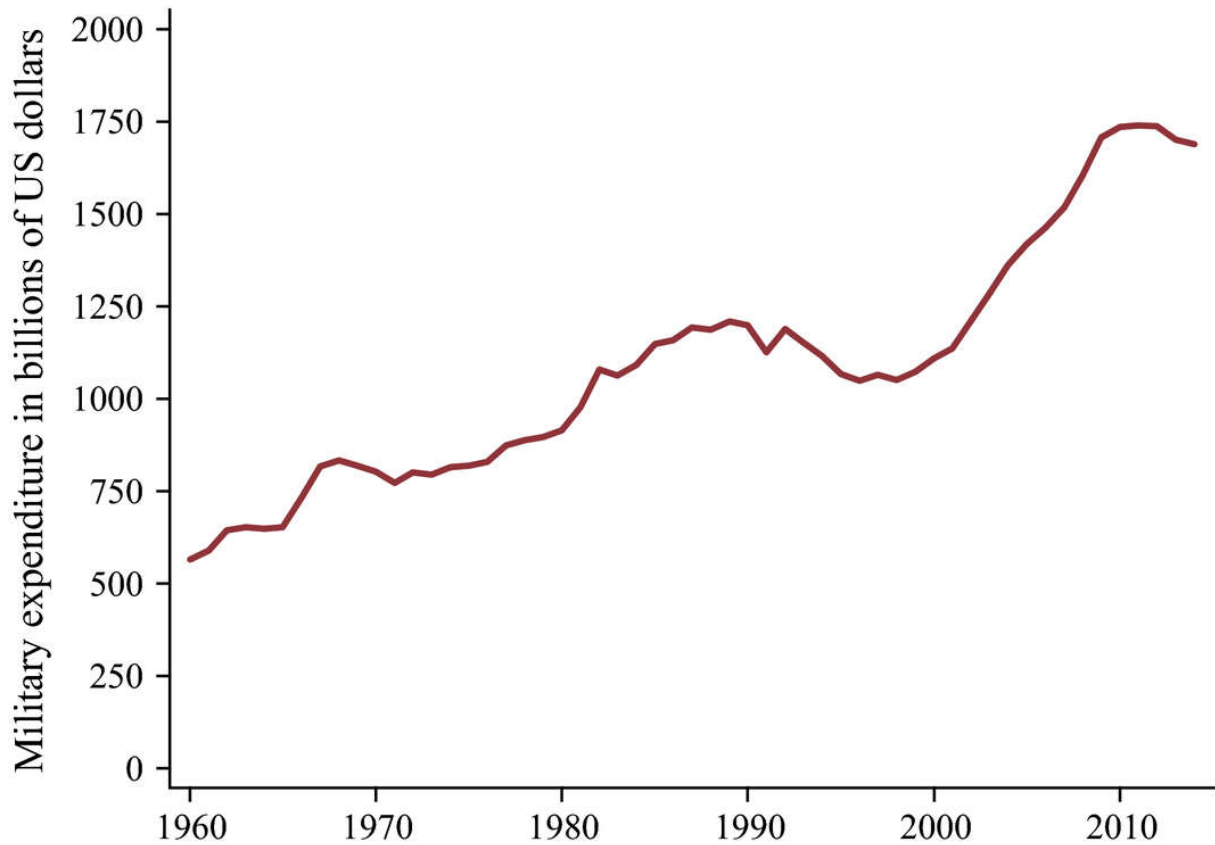


## **Towards disarmament: Spreading weapons – spreading violence**

Before I start with my statement, I would like to clarify from which perspective I am talking. I am a professor in the Faculty of theology of Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena. My topic is Christian Ethics. The field I have found so exciting during the last years is Reconciliation Studies. Reconciliation Studies means the research about the restoration of relationships between States, groups, institutions or individuals after atrocities such as War, Civil War, Genocide, Apartheid, colonialism, Slavery and other human rights violations. We try to understand whether processes of reconciliation more or less succeed like in Northern Ireland or more or less failed so far like in Israel-Palestine or concerning the reunification of Cyprus. We are convinced that only the cooperation of many disciplines like communication, cultural studies, economy, education, law, linguistics, history, political science, psychology, religious studies, sociology or theology can find a complete and convincing answer on those questions. Therefore I will speak as a Christian Ethics who works together with other academic disciplines. Only in my final remarks I will speak a bit more personally.

