

# War Industry and Unjust Distribution as a Global Problem

*Mustafa Köylü*

The article identifies the global growth of the war industry and weapons trade along with inequitable distribution of wealth and unjust economic systems as major reasons for the lack of peace and prosperity everywhere in the world. The article discusses the political economy of war and its implications on the socioeconomic elements of society. The paper illustrates through an economic evaluation of the Gulf War and the Iran-Iraq War the enormous damage that modern weapons and modern wars can burden a nation and its civilian population. The article does not offer any specific strategies to deal with either the ravages of the war industry during war as well as during peace, or with the inherent inequity in the economic system. But the author hopes that the awareness of these problems and their incredibly devastating consequences will exhort everyone into address them.

Developments in science and technology have brought many advantages to human beings but at the same time have caused them many serious problems. The conflicting results of the technological and scientific developments in the last two centuries are most apparent in two major fields: the armament industry and economic distribution. Nations that excel technologically become richer and richer and possess the most powerful and destructive weapons, and those who cannot adapt themselves to these developments become poorer and poorer. Worse, it seems likely that this disparity between rich and poor nations will not narrow but rather will continue to widen to the detriment of the majority of the earth's population.

The main purpose of this article is to examine what is going on in the world in general in two areas: war and peace and socioeconomic justice. This article consists of two major sections. The first includes a brief treat-

ment of war and humanity: the economic cost of militarization, the relationship between military expenditures and both employment and social welfare, some features of new weapons, and two contemporary, high technology wars (Iran-Iraq and Gulf) that demonstrate the power of new weapons. The second part discusses socioeconomic justice around the world, including the unjust economic distribution of resources both between and within nations and the consequences for the poor living in the developed and underdeveloped countries.

## War and Humanity

War, which has been the most well-organized and destructive form of violence in which human beings engage, is an integral part of mankind's history. Both the Bible and the Qur'an record its ubiquity.<sup>1</sup>

But why have human beings fought throughout history? What are the reasons for such wars? Why have the number of wars and conflicts increased in the twentieth century? And will this situation continue forever?

The first answer, derived from a historical study of relationships between the West and the East or between Christians and Muslims, might be that religion is a main reason for war. However, reducing the causes of war to only one explanation is not correct. As Quincy Wright points out, there are many reasons for war:

To different people war may have very different meanings. To some, it is a plague which ought to be eliminated; to some, a mistake which should be avoided; to others, a crime which ought to be punished; and, to still others, it is an anachronism which no longer serves any purpose. On the other hand, there are some who take a more receptive attitude toward war and regard it as an advantage which may be interesting, an instrument which may be useful, a procedure which may be legitimate and appropriate, or a condition of existence for which one must be prepared.<sup>2</sup>

There is no single reason for war, but rather many — political, social, and economic. John Huddleston lists among the causes of twentieth century wars the following: the nature of human beings, nationalism, racism, extremes of wealth and poverty, religious fanaticism and strife, male domination of public affairs, and competitive arms races.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the reason, it is a fact that wars have continued both between and among nations. However, as Betty A. Reardon points out, "Physical or direct violence, particularly military violence, in the twentieth century, appears to be more var-

ied and certainly more destructive than it has ever been."<sup>4</sup> Why are twentieth century wars so destructive, dangerous, and inhumane? The following facts may help answer this question.

Scholars estimate that between 1480 and 1940 there were 244 important wars in which the nations of the world participated. There were 2,659 important battles fought by European nations alone.<sup>5</sup> It must be noted here that contrary to common belief, most of these wars were between nations that followed religions other than Islam.<sup>6</sup>

Since World War II there have been 149 wars.<sup>7</sup> According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the number of major wars (those that kill at least 1,000 persons) per year rose to 34 in 1993, after having dropped from 36 in 1987 and to 30 in 1991.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of these wars, just since the sixteenth century, some 142 million people have died. Of that number 108 million, or 75 percent, have died in wars during the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Overall, according to William Eckhardt's estimation, 73 percent of all war-related deaths since 3000 B.C. have occurred in the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> In addition to this direct killing, some 40 million people have died as a result of war-related famine or illness. One analysis asserts that "more than twice as many people have been killed in wars in this supposed postwar period than in the entire nineteenth century, and seven times as many as in the eighteenth century."<sup>11</sup>

