



Reduction of Military Budgets

Fabian Flottmann, Chair of the GA

**“Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly
Before they're forever banned?”**

Bob Dylan – *Blowing in the Wind*

Honorable Delegates,

This year's preparation guide quotation does not come from a famous elder statesman or politician. None of them ever described the absurdity of war as poetically¹ as Bob Dylan in “Blowing in the Wind”, a classic rock song that later should become the hymn of the Vietnam peace movement. More than 40 years later, the world community still faces armed conflicts all around the globe, people wonder why, and the answer, my friend, keeps blowing in the wind. But there is some hope...

In this guide, I will first briefly explain the terms *disarmament* and *military budgets*. Secondly follows a short history of disarmament and measures already taken by the United Nations to reduce military expenditures. Thirdly, you will find some important facts and figures. Your preparation process will finally be guided by several introducing questions and research links (see appendix) providing you with useful information.

The UN Charter's First Article states the UN's primary purpose, which is to “maintain international peace and security”² and “take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace[...]”³.

Disarmament and Military Budgets

One of these above-mentioned “collective measures” against threats to peace is the policy of *disarmament*, which means “the banning of armaments, or their reduction to the lowest level possible.”⁴ Less weapons available, less war. The UN Charter's Article 26 also refers to disarmament, asking the Security Council to propose a “system for the regulation for armaments”⁵ in order to maintain peace with the “least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources”⁶

1 Though I have to admit that Eisenhower came close when saying: "Every gun, every warship, every tank and every military aircraft built is, in the final analysis, a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed, from those who are naked and are not clothed."

2 Charter of the United Nations. United Nations. 1945. Retrieved August 04, 2009 from Un.org: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml>

3 Ibid.

4 "disarmament." A Dictionary of World History. 2000. Retrieved August 04, 2009 from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O48-disarmament.html>

5 Arms Reduction Coalition. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Arcuk.org: <http://www.arcuk.org/>

6 Ibid.

Military budget or *military expenditure* includes “all costs incurred as a result of current military activities”, such as personnel expenses, costs of operations and research, administration etc⁷. The *reduction of military budgets* is one approach towards disarmament. It often does not only seek to reduce military potentials, but also to reallocate the financial resources released from military expenditure, for example to social or economic projects.

As stated above, the military budget reflects the amount of money “absorbed by the military activities”⁸, not directly the “military capability”⁹ or military power. For example, a country with an annual military budget of 30 Billion US\$ could have a higher military power than a country with a military budget of 35 Billion US\$. This could be due to differences in command, allocation of resources, allies, strategical advantages etc.

History of disarmament and existing UN initiatives

The history of disarmament began before World War I, when first international agreements towards disarmament were attempted. The first *World Disarmament Conference* took place in 1932. The *United Nations Disarmament Commission* (UNDC) was established in Geneva in 1952. There are national campaigns intending unilateral disarmament, bilateral agreements between two countries, and multilateral agreements that are achieved at international meetings or the UNDC.¹⁰

The first special General Assembly session devoted to disarmament was the *Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly* in 1978. The *final document* (important, see) of that session is often cited in subsequent General Assembly and other committees' resolutions. The paragraphs 89 and 90 deal with the reduction of military budgets, asking for a “gradual reduction of military budgets on a mutually agreed basis” and “concrete steps” to achieve this matter.¹¹

In 1980, the General Assembly adopted resolution 35/142B directly referring to the *final document* from 1978 and leading to the foundation of the *United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures*. It obliges member states to “report annually to the Secretary-General their military expenditures of the latest fiscal year for which data are available”¹². This instrument is still being in use today. The annual number of participating countries can be seen in the following chart:

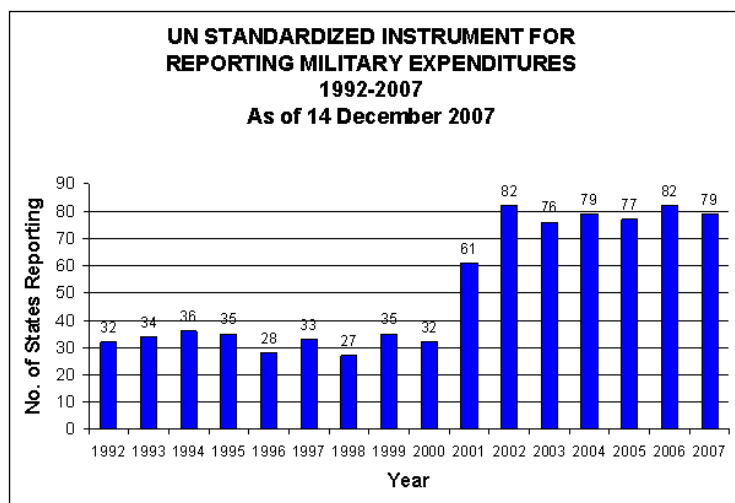


Chart 1: The graph shows how many UN Member States reported their military budgets to the UN each year. About 80 of all 192 countries (~40%) participated during the last years. Source: United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures.

7 Measuring Military Expenditure. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2009. Retrieved August 04, 2009 from Sipri.org: http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/researchissues/measuring_milex/measuring_milex_default/?searchterm=military%20budget

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 "disarmament." A Dictionary of World History. 2000. L.c.

