



**German (Dis)Armament Policy:  
An Intersectional Feminist Analysis  
by WILPF**

# About us

The *Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit* (IFFF) is a feminist peace organisation based in Berlin. It has been active since 1915 and is part of the oldest women's peace organisation in the world, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

(WILPF). The German section of WILPF campaigns for disarmament and human rights and analyses the causes of war and violence. It promotes a worldwide commitment to peace and equality.

## IMPRINT

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**NOTE ON LANGUAGE IN THIS BROCHURE**

The words *men* and *women* include all people who identify as such. We also include non-binary people and people of other gender identities.

JENNIFER MENNINGER AND VICTORIA SCHEYER

# Introduction: How are Security, Militarism and Gender related?

What does security mean to you? What does peace mean to you? What do peace and security mean to all of us? These are questions that are answered differently by different people. Peace and security can mean the following, for example, a humane and environmentally friendly ecosystem, a healthy food supply and access to health and education services, and a social system based on solidarity. Peace and security can mean the promotion and protection of human rights and thus the right to self-determination and self-realization with regard to identity and sexuality. Peace and security can mean a life free from discrimination.

In political discourse, however, peace and security are mostly understood in a militaristic sense: security through defense and peace through (nuclear) deterrence and military spending, following the logic of who has greater military power. The societal approval of the German Bundeswehr (eng. Federal Defense) and its visibility<sup>1</sup>, the scope of the German arms export industry, the budgeting for military defense (including NATO) determined by the Bundestag (eng. German Federal Parliament) and the stationing of US nuclear weapons in Büchel indicate that militarism is not rejected in Germany.

In Germany, the militaristic concept of security is firmly anchored not only in political discourse and decisions but also in society. It is based on prevailing gender stereotypes and norms.<sup>2</sup> Gender norms are characteristics and behaviors that are associated with femininity and masculinity and ascribed to persons.

How are militarism and weapons related to gender norms? Security policy, war, weapons and defense are often described as “men’s issues” and are usually represented by men. Violence, strength and courage are referred to as “masculine” traits. It is often regarded as “masculine” to carry a weapon in order to protect the supposedly weaker people in society. Why is it not “feminine” to carry a weapon? In conversations about disarmament, we have heard on numerous occasions, even from public political actors, that weapons are not a “sexy women’s issue”. The references to the unequal appreciation and the dominance of “male” over “female” characteristics solidify and maintain patriarchal social structures in which (armed) violence is equated with strength, rationality and superiority. This association of “masculinity” with gun violence legitimizes a militarized culture and militarism as well as dis-

<sup>1</sup> 76% of Germans have a positive attitude towards the German Bundeswehr. ZDF (2019). <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute/bundeswehr-studie-deutsche-aussenpolitik-sicherheitspolitik-100.html>

<sup>2</sup> Enloe, C. (2014). Understanding Militarism, Militarization, and the Linkages with Globalization. Women Peacemakers Program. [http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015\\_9/Gender%20and%20Militarism%20May-Pack-2014-web.pdf](http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015_9/Gender%20and%20Militarism%20May-Pack-2014-web.pdf)

crimination based on gender.<sup>3</sup> Power relations between people, within families, societies and also in international weapons and security policy are based on these stereotypical ascriptions.

Apart from unequal gender relations, security policy is also determined by racist and post-colonial power relations. For example, countries in the Global North dominate the United Nations Security Council, which is responsible for legitimizing military interventions. As a result, gun violence tends to be legitimized more often by these countries than by countries in the Global South, as the “war on terrorism“ of the USA has shown, for example. Possession of nuclear weapons by Western states is regarded as a means of balancing power and ensuring peace. Nuclear weapons outside the West are regarded as a security threat.

The impacts of armed conflicts and wars also depend on gender and other identity affiliations, such as religion, sexuality, age, (dis-)abilities and national or ethnic affiliation/attribution. 80% of people who die from gun violence in war are men; women and girls are disproportionately affected by rape and other forms of sexual violence; people with a refugee background or displaced persons have less access to medical

<sup>3</sup> ECCHR, & WILPF (2018). The impact of Germany's arms transfers on economic, social and cultural rights. [https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Kommentare\\_Konferenzberichte>Weiteres/CESCR\\_Germany\\_Jt\\_ECCHR\\_WILPF\\_submission.pdf](https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Kommentare_Konferenzberichte>Weiteres/CESCR_Germany_Jt_ECCHR_WILPF_submission.pdf)



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care; and the vulnerability of homosexual and transgender people increases enormously in conflicts.<sup>4</sup> In conclusion, gun violence affects people differently and thereby reinforces multiple types of discrimination.

Feminist and Indigenous groups as well as peace activists have advocated against weapons and the military time and time again. They have demonstrated that militarism is an intersectional feminist issue. Although there have already been many successful efforts of civilian disarmament and improved legal regulations, such as the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Arms Trade Treaty<sup>5</sup>, feminist and Indigenous activism is often rendered invisible by political decision-makers and the arms industry. The

<sup>4</sup> Women's Refugee Commission. (2020). Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in Conflict and Displacement: Findings from a Qualitative Study in Bangladesh, Italy, and Kenya. 32.

