

Schools, NOT Wars

Source: "1 Soldier or 20 Schools?" by Nicholas D. Kristof, the New York Times, 7/29/10.



The war on terror, including Afghanistan and Iraq, has been, by far, the costliest war in American history aside from World War II.

This should be a wake-up call to President Obama, underscoring how our military strategy is not only a mess — as the recent leaked documents from Afghanistan suggested — but also more broadly reflects a gross misallocation of resources.

One legacy of the 9/11 attacks was a distortion of American policy: By the standards of history and cost-effectiveness, we are hugely overinvested in military tools and underinvested in education and diplomacy.

Under Mr. Obama, we are now spending more money on the military, after adjusting for inflation, than in the peak of the cold war, Vietnam War or Korean War. Meanwhile, a sobering report from the College Board says that the United States, which used to lead the world in the proportion of young people with college degrees, has dropped to 12th.

What's more, an unbalanced focus on weapons alone is often counterproductive, **creating a nationalist backlash against foreign "invaders."** **Over all, education has a rather better record than military power in neutralizing foreign extremism.** And the trade-offs are staggering: **For the cost of just one soldier in Afghanistan for one year, we could start about 20 schools there.**

Aid groups show that it is quite possible to run schools so long as there is respectful consultation with tribal elders and buy-in from them...[they] are **doing more to bring peace to Afghanistan than Mr. Obama's surge of troops.**

Imagine the money spent every five weeks in Afghanistan would ensure that practically every child on our planet gets a primary education. **Tell Mr. Obama end the wars now!**



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for Peace & Justice

Join our 403rd Peace Vigil to end the wars!
Every Saturday, 1-3pm, at Rte. 59 & N. Middletown Rd. in Nanuet, NY
For info: www.rocklandaction.org 8/7/10

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