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Why I Believe War Is Not the Answer

Families torn apart, lives turned upside down, countries left in shambles. War is a devastating force that, despite beliefs throughout history, creates more problems than it solves. Growing up in a military family and having friends that have recently enlisted, I have the devastating effects of war firsthand. One cannot simply replicate that experience from reading a history textbook.

War, simply put, changes people. I have experienced recently and have come to a greater understanding of what our young men and women are truly signing up for. My best friend shipped out to basic combat training this past summer. For as long as he can remember, he's wanted to be an infantryman. As I hugged him goodbye in the airport for the three months, there was a soft, kind gleam in his eyes that was comforting. After those long and grueling months, he returned. However, I didn't see the same person anymore. The gleam in his eyes was dead and was replaced by a look of aggression. His smile was replaced by a grimace. Then he said, "I'm ready to go to war. I'm ready to kill. I know what to do." I will never forget those words. My best friend, once a kind and gentle spirit, has been molded into a mindless killing machine. I fear for the day he sees war.

My grandfather is a Vietnam veteran. He has always been a role model to me and full of guidance and wisdom. However, there is often a distant look in his eyes, and you know that his mind is traveling back to the horrors of war while his body remains present, empty of feeling. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) isn't something that a veteran of war can simply "forget." It's a real disease caused by the hellish scenes of combat. As we have come to see in recent days with the murder of "American Sniper" Chris Kyle by mentally ill Marine, Eddie Routh, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can spiral out of control and be dangerous to the sufferer and others around them as well. This disease destroys minds, ruins lives, and tears families to pieces. The best way to prevent this disease is to eliminate the cause. If countries were to find diplomatic solutions to solve their problems, the gruesome images of war would no longer infect the malleable minds of our young men and women.

In addition to a destroyed mental health, many veterans of war also come home with physical disabilities that may haunt them forever. When I was a little girl, my thoughts were plagued by stories on the news saying: "Roadside Bomb Kills 20 Americans," and other reports of the sort. Those fortunate enough to survive events such as those will forever have a mark of that memory. Whenever that young man or woman looks down to see that they have an empty space where their leg should be, one can only imagine the thoughts that race through their mind.

War does not only destroy the lives of veterans and their families, but the lives of all their fellow countrymen alike. In the example of WW II, Germany was left in shambles. Towns were destroyed, their economy had hopelessly crashed, and their government had failed them. It took decades to rebuild what was left of their infrastructure and their pride, and they still feel the effects today. Is the oblivion really worth the fight? What is even being accomplished by all this violence?

This is the time to choose. Leaders of the world's countries must take a stand and realize that we are *all* human beings. We *all* inhabit this world. We *all* want what is best for our countries. We *all* want our world to be a better place for our children. Yes, countries will always disagree, but if they would collaborate and come up with diplomatic solutions to problems, we could see a world with less aggression and less empty souls. We could see a world with more understanding and more peace. This is definitely a goal worth working towards.