

# Eisenhower's farewell address



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Eisenhower's Farewell Address Eisenhower was one of the most successful post-war American presidents. He came to fame as the top general in the Second World War before moving into the civilian role of Commander-in-Chief. As a man with a great deal of military experience, his farewell address was especially striking in how he warned of a military-industrial complex. Understanding this concept is vital to understanding much of contemporary American defence policy. A military-industrial complex is a loose or hypothetical group of businesses, lobbyists, politicians and contractors, who believe the American government needs to spend more money on defence. The Pentagon is the headquarters of the Department of Defence. Much of the focus of the complex is on this institution as this is where the money goes and the decisions are made. This was especially true during the height of the Cold War when the U. S. faced an existential threat from the Soviet Union, and members of the complex could use fear to strengthen their arguments. These groups not only felt that America needed to spend more on the military to survive, they also wanted more money spent so that they themselves could be enriched. Many of these programs would not have been a good use of taxpayers funds. For Eisenhower, this was unacceptable. He valued a strong national defence policy, but he was concerned that defence spending was taking over and that it was eating into other programs. He knew that for America to be strong it needed both a powerful military and also the social and cultural programs that made it a beacon of freedom to the world. He believed that too much power in the hands of the military-industrial complex would have negative consequences. Work consulted Bowie, Robert R. and Richard H. Immerman. (1998). *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy*. Oxford University Press.