

The Economics of Killing

Book Discussion Event hosted by UNA Birmingham

VIJAY MEHTA

Venue: The Birmingham and Midlands Institute
Margaret Street
Birmingham B3 3BS

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Introduction

Good evening and welcome to the book discussion. Thanks to Gillian Briggs, Ravi Kumar and members of Birmingham UNA for arranging today's event. I am pleased to see so many of you who are working to make a difference in our world. It is amazing how organisations like the UNA spread all over the country do huge amount of good work for Peace, Development and Human Rights. So it is good to be here in this beautiful city of Birmingham.

The reason for writing the book is the urgent necessity to try to stop our world becoming dangerously militarised. 1% of the elite-politicians, military, weapon manufacturers, arm dealers, corporations and media support militarism knowing well that using force against force does not work. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) data for 2011, the military spending has gone up to \$1.74 trillion while 925 million people go to bed hungry every night. 4% of the military spending is enough to wipe out extreme poverty, financial crisis and climate change. The cold war has been over for more than two decades, yet the world continues on an insane path to increase its military spending year after year as if we are living in a time of unending conflict. More problematic is the fact that by over-arming ourselves in the West and Asia, we do not end up repeating the horrors and the bloodshed of 20th century in which 250 wars were fought and 160 million lives were lost.

How can a society be called civilised if it has an international arms/killing industry which leads to wars, violence, barbarism, to counterproductive military budgets destroying social, economic, political and cultural fabric and values. Today countries are more and more resorting to war instead of dialogue and diplomacy to solve disputes. We need to explore nonviolent ways for building peace, restoring human dignity, ethics and civilisation.

The US obsession with wars and military spending has created a monster – the military-industrial complex – which acts against the interests of people everywhere, including US citizens themselves. My book, *The Economics of Killing* shows how this monster is not only the cause of extreme poverty in the developing world, but of 911 and the market crash of 2008. How the world can move away from war economy to a sustainable peace economy based on soft power and co-operation, so we can tackle the biggest threats facing humanity: extreme poverty climate change and warmongering.

What is Military Industrial Complex and the damage done by it

The Military Industrial Complex (MIC) comprises of military technologies, dual use systems (starts computer and software to fuel cells, lasers, robotic arms and optical equipment) and industries deemed to be strategically important. It also includes the arms trade, illegal and legal, contributing to instability and absorbing resources.

In 2011, US is still number one in military spending with \$711 billion with China and Russia catching up fast. USA has 4% of world's population, friendly neighbours like Canada and Mexico, both democracies yet spends more than the rest of the world on military.

There are 25 million soldiers worldwide America's defence department is the world's biggest employer with 3.2 million people on its payroll. China, a big military spender employs 2.3 million in its armed forces. The MIC includes intelligence gathering centres and 1000 military bases spread around the world in 183 countries. Weapon manufacturers of small arms, cluster bombs, missiles, landmines, military tanks, ships, fighter jets, nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons and newly introduced drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) much more are part of the complex Military Apparatus.

The technological developments in the armaments field are becoming more and more sophisticated and murderous

Some examples of damage done by MIC are:

1. Rise in conflicts leading to millions of deaths and untold suffering
2. Oppression of developing countries & forced transfer of resources from poor to rich
3. Islamist terrorism and War on Terror
4. 2008 financial collapse and current economic crisis
5. Marginalisation of United Nations and Weakening of World Institutions
6. Start of a new cold war in Europe and Asia with frightening prospects
7. Negative effects of MIC on environment, global and human security including refugees, migrants etc.
8. Control of information, secrecy, Manipulation of media, biased reporting and false propaganda
9. Use of Science, latest technology and research being used to develop satanic weapons
10. MIC Giving powers to military alliances like NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) to police the world and fight its wars

Rise in conflicts leading to millions of deaths

Obsession with wars and military spending since WW2 from Vietnam, Korean wars, Cold War and the present Iraq and Afghanistan war has killed millions of people, brought untold violence and suffering to civilians and taken the world in the direction of anarchy and disorder. It has created a war economy in which biggest industries heavily subsidised by the US tax payer have become arms manufacturers alongside civilian output, e.g. Boeing, General Electric, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin and UK's BAE (British Aerospace).

Across the world, MIC has handed power to that 1% of humanity whose material desires can never be sated, who act as economists say they should, who murder, torture and steal in exchange for billions in a Swiss bank account, for a fourth yacht or a tenth palace. However, the rest of the humanity, 99% pay for the war in bigger taxes and depreciation of their savings due to inflation after the war.

