

FRACTURES

INTERNATIONALIST TEACH-IN SUMMARIES

30 April-18 June 2025



Are we headed to World War III?

Summary of FRACTURES session 5, 28 May

Our fifth conversation was with:

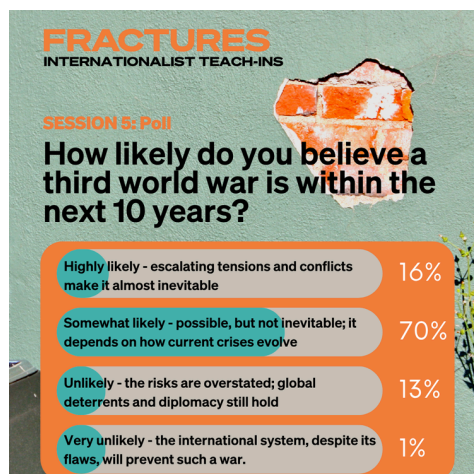
- **Niamh Ni Bhriain**, coordinator of TNI's War and Pacification programme
- **Samar Al-Bulushi**, professor of anthropology at UC Irvine and author of *War-Making as World-Making: Kenya, the United States, and the War on Terror (2024)*
- **Andrew Feinstein**, Shadow World Investigations and editor of *Monstrous Anger of the Guns: How the Global Arms Trade Is Ruining the World and What We Can Do About It (2024)*
- Co-moderated with **Anuradha Chenoy**, Adjunct Professor, Jindal Global University (Haryana, India) and Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum.

Content below

- Poll: Are we headed to World War III
- Key points from the session
- Thoughts on strategy
- Comments in the chat
- Further resources

Poll: Are we headed to World War III?

We did a poll to test the temperature of the room, but it also opened an important debate about how to define 'world war' and indeed 'war' itself.



Global rise of militarism

- **Niamh Ni Bhriain:** Global military spending is on a dramatic and inexorable rise, reaching a **record \$2.7 trillion this year**, which is accompanied by escalating wars, conflicts, and the normalization of genocide, where two million people are being starved to death in Palestine. **NATO's military spending accounts for over 55%** of this spending. Until recently they had a goal of spending 2% of GDP on the military and they are now committing to spend around 3.5-3.7%. The European Union is making the biggest additional investments, guided by arms industry influence. The new 2030 Defense Readiness Plan proposes €800 billion in funding—massively outweighing EU climate allocations. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has openly said this spending may come at the expense of social services, healthcare, and pensions. The **main drivers** for this militarisation are the **influence of arms company lobbyists and representatives** in decision-making spaces, as well as a **colonialist mindset and racist logic** that perpetuates dominance and territorial expansion. The **main consequences** are a **complete undermining of diplomacy, international law and attempts to build peaceful resolutions to conflict**. EU is now claiming its strategy is peace through strength, but this is the opposite of what peace means. Militarisation does not increase safety; it fuels more war, conflict, and climate breakdown.
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- **Andrew Feinstein.** The **global arms industry** is pivotal to this militarisation, **driven by corruption and the profit motive**, with politicians and oligarchs benefiting from the trade in weapons, which accounts for 40% of all corruption in world trade. The **arms trade is the sharp end** of an ever more corrupt, mendacious political order almost everywhere, characterized by **corporate state capture**, where politicians and governments serve the interests of a tiny minority of billionaires and corporate titans and willing to use authoritarianism and repression to protect their interest. The corruption in the arms trade feeds back into the political systems of both buying and selling countries, with senior politicians and officials benefiting from corrupt monies, as seen in the example of Tony Blair's estimated earnings of over £110 million as a result of the Iraq war since leaving office

Redefining war

- **Samar:** Need to go beyond ideas of world war to reflect on the daily, systemic violence experienced by populations in the **Global South**, not just great power conflict in the Global North. This broader view reveals persistent, globalized war-like conditions for the global majority. It also points to the way '**permanent war**' has emerged through the **Post-9/11 'War on Terror'** to **reshape global governance, law, and power in order to pacify racialized populations** through violence and control and creating a militarised political economy. It has also led to ever more **obfuscation, such as through discursive shifts (e.g., replacing "war" with terms like "stabilization" or "areas of active hostilities")**, **manipulation of Legal and Humanitarian discourse**, and the **militarisation of areas like development, democracy promotion, and humanitarian aid**, making military solutions appear normal or inevitable. Institutions like the United Nations are complicit, shaping the geopolitical consensus around militarised solutions, as well as some civil society organisations that examine civilian harm but don't question the militarisation itself. It has also led to the **outsourcing of imperial wars**, for example through AFRICOM, the U.S. operates military facilities in 15 African countries and has shifted from direct invasions to drone warfare, training and funding African security forces to act on behalf of U.S. interests eg in Kenya where trained police are involved in extrajudicial killings and repression, supported by U.S. aid. It also **intersects with elite interests in the Global South**, which means

that countries like Kenya are not merely U.S. proxies; they may also use interventions (e.g., in Haiti) as testing grounds for repressive tactics to be used domestically.

- **Niamh** also spoke to the massive militarisation that is rarely covered in the global North, such as in Mexico as well as the violence against migrants who are allowed to drown in the Mediterranean as a result of European border policies.