<sup>5</sup> For further information see Reaching Critical Will. Arms Trade Treaty. <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/att>



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power structures and effects of militarism and armed violence affect us all. In Germany, in particular, we bear a great responsibility. Germany is the fourth largest arms exporting nation in the world, after the USA, Russia and France and ahead of China. The German Federal Government thus bears a very large responsibility for the record-breaking global military expenditure of 1,917 billion US dollars in 2019, which is the highest expenditure since 1988. Germany holds

the record for the highest increase in military spending worldwide since 2019, namely by 10% compared to the previous year.<sup>6</sup> From a feminist perspective, military spending and the reinforcement of the military-security apparatus are a means to exercise power and do not serve security and peace. Therefore, WILPF advocates for disarmament, the dismantling of binary and militaristic gender norms and an intersectional feminist understanding of security.

In this brochure, ten activists from WILPF Germany look at German military and security policy from an intersectional feminist perspective. The first article examines the connection between Germany's military spending, exports and disarmament policy based on a feminist critique. The second article covers the topic of small arms and examines the links between small arms export policy and gender-based violence. This is followed by an analysis of Germany's nuclear weapons policy, which illustrates that nuclear deterrence is nothing more than a fairy tale. The fourth article explains the negative consequences of the use of fully autonomous weapon systems and presents Germany's position on this. Finally, we will discuss how Germany's security policy must be changed to make the world a safe, flourishing and environmentally friendly place for everyone.

<sup>6</sup> SIPRI. (2020). SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Summary. [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/yb20\\_summary\\_en\\_v2.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/yb20_summary_en_v2.pdf)

HEIDI MEINZOLT

# National and international Activities of WILPF in the field of Disarmament

- 1915** — The Women's Peace Congress in The Hague passed a resolution on "general disarmament" and demands that all states nationalize the manufacturing of weapons and ammunition based on an international agreement and to oversee the international trade of weapons.
- 1924** — At the WILPF Congress in Washington DC, Gertrud Woker and Naima Sahlbohm draw attention to the devastating effects of chemical weapons.
- 1932** — On the occasion of the World Disarmament Conference of the League of Nations, WILPF members and other peace activists collect approx. 6 million signatures worldwide for their demand: "The war has been renounced, now let's renounce weapons".
- 1976** — The first UN Special Conference on Disarmament takes place at the insistence of WILPF and other non-governmental organizations.
- 1979** — WILPF takes part in the "Stop the Arms Race"-campaign.
- 1984** — Campaigns for a nuclear test ban treaty and other multilateral disarmament agreements are co-initiated by WILPF.
- 1995** — WILPF organizes a peace march from Finland to China. Many members participate in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and stand up for peace and disarmament.
- 1999** — The feminist WILPF disarmament program *Reaching Critical Will (RCW)* is founded.
- 2000** — WILPF played a key role in the development of Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security", which was passed unanimously in the UN Security Council on October 31, 2000.
- 2010** — The WILPF campaign "Move the money from war to peace" starts and calls for the redistribution of funds from military to civilian areas.
- 2021** — The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force on January 22, 2021. WILPF is a member of the global alliance for the treaty and works closely with ICAN.

# Reality Check on Germany's Weapons Policy

The increasing use of weapons has extreme effects on the environment, social structures and the marginalization of structurally disadvantaged groups. The use of force, in particular the use of weapons, consolidates existing asymmetrical power relationships between groups and genders and increases vulnerabilities. Particularly in conflict zones, this results in displacement and expropriation, prevents the fulfillment of people's basic needs and triggers economic and humanitarian emergencies. Living standards, above all food security and access to social security and health care, are severely impaired. Women are disproportionately affected by the consequences of armed conflict and war and often have impeded access to political participation, medical care or justice. Women increasingly suffer from sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. Nevertheless, Germany holds onto an expanding arms export policy, while presenting itself as an active partner for global disarmament and arms control. Human rights are claimed to be a priority of German foreign and security policy.<sup>7</sup> Conducting a feminist analysis of German weapons policy, this chapter explains the linkages between military spending and

social injustices, human rights and arms exports, as well as disarmament efforts and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

## Arms Spending and Social Injustices - You Get What You Pay For

The total budget of the Federal Government in 2020 was 508.52 billion euros, of which 8.98%, amounting to 45.65 billion euros, was allocated to the Federal Ministry of Defense. This means that the Ministry of Defence has the third largest budget of all ministries, after the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the General Treasury. The defense budget is thus higher than that of the Federal Ministries of Health, of Transport and Digital Infrastructure and of Education and Research.<sup>8</sup> 8.11% of the budget is planned for health and 3.99% for education. The priorities of the current Federal Government are clearly reflected in the budget planning. Around 7 billion euros were spent on procurement measures alone, i.e. the purchase of tanks or combat aircrafts. In comparison, 5 billion euros were invested in the education system and the skills promotion of young talent. Only around 434 million were allocated to peace building efforts, including civil conflict resolution. This amounts to the costs of a "Puma" tank (420 million). The coronavirus crisis has now amplified what was

<sup>7</sup> "Germany as an active partner for global disarmament and arms control" - this is the heading on the subject of disarmament on the homepage of the Federal Foreign Office. Foreign Office. (2020). Deutschland als aktiver Partner für weltweite Abrüstung und Rüstungskontrolle <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussen-politik/themen/abruerstung-ruerstungskontrolle/abruerstung-grundsatz-node>

