

**War**  
**By Garrett Prem**  
**River Valley High School Class of 2018**  
**Veterans for Peace Scholarship Recipient**

War: arguably the most lethal killer the world has ever seen. It has toppled dictators, established dynasties, and cemented legacies. Though there are many variables, there are only two constants in the equation of war: conflict and mortality. We try to validate our atrocities with multitudes of reasons, such as need for justice, revenge, or political gain. There are only widows, widowers, and orphans left to reconstruct what remains of their fractured hopes, dreams, and ambitions. British philosopher Bertrand Russell once said, "War does not determine who is right, only who is left." What purpose do heavily militarized conflicts serve if they level any form of life and prosperity that has ever existed?

In the 4.5 billion years the Earth has existed, there have been numerous conflicts over morality. The American Revolution, both world wars, and the cold war were all encounters focused around an evident good and evident evil. Each time the United States beats the drums of war and declares itself ethically superior. We pray for the troops we send off to combat, and turn the other way as our government funnels entire civilizations into internment camps. Though we as a society continue to think we are taking the high road, that the U.S. is nothing like Hitler and his concentration camps or Stalin and his gulags. Trigger words such as Nazis and Communists are thrown around, but if we fail to give ourselves a hard look in the mirror then maybe war will forever be considered a necessary evil. If, as a country, we continue to build walls instead of bridges we will just cement the notorious nickname of "world police."

Growing up I always thought that I was very fortunate to live in what many considered the greatest country the Earth has ever seen. After all, it's all my teachers and mentors ever told me when I was young. Every morning I would wake up and go to school and say the same pledge every kid across America had to say. I would patriotically proclaim the words "with liberty and justice for all" without any sort of apprehension. I continued to bleed those great colors of red, white, and blue until I reached high school, where I quickly came to the realization that I had been living in a fish bowl my entire life. I was finally exposed to the atrocities that the United States of America was committing in the Middle East. It was difficult to comprehend that my home country was relying on cruel and inhumane tactics to solicit information from suspects, regardless of their guilt. It was not only a spit in the face of the Geneva Convention, but a spit in the face to everything that I had once believed this nation stood for.

In conclusion, the highly volatile dispute of increasing or decreasing military action is not solely a one-dimensional issue. We as a society need to fix the paramount issues that lay in our own backyards, as well as fix the flaws in the overall effectiveness of our interventions in foreign disputes. We need to realize that conflict is no longer the sole cause of warfare. With the rapid industrialization of multiple societies, war has evolved to cause more war.