### 1. Towards disarmament?

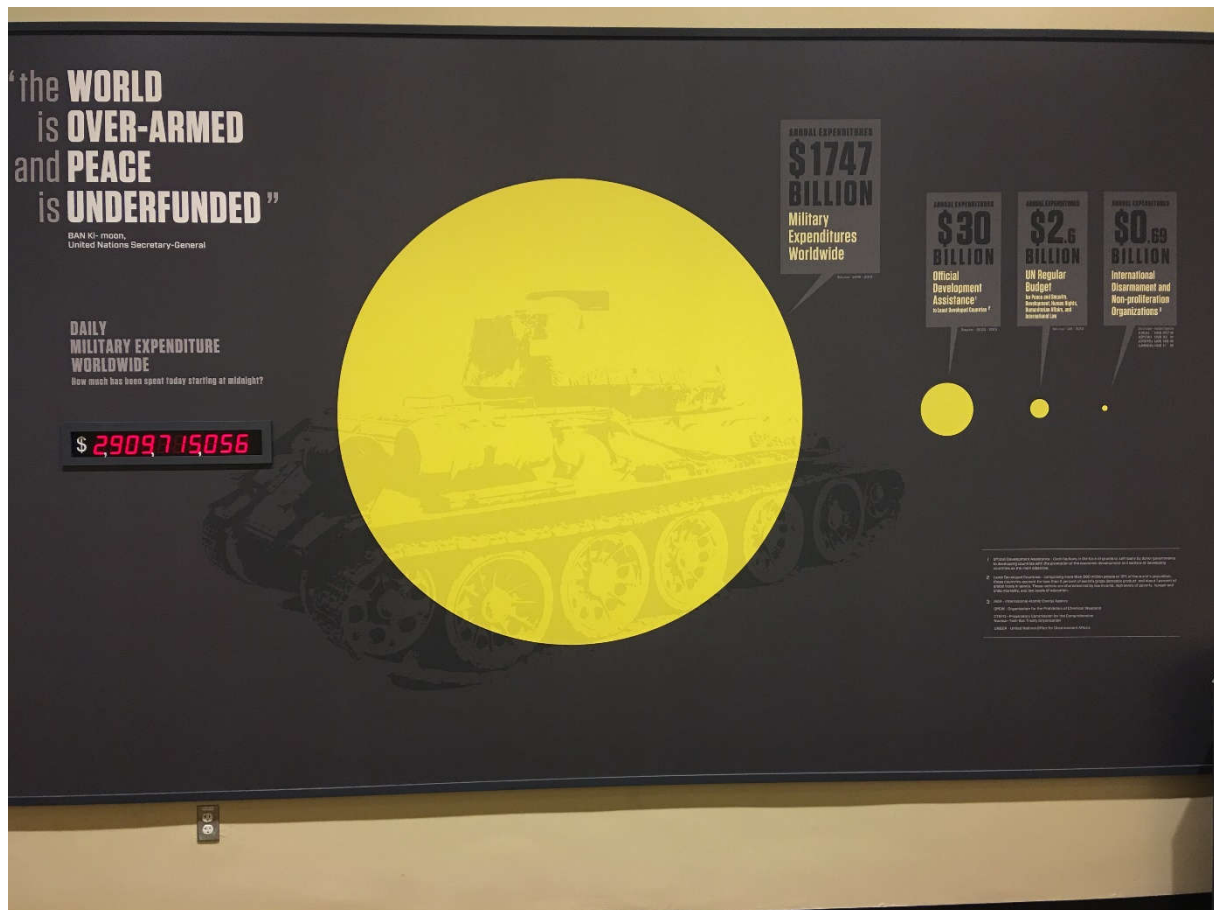
Looking at military expenses worldwide, there is clear evidence that we are not evolving towards disarmament but towards new extremes of military spending. The slight decrease after 2010 is already inverted by actual developments. According to UN estimations, in 2017, we are likely to see at least 1747 billion \$ spent on military worldwide, a sum which is approximately the same as in 2010. This sum is much more than what was spent in the times of Cold War where in the 1980ies the total expenditure for military worldwide was a bit less than 1200 billions of \$, in the 1960ies and 70ies not even 1000 billions of \$. The most important and shocking observation however is: Between 1990 and 2000 the expenditures decreased under 1000 billion \$, since then they go straight up until 2010.



If we want to find chances for disarmament, we first must understand the development of military expenditures. This cannot go without saying some words about the sums:

## 2. Inconceivable sums for weapons and soldiers

To get some understanding how much humanity is paying for weapons, soldiers and related costs, it might be helpful to have a look at the watch in the United Nations building in New York.



This watch counts day per day how much money has been spent for military. We have here a photo taken this year at about 6 pm. At that moment already 2.9 thousand of billions of \$ – it will soon be a figure of a 3 with 9 zeros – have been spent on that day only. With a world population of about 7.5 billion people we see that we could give more than half a dollar per day to every human being if we would not spend it for military. During one year that would be 233 \$ more for everybody – if that money would be distributed in that way. If there would be a decision to spend that money not on military, many problems could be resolved like to overcome hunger and extreme poverty or to provide good healthcare to everybody on the globe. It might be that many reasons for wars could be overcome in investing that money to something else than weapon.