<sup>8</sup> Bundeshaushalt (2020): Einzelpläne 2020 - Übersicht Soll Ausgaben. <https://www.bundeshaushalt.de/#/2020/soll/loesungen/einzelplan.html>



already clear before: the health and education systems are underfunded, and disadvantaged groups of people are more severely affected by crises. Budgets are lacking when it comes to promoting social justice, gender equality and peacebuilding. Nevertheless, for 2021, the defense budget rose by around 2.8% to 46.93 billion euros, even though the ongoing health and socio-economic crisis has made it very clear that health, economic and social security cannot be achieved with guns and tanks.<sup>9</sup>

Feminist security and peace in the form of social (gender) justice need an adequate budget. 800.000 euros alone can fund the primary school education of 7633 girls in low-income countries.<sup>10</sup> With the German budget for tanks, 4 million children could receive a primary school education. Alternatively, the budget for a tank could be used to establish the first Peace Ministry that focuses on conflict mediation and actively trains and supports peacekeepers. A reallocation of this budget could also meet our demands for adequate funding for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which focuses on the protection of women in wars, conflict prevention and disarmament.

In the spirit of “You get what you pay for”<sup>11</sup>, the number of global armed conflicts has increased which will consequently weaken social justice and gender equality. Peace needs gender equality and solidarity-based social systems and therefore demands a reallocation of the defense budget to investments in education, social affairs and health, both nationally and internationally. Therefore, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is campaigning to “Move the Money from War to Peace and Gender Equality”<sup>12</sup>.

### German Arms Export Controls and Human Rights?

All German arms exports have to be in compliance with a certain set of rules, namely the War Weapons Control Act (KWKG), the Foreign Trade Act (AWG), the “European Code of Conduct on Arms Exports”, the international “Arms Trade Treaty” and the OSCE's “Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers” in order to be approved by the German Federal Government.<sup>13</sup> Germany's guiding principle is that the “goods are not misused for human rights abuses or contribute

9 Deutscher Bundestag. (2020). Haushalt. Deutscher Bundestag. <https://www.bundestag.de/>  
10 WILPF. (2016). Women, Peace and Security Financing. PeaceWomen. <http://www.peacewomen.org/WPS-Financing>

11 WILPF (2018). Move the Money From War to Peace. WILPF. <https://www.wilpf.org/move-the-money/>

12 More about the WILPF “Move the Money” campaign here: <https://www.wilpf.org/wilpfs-movethemoney-initiative-to-boost-funding-for-women-peace-and-security/> and information material here: <http://www.peacewomen.org/WPS-Financing> or a link to COVID19 here: <https://www.wilpf.org/covid-19-militarise-or-organise/>

13 ECCHR & WILPF. (2018). The impact of Germany's arms transfers on economic, social and cultural rights. [https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Kommentare\\_Konferenzberichte>Weiteres/CECSR\\_Germany\\_Jt\\_ECCHR\\_WILPF\\_submission.pdf](https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Kommentare_Konferenzberichte>Weiteres/CECSR_Germany_Jt_ECCHR_WILPF_submission.pdf)



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to exacerbation of crises”<sup>14</sup>. However, there is a great gap between this principle and actual export permits. In addition, sexual and gender-based violence (physical, sexual, emotional or structural violence against people based on their gender identity or sexual orientation) is not taken into account as a violation of human rights in this assessment. In Germany, gender-based violence is not an explicit reason to deny these permits<sup>15</sup>, despite the fact that the Arms Trade Treaty states in Article 7 (4) that arms may not be exported if they contribute to gender-based violence.

The core problem of arms exports is that the safeguarding of human rights cannot be guaranteed.

14 Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie. (2020). Für eine zurückhaltende und verantwortungsvolle Rüstungsexportpolitik. <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Dossier/ruestungsexportkontrolle.html>

15 Bernarding & Lunz (2020). Exporting Violence and Inequality. The Link Between German Arms Exports and Gender-Based Violence. Center for Feminist Foreign Policy. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cd7cd9d482e9784e4ccc34/t/5fa54f4f619e4d51ec8484cd/1604669266465/Greenpeace\\_CFFP\\_GenderBasedViolence\\_ArmsExport\\_Final.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cd7cd9d482e9784e4ccc34/t/5fa54f4f619e4d51ec8484cd/1604669266465/Greenpeace_CFFP_GenderBasedViolence_ArmsExport_Final.pdf)

Human rights violations affect men (who are most likely to be murdered by weapons because of their age and gender), women (who are primarily affected by sexual violence) and minorities and groups with particular vulnerabilities (refugees, stateless persons, oppositionists, who were displaced or threatened with weapons). Nevertheless, Germany repeatedly approves arms exports to countries that wage war, deliver weapons to crisis areas or send mercenaries.<sup>16</sup> In 2019, weapons were delivered to Egypt, Jordan, the UAE and Turkey: countries that do not only have an extremely bad national human rights record, but also support wars in Libya, Yemen and Nagorno-Karabakh. Why do German arms deliveries to Egypt get approved? The country currently ranks 134th out of 153

16 Gemeinsame Konferenz Kirche und Entwicklung. (2020). Rüstungsexportbericht 2020. <https://www.gkke.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GKKE-69-REB-2020-Pressversion.pdf>

in the global rankings for gender equality.<sup>17</sup> Violence against women and girls is the most common human rights violation in Egypt (rape, forced marriage, no right to abortion, violence in marriage).<sup>18</sup> Domestic violence and intimate partner violence are not criminalized by law and some human rights defenders are currently detained for their work.<sup>19</sup> Other critical examples are deliveries of military vehicles to the Arab Emirates, but also submarines and ships that are sold to countries such as South Korea and then used to transport weapons and ammunition to countries with armed conflicts. However, since the control of German exports only extends to the first buyer, Germany evades responsibility in such cases.