Points in the discussion

- **Increased defense spending** is claimed to be good for economies, but studies show it has **never worked to increase jobs** and even acts as a drag on economic growth and prosperity
- The **military-industrial complex has become bigger and broader**, with **tech companies** now also being defense companies, while **financial institutions** like Fidelity and BlackRock play a crucial role in funding these entities
- **Militarisation is central to driving the climate crisis**, with direct emissions from military equipment and indirect impacts from military protecting fossil fuel companies, highlighting the need for anti-militarism and climate movements to converge. Instead of being exposed, the arms industry has greenwashed itself as a solution to the climate crisis, rather than a central component of the problem, by promoting "greener" weapons and military bases
- **Feminists** like Amina Mama, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Angela Davis highlight the need to **expand the vision to look at how violence is embedded in the fabric of our lives** and to think about **interconnected forms of power and sources of oppression**

Thoughts on strategy going forwards

- Advocating for **state neutrality or non-alignment** is one avenue. In Ireland it has a long history (Neither Kaiser nor King was a slogan during WWI), but it is still being steadily undermined, eg Shannon Airport being used by the US military. But it is critical to arrive to exit countries from the Global North war machine and to show a different path.
- In the Global South some states have refused to take sides on the Russia/Ukraine war for similar reasons and are opening up space for resistance to genocide/war, such as South Africa taking Israel to the ICJ. But opposition to US or European imperialism by certain states should not mean carte-blanc support. For example military coups in the Sahel region may use anti-imperialist rhetoric but continue to share intelligence with these countries and promote militaristic approaches. **More than multilateralism, we need internationalism - people-to-people forms of solidarity** as a more reliable source of hope and inspiration
- **Direct action is a key tool**, for those who can do this. For example groups like Palestine Action in the UK have successfully shut down a number of Elbit factories (one of the main Israeli companies involved in the genocide)
- **Strikes and worker actions**, such as dock workers refusing to load weapons, **are essential** in challenging the military-industrial complex, and workers should organize themselves to refuse work on certain munitions or components. This needs a lot of outreach and mobilisations as some union leaders have openly said they only care about jobs and working conditions and not the global impacts of goods/products made by union labour.
- **Military tax boycotts** and **putting up independent candidates in elections** are also important actions to take.

Compelling fact



The United States government employs more people to run one aircraft carrier than it has diplomats across the entire world, and the country has 12 aircraft carriers, highlighting the prioritization of military power over diplomacy

Comments in the chat

Inoshi: 'We're already in a low grade WW, this will continue.'

Carlos T: 'War has always been good for business. It is in the roots of capitalism, that is the prevailing political economic system chosen by imperialists and colonialists from Europe and the US.'

María LP: 'From a Latin American perspective, the use of the term "civilization" is as violent as war or worse, because it takes you to the Spanish conquest of the continent: the destruction of several peoples materially, culturally and symbolically.'

Josephine: 'While focusing on strategies like neutrality and targeting arms companies we always need to keep making the connection to the need for systemic change. ... any demands that stay short of wanting to change the system as the whole will at the most temporarily pacify the war machine. But to dismantle it we need a different system. So that needs to be part and parcel of our communication and our demands.'

Katerina A: 'As a Greek, I remember how our entire youth was shaped by the austerity narrative and the supposed need to tighten belts because of the debt crisis. Now, the EU is suddenly willing to abandon austerity—not to invest in a sustainable, just future for all, but to rearm and fuel militarization. Why do that? Unless you are preparing for war.'

Further reading and listening

Samar:

- [The US Plan to Outsource its Imperialism in Haiti to Kenya](#) (Jacobin)
- [What is AFRICOM? How the U.S. Military is Militarizing and Destabilizing Africa,](#) (Teen Vogue)
- [Empire by Invitation](#) (The Intercept)
- [Book: War-Making as Worldmaking Kenya, the United States, and the War on Terror](#) (2024)

Niamh:

- [Policy briefing on the EU's complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza](#)
- [Article: How the EU has used the war in Ukraine to expand its border regime](#)
- [Fanning the flames: how the European Union is fuelling a new arms race.](#)
- More TNI reports on EU militarism <https://www.tni.org/en/topic/eu-militarism-and-war-policies>
- More TNI reports on the climate impacts of militarism here: <https://www.tni.org/en/topic/climate-security>
- Follow Neutrality roadshow in Ireland: https://www.instagram.com/neutrality_now/

Andrew:

- [Apartheid, the arms trade, and Israel: Interview with Andrew Feinstein](#) (Counterfire)
- [Project indefensible – 7 myths that sustain the global arms trade](#)
- Palestine Action (direct action against genocide) <https://www.palestineaction.org/>

Other resources recommended in the session:

- Airwars is a good resource for tracking a lot of the wars that are often not covered (eg constant drone wars) and the civilian impacts <https://airwars.org/>
- G. Toal, Oceans Rise Empires Fall: Why Geopolitics Hastens Climate Catastrophe (2024)
- I. Rangelov & M. Theros, Climate emergency and the future of civic space: Lessons from the War on Terror (2024)

And some parting quotes:



Andrew Feinstein

'In our current moment we probably have the most mendacious, mediocre and corrupt political leaders we have seen in the world at least in my lifetime - a concept of extreme corruption called state capture where the highest office of states and the policy process itself is captured for narrow private interests'



Niamh Ní Bhriain

'Militarisation is about profit, it's about control, it's about dominance, it's about territorial expansion.'



Samar Al-Bulushi

'There's no longer a clear beginning or end to war—it's become a protracted assault on human dignity.'



Niamh Ní Bhriain

'You can't fight the climate crisis without taking on militarism—it's impossible.'

www.tni.org/fractures