### 3. Understanding decreasing military expenditures

During the last decades, we can observe two main reasons for decrease in military expenditures: one is lack of money in the budgets of the States. This is the reason for the relative decrease in the 1970ies after the oil price shock and of the decrease around 2010 when the effects of the financial crisis in 2008 became effective on military budgets. This effect of problems in economy, is not a very encouraging one, because it is not driven by clear decisions to overcome the system of deterrence in order to build finally a more peaceful world.

But there is also another reason why military expenditures decreased and this was the end of the cold war in the 1990ies. During that time many governments, namely in Europe including Russia, developed the idea that negotiations, common institutions and peaceful settlement of conflicts will become much more important in the future than military threat or even war. The question we should ask much more today is in my sense: why did we not grasp the chances of the 1990ies? Why more and more politicians started to serve the cold coffee of the cold war again? Why there is not only

stagnation, but on a worldwide level an unprecedented boom of military expenditures between 2000 and 2010?

#### 4. Understanding the increasing military expenditures

The reasons why military expenditures jumped from around 1000 billion \$ to 1.750 billion \$ within 10 years are complex and not so easy to analyse. What we could observe first was that during a time when European countries including Russia diminished their military expenditures in the 1990ies, the USA kept military budget on a high level. This was partly a result of the influence of the American weapon industry on the politics of that country, partly it also had different reasons like mistrust in countries such as China. In 2016 36.0% of what is spent for military worldwide is spent by the USA. In the beginning of the 1990ies during the second gulf War after the Kuwait-invasion there was still the expectation that American military will act in the name of the UN, but that changes dramatically after 9/11 2001. USA decided to start wars in Afghanistan and Iraq not asking much about the UN or international law. The increasing military budgets of many countries around the world are the result of more or less three factors, which in many cases come together: 1. the feeling of being threatened by the overwhelming military power of the USA or in some cases also by other countries, 2. the idea that the country might get more influence through military and 3. the destabilisation of some regions. The first factor, threat by the USA probably is the most important for Russia, but in Russia there is also the fear of destabilisation from internal conflicts and even more effective the dream to win ancient glory, power and control over land back by military action. For a country like South Korea which also increased his military expenditures to 36.8 billion \$ per year in 2016, which is only a bit less than Germany, the destabilisation of the region by the neighbour in North Korea and other factors seems to be the strongest. For Saudi Arabia which spent 63.7 billion \$ in 2016 the factor destabilisation of the region and the idea to win more influence seem to be the most important. There is probably no threat from the USA the Saudis are afraid of. To get a better overall orientation, let us have a look at the countries who spend most on weapons and soldiers today.

#### 5. The different composition of countries spending enormous sums on military

Looking at the countries which spent much on weapons and soldiers, we observe large increases in countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, India, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates or Brazil.

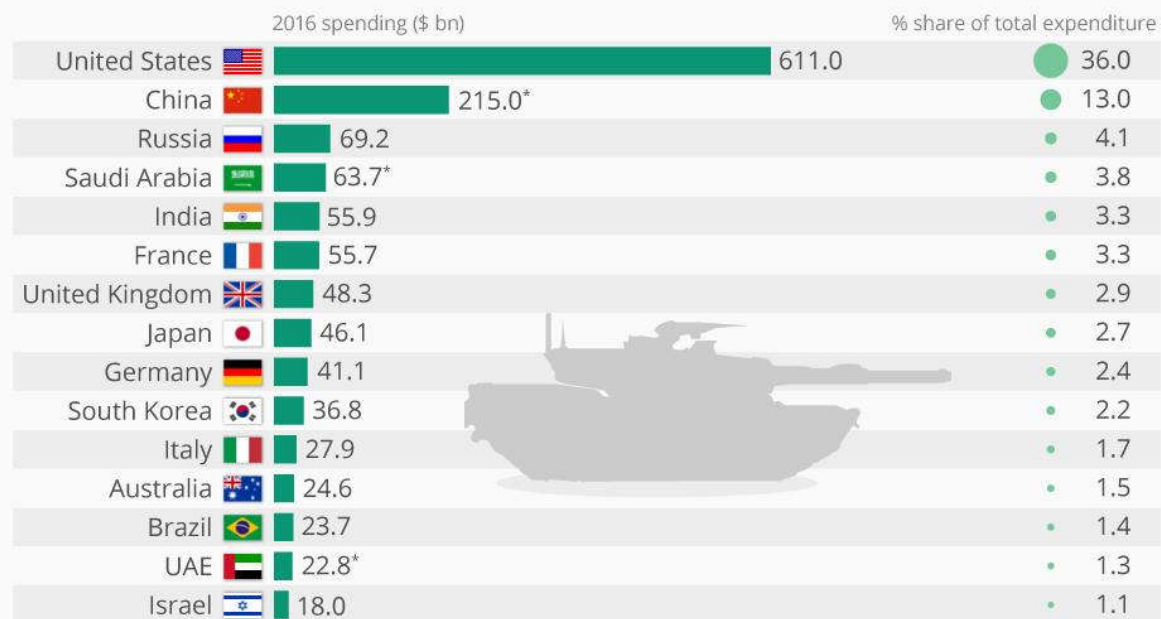
In the list of countries spending on military, USA is first, then comes China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India and only after those the first EU country France. This seems to me the result of the three factors: threat, destabilisation and chances to win more influence. Particularly worrying is that the style of politics has changed.

