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As our nation and world have moved into the 21st century, we have not yet recognized how detrimental war is to ourselves and others in need. In the past year, the United States alone spent over 663 billion dollars on the military. In 2009, the United States spent 46.5% of the world's military expenditures which totaled \$1.531 trillion. Since we have entered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than 5000 United States soldiers have been killed and tens of thousands have been wounded. These numbers do not include Iraqi and Afghan citizens and soldiers killed or wounded. Not only is war one of the most costly endeavors undertaken by any nation, it remains the largest thief from those left hungry and deprived around the world.

If the United States alone made a miniscule cutback on military spending, and instead spent that money to address poverty, we could help to bring about the end of world hunger. A 2008 study by the World Food Programme, an organization fighting hunger worldwide, found that 12 million African children are orphaned due to AIDS, and that it takes \$0.31 to feed each of these children a day. Thus, the cost necessary to feed 12 million orphaned children for a year makes up just 0.2% of the annual United States military budget. Not only can this incredible feat be done with ease, but the amount of money required to do so is insignificant compared to the vast sums spent on our own military endeavors. Organizations such as Hearts & Minds believe that if industrialized nations each donated 1.5% of their gross domestic product (GDP), it would be possible to eradicate world poverty.

Indeed, a country's poverty level can be linked to the percentage of its GDP spent on its military. Three countries that have some of the highest percentages of their GDP spent on the military are Eritrea, Israel, and Yemen. These three countries have outrageous poverty levels. Eritrea, a small African country, spent one-fifth of its GDP on its military in 2008. And, Eritrea is estimated to have half of its population living below the poverty line. Israel spends 7% of its GDP on the military, and has almost a quarter of its citizens beneath the poverty line. And, Yemen spends 6.6% of its GDP annually on the military, with almost half of its population below the poverty line.

Many believe a military is necessary to act as a deterrent against warfare around the world. However, we can simply look to our own past, in the Cold War with the Soviet Union, under the MAD theory, or Mutually Assured Destruction. Both our country and the USSR continued to build nuclear weapons until it was possible to destroy the world in a nuclear holocaust one hundred times over, and now both countries are faced with the task of disassembling these weapons. We must realize that military forces, as deterrents, are not necessary for world peace and in fact substantially increase poverty worldwide.