

## Some Causes

The causes of militarization are many and complex, involving both internal and external factors. Clearly, the increase in the global arms trade contributes to the growth of military control and dependence on outside powers. But questions must be asked about why the privilege of a few must be maintained at the expense of meeting the basic needs of the majority.

The alliance between local elites and foreign economic powers means that certain groups have a vested interest in keeping the political order as it is. Assuring the supply of raw materials and cheap labour requires a Third World kept dependent on the industrial countries. As always, someone stands to gain from the exercise of power and control over the majority.

## A Question Of Security

Our world is marred by conflict. There have been 65 major wars since 1960, fought on the territory of 49 countries, almost all of these in the Third World. Fought with conventional weapons, these wars have been responsible for the death of more than 10 million people.

Often we ask, "What is the cause of such conflict?" Often the answer stresses the need to ensure security. National security is used as the justification for militarization, repression, increased arms sales, and intervention by outside forces.

Christians must ask, "But whose security? And at whose expense?"

As the final report of the Brandt Commission stated so simply: *"More arms do not make mankind safer, only poorer."*

**Much of the insecurity of the world is connected with the divisions between rich and poor countries — grave injustice and mass starvation causing additional instability . . . if military expenditures can be controlled and some of the savings related to development, the world's security can be increased and the mass of mankind currently excluded from a decent life can have a better future.**

BRANDT COMMISSION, 1980

For further information read:  
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# Arms Increase In The Third World

**While the prevention of nuclear war remains the first ambition of disarmament, 'conventional' (non-nuclear) weapons account for 80 percent of all arms spending. In fact all the wars since the Second World War have been fought with conventional weapons, and in the Third World, where they have killed more than ten million people.**

BRANDT COMMISSION, 1980





## Dimensions Of The Problem

- Global military expenditure now totals \$600 billion per year — over \$1 million per minute;
- 20% of the world's military expenditure is by Third World nations;
- International trade in conventional arms amounts to more than \$35 billion per year;
- Canada alone exported \$150 million dollars of military equipment to the Third World in 1982;
- Three-fourths of the world arms trade is with the Third World;
- The armed forces of the world now number 25 million — two-thirds of which are in the Third World.

## Militarization Of The Third World

The rapid build-up of arms in the Third World, at a rate more than double anywhere else, is a symptom of a life-threatening disease. Third World countries locked in poverty and wracked by internal strife are increasingly becoming military-dominated or controlled. Thus the stage is set for further conflicts both internally and internationally.

Of 113 developing countries, 52 are classified as military-dominated, having one or more of the following characteristics:

- a state of martial law exists;
- military officers hold key positions in the political sphere;
- the regime was established by a military coup;
- the legal system is based on military courts;
- military forces and political police are linked.

Military control and domination of a country can have obviously devastating effects. Of the 52 military-dominated governments in the Third World, 49 are considered to be repressive of their own citizens. More than half of these, judged highly repressive, use brutality and torture.

Between 1976 and 1980, the governments with the worst human rights records received two-thirds of all the arms shipped to the Third World.

## Poverty – Repression – Militarization

To a large degree, military domination of a government is simply the later step in an on-going process through which the values, structures and influence of the military intrude upon and then overflow into the civil and political realms of the society. This process, which is often very gradual, is called militarization.

The militarization of a country is a tragic cycle that begins and ends with the poverty of the majority. To survive in the world, poor countries sell their raw materials and agricultural products on world markets. Increased arms purchases provoke a shortage of foreign exchange, pushing the country to try and sell more of its resources, or produce more cash crops for export, often at the cost of cutting back on production of food for local needs.

All too frequently, the country is forced into greater borrowing from foreign governments and banks. Borrowing is further aggravated by increased arms purchases from outside the country. The result is a rise in the burden of debt. Increased indebtedness often means that demands are made on the government by the international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, to cut back on social programmes and development efforts, in order to pay back the foreign loans. The poverty of the many is thereby increased.

The impoverished population demands a greater share of the country's resources. The government responds by increasing military control,

purchasing more arms and arms technology. Their goal is to quell unrest, ensure order, and safeguard the privilege of those in power. The cycle is complete — and is repeated in an ever upward spiral, each stage becoming more pronounced.

