

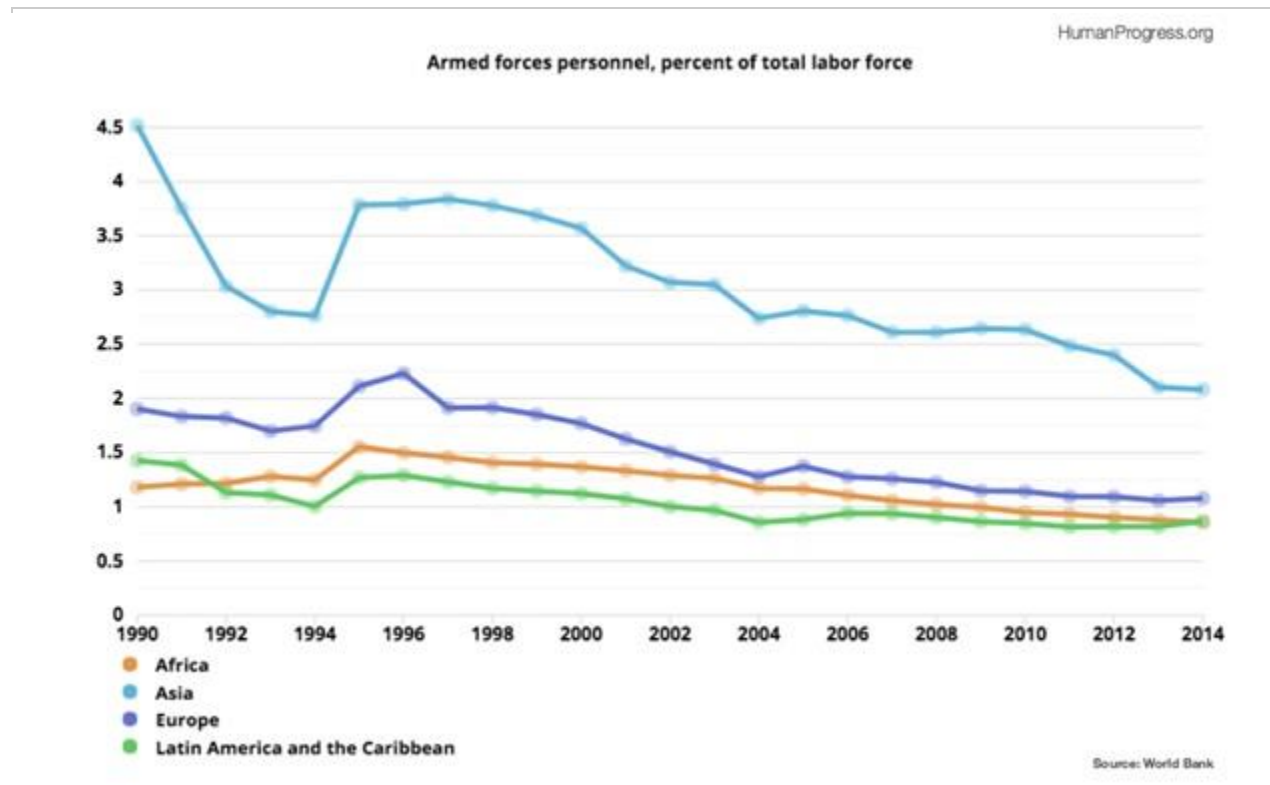
## Fewer People Exposed to Horrors of War