Another important feature of twentieth century wars is that more conflicts and killings have occurred in the developing countries. From 1945 through 1992 over 92 percent of all conflicts were in the developing countries.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the more industrialized and democratically governed states have constituted a vast zone of relative peace for their more than three-quarters of a billion people.<sup>13</sup>

### The Economic Cost of Militarization

It is a fact that, especially since World War II, both the developed countries, which have met their basic human needs, and the developing and, underdeveloped countries which have far from met their peoples' basic needs, compete fiercely for superiority in destructive power. Although there has been a slight reduction recently in worldwide military expenditures, they still make up an important proportion of the Gross National Product (GNP) of most countries. In 1987, world military expenditures totaled more than U.S.\$1 trillion, equaling the total income of the 2.6 billion people of forty-four of the poorest nations in the world.<sup>14</sup> As of 1993, the developed countries spent as much on military power in a year as the

total income of the poorest 2 billion people on earth.<sup>15</sup> Since World War II, global military spending amounts to U.S.\$30–35 trillion.<sup>16</sup> Globally, between 5 and 6 percent of the world's total annual product is spent on military affairs.<sup>17</sup> This means that the world spends \$1,900,000 each minute for the purpose of defense.<sup>18</sup>

Who spends excessively for military defense? Ironically, it is not only the developed countries, which can better afford military expenditures, but also the developing and even underdeveloped countries, with great foreign debts and unmet basic human needs, which spend significant amounts of their GNPs for military defense.<sup>19</sup> During the seventies and eighties, three-quarters of the global arms flow went to the developing countries.

The Middle East countries became the world's largest arms market, however, as they waged war against each other during the last half of this century. According to Shimon Peres, since Israel's recognition in 1948, Arab countries have fought six wars with Israel and another six among themselves.<sup>20</sup> Between 1977 and 1987, SIPRI estimates the cumulative military spending of all the countries of the Middle East to be approximately \$615 billion. As a share of the GNP, military expenditures in the region averaged 17 percent between 1978 and 1985 and represented nearly 40 percent of all arms imports in the world.<sup>21</sup> While there was a worldwide economic recession and Third World debt crisis, "Iran and Iraq accounted for more than half of the arms purchased by Third World nations in the mid-1980s, with total purchases in excess of \$100 billion over the course of a decade."<sup>22</sup> When we add the nations of the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, this figure rises to \$150 billion.<sup>23</sup> A report to the U.S. Congress indicated that U.S. arms sales to the Middle East from 1978 to 1988 represented two-thirds of total foreign sales.<sup>24</sup> Figures show that investments in military equipment in that region consumed between 21 and 26 percent of all government expenditures.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the U.S. diplomats see the Middle East countries in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, as a "great cash cow." In the words of William Quandt, a Middle East specialist formerly on the National Security Council, "It takes King Fahd about 10 seconds to write a check. It takes Congress weeks to debate the smallest issue of this sort."<sup>26</sup>

Escalating debts are one result of this excessive military spending. By 1985 the external debt of Third World countries was about \$750 billion — 330 percent higher than in 1975.<sup>27</sup> By 1993 the debt of the world's developing countries rose to \$1.77 trillion<sup>28</sup> and to \$1.9 trillion in 1994.<sup>29</sup> It is

estimated that on average about 40 percent of developing countries' debts result from the importation of arms.<sup>30</sup> While these Third World countries continue to militarize themselves, they are not likely to repay their debts anytime soon. Usually, they make occasional payments of interest rather than paying off the principal. Hal Kane points out that "developing countries pay \$180 billion every year in debt service. Taken as a whole, the Third World owes an amount equal to about half of its yearly income."<sup>31</sup>

Although Third World countries, including Muslim countries, spend billions of dollars on militarization, when we compare them with the developed nations, they are (and will be) always at a disadvantage in terms of their economies, societies, and military powers. There are several reasons for this.

First, they lack the resources for military development, research, and manufacturing that developed countries have. The money that the U.S. spends for the purpose of militarization every year — an average of \$300 billion — exceeds the total collective GNP of most of the developing countries. Even if Third World countries buy the newest and latest weapons, they are quickly obsolete. This was Iraq's situation during the Gulf War. Although the U.S. had sold Iraq billions of dollars worth of planes, tanks, and missiles during the Iran-Iraq conflict, Iraqi soldiers and forces could not respond well against America and allied bombings in the Gulf War. While the United States was selling weapons to Iraq, it was spending trillions of dollars on more sophisticated military machines. Since Iraq had the old military machines and the U.S. had the new ones against which the old ones wouldn't be very effective, Iraq lost and America won the war.<sup>32</sup>