In 2019, the Federal Government approved arms exports worth 8.02 billion euros, thus made profits from the exports of weapons through taxes. From a feminist perspective, it is essential to analyze the consequences, effects and power relations of arms exports and to amplify the voices of marginalized groups.

It is undisputed that violent conflicts, gun ownership and the associated dominant (hegemonic) image of masculinity are directly related to increased sexual violence. Even in countries where there is no active conflict, the risk for women and other marginalised persons to be killed or injured as a result of domestic violence increases when small arms proliferate and when there is no comprehensive arms control legislation.

### **UN-Agenda Women, Peace and Security and Commitment to Disarmament**

From 2019-2021, Germany was a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and presented itself as a mediator in overcoming ongoing conflicts. The Women, Peace and Security agenda was the focus of the German delegation, which initiated a new resolution on the agenda.<sup>20</sup> The Women, Peace and Security agenda underscores that disarmament is fundamental to the prevention of violence and the protection against gender-based sexual violence. It states that weapons are drivers of violent conflict and that their use is more damaging to those groups who are excluded from decisions on conflict transformation, peace processes and the acquisition of weapons. In its National Action Plan for the

17 World Economic Forum. (2019). The global gender gap report 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2020>

18 UNFPA Egypt. (2016). Gender-based violence. UNFPA Egypt. <https://egypt.unfpa.org/en/node/22540>

19 Amnesty International. (2020). Ägypten: Wir sorgen uns um Hoda Abdelmoniem! <https://www.amnesty.de/mitmachen/urgent-action/aegypten-sorge-um-menschenrechtlerin-2020-12-04>

20 Foreign Office: Deutschland, Mitglied im Sicherheitsrat der Vereinten Nationen 2019/20 (2020). [https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/internationale-organisationen/uno/07\\_Sicherheitsrat](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/internationale-organisationen/uno/07_Sicherheitsrat)

Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, Germany acknowledges that weapons pose an increased risk to women's security and commits to an improved gender perspective in disarmament and to preventing the proliferation of small arms. Despite this commitment, Germany remains the world's fourth-largest arms exporter in 2020.

This is where the incoherence of German foreign policy becomes visible. We do not buy the alleged priority of the Women, Peace and Security agenda of the world's fourth-largest arms exporting nation. Official texts of the government mainly speak of arms control instead of the goal of complete disarmament. A serious disarmament agenda would mean preventing violence and its consequences and not consolidating asymmetrical power relations. Germany must truly embrace the goal of disarmament if it is to make a real contribution to preventing humanitarian emergencies and promoting gender justice.

# Small Guns, Great Terror

The National Rifle Association (NRA) is one of the most influential lobbying groups in the USA. It spends around 3 million dollars a year to influence politicians to make sure that legal gun regulations in the USA do not get restricted.<sup>21</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that 38,000 Americans die each year as a result of gun violence.<sup>22</sup> We lament that the US government still doesn't renounce the influence of the NRA. But is it much different in Germany? Is the German Federal Government actually more independent of the gun lobby than the US government? In Germany, the risk of being killed or threatened by a weapon is significantly lower than in many other countries. Germany has ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) back in 2013, which recognizes the proven link between the arms trade and gender-based violence for the first time.<sup>23</sup> Yet German weapons are used on a daily basis to threaten, terrorize and kill. For decades, Germany has acted as if the responsibility for German weapons stops at the country's borders. Germany currently ranks fourth among the world's largest arms exporting nations.<sup>24</sup> As recently as in 2019, the German government set

a new export record, approving arms exports worth €4.9 billion.<sup>25</sup> What does this mean for the non-German global population? What impact does this export record have on people's daily lives? The discourse of German export policy often revolves around heavy weapons. The following text, however, will deal with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and with their impact on the lives of women in particular.

The last 30 years of research on women and security indicate that sexual violence is used as a "weapon" in war. It has been proven that sexual violence is used to demoralize the enemy and to show one's superiority in power. In any case, sexual violence is also always the result of a distorted image of masculinity.<sup>26</sup> However, an end to war does not result in an end to this form of violence.<sup>27</sup> Sexual violence takes place on an escalating continuum. It can take the shape of structural violence, of domestic violence and can even be used as a strategic "weapon" of war.

21 BBC (2020): US gun control: What is the NRA and why is it so powerful?, [online] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-35261394>

22 Giffords (2020): 38, 000 Americans Die From Gun Violence Every Year – An Average of 100 Per Day, [online] <https://giffords.org/gun-violence-statistics/>

23 SIPRI (2019): The inclusion of gender-based violence concerns in arms transfers decisions: The case of the Arms Trade Treaty, [online] <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2019/inclusion-gender-based-violence-concerns-arms-transfers-decisions-case-arms-trade-treaty>

24 SIPRI (2020): SIPRI Yearbook 2020

25 Handelsblatt (2020): <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/nach-rekordjahr-bundesregierung-hat-2020-weniger-waffenexporte-genehmigt-as-in-previous-year/26729160.html?ticket=ST-998996-9K5Ird5Lz0PZ5JuH-LIbe-ap3>

