

McNamara and the "fog of war"



Sometimes negotiation and peace is the only way to avoid catastrophe that could destroy us all. The first lesson of the "Fog of War," that McNamara gave was to empathize with your enemy. McNamara thought it was a must and that it was important to put ourselves into the enemy's shoes. He discussed in the interview that later became a documentary, the possible serious consequences we could face as a nation if we didn't empathize with Cubans during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. We must try to put ourselves inside their skin and look at us through their eyes, just to understand the thoughts that lie behind their decisions and their actions," McNamara justified. If we could negotiate and settle, we might be able to work something out to benefit both the U. S. , and the Soviet Union. During the Cuban missile Crisis, McNamara tried to persuade President Kennedy not to press on and invade Cuba. He could give the president advice because he was a member of the president's cabinet. Robert McNamara was the Secretary of Defense in office. He persuaded him along with Tommy Thompson whom was the former U. S. Ambassador to Moscow. They gave them advice on two messages we received from the Soviet Union. McNamara described this as a "hard message" and a "soft message." The soft message said they would remove the missiles from Cuba as long as we promised not to invade. On the other hand, Kennedy also received the hard message which basically revealed that if we pressed on and invaded Cuba, they would respond with massive military force. McNamara stressed how important it was to empathize with Cuba, if we didn't the consequences could be a nuclear warholocaust. Kennedy ended up empathizing with them by responding to the first message.

This action could have saved us from a possible Nuclear War and from devastation, disaster, and from losing trillions of innocent American people. McNamara describes the relationship between empathy, morality, and war. He thinks that during war in order to be victorious you have to see the way the enemy sees and try to make peace with them. From a moral standpoint, do what's best for the common good. It's best to make peace or at least negotiate and come to an agreement to avoid any consequences that could threaten innocent civilians. I think he believed more in peace and harmony than in war.

It was best to just avoid it if possible and negotiate then avoid conflict. Later on in the documentary, McNamara describes the fire bombings of Japanese cities. He argues is it moral to take the lives of 100, 000 of Japanese civilians in one night just to win the war. On top of burning the cities, Lemay wanted to drop a bomb. McNamara argued that proportionality was a guideline in war. We shouldn't overdo it just to win. We should have it evened out with the enemy on casualties and civilian deaths. Lemay considered his actions to be thought immoral if they had lost.

So judging from that I'd say that if his side lost, then losing that many people would have been for nothing. If they would have won, it would have been moral is the conclusion I'm drawing from this. Is it ever legitimate to criticize your country's actions in a time of war? I think so yes, and I wouldn't consider it to be unpatriotic for disagreeing with the government. Freedom of Speech is one thing our country is founded on and everyone can have their own personal view or criticism. One can still have love for one's country and not agree with their policies or in this particular case, war tactics.

Some people may not be for war because of the innocent lives lost: men, women, and children. Some people might especially be against nuclear war because of innocent lives and it just causes more danger and conflict. In my opinion it is legitimate to argue or criticize about war or any other action a country carries out. This documentary opened my eyes and changed the way I truly saw Nuclear War and the effects and consequences it can have. The Cuban Missile Crisis had very high stakes to cause not only a Nuclear War, but a Nuclear war Holocaust. With being struck with one bomb, there is a possibility we would of bombed Cuba back.

I don't believe we would of surrendered. Other countries would of gotten involved and devastation and loss as of a result from this would have been very great. The fire bombings described in Japan was very disproportionate and unevenly scattered. Cities everywhere in Japan had different numbers of deaths and injuries. Lemay thought this had to be done in order to win the war, even though it was considered " immoral. " This documentary was an eye opener and it really gave good insight on the key ways to being successful in a war. McNamara called it " The Rules of War. "