Second, military organizations around the world do not sell all the essential parts of the weapons, "so that some proportion of the nominal order of battle must always be unavailable."<sup>33</sup> For example, one Western military expert asserted that only 10 percent of the Iranian Air Force's F-14s were battle ready when the war with Iraq started.<sup>34</sup>

Third, in an arms race there is no end. New purchases of arms systems by one group of countries automatically elicits similar moves in neighboring countries. As George Kim observes, "This is a kind of chain reaction resulting in permanent expansion, an uninterrupted replenishment of military arsenals, a kind of race in the quantitative and qualitative accumulation of arms."<sup>35</sup>

Fourth, since the manufacture of modern weapons and arms needs an outlet, the war industry requires field testing for new weapons, warplanes, and

other sophisticated devices. Therefore, as Naji Abi-Hashem asserts, "The heavy production of weapons and the substantial economic value they can generate may at times cause powerful governments to manipulate tender spots around the globe or to feed regional conflicts in order to market their products."<sup>36</sup>

Fifth, while sellers of weapons, such as the U.S., see the Middle East countries as the "great cash cow," they are not happy about selling their products. A U.S. diplomat said, "But, in order to keep the great cash cow happy, the flow of advanced U.S. arms to the Saudis has to continue virtually uninterrupted, regardless of how these arms may ultimately be used by the Saudi Sheikdom or a successor regime."<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, it can be said that the Third World countries in general, and Muslim countries in particular, must know that the true aim of the developed nations is not to keep peace in the globe, but to sell their weapons and gain benefit even at the cost of millions of peoples' lives. During Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the attitude of U.S. President George Bush reflected this when he argued for U.S. involvement: "Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom, and the freedom of friendly countries around the world would suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell into the hands of Saddam Hussein."<sup>38</sup>

### The Effects of Militarization on Development, Employment, and Social Welfare

These are some disadvantages of militarization for developing countries that are importing their weapons from the developed countries. What about the developed countries? What effect does excessive militarization have on both developed and developing countries in terms of employment and the social welfare of their people? Although the answers to these questions differ somewhat from country to country, the fact is that excessive militarization in both developed and developing (or underdeveloped) countries is not an economic advantage, but rather an economic burden on the people.

Let's look first at the relationship between employment and militarization. Contrary to common belief, continuation of the arms race creates unemployment, since disarmament and reallocation of money into the civilian sector would create more jobs and reduce unemployment.<sup>39</sup> Many economists see arms spending as subtracting from a nation's total resources. The first economist, Adam Smith, presented this position in his famous book, *The Wealth of Nations*:

[T]he whole army and navy are unproductive laborers. They are the servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people. Their service, how honorable, how useful, or how necessary soever, produces nothing for which an equal quantity of services can afterwards be produced.<sup>40</sup>

It is a fact that military expenditures employ some people; there can be no doubt about that. However, this does not mean that military spending creates more jobs than equivalent money spent for the domestic economy. Spending for defense not only produces nothing that consumers can buy, but also is a very poor way of creating jobs. According to one account given by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in America, "Every \$1 billion spent on [the] military creates on average 75,000 jobs. The same \$1 billion spent on mass transit creates on average 92,000 jobs; construction, 100,000; health-care, 139,000; education, 187,000."<sup>41</sup>

Military expenditure not only creates fewer jobs compared with alternative civilian expenditure, but also uses the most highly skilled, scarce, and best educated people. For example, in 1989 in the U.S. "twenty-one percent of all engineers, 24 percent of all electrical engineers, 32 percent of all mathematicians, and 34 percent of all physicists went to the military industries."<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, globally, 25 million soldiers were serving in the armed forces of different nations, more than 500,000 scientists and engineers were engaged in research and development for military purposes, and another 5 million workers were involved in weapons production.<sup>43</sup>

While both developed and underdeveloped countries spend billions of dollars for defense and hire the most skilled and educated persons for the military sector, most of the poorer nations have not met the basic food, health, and literacy needs of their people. According to the *World Development Report of 1994*, one billion people in the developing countries still lacked clean water and nearly two billion people lacked adequate sanitation.<sup>44</sup> In 1993, as a result of the lack of clean water, adequate sanitation, and ample nutrition, preventable infectious diseases accounted for an estimated one-third of all deaths in the world — 16.4 million out of 51 million. More than 99 percent of deaths from infectious diseases occurred in developing countries, most of which spend much more money for militarization than for health.<sup>45</sup> In addition, in 1993 seven million adults died of conditions that could have been inexpensively prevented or cured.<sup>46</sup>

