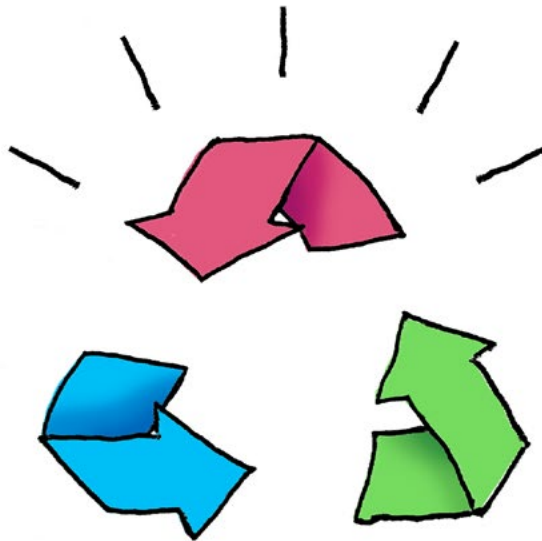
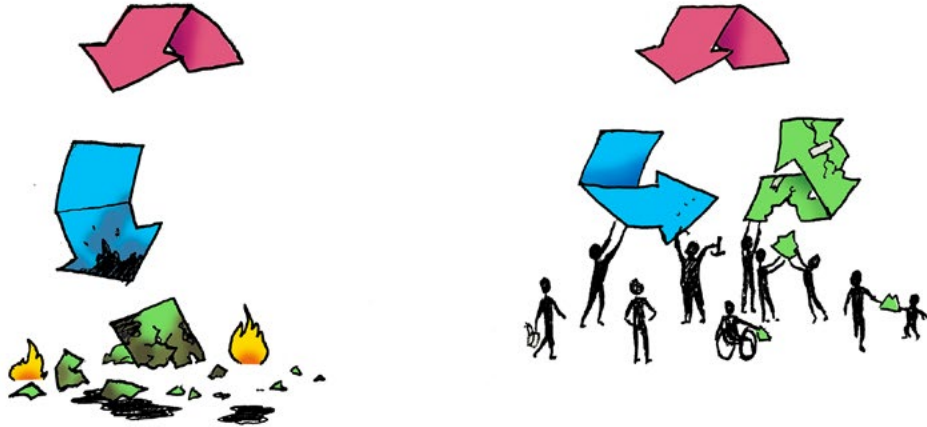


Introduction: From a Culture of War to a Culture of Care



We're at a critical moment in history, where meaningfully addressing the climate crisis requires an unprecedented response rooted in global cooperation, collaboration, and care. In contrast, dealing with climate change is increasingly seen as a security issue rather than a matter of upholding human rights and advancing justice. To achieve climate justice, we must restructure the extractive economy we have now that is harming people and ecosystems. Such aspirations and militarism are fundamentally at odds. True climate solutions must have antimilitarism at the core.

Recognizing that the impacts of climate change will dramatically increase instability around the globe, this paper examines the role of militarism in a climate-changed world. As outlined in the pages that follow, climate change and militarism intersect in a variety of alarming ways:

The Pentagon is a major polluter.

U.S. Militarism degrades the environment and contributes directly to climate change. Plans to confront climate change must address militarization, but “greening the military” misses the point entirely. Militarism and climate justice are fundamentally at odds.

The United States has a well-known history of fighting wars for oil.

The fossil fuel industry relies on militarization to uphold its operations around the globe. Those who fight to protect their lands from extractive industries are often met with state and paramilitary violence.

Climate change and border militarization are inextricably linked.

It is clear that on a warming planet, cross-border migration will rise. As the U.S. continues to ramp up border security, so do threats to all people’s freedom to move and stay. Immigrant justice is climate justice, and challenging militarism is critical to achieving both.

Over-investment in the military comes at the high cost of under-investing in other needs, including climate.

For decades, the U.S. has invested in military adventurism and prioritized military threats above all other threats to human life. The bloated U.S. war economy presents an opportunity to redirect significant military resources, including money, infrastructure, and people, toward implementing solutions to climate change.

Workers need a way out.

