

“War is humanity’s deadliest invention”

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It is a strange creation, a great machine that is capable of swallowing entire nations in the blink of an eye. Fed human lives, human anguish, and human rage, the war machine spits out a few barrels of oil and a handful of treaties that are furtively carried away by a few individuals. The rest of us are left looking at the empty desolation, waiting for a miracle to come from the strange machine, something that would redeem the sacrifices made in return. But nothing emerges.

We wonder how anyone, having seen what this cruel machine can do, could ever consent to feed it more human lives in the hopes of mere material gains; wealth, territory, prestige. But as the war machine rolls on, trespassing onto once sacred values, there are always the few who are willing to sacrifice the many for the spoils of war.

From an economist’s point of view, “War is a racket... in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.” But the world’s physicians see only the injured they could not save. The world’s teachers see only the students whose desks are now empty. The world’s soldiers see only the faces of the dead, people who, in another lifetime, might have been their friends, but were given a the title of enemy. When war is declared, only one viewpoint prevails: the view of the morally blind.

Certainly it is correct to say that the profits of war “are reckoned in dollars.” Wartime economies have been known to rise swiftly from the ashes of a recession, in a flurry of industrial activity and vitriolic patriotism. Technology flourishes as people develop more ways to end a human life. Any ancient culture famed for their barbaric actions would be deeply disturbed to see nuclear and chemical weaponry of a modern arsenal.

But lives are not the only losses of war, for how can the value of a human life be quantified? Everyone loses in war, even the living. For every casualty, there is a grieving community left behind. Even strangers on the street feel the ripples of a single death; there is one less person in the world that they will never have the chance to meet. Among the dead are people who could have made the world a better place. The unknown soldier killed in action might have lived to eighty, found a cure for cancer, or written poetry of astounding depth and humanity. The potential of a life is lost in war.

The spoils of war are rendered trivial alongside the casualties, yet history repeats itself. There is always new generation, a generation sheltered from the horrors of war, that unwittingly makes the same mistakes as their forefathers, sacrificing peace for ambition. But each successive generation makes the same mistake in a different world, a world with more devastating technology. As the losses grow, one day the world will learn that war truly has no profits.