Illiteracy is also a serious problem in the developing countries. According to Ruth Leger Sivard, "one-quarter of the adults in the world

cannot read and write, and most of them are in the low-income countries. Over half of the adults in South Asia and in Africa are illiterate, and almost half of those in the Middle East as well."<sup>47</sup>

As a result, we can say that the ancient Roman maxim: *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you want peace, prepare for war), does not work in our times. Contrary to this famous dictum, as Renner points out, "The accumulation of unprecedented military power has brought not eternal peace but massive destruction during war and high economic and environmental costs in preparing for it."<sup>48</sup>

### The Features of New Weapons and Wars in the Twentieth Century

When we compare modern conflicts and wars with earlier ones, we see that they have declined in average duration but have enormously increased in frequency, intensity, magnitude, and severity."<sup>49</sup> One view is that modern weapons and wars are "more ruthless, more immoral, and more inhumane than ever conceived in past history."<sup>50</sup> Why is this so? The following comparison summarizes the judgments of scholars on this question:

*Noncombatant fatalities.* In the past, there was always the possibility that wars could be fought between the armed forces of nations without involving civilians. This is no longer possible. While at the beginning of the twentieth century approximately 50 percent of all war-related deaths were civilians, by the 1980s as many as 75 percent were civilians; in the active wars in the 1990s more than 90 percent of war-related deaths were civilians.<sup>51</sup> UNICEF claims that during the last decade, 2 million children have died in civil wars — wars in which more children than soldiers were killed.<sup>52</sup>

*Environmental destruction.* While in the past environmental damage from war was limited, such destruction has reached a new magnitude in our time. Robert McAfee Brown points out that "today's weapons and wars not only kill people and destroy cities, but also destroy forest, vegetation, arable land, and may upset the ecological balance for generations to come."<sup>53</sup>

*No winners.* In the past, when the weapons were bows and arrows or even guns and bombs, there were ways in which one side could be considered the winner and the other side the loser. However, there are no winners if nuclear weapons are used.<sup>54</sup> That is why General Douglas MacArthur said, regarding a possible nuclear war, "If you lose, you are annihilated, if you win, you stand only to lose. [Nuclear] war contains the germs of double suicide."<sup>55</sup>



The above-mentioned differences are just a few in comparing past and present warfare. The most significant differences between past and present wars, however, are the nuclear weapons and nuclear wars that emerged in the twentieth century.

Now we must speak of nuclear weapons that threaten all nations, whether they have them or not, and their possible effects when they are used. Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous weapons and the most destructive, and they have the longest effective power. Human beings first experienced nuclear weapons in 1945 in Japan's two cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With very small atomic bombs (compared with those later developed) 200,000 people were killed in Hiroshima; 62,000 out of the city's 90,000 buildings were completely destroyed, and 6,000 other buildings were damaged beyond repair.<sup>56</sup> The explosive power of the bomb on Hiroshima was just about 12.5 kilotons.<sup>57</sup> Today most modern nuclear weapons are 3 to 50 times as powerful as the bombs of 1945.<sup>58</sup> The number of bombs in the world is beyond human imagination. At its peak in 1982, the global stockpile was almost 25,000 strategic and more than 30,000 tactical warheads (those that travel 3,000 miles or less),<sup>59</sup> with the power of over 50,000 megatons.<sup>60</sup> This is the equivalent of 16 thousand million tons of TNT, or three tons of TNT for every man, woman, and child on earth — enough to erase the human race several times over.<sup>61</sup>

Although the strategic arms reduction treaties (START I and II) reduced the number of nuclear warheads by 6 percent in 1993 (from 52,875 to 49,910), by 3 percent in 1994 (from 49,910 to 45,100), and by 9 percent in 1995 (from 45,100 to 40,640), there still remains the equivalent of 9,700,000,000 tons of TNT destructive power.<sup>62</sup> Even if the two START treaties were fully implemented by 2003, the United States and Russia together would retain 6,500 warheads containing enough firepower to annihilate all life on earth. Michael J. Sheehan points out that "the essential objective of arms is to make the world safe for nuclear deterrence. It assumes that 'nuclear weapons cannot be eliminated and that the world must therefore learn to live with them.'"<sup>63</sup>

