



This blog is reproduced here from The New Public Health, fourth edition, 2023. On-line version for lecturers and course leaders. With the kind permission of the authors: Theodore H.

Tulchinsky, Elena A. Varavikova, and Matan J. Cohen and the publisher: Academic Publishing Earth & Environmental Science Textbooks **ELSEVIER**

DISCOUNT CODES for ASPHER, WFPHA, ASPPH and GNAPH members

30% off any number of copies: ATR30

40% off for 25 copies or more: BULK25

50% off for 50 copies or more: BULK50

URL INFORMATION & ORDERS: [The New Public Health - 4th Edition \(elsevier.com\)](https://www.elsevier.com)

Militarism or health? The need to convert to a healthier, greener economy

Professor John Middleton

Immediate Past President, Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER)

For NPH4 Chapter 16

Global military expenditure passed 2 trillion dollars, in 2021. (1) Many historians have repeated the maxim of African-American sociologist and Pan African Civil rights activist, WE Burghardt Du Bois that '*the cause of war is the preparation for war*'. (2) President Dwight Eisenhower, in his last presidential address in 1961 warned about the *military-industrial complex*, its undue and unearned influence and its potential to distort democratic processes. It later became styled the *military-industrial-scientific complex*, recognizing the potential for public policy to be held hostage by university military research and technological elites. (3) Military manufacture is the driver of military adventurism and aggression; it provides the tools for repression. It creates the appalling public health consequences of conflict, we see around the world today.

During the widespread opposition to nuclear proliferation in the early 1980s, healthcare workers, under the worldwide aegis of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) campaigned against the threat of nuclear weapons, but also against the waste of money and resources. This was famously captured in Victor Sidel's Lancet paper, 'Destruction before Detonation' (4). More recently, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute compared the *opportunity cost* of military spend with the money needed to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals; achieving the SDGs 1 and 2, to eliminate hunger, would require 13% of global military spend, SDG4 on education, 12% and SDG 3 on health, 5%. The UN report on Disarmament and Development (Thorsson report) spelled out the adverse impacts of the military-dependent economies then in a period of *stagflation* - high unemployment but spiraling inflation. Military industries, although major employers, do not employ as many people for a given investment as do health, education, transport, and environmental activities. Military industries compete with other manufacturers for material resources and human ingenuity. (5)

Even before the impact of the Ukraine war, military spending was on the increase. (1) There was a brief respite in military spend in the post-Cold War years and calls for a *peace dividend* by all parts of the political spectrum. (1, 6) There were campaigns and demonstration projects, in many countries, like the iconic UK Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine Alternative Plan. These showed how military industry could be converted for peaceful, socially, and environmentally useful product manufacture. (7) In Sandwell, in the West Midlands of England we described a *health dividend* – through which harmful industries like tobacco retail, processed food and alcohol could be converted to healthier production and services. (6,8,9) The King's Fund later expanded the idea of the health dividend, essentially describing the corporate citizen role of health services. As a major employer, landowner, procurer of goods and services, the NHS has a major role in practicing what it preaches to create better health and economy. (10) It has risen to this challenge most recently and with great ambition in the Net Zero Carbon strategy. (11) By the same score, manufacturing industry can be diversified towards more human-centred technology, meeting the needs of people with disability, an *inclusion dividend* (12,13); It can also be diversified to prevent climate breakdown, *the green dividend*. (6,9) The *Million Climate Change Jobs* campaign (14) and *Just Transition* (15) exemplify the action required to convert to a healthier, greener economy. We need to convert from our fossil fuel addiction-replacing the 'extractive economy' with the 'regenerative economy'. (16) Calls for conversion plans have been part of the response to the UK government's next generation Trident nuclear missile development. Marine renewable energy systems featured strongly as alternative uses for the naval dockyards of Devonport, Faslane and Barrow (18,19,20).

After the Cold War, major defence manufacturers talked of diversifying their product base to civilian uses. Most manufacturers found a stopgap in exports of armaments to Third World countries, fuelling further conflict and indebtedness. Diversification was avoided by acquisitions and mergers, like that of Lockheed-Martin, and by British Aerospace, which is now 95% military dependent. The first Gulf War provided a showcase for new 'Smart' weapons. (6, 21) Global military spend began to climb again in the late 1990s, and through the Obama and Trump years. US spend accounts for over 800 billion dollars, the same as the next 9 countries put together. (1)

The Ukraine war has provided a shop window for new military hardware and brought in new players to the global marketplace, South Korea, Iran, Turkey, Latvia, Poland. Conventional Cold War armaments and military strategy have been found to be cumbersome, outmoded, and vulnerable to remote, drone-based, and loitering munitions. (22,23) The advent of remote and drone warfare may create an illusion of machines destroying machinery, but the reality is of harsh, human, mainly civilian misery, mundane and medieval, through cold, privation and starvation. Wars continue to be fought in the Middle East and Africa and repressive military force is deployed in numerous other internal conflicts. War remains a major cause of human suffering and must be addressed by the public health community. (24, 25) The preparation for war still needs to be addressed through conversion of military technology and the economy for peaceful, socially, and planetarily useful purposes.