26 Baaz, M.E., Stern, M. (2014): Understanding Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings, in: M. Evans, C. Hemmings, M. Henry, H. Johnstone, S. Madhok, A. Plomien, S. Wearing (Hrsg.), The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory (SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 585–605); Wood, E.J. (2004): Sexual Violence during War: Explaining Variation, in: I. Shapiro, S. Kalybas (Hrsg.), Order, Conflict and Violence (Yale University)

27 Baaz, M.E., Stern, M. (2014): Understanding Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings, in: M. Evans, C. Hemmings, M. Henry, H. Johnstone, S. Madhok, A. Plomien, S. Wearing (Hrsg.), The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory (SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 585–605); True, J. (2012): The political economy of violence against women (Oxford University Press)

**Sexual violence does not come to a sudden end with an official ceasefire.<sup>28</sup>**

**The risk of such violence ending in rape or even murder is exacerbated by easy access to weapons, especially “small“ or “light“ weapons.<sup>29</sup> Due to their easy transportability, small arms and light weapons are smuggled frequently and often end up on the black market and in the hands of violent individuals.<sup>30</sup> For example, between 2009 and 2012, German firearms from the Sig Sauer company reached Colombia with an ongoing civil war. In 2014, assault rifles of Heckler & Koch were used to execute 43 Mexican students in Guerrero.<sup>31</sup> The consequences of German arms deliveries are often fatal. But how exactly are these examples related to women’s lives and the risk of gender-based violence?**

**In times of war, the post-war period, and even in what we call “peace time”, small arms and light weapons are used to threaten, terrorize and kill women. What would you do if a loaded gun was pressed to your temple, or to the temple of your father, your sister, your child? Would**

**you choose to die or to give your aggressors what they demand? Threatening someone with a handgun is a particularly effective way to coerce sexual acts (sometimes for years).**

**In the domestic context, we can observe that in relationships that are characterized by violence, the probability of being killed by one’s partner increases dramatically if there is a weapon in the household.<sup>32</sup> In the United States, for example, 55% of domestic violence fatalities are shot with a gun.<sup>33</sup> It is evident that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons increases the danger to women’s lives.<sup>34</sup> From these women’s perspective, it makes no difference whether crime or conflict, military or non-military weapons, legal or illegal weapons are the sources of threat. The terror and trauma remain the same.**

**How can we claim a moral superiority over the USA or other states and their weapons laws, when it is often German weapons that circulate there and make such terror possible? As a society, we applaud the German economy, the black zero budget rule, the restrictive gun laws.**

28 True, J. (2012): *The political economy of violence against women* (Oxford University Press)

29 Cukier, Kooistra, Anto (2002): ‘Gendered Perspectives on Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse: Effects and Policies’, in: Farr, Gebre-Wold (Hrsg.), *Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns* (BICC)

30 Wisotzki, S. (2020): *Deutsche Rüstungsexporte in alle Welt? Eine Bilanz der vergangenen 30 Jahre* (o. O.)

31 Ibid.

32 Cukier, Kooistra, Anto (2002): ‘Gendered Perspectives on Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse: Effects and Policies’, in: Farr, Gebre-Wold (Hrsg.), *Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns* (BICC); Snyder, R. L. (2019): *No visible bruises: What we don’t know about domestic violence can kill us* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA)

33 Cukier, Kooistra, Anto (2002): ‘Gendered Perspectives on Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse: Effects and Policies’, in: Farr, Gebre-Wold (Hrsg.), *Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns* (BICC)

34 Ibid.

But what if we think one step further? What if we realize that a loose arms export policy contributes to German prosperity? That German security is maintained at the expense of non-German insecurity? Unlike in the USA, in Germany there are no official figures that reflect the political influence of gun advocates. However, there are speculations about money transfers to members of the Bundestag (German parliament) from Germany's largest gun manufacturers, such as Heckler & Koch.<sup>35</sup> Instead of providing transparent and publicly available information, the negotiations of the German gun lobby are taking place behind closed doors. This enables Germany to praise its own progressiveness and moral superiority, also concerning gender equality. However, it does not reflect reality. The tacit acceptance of this policy must end. We bear a responsibility towards the women, men and children affected by violence and must illuminate, question and vociferously oppose the highly problematic German weapons policy.

35 Zeit Online (2018): Ermittlungen gegen Heckler & Koch wegen Bestechung, [online] <https://www.zeit.de/news/2018-05/22/ermittlungen-gegen-heckler--koch-wegen-bestechung-180522-99-401210>

# Nuclear Disarmament 2.0: From Failed Non-Proliferation to International Ban

## Nuclear Sharing and Germany's Fairy Tale of Deterrence

The topic of nuclear weapons often seems to be an outdated topic, belonging to the Cold War era rather than to the multilateral politics of the 21st century. However, up until today, there are still 13,000 nuclear explosive devices from nine nuclear-armed states<sup>36</sup> around the world, and the logic of nuclear deterrence continues to determine international security policy. Germany is also heavily involved in this policy: around 20 US nuclear weapons are stationed in Büchel in the state Rhineland-Palatinate.<sup>37</sup> In addition, German companies<sup>38</sup> and financial institutions contribute to the production and financing of nuclear weapons.<sup>39</sup> Germany and its NATO allies hold on to a policy of nuclear deterrence. It is argued that a global power balance is ensured, through the existence of nuclear weapons, their “balanced” distribution among a few states and the threat of their use. As a remnant of the bipolar world of the Cold War, this reasoning rests on the pillars of patriarchal power politics.<sup>40</sup> In 2018, when North

Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un reminded the world of the “nuclear button” on his desk as a threatening gesture, Donald Trump retorted that his nuclear button is “much bigger” and “more powerful” than Kim Jong-Un's.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, the size comparison is not the exception here, but the rule of a policy based on outdated images of masculinity: Nuclear deterrence instead of multilateral disarmament, size comparison instead of diplomatic communication.

