

# Midland DAILY NEWS

## Northwood debate tackles military intervention

Niky House

March 7, 2015

A recent debate at Griswold Lecture Hall on the campus of Northwood University centered around one question: Are U.S. national interests in the Middle East best advanced by active military intervention?

Max Boot, the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow for national security studies at the Council of Foreign Relations, believes they are.

Doug Bandow, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, does not.

Boot said the U.S. needs to “stay active and involved.” He said that when there is an “American failure to lead and actively intervene... chaos and disorder increase.”

Examples he gave include withdrawals of American troops leading to the “unraveling” of certain areas, as well as the rise of extremist groups and interest in acquiring nuclear weapons.

He also mentioned that because the Middle East contains “60 percent of the world’s oil supply,” we cannot afford to be absent from active leadership in the region.

Bandow argued that “leadership suggests prudence and judgment,” and that “use of the military should be a last resort.” That is because “the costs are high ... not just lives but money.”

He pointed out that our interventions are not necessary for allies who can defend themselves. Also, he believes that intervening can cause other problems, and that “every new problem we create we will be called upon to solve.”

Furthermore, he stated that “war is not the answer to the problem of terrorism.”

Hannah Hammersley, who is a sophomore and is homeschooled in the Owosso area, listened to the merits of both men.

“It is hard to tell; I agree with some of both, but don’t entirely agree with one or the other,” Hammersley said. “I agree that the military should be a last resort, but I also agree with advocating our cause in foreign nations.”

Shane Barron of Flint is a freshman at Northwood studying sports management. He attended the debate for his freshman seminar course.

“This is interesting because it is good to know about what’s going on outside of the U.S., and how people feel about going to war for the right purpose,” Barron said.

He also commented about “how good we’ve got it here compared to other countries.”

Glenn Moots, chair of philosophy and political science as well as director of the Forum for Citizenship and Enterprise at Northwood, lined up the speakers for the debate.

Shirley Russell of Midland said she enjoys the speakers Moots brings to campus.

“I am almost always in attendance,” Russell said. “They are wonderful opportunities to learn.”

Russell also had some thoughts about the evening’s topic.

“I tend to think that other countries tend to dislike us, thinking we are imperial ... and that we tell them what to do,” Russell said. “We really need to watch what we are doing because they have their own cultures and they are not going to throw all that away to become democratic. Eventually, maybe — but not if we force it.”

James Randall Johnson, who teaches political science classes at Northwood, served as the moderator.

Johnson was pleased that these two men, both prominent authors, speakers and leading voices in their corners, were chosen for this debate.

He said both could weigh in with an expert opinion on what he called asymmetric warfare. He explained this as “nation-states fighting against terrorist organizations.”

This has caused an “enormous change in the military,” Johnson said, including military equipment, tactics and deployment strategies. Johnson served as an officer in the U.S. Navy.

From Bandow’s perspective, there are “alternatives to military action,” and “America can fix a lot from home.”

From Boot's perspective, a military presence does not have to mean war. He cited several places worldwide where U.S. troops are present, and additional places where they have protected open commerce, without any casualties.

"The event was very successful, attracting folks from Northwood and the surrounding communities," Moots said. "Both sides were presented eloquently and persuasively and the audience was engaged from first to last."

"This was a good, very lively debate; I think we aired some important differences," Boot said.