Star Wars, A Political Reflection On Society: Movie Review

Abstract

Some believe that art imitates life while others may believe that life imitates art. In the world of movies, it's mostly art imitating life. I am drawing similarities between the masterpiece Star Wars and the world history, Undoubtedly the movie had characters like Jedi, Sith lords, E-woks, droids, etc but the characters were evolved around the ancient Roman Empire, Japanese Shaolin Monks, Samurais, Morden day politicians, and the knight templars. George Lucas was inspired to write about the Vietnam war, the Watergate scandal, US and Soviet Union cold war, the World wars and the world affairs. He created characters, all based on real individuals. But the most interesting part was that when the movie was released people loved the dark side which drew their power from darker raw and intense emotions like anger, hatred, fear, passion, and aggression. Which was definitely not the intention behind the movie. The most fascinating aspect of Star Wars is that the audience related to it on an individual level and intention choosing the dark side, thus completely changing the equations of the concept of Good and the bad. Like Watergate, the storyline of Star Wars continues to resonate in modern times in politics and society and acts as a warning to anyone in public life of the dangers of being too driven by power to not notice the moral, ethical and legal implications of their doings.

Introduction

Reflection on today’s society

In 1973 George Lucas sat down to draft a science fiction movie about a ragtag group of rebels fighting a corrupt central government, and at that time the trial of the Watergate burglars had just begun. [1] The outcome was “Star Wars” which reflected the fraught politics of that moment and served as a good political lesson along with the entertaining story which continues to enthrall the generations, resulting in a masterpiece of epic proportions with faithful followers from all generations. (Tribune,2007)[http://time.com/49758613/star-wars-politics-watergate-george-lucas/]

Watergate scandal interlocking political scandals of the administration of U.S. Pres. Richard Nixon that was revealed following the arrest of five burglars at Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office-apartment-hotel complex in Washington D.C. Facing likely impeachment for his role in covering up the scandal Nixon became the only U.S. president to resign. [[Journal] / auth. Spector Ronald H.. - New York: https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War]

Watergate in simple words is about a man drunk with power and trying to retain the power with any means required. The best example in Star Wars, Emperor Palpatine trying to gain power by manipulating the young Skywalker by offering him a solution from death and power to control the galactic empire. All the wars come down to the same to power, greed, and lust.

But like all art, photography, movies this also escaped their creators’ intentions. As Star Wars” and its sequels broke box office records, it became so popular that its characters, plot devices,

and lingo became a kind of cultural shorthand. Politicians and activists used it to make their arguments. And in the irony of it is that the movie's bad guys were embraced by the very types of people he was warning against. In a way, "Star Wars" was the first political meme of the modern era.

Whatever the artist intends by his writing, it is immaterial. Once he writes, only what people read and interpret from the words becomes reality. I believe this is also true for visual art. An artist may have an intention although this is likely to change many times over the course of making work and after the work is completed, however, that intentions have little or nothing to do with how the work is received by a viewer.

The political history of "Star Wars" began probably with Jimmy Carter like Luke Skywalker a farm boy who went on to bigger things. At Camp David, in 1978 with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat as they held a secret strategy session for the historic Camp David accords. The real breakthrough came in 1983, the same year "return of the Jedi" was released. President Reagan had been lobbying rhetorical attacks at the Soviet Union throughout his first term, but he faced pushback from the more establishment foreign policy types in the white house. One speech at house oof commons had been watered down. The white house's conservatives struck back, taking some of the harsher lines from that speech and adding new jabs to the set, to be delivered before the national association of evangelicals, an address that the foreign policy gurus would overlook. One section of the speech ended up defining Reagan's combative approach to the USSR. "I urge you to beware the temptation of pride the temptation blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil," he said.[Eddy Grant – The Washington post] - [http://time.com/49758613/star-wars-politics-watergate-george-lucas/]

Speechwriter Anthony r. Dolan, who wrote that paragraph, later denied that the term "evil empire" was inspired by the galactic empire in "Star Wars," but the image stuck in large part because of that resonance. The Soviets decried the "evil empire speech," as it came to be known, and Reagan himself walked the phrase back in a 1988 meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachevian, arguing it came "from another time, another era." [Carroll Nicole. USA today] [http://time.com/49758613/star-wars-politics-watergate-george-lucas/]

When he gave a second speech a few weeks later calling for a space-based missile defense system, critics dubbed it "star wars," and the name stuck. By 1985, even a group supporting the strategic defense initiative was using the name in its ads leading to an unsuccessful lawsuit on trademark infringement from Lucasfilm Ltd.

