

# A world without military?

New Internationalist Easier English Ready Lesson: Intermediate + level

This lesson:  
Speaking  
Reading  
Linkers of contrast  
Writing



What does  
this picture  
show?

Do you know  
this symbol?



In groups, make a list of all the positive and negative reasons that countries have military:

Positive:

Negative:



Now read the following 2 slides and find:

- 3 good reasons for keeping the military
- 3 good reasons for abolishing the military

Change is difficult. Even radical activists can find it difficult to imagine a world without our institutions and our ways of doing things. Perhaps this is why most anti-war campaigners don't want the end of military forces.

We have an idea that the military have an important role. In fact, the military is there to engage in violence or fear to help the powerful.

Of course, there are different kinds of violence. If we look at history, we find that states formed armies only when war started. In Europe, well into the 17th century, people thought having an army was a sign of tyranny. But as capitalism developed, the search for new markets and materials became mixed with violence as states started to colonize, fight other colonisers, and stop protests at home. The pacifist socialist Bart de Ligt wrote in 1937, 'Without war, or at least the threat of war, capitalism does not work'.

We must also challenge the military for denying human rights to its own soldiers. All too often, armed forces recruit the poorest people. They brutalise them through military training, send them to fight other poor people, and then send them back into poverty. That's why peace-loving people don't attack the individuals in the military but the authorities that employ them.

The reasons for having armed forces don't make sense. We often believe that we need soldiers to defend a country against a possible attack. But many countries with an active military prepare their forces for fighting abroad – not at home. For example, British armed forces have equipment made for fighting in a desert. The equipment would not help if Russian soldiers landed in Cornwall. If Russian soldiers landed in Cornwall (which is very, very unlikely), British troops would protect government buildings, military installations, and important businesses. But defending people and towns would not be so important. Non-co-operation by civilians might be a better kind of resistance.

Another reason for having armed forces is the work that they do when they give aid, tackle fires or floods and, recently, help with Covid-19. We are thankful to people who do these things – but why do they need to be an armed force? A country wanting to stop having armed forces could put the military into new or bigger civilian services to help with disasters.

So, how might we make this change? A government would need a lot of political will to get a policy like this accepted. There would be opposition from military leaders, arms companies, and other countries. But we must do it. Costa Rica is the only country to abolish its armed forces and make that part of its constitution. Iceland does not have an army but it does military deals with NATO. It would need a powerful abolition movement, working with anti-militarist campaigners around the world. With the abolition of armed forces, there would be compensation to those losing their jobs and offers of retraining.

Only a global campaign can lead to the abolition of all armed forces. Groups such as War Resisters' International bring together pacifists and anti-militarists around the world in campaigns like these. Citizens can also call for an end to armed forces in our own countries, and continue to campaign against individual wars, arms, and arms deals. But it needs protest against the whole idea of a military.

Armed forces are not there to protect us, but to protect the power of the powerful. Let's have the courage to say so.

## Linking ideas:

Can you use these linkers of contrast?:

**Whereas ... While ... However ...**  
**Although ... In spite of /**  
**despite ...**

Practise linking the positive and negative ideas you found in the text, using one of the linkers each time. Think about how to use each one (at the beginning or end of a sentence? With verbs or noun phrases?)



# Now add a linker to each gap:

- 1) ..... of the fact that many people think the military are necessary, they don't do much to protect civilians.
- 2) ..... all the military we have in the world now, we don't have peace.
- 3) Military forces often help in disasters. .... a civilian task force could do this just as well.
- 4) The world could decide to abolish all armed forces, ..... this would not be an easy thing to do.
- 5) ..... many people think the military exist to protect people, they actually protect the power of the powerful.

# Key:

- 1) **In spite** of the fact that many people think the military are necessary, they don't do much to protect civilians.
- 2) **Despite / In spite of** all the military we have in the world now, we don't have peace.
- 3) Military forces often help in disasters. **However**, a civilian task force could do this just as well.
- 4) The world could decide to abolish all armed forces, **although** this would not be an easy thing to do.
- 5) **Whereas / While** many people think the military exist to protect people, they actually protect the power of the powerful.

Look at the examples – how do we use these linkers?

(beginning, middle or end of sentences? Before verb or noun phrases?)

**And which of these sentences do you agree with? Why?why not?**

Role play A&B – discuss, then swap roles and repeat:

A/ you think all countries need to keep their armed forces



B/ you are a pacifist and think all countries should get rid of their military

# Follow-up:



**Reading:** read the original version of the article and compare:

<https://newint.org/features/2021/08/09/what-if-armed-forces-abolished>

**Writing:**

Write a formal letter to a newspaper giving your own opinions about the military in the world today