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### **Why War Is Not the Answer**

How can we stimulate our economy without increasing the wage gap? How can we reduce the national Debt? How can we afford universal health care of research in domestic sustainable energy? How can we make higher education more affordable for more people? How can we support the creation of peaceful, legitimate governments in foreign lands? How can we lower rates of sexual assault? How can we foster the equal treatment of women, people of color, and other minority groups? How can we create a greater, more peaceful world?

If the sort of questions we're asking search for the empowerment and improvement of human life and happiness on a universal scale, war has never been and never will be their answer.

A grotesque amount of money flows from U.S. citizen income taxes to the Pentagon. Nearly *half* of all income tax received funds our national military appetite<sup>1</sup> - it pays for the latest tanks and missiles, for current "contingency operations" in Iraq and Afghanistan, for interest on the national debt incurred by the past military spending, and so on. The United States spends nearly as much on its military as it does on Social Security, or Medicare and Medicaid combined<sup>2</sup>. We may dream of someday having universal health care in the states, but this will never be unless we find the money to realize it. I find it ludicrous that we spend so much on actively harming "other" peoples while we struggle to pay for adequate healthcare for our own people.

*"Military spending can't be all bad, we've got to defend ourselves somehow!"*

While there is some justifiable need for national security, our spending far outpaces that need. As of 2014, the U.S. spends more on its military than the next eight top-spending countries do on theirs' *combined*<sup>3</sup>. This rule has been applied most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the operations have lasted longer than U.S. military involvement in WWII. Either we're not spending enough, or this approach isn't the right one. With the U.S. overextending its big stick for such continued periods, it only makes sense that the national debt continues to rise. Historically speaking, wars have been one of the biggest causes of debt in our nation's history<sup>4</sup>. The cumulative effect we feel today of this bloody legacy is estimated to make up 80 percent of the national debt – all of it created by past military spending. The national debt, not ISIS or any other foreign insurgent

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<sup>1</sup> War Resisters League Federal Pie Chart – [www.warresisters.org/federalpiechart](http://www.warresisters.org/federalpiechart)

<sup>2</sup> US Spending Compared to Other Countries – <http://pgpf.org/Chart-Archive/0053> defense comparison

<sup>3</sup> Pentagon's Old Doctrine on 2 Wars – The New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/washington/15military.html>? r=0

<sup>4</sup> The Long Story of US Debt – The Atlantic [www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/11/the-long-story-of-us-debt-from-1790-to-2011-in-1-little-chart/265185/](http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/11/the-long-story-of-us-debt-from-1790-to-2011-in-1-little-chart/265185/)

organization, is widely considered the biggest threat to U.S. national security. Our ability to avoid default is inherently linked to our global credibility, our ability to continue social program, and ultimately the value of the U.S. Dollar.

I've spoken mostly to the flaws on a macroeconomic scale of the United States' addiction to war, but there are similarly infinite social consequences to our acceptance of the military-industrial complex. Sexual assault in the military is not an uncommon thing, either for women or men. The military system of prosecution for sexual assault is not adequate – most cases go unreported, and of those that are brought to trial, a tiny fraction end in conviction. While women are more likely to be harassed in the military, the reporting system is especially alienating to victimized men<sup>5</sup>. Men in the force are, in fact, assaulted more often than women, if only because more men enlist, and yet report forms ask questions like, “How many times were you violated in your vagina?” The military system creates an environment of total unquestioning submission, which has proven itself conducive to sexual assault, and yet it cannot bring itself to question its own reporting system. The fact that a commander has the authority to decide if a case is prosecuted or not is insane. It is too hard and personal to prosecute one of your own for any such allegation, and so few bother to report, fewer still are prosecuted, and almost none see justice.

I cannot speak firsthand to the personal tragedies of living in war, but I am assured they are similarly infinite. The rates of PTSD and soldier suicide are astonishing and unnecessary<sup>6</sup>. How can we justify causing at least 20 percent of veterans to suffer from PTSD and or depression? How much loss of life and limb can we swallow to line the coffers of weapons producers? How can we continue to defend a system based on war if it costs us so much – both financially and personally – but repays us so little?

The simple answer is, we can't.

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<sup>5</sup> Male Military Rape – GQ -  
<http://www.gq.com/long-form/male-military-rape>

<sup>6</sup> PTSD Statistics  
<http://www.veteransandptsd.com/PTSD-statistics.html>