As a result, human beings, according to George Kim, are now confronted with a dilemma "either to find ways to ease international tensions through the joint efforts of nations or to let the world slide down at an increasing speed toward the abyss of a nuclear conflict. A third alternative simply does not exist."<sup>64</sup>

## Two Contemporary Wars: The Iran-Iraq and the Gulf Wars

So far I have talked about the global economic cost of militarization; its effects on economy, development, and social welfare, and the features of the new weapons; particularly nuclear weapons, and wars. However, I have not talked about a real war and its consequences. In order to understand better the consequences of war, I would like to give two examples: the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. Both occurred in the last decade and directly concerned not only the countries in which the wars were fought but all Muslim nations. I will not attempt to judge here who was right or wrong; rather, will indicate their economic costs and social consequences.

### The Iran-Iraq War

One of the most dramatic and costly wars since World War II was the Iran-Iraq War. About one million people were killed and perhaps twice as many were wounded. In addition, the war turned more than five million Iranians and Iraqis into refugees in their own country and imposed severe economic dislocation and environmental damage.<sup>65</sup>

During the war, in order to keep its military staying power, Iraq spent far more money on imported weapons than it received from oil sales. According to Michael Renner, approximately 40 percent of its GNP went to military expenditures.<sup>66</sup> The ultimate cost of that war was staggering. Abbas Alnasravi, professor of economics at the University of Vermont, estimated that the total cost came to \$416 billion in the years from 1980 to 1985<sup>67</sup> — an amount that surpasses the two countries' combined earnings of \$364 billion from oil sales since Iraq and Iran first started exporting "black gold" in 1919 and 1931, respectively.<sup>68</sup>

Some economists estimate the damage to oil fields, refineries, pipelines, and export terminals at \$28 billion for Iran and \$8 billion for Iraq. Both countries may well have lost an additional \$100 billion in potential oil reserves because of the damage.

Besides human tragedy and monetary loss, half of the population in both nations remains illiterate, and over one-third lacks access to safe drinking water. In Iran, the infant mortality rate remained 42 percent higher than the world average, and life expectancy in both countries runs several years below the world average of 62 years.<sup>69</sup>

### The Persian Gulf War

Despite the ravaging effects of its war with Iran, Iraq was making considerable economic progress before the Gulf crisis. In 1991, Adeb Abd

and Gavrielle Gemma traveled widely in Iraq and reported on pre-Gulf War conditions:

Although it varied in different parts of the country, again and again people described to us the following: the entire country was electrified ... Since 1982, eighteen major hospitals had been built. Some were renewed in the Middle East. Medical care was basically free with a token payment of half a dinar upon admission and one dinar each day regardless of care. Illiteracy had been substantially reduced; education was universal and free through college. Water was supplied to all parts of the country. Prenatal and postnatal care and vaccinations for children were available throughout the country, including rural areas. The social position of women was advancing. Food was abundant and inexpensive ... Low interest loans were provided by the government, which had also started a program to give land to people who promised to produce within five years. Doctors had not seen cases of malnutrition in Baghdad for over a decade.<sup>70</sup>

What followed this period of growth, prosperity, and development was a war that brought misery, distress, and poverty. Concerning the war's devastation, Abed and Gemma reported:

In every city we visited, we documented severe damage to homes, electrical plants, fuel storage facilities, civilian factories, hospitals, churches, civilian airports, vehicles, transportation facilities, food storage and food testing laboratories, grain silos, animal vaccination centers, schools, communication towers, civilian government office buildings, and stores. Almost all facilities we saw had been bombed two or three times, ensuring that they could not be repaired. Most of the bridges we saw were bombed from both sides.<sup>71</sup>

In fact, not only were the infrastructure of the city and life support systems bombed several times, but also thousands of Iraqis were buried alive during the Gulf War. Pentagon spokesman Pete Wilson did not dispute published estimates of 8,000 Iraqis buried alive; rather, agreeing that a horrible situation existed he stated, "There is no nice way to kill people."<sup>72</sup>

