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The Solution to War, is Peace

In the event of increasing hostilities between the Soviet Union and the “free nations” during the summer of 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower said: “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.” Eisenhower was right. Every advancement a nation makes in its war effort, as in any endeavor, takes money, support, time, and focus away from important, and sometimes crucial social issues.

A nation’s success shouldn’t be measured by how well it fights off its enemies, but by how well it takes care of its citizens and works to bring peace within itself and between all other nations. Eisenhower, in his “Chance for Peace” speech called for “just and lasting” peace, the “only fitting monument” to those who had suffered and died in World War II; to uphold the ideal of freedom against any “single, unbridled, aggressive power.” Eisenhower also said that “as long as there persists a threat to freedom, [free nations] must, at any cost, remain armed, strong, and ready for the risk of war.” Freedom is certainly an important ideal to fight for. However, staying “ready for the risk of war” involves cutting assistance to the needs of the hungry and the poor. There are costs *and* benefits to strengthening national defense, but often, the consequences regarding poor and needy citizens are overlooked in the larger picture of international affairs.

Arming a nation for war doesn’t simply take money out of a budget, or add to a national deficit. It changes the focus of many people’s lives. Instead of helping within their communities, members of society are expected to shift their focus onto national defense. In 1953, the Soviet Union *truly* posed a threat to national security. However, the constant “Cold War” that resulted weighed heavily on the United State’s budget, and required the nation’s unwavering attention to an unknown and unpredictable threat. Logically, the only way to return the focus to internal issues is to maintain international peace and security. In the event of peace and mutual trust between nations, money spent arming ourselves against one another, would become unnecessary.

Eisenhower, as a solution, suggests that nations reduce their weapons, both in production and possession. I think the spirit behind this idea is correct. If all nations would only reduce their powers consensually, their actions would build a sense of trust internationally, allowing nations to focus on improving their internal affairs, without fearing retaliation from their surroundings. Though Ike’s words were said over half a century ago, they contain much truth for the world today. The more we, as citizens of the world, endeavor to maintain peaceful relationships through the reduction of conflict, hate, prejudice, and fear, the more effort we can put towards improving conditions for those truly deserving assistance.