



# WAR IS A VITAL MATTER

## Lesson 5: Is War a Vital Matter for the United States?

➤ "War is a vital matter of state. It is the field on which life or death is determined and the road that leads to either survival or ruin, and must be examined with the greatest care." (Ames)

➤ This assertion by Sun Tzu is true for individual Soldiers and was true for states during the Warring States period but it is not true for the United States today.

➤ The United States has no near-peer neighbors and has the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans between it and Russia and China. Further, the United States lost the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan Wars without serious consequence.

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- ☐ FOR SOLDIERS
- ☐ FOR THE STATE
  - ☐ CHINESE WARRING STATES
  - ☐ AFGHAN TALIGAN
  - ☐ USA

**USA COSTS**

- ☐ 2,372 US MIL DEATHS *but* 329 Million Population
- ☐ 1,720 US COV DEATHS *but* 681,000 dead on road
- ☐ ~\$15T (?) *BUT* ~\$20T GDP
- ☐ ~\$33T Revenues
- ☐ OPPORTUNITY COST
- ☐ REPUTATION / SOFT POWER





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- Cost of the Afghan War.
  - As of July 27, 2018, there have been 2,372 U.S. military deaths and 20,320 American servicemembers have been wounded in action. There have also been 1,720 U.S. civilian contractor fatalities.
  - But there are over 329,365,000 people in the USA. In 2018 more than 40,000 Americans died by car accidents and over 4.5 million were seriously injured. From 2001 to 2018, during the same time period when 4,000 Americans died in Afghanistan, over 681,000 Americans died in car accidents. Just as the traffic fatalities have had no significant impact on the United States, neither have the Afghan War dead.
  - The United States has spent about \$1.5 Trillion on the war, but with revenues of around \$3.3 Trillion and a GDP of around \$20 Trillion that expenditure has not been a road to ruin.
  - The United States has paid an opportunity cost. For example it was not well positioned to oppose the Russian invasions of Georgia and the Crimea.
  - The United States has lost authority and tarnished its reputation but it remains the world's most important state.
- Despite all these costs the Afghan War has not been a vital matter for the United States or a path to ruin.