While 300,000 Iraqi soldiers, most of them "essentially defenseless soldiers, soldiers withdrawing without weapons, and soldiers seeking surrender," were killed by the use of technologically superior weapons, just 150 American soldiers were killed.<sup>73</sup> In fact, not only were soldiers killed, but also, according to a Red Crescent estimate, 112,000 civilians were killed, 60 percent of whom were children.<sup>74</sup> Even worse, the deaths of both sol-

diers and civilian people did not end with the war, but have continued, especially among the children. As a result of economic crises, child mortality tripled through 1991 and in some areas quadrupled. The Harvard International Study Group which visited Iraq in August and September 1991 concluded that one million Iraqi children were malnourished, with 120,000 suffering severe and acute malnutrition. Hyperinflation caused food prices to rise as high as 2,000 percent.<sup>75</sup> In early 1992, it was widely reported that 5,000 to 6,000 civilians were dying every month as a direct result of the bombing, compounded by shortages of food, medicine, and medical services caused by the sanctions.<sup>76</sup>

Iraq, of course, not only lost her people but also sustained a big economic loss. According to the Arab Monetary Fund, compared with America's cost of \$5 billion,<sup>77</sup> the cost to the states of the Persian Gulf region was \$676 billion, not including the devastation to the Kuwaiti and Iraqi environments and lost economic growth in these and other Persian Gulf states.<sup>78</sup> In addition to this immediate cost, economy experts estimate that the cost of rebuilding Iraq to prewar levels would be at least \$300 billion.<sup>79</sup>

Besides the economic consequences of the war, according to Naji Abi-Hashem, the Gulf War strongly fed the anti-West and anti-Christian movement in the region. He asserts that "one of the most significant outcomes of the Gulf War is the rise of strong waves of anti-Western feelings and fundamentalist movements throughout the Arabic world and Moslem nations."<sup>80</sup> To him the Western military confrontation brought to the mind of most Muslims the vivid memories of crusaders and European armadas. Therefore, while for the Western mind the efforts, effects, and worriers in the Gulf War ended with "Operation Desert Storm," from the Muslim perspective the agony, ordeals, and uncertainties had just begun. Abi-Hashem cites the dismay of Christian workers in the Middle East over the consequences of the war. One predicted that "this could hurt Christian-Muslim relationships for 100 years." Another feared that "the Christian ministry would be so limited, and is in some places reduced, as to be virtually non-existent."<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the social, cultural, and economic consequences of war, there are significant psychological and emotional consequences. Research studies show that some of the victims exposed to the stress of war will never completely recover. Experiencing violence, severe stress, and personal and communal loss and tragedy and being subject to constant threats

and fear of death can have long-lasting and damaging effects on individuals of all ages.<sup>82</sup>

People in the developed or underdeveloped countries have been affected adversely not just from these wars, conflicts, and arms races, but also from unjust economic distribution, the second problem threatening the poor in the world today that I discuss in this article.

## Socioeconomic Justice around the World

History, by its very nature, includes periods of both relative stability and instability, change and crisis. However, as Mexican social scientist Velaquez has said, "Today's crisis is different from any [in] previous history because it is global, progressive and could possibly be terminal."<sup>83</sup> Our world has never seen such economic oppression, unjust economic distribution, and poverty as we have today. The following estimations show how the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Fernand Braudel has given the following figures:

In 1700, on the basis of the 1960 exchange rate of the dollar, the gross national product per inhabitant ranged from 150 to 190 in England and from 250 to 290 in the British colonies in America (the future U.S.A.). In 1750, it was 170 to 200 in France, 160 to 210 in India (140-180 by 1900!), and 228 in China (but 170 by 1950!). Globally speaking by about 1800, the GNP per person in Western Europe was about \$213; in North America, \$266; in what is known as the Third World, about \$200. In 1976, however, on the basis of the same 1960 exchange rate, the Western European GNP had reached \$2,325, but the Third World's only \$355.<sup>84</sup>

In short, less than two centuries ago "before the Industrial Revolution, the life standard was almost the same everywhere in the world, approximately \$200 a year, on the basis of the 1960 exchange rate, with a slight advantage in favor of the ancient Asiatic civilizations."<sup>85</sup> So while two centuries ago the average per capita income of the richest countries was perhaps just a few times greater than that of the poorest, today's average, for some rich countries, is almost one hundred times more than that of its counterparts in Bangladesh, for example.

