

Saturday

English Essay Assessment #3

14/3/26

## Are Modern Wars not Holy Wars?

Outline:

### ① Introduction

i- Hook

ii- Background

iii- Thesis Statement: Although some analysts insist that the religious fervor attached to modern wars by outspoken politicians makes them holy wars, in truth modern wars are quite the opposite, driven by principles rooted in expansionist policy, economic gains, cultural and ideological clashes, and security threats.

### ② Conceptualizing Holy Wars

### ③ Conceptualizing Modern Wars

### ④ Why Modern Wars

#### A. Expansionist Policy

i- World War 1 and World War 2 were fought in order to expand the geography of major participants throughout the European Peninsula.

ii- Mexican-American War fought to encroach upon and expand American territory.

#### B. Economic Incentive

i- Gulf War and later Iraq War to secure wealth and oil supply under bogus charges of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq's possession.

#### C. Cultural Clash

i- East Pakistan's desire to secede from West Pakistan

was rooted in a strong, opposing sense of cultural identity, leading to the creation of Bangladesh.

#### D- Ideological Clash

i- Ngo Dinh Diem was greatly opposed by the democratic west due to his desire to accept Communism. The Vietnam war and 1963 coup were all carried out in order to quell the potential spread of communism.

#### E- Regime Change

i- The current Iran-US-Israel war was started with a desire to eliminate Iran's leadership and install a new USA backed leadership, similar to 1953 where Mohammed Mosaddegh was overthrown and pro-US Shah Reza Pahlavi was installed as supreme ruler.

#### F- War on Terror

i- Despite Islamophobic sentiments arising from it, the War of Terror was at its core presented as a joint cooperative venture to tackle insurgents that threaten National Security across the globe.

#### G- Security Concerns

i- Russia's invasion of Ukraine occurred around a time when NATO's expansion in Europe threatened its own territorial security. Thus, a preemptive expansion tactic was applied to counteract NATO expansion.

#### ⑤ Opposing arguments

i- Some view the recent Iran war as having been started purely for religious superiority and extremism.

↳ Counterargument: Israel's hegemonic pursuits through the region are long-standing, and Iran's strategic position in the global oil trade made it a very lucrative next-step in

still expansionary pursuits. Along with USA backing and decades of establishing military bases around it, the geopolitical incentive was always clear, even if the veil of religion has garnered greater support as a smaller scale rallying tactic.

ii- Extremist groups like ISIS, Al-Qaeda etc. were established with religious ideology at their core, so such warfare is rooted in Holy sentiments.

↳ Counter-argument: Such groups operate with such brutality that goes against fundamental principles and guidelines, for warfare and general conduct, outlined in their sacred texts. Torture, drug trafficking and numerous other human rights violations are the norm.

## (6) Conclusion

Peace is a noble aspiration, but human history has demonstrated over and over just how fleeting and elusive it is. From the era of primitive man ~~with~~ bound to tribal lifestyle, to modern man thriving in a complex system of states, humanity still faces conflicts rooted in religious and/or secular interests. The Crusades are the most well known example of a warfare rooted in religious ideology, with Christians and Muslims constantly at war with each other over control of Jerusalem, a city of great symbolic importance to the faiths. The Thirty Years' War in Europe also had some degree of religious motivation that fueled the wars. However, with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the influence of the Church in political matters was greatly reduced as the groundwork for the modern, secular state was laid down with sovereigns of the state having the full control over matters of national sovereignty. Despite

the reduction in religious institutions' influence in global politics, a number of people still believe a great deal of conflicts are rooted in religious ideology. The Gaza genocide is one such case, as is the recent Iran war, framed as an ideological and religious war between Jewish and Islamic values. However, when one peels back the thin layer of religious fervor, the geo-political, economic, and imperialist motivations beneath are laid bare. Moreover, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war was not waged on religious grounds, rather irredentist claims as well as security risks owing to perceived NATO expansion in Europe. Therefore, the scales indicate that modern wars by large, are motivated by secular goals rather than religious wars.

A 'holy war' is one that is grounded in religious motivations and principles. Those who wage them believe themselves to be emissaries of God's will, while those who oppose them are non-believers that must be vanquished, or invited to accept the same belief so they may partake in the grace of God. Such grace often boils down to the promise of eternal rewards in the hereafter. Muslims and Christians in the crusades both believed in similar ideals, leading to repeated conflict. Even the main target of their battles, the holy city Jerusalem, functionally has no value as a military asset or a trade hub. However, control of such a place was deemed worthwhile due to the associated spiritual connections. Holy wars are also generally rooted in humanitarian principles, with non-combatant rights given due importance.

'Modern warfare' is a different story however. With the advent of the industrial revolution and advancement of technology, the day of the sword and battlefield

is long-gone. The range and scope of battle has greatly increased, with sea, air, and trench warfare, as well as the use of heavy artillery. World War I may well be the first instance of the post-Industrial revolution technology being applied to such effect that warfare would never be the same. Civilian lives are a great liability now and even non-combatants are potential targets in the scope of modern warfare, from the trenches of World War I, to the current Iran-US-Israel War of March, 2026.

To begin with, Expansionist policy is a major motivating factor for modern wars. In World War I, a great deal of trench warfare in Germany was carried out to maintain territories between France and Belgium. For a mere one hundred metres of land, thousands would die in each raid in trying to maintain control of pointless landmass. World War II exemplified this, with motivations of ~~map~~ irredentism being one of Hitler's major policies after World War I. Though some territories were acceded to Germany by the UK and other neighbours in an attempt of appeasement, Germany's ambitions went far beyond irredentism, laying siege to Poland and other territories in order to increase its domestic territory. Apart from that, the Mexico-American War of 1846 was also waged by the USA in order to gain control of the disputed boundary between the two nations on the Nueces strip, since Mexico did not recognize Texas as American territory. Therefore, Expansionism is a major driver for many of the wars fought in modern times.

Moreover, there are economic incentives that motivate modern warfare. The Gulf War in 1991 was carried out in order to liberate Kuwait. However, this wasn't due to any notion of human rights, these were pre-texts as Kuwait ~~was~~ was a very oil-rich country and there were fears of Saddam

Mussein gaining a monopoly over global oil trade if he was not stopped in time. By liberating Kuwait, the USA not only gained control of its oil reserves, but it also gave them a strategic foothold into Iraq. Thus, in 2003, the USA managed to create a bogus narrative of Iraq possessing Nuclear weapons and managed to launch a full-scale war on grounds of Global Security in order to liberate Iraq. In truth, there were no weapons of mass destruction and much of Iraq's wealth was plundered and its oil reserves captured. What followed was a period of great instability in the region which goes counter-intuitive to the aims the USA presented as humanitarian intervention. However, when you step back and view the entire war's purpose mainly being total domination, establishing a greater foothold in the region and amassing wealth, the underlying motivation becomes clear. Therefore, economic gains are a major cause for modern wars.