In the context of this prevailing logic, a policy of disarmament is seen as emotional and naive and is directly associated with weakness and alleged femininity.<sup>42</sup> However, with a view to history, the question arises what is in fact naive: the understanding of security based on mutual threats of mass destruction or the assumption that existing weapons could be used eventually? Not only the use of nuclear weapons but also their development, testing, transportation and storage have devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences.

36 France, UK, USA, Russia, People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea

37 Werdermann (2019) Atomares Deutschland. ICAN. [https://www.icanw.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019\\_atomwaffenstandorte\\_web.pdf](https://www.icanw.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019_atomwaffenstandorte_web.pdf)

38 Snyder (2019) Airbus Company Profile. <https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/airbus/>

39 Snyder (2019) Liste deutscher Finanzinstitute. <https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/germany/>

40 Standke-Erdmann & Scheyer (2020) Exposing Flaws in the Logic(s) of Nuclear Deterrence as an International Security Strategy – A Feminist Postcolonial Perspective. *Ethics & Armed Forces* 2020/1

41 Trump, D (2018) Twitter. <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948355557022420992>

42 Acheson, R. (2019) The nuclear ban and the patriarchy: a feminist analysis of opposition to prohibiting nuclear weapons. In: *Critical Studies on Security* 7(1)



### **Nuclear Colonialism - A Ban on Nuclear Weapons as a Requirement for Social and Ecological Justice**

The primary victims of the nuclear weapon production processes - from uranium mining to nuclear bomb tests to nuclear waste storage are historically disadvantaged, multiply marginalized groups. They are systematically excluded from the prevailing nuclear weapons policy. Thus, nuclear colonialism is understood as the systematic exploitation of the territory of Indigenous and formerly colonized groups in order to produce nuclear weapons and nuclear energy.<sup>43</sup> Uranium mining causes serious health problems for people and radioactive contamination of ecosystems, for example in Indigenous areas in North America and formerly colonized countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>44</sup> Nuclear weapons tests in former colonies, for example in Algeria or near Pacific island states, also have long-term negative impacts.<sup>45</sup> The use of nuclear weapons also has gendered impacts. People with ovaries and a uterus have a higher risk to be affected by long-term (reproductive) health consequences.<sup>46</sup> Gendered role attributions expose women to far more emotional and reproductive responsibility and thus stress.

43 Endres, D (2009) The Rhetoric of Nuclear Colonialism. In: *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6 (1)

44 Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (2019). Der Uranatlas. <https://www.rosalux.de/publikation/id/40912/>

45 IPPNW (2019) Hibakusha Weltweit. <https://hibakusha-worldwide.org/de>

46 Ozasa, K. et al (2012). Studies of the mortality of atomic bomb survivors: Report 14, 1950-2003 – an overview of cancer and non-cancer diseases. In: *Radiation Research* 177 (3).

Structural discrimination intensifies in the context of crises and conflicts, whereby women - in particular in the Global South - experience further marginalization due to the impacts of nuclear politics.

### **The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - Means to Change Discourse**

Although various multilateral disarmament treaties exist, the people who are primarily affected by the mentioned effects have not been taken into account sufficiently. Take, for example, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). 191 states are currently parties to the NPT - including Germany.<sup>47</sup> The NPT regulates, in particular, the containment of nuclear weapons by prohibiting proliferation and new nuclear weapons programs. However, the possession of nuclear weapons by permanent members of the Security Council (China, UK, France, USA, former Soviet Union), also known as P5, is not called into question. Based on this double standard, the NPT consolidates the power position of the P5. This global nuclear order<sup>48</sup> reproduces power imbalances and thus establishes inequalities in the international community of states. Moreover, the P5 no longer show any disarmament efforts, although the NPT calls for

47 UNODA (1968) Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>

48 Biswas, S (2014) *Nuclear Desire. Power and the Postcolonial Nuclear Order*. University of Minnesota Press

them. Non-proliferation has not been successful either, as today (at least) four more states possess nuclear weapons.

For this reason, a majority of non-nuclear armed states worked together with Indigenous activist groups from all over the world<sup>49</sup> and civil society organizations like WILPF<sup>50</sup> as a member of the ICAN<sup>51</sup>, to develop the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW is the first nuclear disarmament treaty that fundamentally prohibits nuclear weapons and emphasizes their humanitarian and environmental consequences and recognizes gender-specific impacts. The TPNW came into force on January 22, 2021 and has so far been ratified by 51 states.<sup>52</sup> Nuclear weapons are therefore prohibited under international law. An amendment of international standards is being sought, similar to previous bans on landmines and cluster munitions.<sup>53</sup>

It is to be expected that further ratifications of the TPNW will follow and that nuclear-armed states will be pressured.

49 Indigenous Statement to the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty Negotiations: <https://icanw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Indigenous-Statement-June-2017.pdf>  
50 WILPF (2017) The Nuclear Weapon Treaty Resource Guide: [https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Nuclear-Weapons-Ban-Treaty\\_English-web-FL-NAL.pdf](https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Nuclear-Weapons-Ban-Treaty_English-web-FL-NAL.pdf)

51 ICAN - International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

52 UNODA (2017) Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>  
53 UNODA (1997) Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/anti-personnel-landmines-convention>

UNODA (2008) Convention on Cluster Munitions.

