

HST 203: History of the United States Sp14 (Escobar Meta 41237 41238)

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Forum 4

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Military Industrial Complex

by **Joe Escobar** - Thursday, May 22, 2014, 8:43 AM

This forum thread is for the Military Industrial Complex discussion.

After studying the required materials, address the questions in your posts.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it

RE: Military Industrial Complex

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Comparisons/ Predicting the Future

by **Joseph Foley** - Saturday, May 24, 2014, 12:17 PM

Okay, so the article's conclusion is wrong, and the cartoon is more historically accurate. But, what does this tell you about comparing wars, hot (WWII, Korea), cold (Cold War), terror (Iraq, Afghanistan)? Should they be compared? Moreover, what does it reveal about our nations' leaders, Democrat or Republican, and their response or reactions to real or perceived foreign threats?

It would be interesting to hear the author of this articles take on Obama's foreign policy now, years later, and still many troops on the ground (At the end of May 2010, the number of

American fatalities was reported to have reached 1,000. By September 2012, the total number passed **2,000**. More than two-thirds of those deaths have occurred since the American military presence in Afghanistan was doubled under President Barack Obama in 2009). I think anytime the public, or a writer, takes a politicians promises as absolute truth, they will be in for a great deal of disappointment. I did not see the author's name on the forum, so I looked it up, and found Patrick Buchanan. Obviously Mr. Buchanan has a political agenda of his own (former presidential adviser, candidate, and political commentator) Politicians make promises to gain votes, keeping them is not something that typically happens. In our survey of American history, we have witnessed many presidents make promises they could not keep, Wilson was a great example in regard to WWI. Obama's stance against war seemed to be a rallying cry against his competitors, and the Bush Administration. He said what his pr staff thought American's would want to hear. Predicting the future is something that politicians, writers, and American's don't have much success with.

I think comparing wars is something that must be approached with care. Professor Escobar has pointed out the spectrum tool countless times in class. When we compare the statistics and facts of war, the glaring differences become much more apparent. I think it is also important to find similarities with military conflicts, but not make sweeping generalizations. Pointing out the similarities between Vietnam, Cuba, Berlin, *The Red Scare*, and Korea, due to the fear of communism spreading is fair, but all of the individual cases had an assortment of different variables. Different economic interests, death tolls, leaders, and even our level of involvement. I don't agree with our military involvement in Vietnam, or our current involvement in Afghanistan, but calling them the same war would be a mistake.

While researching our forums information, I came across Jonathan Turley. Turley is a lawyer, legal scholar, professor, writer, lecturer, and commentator. He wrote a piece titled, *10 Reasons The U.S. Is No Longer The Land Of The Free* (found @<http://jonathanturley.org/2012/01/15/10-reasons-the-u-s-is-no-longer-the-land-of-the-free/>) Obviously hindsight is 20/20, but he brings up some solid points. He mentions similar actions taken by both Obama and Bush, including; indefinite detention, the assassination of U.S. citizens, warrantless searches and many more. Professor Turley closed the argument by writing, "The indefinite-detention provision in the defense authorization bill seemed to many civil libertarians like a betrayal by Obama. While the president had promised to veto the law over that provision, Levin, a sponsor of the bill, disclosed on the Senate floor that it was in fact the White House that approved the removal of any exception for citizens from indefinite detention. Dishonesty from politicians is nothing new for Americans. The real question is whether we are lying to ourselves when we call this country the land of the free." As I have mentioned, we must be careful not to generalize, but I tend to agree with this thought. In recent history, presidents from both ends of the political spectrum have violated some of our constitutional rights, and it seems to be getting worse. Six years ago, I did not think I would be pointing out similarities between Obama and Bush, but like most writers, politicians, and humans, I'm not the best at predicting the future.

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Re: Comparisons/ Predicting the Future

by James Price - Friday, May 30, 2014, 12:34 AM

I agree with you that politicians often make promises that they are unable to keep, such as LBJ promising "an 'unconditional' victory over poverty" (textbook p.986). I also agree with you that comparing wars across history can be tricky. In the article the author compares troop numbers and asks why, if the Afghan war was so important to American safety, we were sending so few troops compared to the Korean or Vietnam wars (Forum Article), but comparing these wars in this manner isn't completely accurate because of how war has changed over the years. Modern wars don't need as many troops on the ground because of the technological advances in warfare. This also leads me to agree with you that while you can find similarities between wars, trying to make comparisons by generalization will often lead to problems.

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US perspective on war

by Austin McQuaw - Monday, May 26, 2014, 1:07 PM

Like someone above has said, comparing wars and other things of such measure should be done delicately. There are many factors to consider that can and will be overlooked. They are not simple to understand. There is so much variation between wars that it is dangerous to compare them. However, I'm sure that when they are put under a microscope similar motives are realized. Wars are comparable because they will share the repeated, and acceptable agendas of those involved.

I feel like America's modern attitude towards foreign military involvement was largely beginning to develop during Truman's time as president. With containment, the US had a hands on, no compromise approach to foreign policy. Containment was not fighting against a direct threat, but an indirect one. Communism was a threat to come for American ideals, not entirely a current threat. Containment was preventative. Ever since, the US has held a preventative stand. Eisenhower supported increasing our military strengths during a time of peace. He was preparing our ability to practice foreign policy against future threats. Eisenhower said that "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex." Why? "So that security and liberty may prosper together." Our 'big stick' was supported. Our motivation for certain military efforts are detailed by Eisenhower near the end of his farewell address.

