



HAL
open science

For Human Development: “guns or butter?”

Gérard-François Dumont

► **To cite this version:**

Gérard-François Dumont. For Human Development: “guns or butter?”. Population et avenir, 2005, 675, pp.3. 10.3917/popav.675.0003 . halshs-01520319

HAL Id: halshs-01520319

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01520319>

Submitted on 10 May 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

For Human Development: 'Guns or Butter'

Source: *Population & Avenir*, No. 675, Nov.-Dec. 2005,
www.population-demographie.org/revue03.htm ; www.cairn.info/revue-population-et-avenir.htm

8 October 2005: North Pakistan experiences a violent earthquake followed by hundreds of aftershocks. There are tens of thousands dead in these isolated regions of the Indian sub-continent. The rescue teams of the Pakistani army are insufficient, the more so as it only possesses about twenty of the helicopters essential to bring relief to civilian populations. But Pakistan, on the other hand, has nuclear weapons...

The list of developing countries following comparable lines would be a long one. In these countries which seem to prefer 'guns' to 'butter', spending on the military rather than on human development, the victims are the civilian populations, exposed to poverty and excess mortality.

However it would be difficult to establish with perfect precision the list of those countries where human development is hindered by excessive military spending, as, in many States, the reported military budgets are of dubious reliability.

Information is lacking on the size of armies, not to mention the many militia groups, which are not mentioned in official documents. For example, Saddam Hussein's Iraq counted dozens of such groups financed with oil money and used by the dictator to extend his cover.

Information is also incomplete with respect to the types and quantities of armament purchased, as the data available do not include weapons that were purchased under other classifications.

Finally, spending on military research or extension of military means should be taken into account. However even these data would not be enough to show the destructive impact of overarmament. For example, the purchase of light weapons, which are relatively cheap, do not come out very clearly in statistics of military spending, and yet they feed civil wars and massacres of extreme cruelty, not to mention the terrible proliferation of anti-personnel mines. Therefore the number of victims is not reflected in the armament budgets as reported.

Typology of the preference for guns

Nevertheless, it is possible to establish a typology of developing countries with a strong priority for 'guns'. First, there are poor countries governed by dictators who use

By Gérard-
François
Dumont



Professor at the University
of Paris IV-Sorbonne ;
President of the journal
Population & Avenir.
Author of *Démographie
politique. Les lois
de la géopolitique
des populations*,
Éditions Ellipses.

and abuse violence to retain their power. Thus, the leaders of North Korea, Burma or Syria seem to have at their disposal unlimited budgets for 'guns', without much consideration for investments in health, education or equipment promoting human development.

A second category covers countries which experience civil wars. Political authorities, even civilian ones, consider that they must equip their army to help maintain order. It is the case, for instance, in Uganda or Afghanistan, even if the situation there is more complex.

In a third category of countries, the army weighs very heavily on the internal balance of power. The army is sometimes so much a State within the State that its requests for arms are almost always financed, all the more so as the army itself holds, directly or indirectly, many functions of an economic nature. This is the case in Algeria, Turkey or Pakistan¹.

In other countries, arms are more for external than internal use, in order for the country to be deemed a 'great power'. This is why the considerable Iranian oil rent essentially benefits 'guns', as revealed by an economy which is still under-developed.

Of course, it would be naive to believe that military budgets could be suppressed by a stroke of the pen. The world is dangerous and, for all those who aspire to peace, the motto "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*"² unfortunately remains valid. When the preference for arms goes much further than implied by the Latin maxim, in countries where the GDP per head is particularly low³, this does not exonerate developed countries, but raises real questions about how to improve population trends in the world. To reduce infant mortality, and maternal mortality, to increase rates of schooling, a huge effort of pedagogy is necessary, in order to make human development a real priority. ☺

(Translation:
Sylvie Vanston)

1. As stated on page 3 of *Le Monde* dated 15 October 2005, through their foundations, activities of the military range from the manufacturing of corn flakes to that of concrete to real estate, education... The same is true of the Turkish army.

2. If you want peace, prepare war.

3. Cf. figures published pp. 19 to 23 of *Population & Avenir* n°685, November-December 2007. www-population-demographie.org