice – and their colonial underpinnings – as joint harms in need of joint forms of resistance, refusal and contestation. I now conclude on what this means for building movements that resist green militarism.

## **Part VI. Conclusions and Ways Forward:** **Destroying the World Is Not the Same as Protecting It**

The green militarism currently on the march across Europe and North America is particularly harmful to eco-social justice movements that view disarmament, demilitarisation and decriminalisation as integral to tackling global ecological emergencies. Military actors can protect beehives on military bases, rewild their estates and promise net-zero warfare, but the climate actions they offer aim to secure the status quo. Greening the military means further empowering the very forces that brought the planet to the precipices that military sectors now argue they can save us from. Nonetheless, the myth that military practice and ecological action can be compatible is taking hold around the globe. This has dire consequences for the realisation of just transitions based on non-military forms of solidarity with and care for people and the planet. Finding ways of resisting green militarism is imperative.

This report has outlined one such way in forging movements united by a common dedication to *demilitarisation, decriminalisation, decarbonisation and decolonisation*, operating across the spectrum of resistance methods from grassroots to policy, direct to indirect, local to transnational. These Ds recognise how militarism, racism and extractivism (with associated histories of colonialism and criminalisation) are tied together in the enforcement of war, social injustice and ecocide, both historically and in today's militarised industrial-scale green revolution. On this basis, resistance movements are building the case for deep decarbonisation through demilitarisation. Peace, anti-militarist and anti-policing, social and ecological justice movements are already tied together by their attention to addressing root causes behind organised violence, inequity and ecological harm. Military solutions to ecological crises – like military or police solutions to social insecurity – remain surface-level, responding to symptoms and creating new ones, rather than tackling the underlying sources that drive ecological breakdown and social strife. No solar-powered drones will make the world safer as the Amazon burns, seas rise and groundwater supplies peter away. No war can be waged on climate change. Rather than military security being intrinsically linked with sustainability, the real link runs seamlessly between demilitarisation and eco-social justice.

Strengthening connections across these movements opens up great potential to enhance the capacity, creativity and reach of intersectional mobilisation efforts that demand nothing short of system's change. Such movements should keep asking: Who or what is secured and made insecure by climate security policy? What world is protected

by military-industrial pathways to sustainable development? Which are the human and ecological costs hidden from view by green war strategies? How can we make visible the humanitarian aftermaths of war and militarism's ecological damage, upending the illusory separation of war's human versus ecological costs?

Military storytelling about planetary care or care for future generations end up distorting public perceptions of these issues. As members of the public, researchers, educators and organisers, we need to also keep asking our policymakers: Which communities are kept safe by massive "defence" budgets? Whose interests are protected by extractivist national security doctrines? What future generations benefit from a green but militarised international?

Attention to the practical implications of spending priorities is particularly important in challenging green militarism. Military actors are now competing with other sectors for resources earmarked for climate action and sustainable development. We need to problematise the climate security dogmas and green war promises that rationalise the military's access to green funds, specifically through challenging the military on its monopoly on defining what keeps "the people" "safe". The money, labour and energy going to low-carbon drone wars, hybrid armies and microwave weapons would be better spent on remedying eco-social injustices and strengthening *civilian* forms of disaster relief and community resilience.

Ultimately, resistance to green militarism has to come in multiple forms and requires actors in- and outside of elite settings, above and under-ground<sup>115</sup>. Policy analysis, public education and awareness-raising communications work are all valuable avenues of campaigning and critique, but it is crucial that they are tied to broader efforts toward movement-building that bridge the divide between elite-driven advocacy and direct or grassroots organising. The necessarily local-global focus of such movements, the need to constantly juxtapose local realities and practitioners with global systems of power, resources and harm, is both a blessing and a curse. It requires acute forms of sensitivity and tolerance, thinking and acting according to experiences and needs that are at once situated and global, particular and generic, human and non-human. Some of the biggest limitations to collective action in these fields thus remain barriers around language, resources and access. That is, structural and cultural inequities that stem from the same relations of power that decolonial anti-militarist eco-social justice movements would labour to dismantle.



**The reality of today's poly-crisis demands that we start believing in cooperation across causes, methodologies and locales. Ecologies of harm require ecologies of resistance.**

# Appendix:

## Movement Index

List of organisations, initiatives and/or campaigns variously addressing the military-ecological nexus, antimilitarism, peace and climate justice, or how to resist green militarism. NB: this list is far from exhaustive.