From the 1980s onwards, the congressional record is littered with references to Skywalkers and Yodas, death stars and Darth Vader's. Quotes from the movie were repeated and garbled. President Obama famously mangled the "Jedi mind trick." And analogies are stretched beyond all recognition. [source google]

The argument first made a splash in 2002 in the conservative weekly standard, which argued as "attack of the clones" was hitting theatres that Emperor Palpatine was a dictator. During the Bush administration, vice president Dick Cheney was called Darth Vader by critics so often that he embraced the nickname, dressing up his black lab in a Vader costume for Halloween in 2007

and joking that it was “one of the nicer things I’ve been called recently.” [Carroll Nicole. USA today] Eventually, he began using the “imperial march” Vader’s instantly recognizable theme as his walk-up music in political appearances. [Carroll Nicole. USA today]

Cheney was still mostly joking. But by 2015, conservative writers were regularly celebrating the galactic empire on twitter. And in an interview shortly after the 2016 election with the Hollywood reporter, Donald trump’s then-adviser and beriberi news executive Steve cannon made clear he was not just making a contrarian joke. “Darkness is good,” he said, arguing it helps distract political opponents. “Dick Cheney. Darth Vader. Satan. That’s power. It only helps us when they get it wrong. When they’re blind to who we are and what we’re doing.” [Eric Geller - CORRUPTION, EXPLOITATION, AND DECAY: THE POLITICS OF STAR WARS]

Somewhere, George Lucas must have surely winced, at least twice. He had already made clear in 2009 that he viewed Cheney not as Darth Vader “a promising young man who is turned to the dark side by an older politician” but rather as that older politician, Emperor Palpatine. And Palpatine, after all, was the character he modeled after Nixon all those years earlier. [Eric Geller - CORRUPTION, EXPLOITATION, AND DECAY: THE POLITICS OF STAR WARS]

But that’s the thing about art. As a creator, you can have an idea, and how people should respond to it politically is not in anyone’s control. But all you can do is put it out there. After that, the audience does what it wants.

The plot of Star Wars.

Episode 1: The Phantom Menace

The seeds for the eventual rise of the evil Empire are sown in a seemingly routine place, a trade dispute between the Republic and the Trade Federation. Two Jedi, the keepers of peace and justice, are dispatched to negotiate the dispute. They end up barely escaping with their lives. They end up on remote Tatooine, where they meet slave boy Anakin Skywalker and his protocol droid C3PO. Jedi Qui-Gon Jinn senses the Force in Anakin and believes he's the 'Chosen One' who will bring balance to the Force. There's a pod race and Anakin is freed. Qui-Gon wants to train Anakin, but the Jedi Council knows something is up with this boy and rejects it. But he helps the Republic win a battle against the Trade Federation, so the Council lets Obi-Wan Kenobi take him as his apprentice.

(The political institutions of “Star Wars” such as the Senate, Republic and Empire and the Latin names of characters such as chancellors Valorem and Palpatine echo those of ancient Rome.[As Tony Keen notes in “Star Wars and History,”] the architecture on the planet Naboo resembles that of imperial Rome, and the pod race in “The Phantom Menace” rivals that of the Roman chariot race seen on screen in [“Ben-Hur.”] The transition from the democratic Galactic Republic to the dictatorial Galactic Empire over the course of the franchise also mirrors that of ancient Rome.)

Episode 2: Attack of the Clones

Anakin is older now. The weird trade dispute has grown to a full-scale revolt against the Republic. Anakin is assigned to protect Republic loyalist Sen. Padme Amidala, and they fall in

love. Meanwhile, Obi-Wan discovers that a Jedi master has ordered the creation of an army of clones based on a single bounty hunter, Jingo Fett, whom Obi-Wan determines is the assassin trying to kill Padme though he does not know why. He also has no idea why the Jedi have ordered up a clone army. Meanwhile, Anakin's mother is murdered, and he freaks out, channeling the dark side that everyone knows he has in him. The full-scale revolt against the Republic is being led by Count Dooku, a former Jedi, who has built his own droid army. Under pressure, the Galactic Senate votes the Chancellor emergency powers, which. The two armies battle and the Jedi and the Clones barely win. The movie ends with the revelation that Dooku, the revolt, the clones, and the droids are all being controlled by an evil Sith Lord, who is the Chancellor.

(At the end of World War II, political and military tensions between the United States and its one-time ally the Soviet Union increased dramatically. The U.S. perceived communism, a social, economic and political ideology encouraged by the Soviet Union and China, as a significant threat to its national security and power. Fearing communism would spread over to Vietnam and potentially Southeast Asia, the U.S. opposed the communist independence movement there. [Spector Ronald H - New York - https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War] This can be compared to the events of the movie. United States and rRepublicand the Soviet Union as the trade federation.)