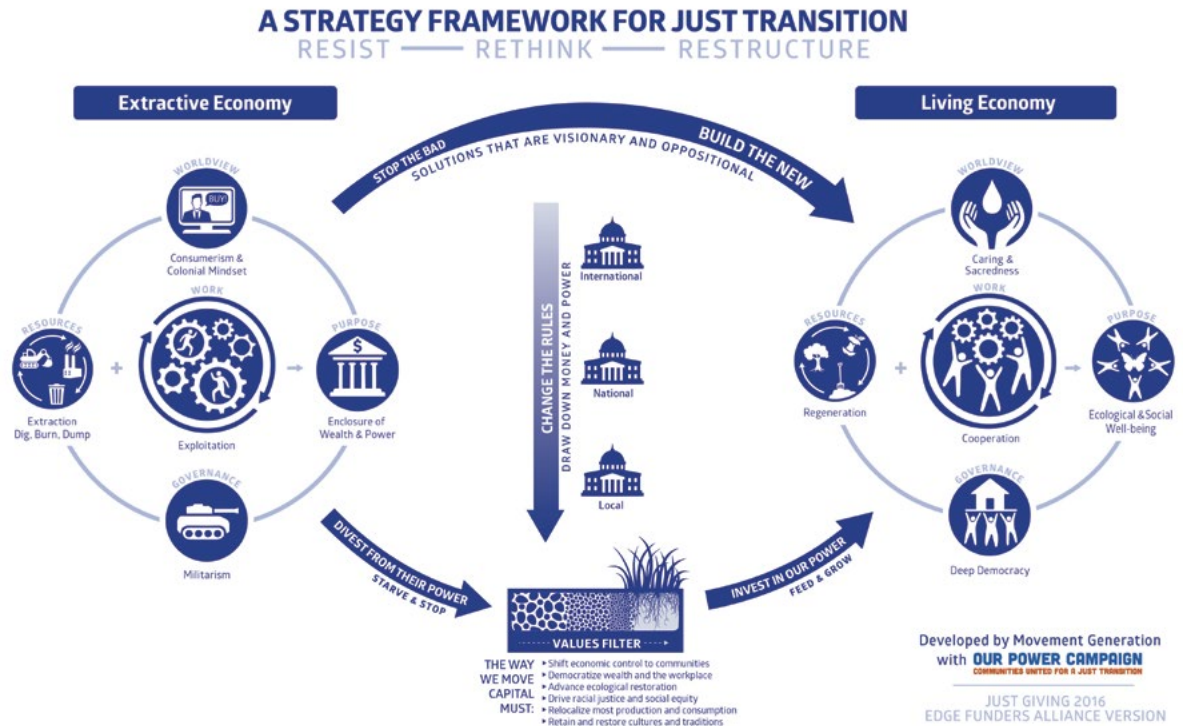
The fossil fuel and military sectors mirror each other in the way that workers frequently end up funneled into lethal work due to limited options. We need a Just Transition for workers and communities in both sectors. In order to rapidly transition to a green economy, we must fund millions of jobs in the green economy.

Racism and racial oppression form the foundation for both the extractive fossil fuel economy and the militarized economy.

Neither could exist without the presumption that some human lives are worth less than others, and racial justice would undermine the foundations of both.

A Just Transition is a Peaceful Transition

In the climate justice movement, the concept of [Just Transition](#) is well-known.¹ It is a process of transforming an unjust, extractive economy that exploits and harms people and the planet, to a just, regenerative economy with healthy, thriving communities and ecosystems. The process must be just for the outcome to be just.



Graphic from Movement Generation, https://movementgeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/JTFramework_EDGE2016-01.jpg

The economic system that extracts finite resources (such as fossil fuels), generates pollution and causes climate change, and exploits communities and workers, is also a militarized economic system that profits from war and violence, whether in distant lands like Afghanistan or in over-policed Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities at home. And, just as with extractive industries such as the fossil fuel industry, militarized industries—like weapons manufacturing—create economic dependence, with workers as well as entire communities lacking economic self-determination and finding their future tied to the well-being of the industry.

People have always resisted the exploitation of the extractive economy, but violence and the threat of it keep the economic system in operation.

Militarism is the coercive arm of the extractive economy. People have always resisted the exploitation of the extractive economy, but violence and the threat of it keep the economic system in operation. This plays out on a global scale: the military yields such power internationally, increasingly militarized police employ brute force against communities in the United States, and immigration enforcement violently

patrols national borders. As articulated by Movement Generation's [Strategic Framework for a Just Transition](#), "If the acquisition of resources, including labor, are through extraction, then the ultimate mechanism of governance must be militarism: structural, well-organized, systematic violence—diverse in forms and methods—but always brutal."²

A Just Transition demands a reimagining and a restructuring of economic systems that works for people and the planet. Such a Just Transition demands solutions that are visionary and oppositional to what we have now. A truly transformative Just Transition must demilitarize our economy at the same time that it moves us away from fossil fuels and extractivism.

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National Security or Planetary Emergency?

In an era marked by monumental challenges, the climate crisis poses an existential threat of unmatched urgency and scale. Communities around the globe are already experiencing the impacts of a warming climate—including severe drought, intense storms, oppressive heat waves, and recurring crop failures. With increasing intensity and occurrence, climate change poses an immediate threat to tens of millions of people around the world.

Yet, climate change doesn't affect everyone equally. Indigenous people, people of color, and people with lower incomes are confronting its impacts first and worst. The relationship between the devastating impacts of climate change and the potential for violent conflict are well documented and are discussed in the sections that follow. And while we should take care not to oversimplify such links, [it is clear](#) that over time increasing bouts of extreme weather will make the planet a less ecologically, socially, and politically stable place.³

Recognizing the catastrophic impacts of a warming climate and the massive response that this crisis demands, climate change is sometimes understood as a “national security threat.” While some hope that a national security frame might push policymakers to take climate change seriously and address the root-causes, this militarized framing invites a search for military “solutions” that legitimize U.S. militarism instead of challenging it.⁴

At a time when the United States needs to shift public resources from funding war and weaponry to instead building the green infrastructure that is required to prevent climate chaos, it is critical that we see through false solutions that conflate climate fixes with national security.⁵ Rather than understanding it as a national security crisis, characterizing climate change as a “planetary emergency” may help to see beyond a militarized worldview and instead foster a spirit of global cooperation. Choosing solidarity over security, real safety comes when we care for each other and our environment.