

The US- Saudi Military Deal And Global Military Expenditure

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In 2010, the largest ever sale of US military equipment was carried out in favor of Washington's indefectible Saudi ally. The provision of the most advanced "offensive" weapons systems by the US to Saudi Arabia has contributed to the development of Saudi Arabia's Royal Force with state of the art fighters jets, which are now being used on behalf of Washington against Yemen. (GR Ed. M.Ch.)

This Saudi-US agreement is outlined in a 2010 Global Research article by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar.

The US plan to sell US 60 billion dollars worth of military equipment to Saudi Arabia will not contribute to peace and security in the Middle East.

The biggest arms deal ever in history, it provides for the sale of jetfighters and helicopters to oil-rich Saudi Arabia over a period of 15 to 20 years. US officials have stated that it will enhance the security of its key allies in the region, especially in the context of the alleged threat from Iran. The Saudis, according to Pentagon sources, are worried about Iran's missile arsenal.

Independent political analysts, however, do not regard Iran as a threat to its Arab neighbours. While the rhetoric of some of its leaders may be belligerent, Iran's diplomatic moves since the late nineties have been aimed at strengthening its ties with states in the Persian Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia.

There are perhaps other motives behind the US-Saudi deal which have not been highlighted in the mainstream media. The sale reinforces US military hegemony in a region that it perceives as vital for its triple interests— Israel, oil and geopolitical control. Since the sale is huge, it will help to fill the coffers of corporate weapons manufacturers at a time when the US economy is in deep trouble

But the consequences for the Middle East could be dire. It could encourage both friends and foes of the US to increase their military expenditure. This could ignite an arms race in the region. An arms race in turn could intensify tensions in the Middle East which is already a cockpit of conflict. An arms race could also skew national priorities and lead to the subordination of other goals such as the eradication of poverty or the elimination of illiteracy, or the minimization of corruption.

This is why countries in Asia should be careful about expanding their military budget. They should not allow weapons manufacturers and arms merchants— supported by political

leaders— to dupe them into making unnecessary military purchases. This danger is all the more real today than in the past since some of the countries in the region are rich and maybe the targets of those who are hell-bent on pursuing their business-cum-political agenda.

Indeed, escalating military expenditure is a global challenge. Global military expenditure in December 2009 stood at 1.5 trillion US dollars. This represents a six percent increase in real terms over 2008. Compared to 2000, it is a 49 percent increase!

Worse, the entire UN budget— the budget of the body charged with maintaining global peace— in 2009 was only 1.8 percent of global military expenditure in that year.

It is significant that the US alone accounted for 46.5% of global military expenditure in 2009. The respected Swedish peace institute, SIPRI, observes that massive US military expenditure is one of the contributory factors to the decline of the US economy since 2001.

There is no doubt at all that global military expenditure has to be curbed and controlled for the good of humankind. It will be no easy task. For the vested interests that sustain military budgets in most countries are powerful. Nonetheless, we have to persevere. Perhaps for a start, governments with low military budgets and anti-war, pro-peace civil society groups should come together to plan the mass mobilization of public opinion against mammoth military spending.

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