- Arms, Militarism and Climate Justice Working Group, Europe/Global, <https://climatemilitarism.org>
- Casa Pueblo, Puerto Rico <https://casapueblo.org/>
- Censat Agua Viva, Colombia, <https://censat.org/>
- Centre Delàs, Spain (Catalonia), <https://centredelas.org/>
- Climate Justice Alliance, United States, <https://climatejusticealliance.org/cop27/>
- Climate Justice Coalition, United Kingdom, <https://climatejustice.uk/talk/>
- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Climate Not Trident, United Kingdom, <https://cnduk.org/resources/climate-not-trident/>
- Climate + Community Project, United States, <https://www.climateandcommunity.org/>
- CodePink, United States, <https://www.codepink.org/wing>
- Common Wealth, United Kingdom, <https://www.common-wealth.org/>
- Concrete Impacts, United Kingdom, <https://www.concreteimpacts.org/>
- Conflict and Environment Observatory, United Kingdom/Global, <https://ceobs.org/>
- Costs of War, United States, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>
- Ecosystem for Peace, Europe/Global, <https://www.ecosystemforpeace.org/>
- Fight Toxic Prisons, United States, <https://fighttoxicprisons.wordpress.com/>
- Folk och Fred, Sweden, <https://folkochfred.wordpress.com/>
- Global Campaign on Military Spending, United Kingdom/Global, <https://demilitarize.org.uk/>
- Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice, Global, <https://demandclimatejustice.org/>
- Global Legal Action Network and Youth 4 Climate Justice, Europe/Global, <https://youth4climatejustice.org/>
- Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, United States, <https://ggjalliance.org/>
- Greenpeace, Central and Eastern Europe/Germany/Italy/Spain, <https://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/>
- Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP), France, <https://www.grip.org/>
- Indigenous Climate Action, so-called Canada, <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/>
- Indigenous Environmental Network, United States/Global, <https://www.ienearth.org/>
- International Peace Bureau, Europe/Global, <https://www.ipb.org/>
- International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Germany, <https://www.ippnw.de/startseite.html>
- Institute for Policy Studies, National Priorities Project, United States, <https://ips-dc.org/>
- It Takes Roots, United States/Global, <https://ittakesroots.org/>
- La Via Campesina, Global, <https://viacampesina.org/en/>



- London Mining Network, United Kingdom/Global, <https://londonminingnetwork.org/>
- Military Emissions Gap, United Kingdom, <https://militaryemissions.org/>
- Move the Nuclear Weapons Money, Global, <https://nuclearweaponsmoney.org/>
- Movement for the Abolition of War, United Kingdom, <https://abolishwar.net/>
- Peace Movement Aotearoa, Aotearoa (New Zealand), <http://www.apc.org.nz/pma/>
- Plant Trees Not Bombs, Global Peace, South Africa/Global, <https://globalpeace.me/plant-trees-not-bombs>
- PAX for Peace, The Netherlands, <https://paxforpeace.nl/>
- Quaker Council for European Affairs, Belgium/Europe, <https://www.qcea.org/>
- Quakers in Britain, United Kingdom, <https://www.quaker.org.uk/>
- Rethinking Security, United Kingdom, <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/>
- Save Sinjajevina, Montenegro/Global, <https://sinjajevina.org/>
- Scientists for Global Responsibility, United Kingdom, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/>
- Stop Cop City, United States, <https://stopcop.city/>
- Stop the Arms Fair, United Kingdom, <https://stopthearmsfair.org.uk/>
- Stop the Wall Campaign, Palestine, <https://stopthewall.org/>
- Stop the War Coalition, United Kingdom, <https://www.stopwar.org.uk/>
- Stop Wapenhandel, The Netherlands, <https://stopwapenhandel.org/>
- Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, Sweden, <https://www.svenskafreds.se/om-oss/english/>
- The Black Hive, United States/Global <https://theblackhive.org/>
- The New Lucas Plan, United Kingdom, <https://lucasplan.org.uk/>
- The Military Carbon Footprint Project, Mexico/Global, <https://mcfptheguide.wixsite.com/the-guide>
- Tipping Point North and South, United Kingdom/Europe, <https://tippingpointnorthsouth.org/>
- Transnational Institute, The Netherlands, <https://www.tni.org/en>
- Veterans for Peace, Climate Crisis and Militarism Project, United States, <https://www.veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis>
- War Resisters International, United Kingdom/Global, <https://wri-irg.org/en>
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115. Aboveground and underground organising are terms used to distinguish between legal and illegal actions. Above and underground actors can organise for the same cause but often have different strategies, organisational structures and levels of public visibility.

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