Oppression of developing countries and forced transfer of resources from poor to rich

- Global militarism in cahoots with Western Governments is destroying the raw – material – rich but impoverished countries of the underdeveloped world.
- Militarism is the key driver of economics of underdevelopment. Puppet governments in poorest countries are given arms to oppress and control its people in return for unfettered access to natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals, which keep countries in never-ending poverty.
- This extreme poverty is the cause of two billion people subsisting on less than \$2 a day. Every 3.6 seconds, a person dies of starvation. Every 30 seconds, a child dies of malaria. Every minute a women dies in childbirth, a genocide of neglect and abandonment. One is reminded of the quotation of Former US President Dwight Eisenhower who said and I quote, *“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in a final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed”*

Islamist terrorism and War on Terror

Islamist terrorism is provoked by the West's wars, a reason which is rarely discussed. Al Qaeda is the manifestation of the anger and humiliation of people living under puppet regimes. Irony is MIC trained Al Qaeda operatives, Iraqi insurgents and Mujahidin's in unconventional warfare (guerrilla warfare) at Fort Bragg, the US Army John F Kennedy Warfare Centre, North Carolina, USA.

2008 financial collapse and current economic crisis

- The huge financial cost of militarism is the key factor in the crisis of capitalism. Much bigger risk for peace and prosperity is the failure to restructure US economy and to reduce massively the economic weight of MIC.
- Some problems facing Africa are created by the financial crisis in Europe and US. According to Overseas Development Report June 2012, the world's poorest countries will receive a \$230 billion hit from Europe's sovereign debt. Military Spending by Africa in 2011 was \$34.3 billion which is being used to carry out wars and violence (especially against women and children) resulting in massive loss of human lives and livelihoods. If this unwise spending can be deployed for completion of Millennium Development Goals, Africa can be a much safer place.
- The knock on effects from weak growth and austerity in the Euro zone has affected trade, aid, investment and remittances. The outgoing President of the World Bank Robert Zoellick has warned that developing countries need to prepare for a renewed wave of global financial turbulence stemming from Europe, and said they should put their finances in order to face the threat.
- USA have financed wars by inflation, raising the debt limit and deficits spending severely draining the much needed resources which could have been deployed for social services and dealing with unemployment.
- Over \$2 trillion is spent on wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which US couldn't afford and which plunged US and West into massive debt. Britain itself is experiencing the human and economic cost of Afghanistan war today.
- It was China that provided US with its seemingly endless quantities of cheap credit which left huge amount of liquidity in western markets resulting in low interest rates and unwise lending of loans by bankers leading to a market crash.

Marginalisation of United Nations and Weakening of World Institutions

China's military build-up or to use an old slogan (Peaceful Rise) is a threat to neighbours (South Korea, Burma, Vietnam, Japan and even Australia who are spending more on defence).

According to the report released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) March, 2012, India now is the world's largest importer of arms (10%) along with 4 next largest countries all in Asia – South Korea (6% of total arms transfers), Pakistan (5%), China (5%) and Singapore (4%). It is the beginning of a new cold war in Asia which could result in horrific consequences.

Negative effects on environment, global and human security including refugees, migrants etc.

The environmental risks of nuclear contamination leaks are already well known like Chernobyl, 3 mile Island and recent Fukushima disaster.

What is not well known is the pollution created by US military which is the world's single largest user of petroleum. Each year it consumes more energy than Nigeria, one of the world's major oil producers. This profligate use of fuel is extremely harmful to the environment.

Another effect of militarism is that more than 36.4 million persons in more than 120 countries are refugees, migrants, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Control of information, secrecy, Manipulation of media, biased reporting and false propaganda

Hijacking and influencing of media continues to play an important role in falsifying the facts and untruthful reporting of the facts. It is evident from the war on Iraq, when media in cahoots with leaders and governments of US and UK, propagated false facts about non-existent weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, the people responsible for the economic crisis on the Wall Street and other countries are not being fully exposed, investigated or punished leaving citizens to ponder at the role of media.

Use of Science, latest technology and research to develop satanic weapons

In the name of global security, science and new technology is being used to develop and produce insane weapons and fight the asymmetric wars of the future. In universities, the scarce resources, are being manipulated do develop and produce new high tech deadly weapons for warfare. These include viruses and bacteria, flying things, vaccines, food, sound and electromagnetic technology, anything with a camera, x-rays and radiation, forays into space, psychological advances, mosquitoes, vehicles of any sort including unmanned drones of every size, time travel and remote viewing, microchips and computers, robots, and even the environment and weather.

MIC Giving powers to military alliance NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) to police the world and fight its wars

NATO is a tool following the agenda of US and its allies of global military dominance. And it is not bringing peace and security, but dangerous instability in the world. The suffering and the dangers NATO has brought with its intervention in wars, is evident in different countries including Afghanistan, Libya and others. Its dangers are even greater as NATO continues to assert its need for nuclear weapons for defence and still holds a policy of first use of nuclear weapons ignoring the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which states that nuclear weapon states should disarm in good faith. NATO is building its missile defence programs in European bases, aimed at Russia. Outside Europe, NATO is expanding its influence from the Mediterranean to the Pacific with enormous cost. NATO is the military wing of a political and economic free market globalisation agenda which by force is harming the economies of the developing world.

What is the Alternative?

The alternatives are military reduction, cutback on global arms trade, reforms of the monetary system to a wisdom based economy and addressing root causes of violence, wars, terrorism and creating incentives for peace economy.