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/convention-on-cluster-munitions>



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The TPNW stands for a change in discourse: non-nuclear armed states and affected population groups emancipate themselves from the exclusive power politics of nuclear-armed states. The production and the threat of use of nuclear weapons affect everyone (and marginalised groups disproportionately) and cannot be justified or tolerated any further.

### Change in German Security Policy - People instead of Weapons

The Federal Government committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but not to the TPNW. In doing so, the supposed logic of deterrence is still used as an argument against the TPNW.<sup>54</sup> We call for the German Federal Government to ratify the TPNW and to stop legitimizing the existence of nuclear weapons. Human security

54 Federal Foreign Office (2020) Erklärung des Auswärtigen Amtes in der Regierungspressekonferenz vom 26.10.2020. [https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/news-room/regierungspressekonferenz/2409890#content\\_](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/news-room/regierungspressekonferenz/2409890#content_)

and justice need to be the focus of security policy instead of weapon systems. Germany's accession to the TPNW is definitely possible. It would entail a withdrawal of US-american nuclear weapons from Germany since the stationing of nuclear weapons is prohibited by the TPNW. Also, Germany would be obliged to withdraw from participating in nuclear exercises and manoeuvres within military alliances such as NATO.<sup>55</sup> Already in 2010, the Bundestag (German parliament) had decided to withdraw nuclear weapons in Germany but has never implemented it.<sup>56</sup> It is time for Germany to stop turning a blind eye to the risks and injustices caused by nuclear weapons and to increase its engagement to promote nuclear disarmament.

55 UNODA (2017) Art. 1 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>

56 Bödecker, Simon (2020) Zehn Jahre Bundestagsbeschluss zum Atomwaffenabzug aus Deutschland, in: FriedensForum 2/2020 Friedenskoooperative

# Fully Autonomous Weapon Systems From an Intersectional Feminist Perspective

The development of weapon systems that can select and target without human control continues unabated. In particular, the USA, Russia, North Korea, Israel and Turkey are working diligently on the development of fully autonomous weapons systems, although relevant experts - such as human rights activists, scientists and developers, from all over the world - warn against this.

Human control of weapons systems is imperative due to a multitude of moral, operational, legal, ethical and technical concerns. The technical systems lack human characteristics to make ethical decisions. Their lack of compassion and empathy is highly problematic because the weapons systems do not understand what it means to kill a human and, therefore, pose a threat to human dignity. Without this understanding, the targeted person becomes a data set only, an object.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the use of “killer robots“ may lead to quicker outbreaks of war in the future. Low casualties within the own troops and a decreasing number of publicly visible victims, result in a supposed reduction in costs for the military - and thus a lowering of the inhibition threshold to wage war. As a consequence, however, the war costs for everyone

else are significantly increased! It must also be acknowledged that the algorithms underlying the fully autonomous weapon systems are developed on the basis of training data. However, if this data does not represent reality accurately (which is impossible to achieve), civilians can accidentally be attacked due to misinterpretations, which already happens frequently. The accountability question remains: Who is responsible for war damage caused by “killer robots”? Military commanders or programmers? And who pays for war crimes if no person can be held accountable? This accountability gap makes it impossible to ensure justice and victim assistance. It should also be taken into account that fully autonomous weapon systems represent a considerable security risk because they can be manipulated by cyber-attacks or hacking.

For all of these reasons, employees of tech companies have already spoken out and mobilized against fully autonomous weapons systems, e.g. in the protest against the Google-backed “Project Maven“. Google employees campaigned against the company providing artificial intelligence (AI) to the Pentagon for surveillance drones. Google then announced that it would not renew the contract with the Pentagon. It's not only within the tech industry where there is great resentment towards these systems. Worldwide opinion polls have repeatedly shown that

57 Dahlmann, A., & Dickow, M. (2019). Präventive Regulierung autonomer Waffensysteme. Handlungsbedarf für Deutschland auf verschiedenen Ebenen. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2019S01\\_dkw\\_dnn.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2019S01_dkw_dnn.pdf)

the majority of humanity is horrified by the possibility that machines could soon decide over life and death. In Germany alone, 72% of respondents are against fully autonomous weapons.<sup>58</sup>

In feminist theory, weapons are generally considered instruments for the preservation of patriarchal power structures and not for the real guarantee of security. From an intersectional feminist perspective, multiple arguments against the use of fully autonomous weapons can be brought forth.