In fact, there has been great economic growth worldwide. According to Lester R. Brown, the world economy has expanded from \$4 trillion in output in 1950 to more than \$20 trillion in 1995. In just ten years, from 1985 to 1995 it grew by \$4 trillion, which is more than from the beginning of civ-

ilization until 1950. Again, since 1900 the value of goods and services produced each year worldwide has grown twentyfold, the use of energy thirtyfold, the products of industry fiftyfold, and the average distance traveled perhaps a thousandfold.<sup>86</sup> However, the benefits of this rapid global growth have not been evenly distributed. Living conditions for roughly 20 percent of the world's population have remained at subsistence level, essentially unchanged. As a result of this uneven distribution of wealth and income, "The ratio between income in the richest one fifth of countries and the poorest one fifth has widened from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 61 to 1 in 1991."<sup>87</sup> Because of this uneven economic distribution, over one billion people, one in five of the world's population, still live in absolute poverty.<sup>88</sup> In other words, while the Third World nations contain 76 percent of the world's population, they earn only 27 percent of the world's income.<sup>89</sup> Worse, this economic gap is not only between the rich and the poor countries, but also within countries. According to Alan T. Durning, between 60 and 70 percent of the people in most countries earn less than their nation's average income. Almost nowhere does the poorest fifth of households earn above 10 percent of national income, while the richest fifth mostly receive more than half.<sup>90</sup>

Uneven economic distribution within countries is found in both developed and developing nations. For example, with 6 percent of the world's population, the U.S. consumes as much as 40 percent of the world's resources, including 33 percent of the world's oil and 63 percent of its natural gas.<sup>91</sup> The average American consumes as much resources in one year as it would take to sustain ninety Indians for one year.<sup>92</sup> But that does not mean that every American is rich or that wealth and income are equally distributed. While the top 1 percent of the people own about 23 percent of all wealth, and the richest .5 percent own fully 81 percent of the national wealth, the lowest 20 percent of U.S. families get only 4.6 percent of the total income.<sup>93</sup> If homes and other real estate are excluded, the concentration of ownership of "financial wealth" is even more glaring. More than 35 million Americans, about one in seven, are poor by the government's official definition, and tens of millions are without adequate medical care.<sup>94</sup>

However, the most acute result of poverty and malnutrition globally is seen among infants and young children of underdeveloped countries. Sivard notes that between 1700 and 1987 there have been 471 wars in which 101,550,000 people were killed,<sup>95</sup> whereas just between 1977 and 1987, at least 136,000,000 children died from preventable poverty conditions — more children died in ten years than people killed in all the wars

that occurred over a 287-year period between 1700 and 1987.<sup>96</sup> As a whole, 70 percent of the deaths recorded each year in the Third World are due to hunger or to problems arising from hunger.<sup>97</sup> In addition to child mortality, each year 250,000 children, including 150,000 in Bangladesh alone, become permanently blind due to the lack of vitamin A.<sup>98</sup> The number of people who die every two days of hunger and starvation is equivalent to the number who were killed instantly by the Hiroshima bomb.<sup>99</sup> As Reardon points out, "Indeed, the children of the world are already living in the rubble of World War III."<sup>100</sup>

Although the remaining people in Third World countries do not die because of hunger or starvation, their social welfare is very low when compared with that in developed countries. For example, in 1990, the entire world spent about \$1,700 billion or 8 percent of its output on health. However, while developed nations spent almost 90 percent of this amount, for an average of \$1,500 per person, developing nations spent about \$170 billion, or 4 percent of their GNP, for an average of \$41 per person. The U.S. alone consumed 41 percent of the global total.<sup>101</sup> Again, while in 1985 Third World countries spent an average of \$150 on the education of each school-age child, the industrialized countries spent an average of \$2,250.<sup>102</sup> As a result of this big gap in spending for education, the literacy rates are 37 percent in the least developed countries, 63 percent in the less developed countries, and 97 percent in the developed countries.<sup>103</sup>

It can be said that the problems of poverty, starvation, health, and illiteracy prevailing widely in the world today are not due to lack of resources, but rather to the misuse and abuse of resources and unjust distribution of wealth. For instance, some specialists estimate that current world food production is enough to provide every human being in the world with 3,600 calories a day.<sup>104</sup> The World Bank also agrees that world grain production alone could provide 3,000 calories and 65 grams of protein for every person per day, more than the highest estimates of minimum nutritional requirements. In fact, the world's wealth is enough to meet people's basic needs. The world's average GNP in 1995 was not less than \$675 per person, but was \$3,629.<sup>105</sup>

As Renner points out, "If governments pursued the building of a peace system with the same seriousness as they built military muscle, in all likelihood many violent conflicts could be avoided and the problem of health, education, housing, poverty, and environmental sustainability could be solved."<sup>106</sup> He maintains, "A comparatively small investment — perhaps