To bring fundamental shift in our ethics and values to eradicate wars, violence and establish peace to reduce debt and financial crisis in which US and most of European countries are engulfed. According to Global Peace Index 2011, if the countries cut back their violence at the rate of 25% for example, it could save global economy \$2.25 trillion. Eradicating violence altogether, can create a stimulus of \$9 trillion, enough to tackle financial, climate change crisis and wipe out extreme poverty including covering cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

US and Western countries need urgently to restructure their economies away from its dependence on military sector. How can it be done?

Shift workers from war industry into 'green collar' jobs – renewables, waste management, pollution control, carbon capture

Share green technology innovation by exporting it to developing countries so they escape smoke-stack stage of development.

Close down corruption loopholes and fraud which has cost the UK economy \$73 billion in 2011 – the \$43 billion BAE Al-Yamama arms deal to Saudi Arabia

Adopt Chinese model (lifted 600 million people out of poverty, despite corruption): They have done this by a policy of protecting growth of state champions which should be followed by other developing countries

Reform UN to play better leadership role in new global economy.

These are some of the ways we can change the system

How the World Benefits?

Military spending is anti development. The developing world does not need hand-outs from industrialised nations. All it needs is a level playing field and leaders who place their country's interest over personal wealth. A Chinese proverb states "Give a man a fish and you feed him for one meal, teach him to fish and he is set for life"

There are examples of people and countries working in creative ways to end violence. In 1948, Costa Rica abolished its army and since has been able to invest resources in public interest – education, healthcare, development or quite simply it invested in its people. No one has attacked Costa Rica because they have no army. The campaign against landmines which resulted in the Mine Ban Treaty – signed by 159 countries – began with the collection of data by hospital staff treating the victims of landmines.

Nonviolent peaceful means have achieved miracles. Some examples are Indian Independence Movement, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland Peace Process, the recent Orange revolution in Ukraine, Velvet revolution in Czech Republic, Rose revolution in Georgia in Europe, and the reunification of Germany are a few examples where non violent revolutions have taken place instead of bloodshed.

In conclusion, let me say selling arms and expecting peace is unrealistic. What we do require is to change war economy to peace economy

Any demilitarisation plan should begin with US by slashing its cold war level of military spending being the biggest player in arms race.

As a start, US could easily cut 15% from the defence budget, saving US\$1 trillion, by laying off the 92,000 new defence personnel hired over the previous 10 years and reducing the US presence in Asia and Europe, scaling back or terminating wasteful projects such as the F-35 fighter (\$1.51 trillion over

its lifecycle \$680 million apiece) and the Virginia class submarine (\$2.4 billion per unit), and shrinking the bureaucracy at the Pentagon that consumes 40% of its budget.

Withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan; refraining from propping up 'venal' governments in chaotic states, letting rich allies defend themselves; and imposing a spending freeze on the Pentagon until it renders itself auditable and amenable to financial oversight. Although some of these factors are unique to the US, these could be adopted by other industrial nations with large military establishments.

Like in UK we can save huge amount of money by scaling down on Trident nuclear submarine replacement which will cost UK economy over \$130 billion over its lifecycle.

What can civil society do?

Our hope for abolition of war and demilitarisation lies with us – Citizen Power. We can mobilise strong grassroots movements, to change public opinion with the help of internet and social media. It is easier to make connections between people, teams and ideas to make a difference and change the world. When enough people are convinced that war is not necessary then elected leaders will be forced to change policies from war mongering to peaceful resolution of conflicts.

As I have said in my book *The Economics of Killing*, diffusion of knowledge devolves power from the elite to the masses, the grip of the MIC will finally end: not with a bang but in a peaceful murmur of prosperity.

My book demonstrates that there is an alternative model to the deadly cycle of military and economic disaster. It is the vital necessity for disarmament on a world scale and a strict regulation of arms trading to create a peace dividend within an international legal framework. It will pave the way by which the military industrial model could be replaced by adopting equitable policies for disarmament, demilitarisation and working for sustainable development thus ending the cycle of violence and poverty.

We are living in amazing times when it is becoming easier to build new pathways. It is very similar to pioneers and innovators of the 19th Century. We can harness the advantage of technology, internet and social media to go global with our message in a short span of time.

How will history remember us? It can only be kind if we can make truth, justice and common sense prevail. Today's book discussion is an opportunity to move forward the debate against the military mindset, to start and activate a political discussion to change the system for a safer planet, leading to peace and prosperity. **Remember, peace is our birth right and we should claim it.** Only then we can leave a lasting legacy for generations to come ensuring the continuation and progress of our sacred civilisation and humanity.

Thanks for listening.

This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com

Please watch 4D for World Peace film :

"Change the World" – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GEK4FFrXk>

And The Economics of Killing Book Launch at Hilton London Euston:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LISJZEECvrE>

Vijay Mehta is chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org), renowned author and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is also the Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org) which was founded by his daughter Renu Mehta. Fortune Forum held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Aitak–24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta's new book "**The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World**" is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkillling.org

"Vijay...a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"

The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."

The Independent, London 26 September 2006