
Foreign Policy

Videos:

“The Danger of American Isolationism | UnArchived: Lessons From the Past”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwuD5auzRDo> (3:08 minutes)

“Prof. Peter Jaworski: War Sucks, What is it Good For?”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvHYwUv6yVA> (2:31 minutes)

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. In the PolicyEd video, we learned that the United States has had tens of thousands of soldiers stationed in South Korea, Japan, and Germany for decades. Were you aware of this? If not, did it surprise you? Why/Why not?
3. Prof. Peter Jaworski said: “Our national inclination is to think about war in the abstract.” What did he mean by this?
4. In the PolicyEd video, we learned that the America First Committee formed in the 1930s and tried to keep America out of a European war. The narrator said: “The outcome of World War II might have been very different if the AFC had succeeded.” Does this justify U.S. military interventions after World War II? Why/Why not?
5. Prof. Jaworski said: “[Wars] make the citizens of the country going to war...nervous, and they make them fearful.” Did you experience fear or anxiety when America was at war with Afghanistan, or from America’s involvement in wars in Ukraine or the Middle East? Why/Why not?
6. The narrator of the PolicyEd video argued that “American ideals like liberty, egalitarianism, and democracy would have been in jeopardy both abroad and in North America” without U.S. military intervention. Do you think it’s America’s responsibility to protect its ideals in other countries? Why/Why not?

7. Prof. Jaworski said: “[E]ven just wars have unintended consequences.” What did he mean by this? What is a just war? What are some examples of unintended consequences?
8. The narrator of the PolicyEd video said: “Just like in 1941, neutrality and isolationism aren’t options for the United States today either.” What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
9. In the Learn Liberty video, we saw clips of war movies while Prof. Jaworski said: “Wars may seem noble because of the dangers and drama involved.” Do you think movies glorify war? Why/Why not?
10. The narrator of the PolicyEd video said that many of the places where the U.S. maintains a military presence are sites of previous aggression, including Germany. What is the significance of that statement? Is it important for the U.S. to maintain a military presence in Germany because of World War II? Why/Why not?
11. Prof. Jaworski said that “our governments choose to valorize generals and politicians with statues....” What are some examples of the ways the United States valorizes generals and wartime politicians?
12. The narrator of the PolicyEd video said: “The unique position of the United States in the world, both in terms of its resources and its foundational principles, means we can’t afford to take a hand-off approach.” What did he mean by this? Does the United States have a unique position in the world? Why/Why not?
13. Prof. Jaworski said: “Two countries that trade extensively with each other are less likely to go to war....” What reason did he give for this?
14. Before watching these two videos, had you thought much about war?
15. How do these videos apply to current events?
16. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
17. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
18. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
19. What else would you like to learn about this topic?