It's interesting to think about the differences between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to war. I believe that Truman was a Democrat and that Eisenhower was a Republican. Truman eventually adopted a very aggressive approach to containment. Then Eisenhower oversaw the military buildup during a time of peace. Both of their policies seemed to be agreeable between each other. Currently, we are near the end of a war that began with a Republican and continued under a

Democrat. Though Obama had hopes to remove troops quickly, (as the cartoon depicts) he had reluctantly accepted the relationship with the war. Though, the perspectives between parties can differ greatly, it's interesting that there are some strong similarities between their behaviors in war time.

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Military industrial complexes, plural

by Daniel Hovet - Saturday, May 31, 2014, 11:43 PM

Yes, comparing wars like Vietnam and Afghanistan and suggesting they are virtually identical is remiss. However, certain elements are present in every war, and one element that some may argue was heavily present in those two wars was the eponymous military industrial complex. Both wars were conducted with a freestanding military, capable of arming itself and supplying itself, unlike in previous wars, such as world war 2, where civilians had to take up to assist in war production, with automotive companies switching over to armored vehicle production, and whatnot. But even here, comparing the two on these grounds is questionable, due to the vagueness of the term "military industrial complex" itself. As was pointed out in the material, Military industrial lobby may have been a better term, and much confusion has followed it's definition. One could argue that there isn't one "military industrial complex", but multiple different ones, which arise in tandem with the changing geopolitical landscape... like the example given in the above comment, with regards to how the military was shaped under different presidents and their respective foreign policy, be it containment, rollback, etc.- the complex was whatever it was needed to be at the time.

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Military nostalgia

by Shane Lundberg - Tuesday, May 27, 2014, 9:40 AM

I think it is worth noting when the radio host said the permanent military industrial complex would behave Like any other company, always wanting more profit. Also worth noting is when he said military commanders typically want more than what is available to them weather they really need it or not. This duality of constant economic growth coupled with the unsatisfied nostalgia of military commanders is what got us where we are today. in my opinion those are the two major driving forces that have delivered us most of our military technology. So everybody is lobbying for military funding but Eisenhower said excess military spending is a waste of national resources. Does our national GDP allow the pentagon and the administration to continue growing our military and at what point will the American people say, "we feel safe enough so start funding other domestic policies". I have friends in Afghanistan and it is in my best interest to keep them as safe as possible but where do we draw

the line?

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Military Industrial Complex

by Britney Painter - Friday, May 30, 2014, 8:54 PM

Like what everyone has been saying, comparing wars are sometimes difficult and should be handled carefully. It's hard now a days to really compare them being that our technology is forever growing and changing, and I think it's nice to see the number of troops getting smaller, coming from a military brat and having to send my dad off every so often. I think also that yes if we really look closely at the wars, we might find similar things but also change isn't always bad. They could be learning from they're lessons and mistakes so we don't keep repeating the same things while at war.

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Ike's "Military Industrial Complex"

by Paige Nibley - Saturday, May 31, 2014, 12:12 PM

President Eisenhower takes on a warning tone in regards to the "Military Industrial Complex" while giving his farewell address. He says that events in recent history call for a defense industry. IKE warns, however, that the creation of a permanent armament industry will establish "total influence". He describes the modern influence of defense production on society as "economic, political, even spiritual, [it] is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development, yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications." Eisenhower warned that a military industrial complex threatens "the very structure of our society." As he was exiting office, Eisenhower did not argue the need for a permanent defense industry. Rather, IKE told Americans that the world after war required such an industry in order to provide adequate defense as a world power. No longer would wartime military production make the cut in the case of an international crisis. The atomic age had arrived and there was no turning back. His warning was warranted, Eisenhower simply wanted balance to be maintained between domestic and defense spending. He feared the imbalance and misplacement of power that may come with a permanent armament industry. The question I have, sparked by the podcast commentator, is in response to the following: is unjustified military spending a wasted resource? My question is, what is unjustified military spending? I think that this is where President Eisenhower feared unwarranted power and misplaced influence. He did not argue the necessity of an industry of defense during peacetime.

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Comparing Wars

by Joseph Foley - Saturday, May 31, 2014, 1:53 PM

As I have been contemplating the idea of comparing wars, I stumbled upon an interesting website. It offers a quick overview of wars, which includes dates, death tolls, length of wars, and locations. The wars covered on the site range from Vietnam, to the Bangladesh Liberation War. You can access the site here: <http://wars.findthebest.com>. American's tend to assume the world revolves around the U.S., but there were many wars before our country was born, and of course many since that we have had no involvement with. I found this site to be particularly helpful with statistics, and it offers a quick and helpful overview.

It can be a slippery slope attempting to compare wars, people have a tendency to make sweeping generalizations. It seems that this subject can become clouded with emotions instead of facts. Similarities are pinpointed, which would be considered a stretch at best by most historians. It is possible to find common ground, or threads of truth that are similar in many wars. America's stance against communism is a great example of similarities of wars waged in a variety of countries (Vietnam, Korea, Cuba, Cold War, etc.). (Random interesting subject: our current restrictions on traveling to Cuba, and the ongoing economic embargo that still exists, our fear of communism is alive and well)

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Re: Comparing Wars

by Laura Newman - Saturday, May 31, 2014, 3:15 PM

I the hardest part people have with understanding past wars, especially with the future hindsight we are graced with is understanding the resonant violation. This is a term from my film class that explains that before we can truly understand a film or its importance during an era, we first much understand the historical, cultural, and social significance of the time the film was made.

Most people will not go through this trouble, but instead will spout off their opinion with the preconceived knowledge they already have. I personally felt this way about the Vietnam War. From my gatherings of pop culture history, I was sure everyone was against the war, and Nixon kept us there for imperialistic and financial reasons. After the class where we spoke about the silent majority, I realized how terribly wrong I was and that almost all voting Americans for for the continuation of the war.

So comparing wars can be interesting and there are patterns that can be analyzed however, without the understanding of the times and situations surrounding the causes/effects, it can be a dangerous study.

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