\$20 to \$30 billion per year — could make a tremendous difference in the global war and peace balance.”<sup>107</sup> However, although some reduction in the number of nuclear weapons worldwide has taken place, as well as peace-keeping negotiations among nations, expenditures for the United Nations’ peacekeeping operations reached an estimated \$3.36 billion in 1995 only, which was “equivalent to less than half of one percent of global military spending.”<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusions

Overall, we can say that today both war and conflicts are more expensive, more destructive, more ruthless, and more immoral than in the past. Wars and conflicts between and within nations destroy countries’ economies, environment, and the social welfare of people. But peace (the absence of armed conflict) has not brought relief. Excessive military expenditures continue to destroy the economies of nations and deprive millions of people of basic human needs in both developed and underdeveloped nations. While developed nations may still consider such expenditures to be advantages, underdeveloped countries and their people are placed economically at an absolute disadvantage due to excessive militarization.

Today many people in both developed and underdeveloped countries suffer not only from the cost of excessive militarization with its related wars and conflicts, but also from unjust economic systems. As a result of economic injustices in the world, very few people live with a humane standard of life, and the majority are far from meeting their basic human needs.

Excessive militarization and unjust economic systems affect many other nations including Muslim countries and their peoples. The Iran-Iraq and the Gulf wars are the most striking example of this. They not only caused the deaths of millions of Muslims and left another million widowed and orphaned, but also devastated their countries’ past, present, and future economies, thereby affecting the welfare of both present and future generations.

I believe that the prosperity and welfare of the world’s nations depend on true peace and socioeconomic justice. Then every country, every nation, and every person should strive for peace and try to share the goods of the world with others. They should remember that the available food is enough for every creature in the world as long as it is used appropriately.

### Notes

1. The Bible: Exodus, 24; Numbers, 3; Deuteronomy, 2, 7, 30; Joshua, 6, 8; Matthew, 10:34. The Qur’an: 22:40; 2:216.



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3. John Huddleston, *Achieving Peace by the Year 2000: A Twelve Point Proposal* (Oxford, England, Chatham, N.Y.: Oneworld, 1992), 10–45. See also Betty A. Reardon, *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), 16; Henry A. Atkinson, "Religion as a Cause of War," in *The Causes of War*, ed. Arthur Porritt (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 118.

4. Betty A. Reardon, *Militarization, Security and Peace Education* (Valley Forge, Pa.: United Ministries in Education, 1982), 39.

5. Wright, *War*, 626, Table 22; see also David P. Barash, *Introduction to Peace Studies* (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth, 1991), 33.

6. R.C. Johnson says, "With the single exception of Islam the other great world religions are all irreconcilably opposed to war and the things war involves." See his "The Influence of Religious Teaching, as a Factor in Maintaining Peace," in *Paths to Peace: A Study of War — Its Causes and Prevention*, ed. Victor H. Wallace (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 347. According to Quincy Wright's, however, the important participants of these wars between 1480 to 1940, were: Great Britain, 74; France, 63; Spain, 59; Russia, 57; Austria, 51; Turkey, 43; Poland, 28; Sweden, 25; Italy, 25; Netherlands, 22; Germany, 22; Denmark, 20; United States, 12; China, 9; and Japan, 9. See Wright, *War*, 641–647; Tables 31–41.

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8. Michael Renner, "Budgeting for Disarmament," in *State of the World 1995: The Trends That Are Shaping Our Future*, ed. Linda Starke (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1995), 151.

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13. Bruce Russett, "Politics and Alternative Security: Toward a More Democratic, Therefore More Peaceful World," in *Alternative Security, Living Without Nuclear Deterrence*, ed. Burns H. Weston (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 108.

14. Barash, *Introduction*, 265. All the costs that follow are calculated in U.S. dollars.

15. Sivard, *Expenditures 1993*, 5.

16. *Ibid.*, 152.

17. Huddleston, *Peace*, 27; Sivard, *Expenditures, 1993*, 43–50.

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19. For the effects of excessive militarization on these countries' social welfare, see George Kim, "The Arms Race and Its Consequences for Developing Countries," in *A Peace Reader: Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-Violence and World Order*, ed. Joseph Fahey and Richard Armstrong (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 148 ff.

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23. *Ibid.*, 203.

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25. *Ibid.* See also Peres and Naor, *Middle East*, 89.
26. Hartung, *Weapons*, 213.
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