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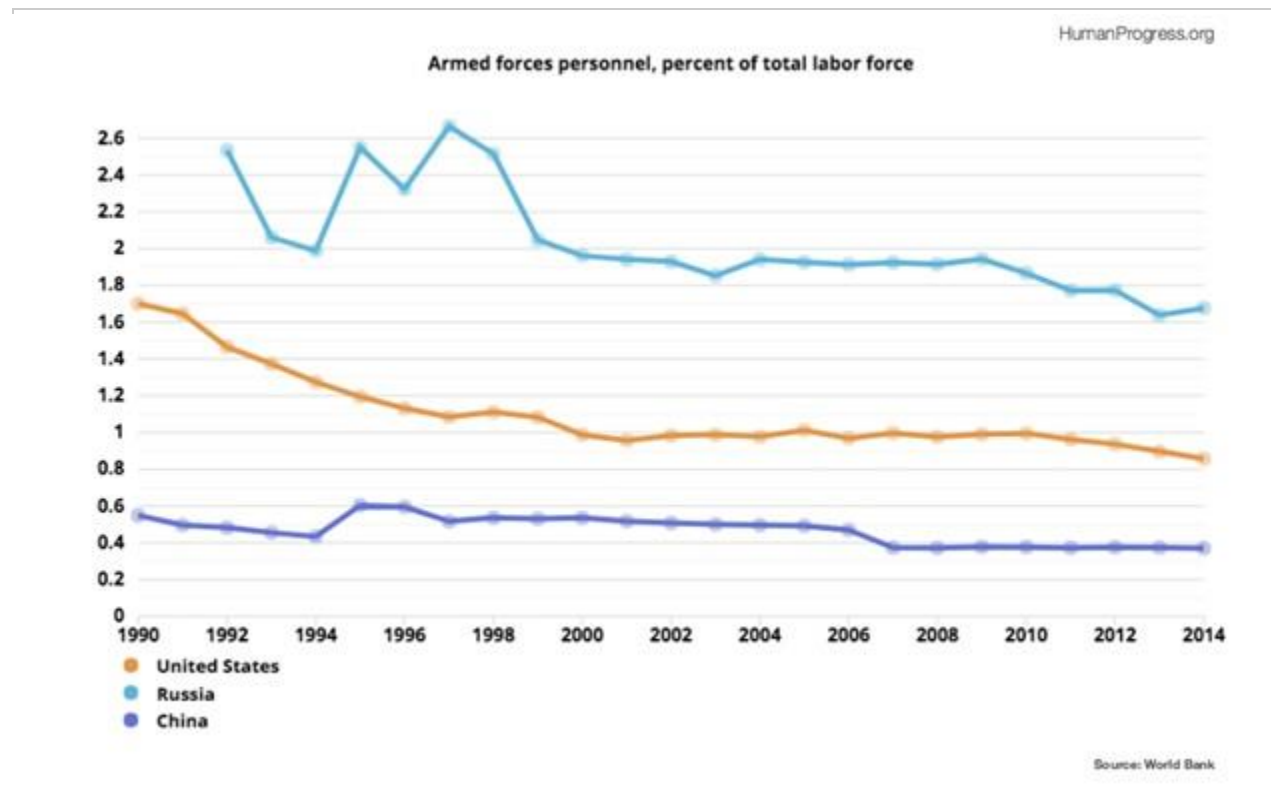
Yesterday was Memorial Day, a federal holiday remembering all those who have died while serving in the United States armed forces. So, in today's column, I take a brief look at the declining share of men and women worldwide who can expect to be exposed to the horrors of war. Looking at armed forces personnel as a percent of the total labor force, we can observe a sustained decline since the end of the Cold War. Globally, it has dropped from 1.08 percent in 1990 to 0.8 percent in 2014. That's a 26 percent reduction.

In Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, it has declined by 27 percent, 54 percent, 43 percent and 40 percent respectively. Even in the Middle East and North Africa, armed forces personnel as a share of the total labor force declined by 58 percentage points—though, admittedly, some of the conflicts in the region have become more serious since 2014.



A similar trend can be observed in the United States and also in our two most important geopolitical competitors, China and Russia. The three countries saw reductions of 50 percent, 32

percent and 34 percent respectively. (The figure for Russia reflects the period between 1992 and 2014.)



The end of the Cold War turned out to be beneficial for another reason. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who was born before World War 2, explained in 2014 that the world is "in greater turmoil than at any time in my lifetime." But is that really true?

The number of armed conflicts and wars rose steadily until the collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Then they started to decline. Empirical evidence suggests that those who remember the bipolar world dominated by the United States and the USSR as a period of stability, are mistaken.

Consider the following astonishing fact. According to the Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker, the Western Hemisphere is, with the exception of the drug-war in Mexico, free of conflict. No person alive can remember our Hemisphere to be as peaceful as it is today. That is something to be grateful for as we look back on this past Memorial Day.

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