Even without war, countries with more weapons use them to threaten other countries in order to get what they want. The bullying Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and some other countries did with Qatar is one example of that new – and in fact very old way of doing politics through military threat. We know that style from colonial powers, but during the Cold war was more or less reserved to the USA and the Soviet-union. The dangerous thing in the actual situation is not only that military equilibrium changes but also that the UN are so much weakened that they might not be able to stop new conflicts and a new phase of every country against the other like before WW 1.

There is also another factor similar to the time before World War 1. The memory of the cruelty of war, of millions killed and cities destroyed has faded away in some important milieus of some countries. There are not any more the fathers and grand-fathers who talk to the younger generation about how they suffered during WW II. Video games like World of Warships which partly are very similar to real High tech soldier's experience, have provided an access to war without experiencing the horror and the individual fear.

## The Top 15 Countries For Military Expenditure in 2016

2016 military expenditure by country and share of global total



\* Estimate

Source: Sipri

Forbes statista

### 6. Is there a great war coming?

If you ask me so directly I would say "yes". I would estimate that it takes still some years, but at least a great regional war is likely to come in the next decades. I would say that for two main reasons:

1. Humanity was not able to put an end to the strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD). The equilibrium of total deterrence is a ruling factor behind the relationships at least between the NATO and Russia, between India and Pakistan or China and the USA. That strategy is a dangerous one. At least twice, in 1983 and in the 1990ies Europe was very close to a nuclear war by error. Are we so sure that not by error and not by a mentally disturbed president and not by some hacker into the computer system and not by an escalation of different reactions and responses like in WW 1 the world will not enter into a nuclear war? I am not sure, and with every year we do not get rid of the high armament system, it becomes more likely to happen.
2. Legacy of the 1980ies and 90ies has widely been denied and abandoned. Institutions like the ICC in The Hague, the OSCE or the UN have been weakened by nationalistic egoism. The teachings of the end of the cold war are no longer taken into account. Instead of what happened, alternative stories have been promulgated which are completely misleading. Michael Gorbachev, in his latest publication in German "Kommt endlich zur Vernunft" Nie wieder Krieg" opposes the myth of Ronald Reagan and the NATO weapons which would have brought Soviet-union's economy into a situation close to collapse where they had to give up. The reality was quite different. First of all, countries like North Korea show that it is possible to maintain a communist regime during decades also through a very severe economic crisis. The Soviet-union and the East European were is a not extremely severe crisis. They could have overcome the economic crises of the 1980ies. Even if they would not have paid back credits from West German and other banks, probably not much would have happened. German army would not have attacked GDR to get three million Deutschmark back for the

Deutsche Bank. The end of the Cold War came through the willingness of the Russian leadership to perestroika and glasnost, it came through the populations of those countries who wanted the change and it came through negotiations. Confutse said: Humans learn through three ways: Through reflection, through experience and through suffering. Through reflection is the fastest and easiest way, but only few take it. Through experience takes more time but it is chosen by more. To learn through suffering is the longest and hardest way to learn. It is the way most people take. Probably humankind will need more suffering in order to become reasonable and to overcome war and military threats. The lessons of the world wars and the experiences of the 80ies and 90ies were not enough. If they were the lessons of the 1990ies could not have been so much neglected.

7. Are there chances for disarmament?

Are there actors for a change towards disarmament? I see three: people becoming active for peace, leaders and God.

In his manifesto "Kommt endlich zur Vernunft" Michael Gorbatchev calls for populations to become activists for peace. He remembers how much impact the Peace movement in the 1980ies had. To me this also seems to be a factor of possible change. People. Individuals, citizens can evolve, they can ask for peaceful policies and foster reconciliation. There might be political leaders who are responsible enough to create disarmament, but also the people in general count a lot. My wish is that through prayer, through spirituality and through development of human persons the world changes. Even if rationally I hold a great war to be likely to come, as a Christian I believe that we are in God's hands and I read his promises like Jeremiah 33,9; a text Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted when he described how it will be if there will be people who have the authority to spread the Christian message of reconciliation again: "And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace I provide for it." I hope that our meeting will be an encouragement to go further that way and to follow the calling of God to be ambassadors of reconciliation who hope against expectations that there will be disarmament and peace on this earth.