We know that technologies are never neutral or unbiased. They are (social) constructs that reflect existing power relations, patterns of domination and discrimination and can be just as sexist and racist as humans. AI-based software - such as Google's image recognition software that identified a Black woman as a gorilla or Microsoft's automated chat bot that made racist and sexist comments after only a short time on Twitter - is proof of this. Such discriminatory patterns, which have already been found in various so-called AIs, are likely to occur in the software of fully autonomous weapon systems as well. The "algorithmic bias" that arises in the programming of target profiles will almost certainly

lead to human rights violations. In the future, it is therefore likely that people will be targeted or killed based on criteria such as their gender or skin color - even more than they are already with existing AI systems. The development of weapons that make their own decisions is also a means to maximizing profit. We are heading towards a dystopian future in which rich high-tech countries oppress poorer countries with the help of "killer robots".<sup>59</sup>

Highly problematic from a feminist perspective is the argument that the deployment of autonomous weapons in conflict contexts is favourable because they cannot rape women. Firstly, women's suffering is instrumentalized by - in this case mostly male - proponents and decision-makers who use this argument. Secondly, it is not certain that autonomous weapons could not be programmed to rape as well. It can, however, be assumed that if a fully autonomous weapon is programmed to rape, it will not hesitate to do so (as opposed to a human).<sup>60</sup>

The last meeting of the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) took place in Geneva in September 2020. During the meeting, almost all states agreed that it was necessary

58 Killer Roboter Stoppen. (2019). Presseerklärung: Widerstand gegen die Entwicklung von autonomen Waffen (Killerrobotern) wächst weltweit, besonders auch in Deutschland. <https://www.killer-roboter-stoppen.de/2019/01/presseerklarung-widerstand-gegen-die-entwicklung-von-autonomen-waffen-killerrobotern-waechst-weltweit-besonders-auch-in-deutschland>

59 Acheson, R. (2020). A WILPF Guide to Killer Robots. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. [https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/WILPF\\_Killer-Robots-Guide\\_EN-Web.pdf](https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/WILPF_Killer-Robots-Guide_EN-Web.pdf)  
60 Ibid.



© Stop Killer Robots campaign in Germany, [www.killer-roboter-stoppen.de](http://www.killer-roboter-stoppen.de)

to maintain human control over the use of force. Many experts stressed the importance of human control in such systems, called for a combination of prohibitions and commitments, and recommended banning autonomous weapons systems that target humans or rely on machine learning.<sup>61</sup> However, no decisions were made.

There are now 30 countries that explicitly call for a ban on lethal fully autonomous weapons systems.<sup>62</sup> Germany is not one of them.

Although the current coalition agreement supports the ban<sup>63</sup>, the German representation in Geneva did not speak out in favor of a ban. In the subsequent expert discussion in November

2020, it also became clear that the German government is currently not calling for a binding national or international legal instrument to ban on autonomous weapon systems.

The public should not accept that the German government remains passive and thereby accepts the advancement of fully autonomous weapons. The impact of German arms exports claims lives worldwide, but the problems resulting from the development and deployment of fully autonomous weapons systems are of a different dimension. I agree with Lucy Suchman's assessment that the promotion of AI in a military context will exacerbate military operations and increase discrimination - while no person can be held politically and legally accountable.<sup>64</sup> To escape a future defined by killing machines with artificial intelligence in addition to the

61 Wareham, M. (2020). CCW REPORT. Vol 8 (Nr. 2). <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/ccw/2017/laws/ccwreport/12079-ccw-report-vol-5-no-1>

62 Campaign to Stop Killer Robots (2020). Country Positions on Negotiating a Treaty to Ban and Restrict Killer Robots. [https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/KRC\\_CountryViews\\_25Sep2020.pdf](https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/KRC_CountryViews_25Sep2020.pdf)

63 Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft - Vereinigte KriegsdienstgegnerInnen (2019). Those who do not want to ban killer robots will

64 Suchman, L. (2020). Algorithmic warfare and the reinvention of accuracy. Critical Studies on Security. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2020.1760587>

**aggravating climate crisis, fully autonomous weapons systems must be banned now.**

**The German government should listen to the voices of technicians, AI experts, Nobel laureates, the UN Secretary General<sup>65</sup> and civil society. It should ban the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons systems and start negotiations for a legally binding international instrument - a ban treaty - before it is too late.**

<sup>65</sup> Campaign to Stop Killer Robots (2018). UN head calls for a ban. <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/2018/11/unban>

# Looking Ahead - Together We Are Strong!

The articles show that the German government's concept of security and the resulting foreign and security policy reinforce various forms of discrimination and promote (gender-based) violence and wars.

Our aim is not only to make the negative effects of Germany's (dis)armament policy more visible, we also want to work towards change for our global society as a whole. Although change often seems impossible, together we can build a movement and our ideas can gain traction. The Black Lives Matter protests, the annual Women's Strike and the Fridays for Future protests show that many people want to make our world a more just and sustainable place. Together we can influence political decisions.

Current debates, such as using armed drones or the development of autonomous weapons systems, point to an uncertain and worrying future. Politicians should not only be guided by party interests but should include voices from civil society, (academic) research and marginalized groups in their decision-making process. Beyond this, it is time for German society to challenge traditional and idealized notions of masculinity and femininity more persistently and to promote just and self-determined identities - including with appropriate educational policies. A critical engagement with (militarised)

masculinities across society is necessary to create alternatives. This is the only way to overcome war and violence in the future.

WILPF contributes to the political debate by changing the discourse and creating new perspectives and intersectional feminist approaches, and demands a redefining of security. Our goals are justice for all people and the transition from a military to a civil and non-discriminatory concept of security. An intersectional feminist concept of security respects human rights, strengthens especially social, cultural and economic rights, protects the environment<sup>66</sup> and pursues financial redistribution away from war towards peace.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> For how militarisation, climate and feminism are connected check out this Wilpf pamphlet: [https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/WILPF\\_Environmental-Zine\\_EN-Web-spreads.pdf](https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/WILPF_Environmental-Zine_EN-Web-spreads.pdf)  
<sup>67</sup> WILPF: Redefine Security <https://www.wilpf.org/work-areas/define-security/>



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