Decisions about what investment is made for societal benefit are political decisions. Production lines to build tanks can be converted to producing tractors. What kind of economy we have is determined by what governments are willing to pay for. Our politicians determine the profit for industry, is in repressive and destructive technology. We can therefore only expect military spend to keep growing, and the prospects for health and the planet appear bleak. Du Bois also said, 'The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression'. The wider public health community can, and must, convert our politicians' mindsets, and convert our economies, and plan for an outbreak of health.

This paper is based on a presentation *Militarism and health*, November 30th 2022 as part of the University of Bielefeld and ASPHER series, 'Public Health in times of War'. Details available at https://www.aspher.org/download/1242/seminar_series_public-health-and-war_06-10-22.pdf

Professor John Middleton

Immediate Past President, Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) Brussels 1050, Belgium

johnmiddleton@phonecoop.coop

July 3rd 2023

References

1. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. World military expenditure passes \$2 trillion for the first time. Stockholm: SIPRI, Press release, April 25th 2022. Available at: <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>
2. WE Burqhardt Du Bois. Available at https://quotepark.com/quotes/1893014-web-du-bois-the-cause-of-war-is-preparation-for-war/#google_vignette
3. Wikipedia. Eisenhower's last speech. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisenhower%27s_farewell_address
4. Sidel V. Destruction before detonation. *Lancet* 1985; 326:8467: 1287-89. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(85\)91564-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(85)91564-8)
5. United Nations (Report of the United Nations Expert Group on Disarmament and Development, (Chair: Inga Thorsson) New York: United Nations Organisation, 1981.
6. Middleton J. Managing public health – health dividends and good corporate citizenship. *Int. J. Management Concepts and Philosophy* 2010; Vol. 4, No. 2:154-176.
7. Wainright, H. and Elliot, D. *The Lucas Plan*. London: Allison and Busby, 1982. (Also see <https://thelucasaerocombineshopstewardscommittee.org>)
8. Middleton, J. Converting Sandwell to a healthier economy. In Bruce, N. and Springett, J. (Eds.): *Research and Change in Urban Community Health*. Liverpool and London: Arrow publications and Liverpool University, 1996.

9. Middleton J. The 2017 Milroy Lecture: Secure, healthy, inclusive and green – four dividends of a healthier future. UK Faculty of Public Health blog, January 19th 2022. <https://betterhealthforall.org/2022/01/19/the-2017-milroy-lecture-secure-healthy-inclusive-and-green-four-dividends-of-a-healthier-future/> and <https://www.fph.org.uk/media/3437/20220112-final-full-including-references-jdm-lecture-2.pdf>
10. Coote A. (Ed.) Claiming the Health Dividend: Unlocking the Benefits of NHS Spending. London: Kings Fund, 2002.
11. NHS England. Delivering a net zero NHS. London, NHS England, 2022. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/publication/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service/>
12. Middleton J, Chesters R. and Mitchell J. Models for inclusion, evidence for choice and innovation. Contemporary Ergonomics, Taylor and Francis and the Ergonomics Society, London and Loughborough, 2005, pp.297–301.
13. Cooley M. (1987) Architect or Bee?, Hogarth, London.
14. Campaign against climate change. One million climate change jobs. London: CampaignCC, 2016. Available at : https://www.campaigncc.org/sites/data/files/sites/data/files/Docs/1mcj_flyer3.pdf
15. UN news. Just transition policies needed to create 20 million jobs. December 9th 2022. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/12/1131562>
16. Climate Justice Alliance. Just Transition Principles. Washington: Climate Justice Alliance, 2022. Available at: https://climatejusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CJA_JustTransition_highres.pdf
17. Nuclear Education Trust. Defence diversification: international learning for Trident jobs. London: Nuclear Education Trust, 2018. Available at: <http://nucleareducationtrust.org/sites/default/files/NET%20Defence%20Diversification%20Report.pdf>
18. Scottish Trades Union Congress. Trident and jobs: the case for a Scottish Defence Diversification Agency. Glasgow: STUC, 2015. <https://stuc.org.uk/files/Congress%202015/DefenceDiversificationReport2014%20v2.pdf>
19. Schofield S. Oceans of work: arms conversion revisited. London: British American Security Information Council. (BASIC), 2007. Available at: https://basicint.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/oceans_0.pdf
20. Quigley, P. (1988) 'Arms exports: the stop gap alternative to Pentagon contracts?', Bulletin of Peace Proposals, Vol. 19, pp.13–20.
21. Monks K. War in Ukraine shakes up weapons industry with new trends and unlikely winners. I-News. Available at: <https://inews.co.uk/news/world/ukraine-war-shakes-up-weapons-industry-new-trends-unlikely-winners-1895022>
22. Galeotti M. Ukraine is becoming a showroom for modern weaponry. The Spectator, November 5th 2022. Available at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/ukraine-is-becoming-a-showroom-for-modern-weaponry/>

23. Wandschneider L, Namer Y, Davidovitch N, Nitzan D, Otok R, Leighton L, Signorelli C, Middleton J, Martin-Moreno JM, Chambaud L, Lopes L, Razum O Wandschnieder The Role of Europe's Schools of Public Health in Times of War: ASPHER Statement on the War Against Ukraine. <https://www.ssph-journal.org/articles/10.3389/phrs.2022.1604880/full>
24. Namer Y, Wandschneider L, Middleton J, Davidovitch N and Razum O (2021) How can Schools of Public Health Actively Promote Peace?. *Public Health Rev*42:1604459. doi: 10.3389/phrs.2021.1604459