11 Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (First Special Session on Disarmament 1978). United Nations Library. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Un.org: <http://disarmament.un.org/library.nsf/63103cde29e9417085256c3f006600e5/1a9e75d6f7e0e80985256c3f005b1782?OpenDocument>
Better readable version: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/static/npp/undocs/GA10thdisarm.pdf>

12 General Assembly Resolution 35/142b. United Nations. 1980. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Un.org: <http://disarmament.un.org/CAB/mil-res35142b.html>

Important General Assembly resolutions concerning the reduction of military budgets include:

- Resolution 37/95 from 1982, mainly reaffirming the *final document* from 1978¹³
- Resolution 39/64 from 1984¹⁴
- Resolution 44/114 from 1989, mentioning in the annex (**important, see 15**) a set of principles elaborated by the UNDC for the reduction of military expenses¹⁵ and expressing the “conviction that reducing military expenditures would have favorable consequences for the world's economic and financial situation because these resources could than be reallocated”¹⁶

From 1979 to 1989, the UNDC considered the reducing of military budgets. After disagreements about the adequate approaches to achieve this, the topic has not been on the official UNDC agenda since 1990.

During the 1990s, the process of disarmament continued without specifically focusing on reducing military budgets. In 1992, the General Assembly amended a set of recommendations for “objective information on military matters”¹⁷ to foster transparency and to verify compliance of member states.¹⁸

In 2008, the Security Council convened to discuss the excessive global armament and measures to fight it, following its duty resulting from the UN Charter's Article 26¹⁹. The press release of the meeting contains important up-to-date statements from Security Council member states and observers concerning reduction of military budgets (**highly important, see 19**).

Facts and Figures

As we can see, UN member states usually more or less agree upon the fact that military expenditures should be reduced. What happened during the last years? Let us have a look at the latest yearbook from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute:

“Global military expenditure in 2008 is estimated to have totalled \$1464 billion. This represents an increase of 4 per cent in real terms compared to 2007, and of 45 per cent since 1999. Military expenditure comprised approximately 2.4 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008. All regions and subregions have seen significant increases since 1999, except for Western and Central Europe.”²⁰

The award for the biggest military budget of the year 2008 (2007, 2006, ...) goes to the United States of America. In 2008 they generated 40% of world's military expenditure.²¹

13 General Assembly Resolution 37/95, United Nations. 1982. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Un.org: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/37/a37r095.htm>

14 General Assembly Resolution 39/64. United Nations. 1984. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Un.org: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r064.htm>

15 General Assembly Resolution 44/114. United Nations. 1989. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Un.org: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r114.htm>

16 Encyclopedia of the United Nations. Osmańczyk, Edmund Jan; Mango, Anthony. 2003. P. 754

17 Arms Regulation and Disarmament - Confidence-building measures. Nations encyclopedia. Retrieved on August 05, 2009 from Nationsencyclopedia.com: <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations/Arms-Regulation-and-Disarmament-CONFIDENCE-BUILDING-MEASURES.html>

18 Ibid.

19 SECURITY COUNCIL STRESSES CONCERN AT INCREASING GLOBAL MILITARY EXPENDITURES. United Nations. November 11, 2008. Retrieved August 05, 2009 from Un.org: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9501.doc.htm>

20 SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2009. P. 180. Retrieved 05 August 09 from Sipri.org: <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2009/05>

21 Ibid.

Hints for your preparation

Does your country support disarmament in general?

Does your country support reducing military budgets conjointly?

Is your government of the opinion that reducing military expenditures is a suitable practice to achieve more stability and peace?

How has the military budget of your country developed during the last years? (see 5)

What incidences justify drastic changes?

Does your country's situation require a high military budget to ensure adequate defense?

Is the economy of your country depending on its strong defense industry?

Would your country benefit from freeing global resources currently bound to military?
(Especially important for developing countries)

Our topic “Reduction of Military Budgets” strongly affects world peace and security, has interesting economic aspects and even tackles the equity between developed and developing countries. I am looking forward to a fruitful discussion on this complex, but highly interesting matter.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at fabian.flottmann@gmx.de

Yours



Fabian Flottmann
Chair of the General Assembly

Appendix: Research Links (see also sources in the prepguide's footnotes)

United Nations

Main homepage

→ Main information resource for all MUN-participants

<http://www.un.org>

Press Releases

→ You can search resolutions and speeches by key word, e.g. “military budget” (remember to adjust search period)

<http://www.un.org/apps/pressreleases/>

United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures

→ Existing UN instrument to monitor military budgets. Contains further information

<http://disarmament.un.org/CAB/milex.html>

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Military expenditure research group

→ Definition of term *military budgets*, opportunities and problems of monitoring

<http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex>

SIPRI Military Expenditure Database

→ Provides long-term data on military expenditure for YOUR country, also as percentage of gross domestic product

Select a state and Submit:

↕

http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

Wikipedia

Military budget

→ Facts and figures

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_budget

List of countries sorted by military expenditures

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_federations_by_military_expenditures

Disarmament

→ History, important steps

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disarmament>