Episode 3: Revenge of the Sith

The Chancellor has been captured by a revolt leader General Grievous, Obi-Wan and Anakin rescue him heroically. The Chancellor, seeking to draw out Anakin's dark side, demands that Anakin assassinate Dooku, which he does. Anakin is dealing with his demons, including visions of Padme dying in childbirth. The Council declines to elevate him to Master status, so the Chancellor puts him on the Jedi Council as his representative. He also brags to Anakin that he knows how to harness the dark side to cheat death though you can't learn that from any Jedi. Anakin eventually figures out that the Chancellor is a Sith Lord, but when the Jedi try to arrest him, Anakin comes to his aid because he still wants to save Padme from the visions of death. The Chancellor makes Anakin his apprentice and dubs him Darth Vader. He also orders him to kill everyone, including younglings, though a few Jedi, including Yoda, escape. Obi-Wan tries to stop him with an epic lightsabre battle on the molten planet Mustafa, leaving Anakin next to a lava river as little more than a burnt-up torso. The Chancellor saves him, puts him in Darth Vader's famous black suit and they start the Death Star. Padme dies in childbirth and her twins, Luke and Leia are separated and hidden from the now-Empire, with Leia going to Adlerian and Luke ending up on Tatooine, with Obi-Wan going into exile there to watch over the boy.

(While the elite Jedi who guard peace and justice in the Galactic Republic bear similarities to Japanese samurai and Shaolin monks, they also echo the medieval monastic military order of the Knights Templar. The Templars write [Terrance MacMullan in “Star Wars and History,”] [“were esteemed above other knights for their austerity, devotion, and moral purity. Like the Jedi, they practiced individual poverty within a military-monastic order that commanded great material resources.”] A 12-member council of elders headed by a grandmaster governed both the Jedi and the Templars, and Jedi clothing even resembled the hooded white robes worn by the Christian warrior-monks who took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Much like the Great Jedi Purge ordered by Chancellor Palpatine in “Revenge of the Sith,” France’s King Philip IV annihilated the Knights Templar after arresting hundreds of them on October 13, 1307,

and subsequently torturing and executing them for heresy.)

Episode 4: A New Hope

Now older, Luke is just a moisture farmer's boy with no idea of his backstory. But Leia is a major figure in a new rebellion against the Empire. Her ship is attacked by Vader, who makes no mention of the fact that he's her dad. She sneaks the stolen plans for the Death Star into R2-D2, who ends up escaping to Tatooine with C3PO, who is as shrill as ever. The droids end up in service to Luke and his family, but R2 escapes to find Obi-Wan. Few have seen such loyalty in a droid. Obi-Wan tells Luke about his father but leaves out all the part about him turning evil. They hook up with roguish Han Solo for a flight on the Millennium Falcon so they can get to Alderman and join the rebellion. First, Solo shoots first and kills Greed. Then they take off. Enrooted, the Death Star proves that it's the ultimate power in the universe by destroying Alderman in one shot. The Falcon comes out of hyperspace into the rubble. The ship is captured by the Empire. Obi-Wan sneaks around and shuts down the forcefield so the Falcon and passengers can escape, but he's struck down by Vader as he flees. The rebels still have the plans for the Death Star and plot a suicide mission that involves dropping a laser bomb into a tiny vent shaft. Solo declined to participate because, hey, he must pay off Jabba the Hutt anyway. Luke is disappointed, but Solo shows up just in time to save his life and allow him to finish his mission, using the Force and his experience bulls-eyeing womb rats in his T-16. Many celebrations ensue.

(The tense relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the threat of nuclear annihilation lurking in the background, was hardly history when “Star Wars” first premiered in 1977. The threat to the planet posed by nuclear weapons was encapsulated on screen in the ultimate weapon of mass destruction the Death Star which destroyed Princess Leia’s home planet of Alderaan, a blue orb that closely resembled Earth. “Star Wars” itself entered the realm of Cold War history after it was adopted by the media in the 1980s as a nickname for President Ronald Reagan’s proposed Strategic Defense Initiative, which would have used lasers to defend the United States against incoming nuclear missiles. [Tony Keen])

Episode 5: Empire Strikes Back

Vader pursues the rebels to a new hideout on the ice planet of Hot. Luke is visited by the spirit of Obi-Wan and told to go to Dagobah to study the ways of the Force with Yoda. Han and Leia barely escape and head to the Cloud City run by Han's scoundrel friend Lando Calrissian. As the Falcon was tracked by Boba Fett Jingo’s revenge-seeking son who alerts Vader what's going on. He shows up and captures Leia and freezes Han in carbonite so Boba Fett can take him to Jabba. Vader has little interest in Solo because he doesn't have the Force. Lando helps Leia escape, but then Luke bails on his training and shows up, where Vader reveals that he's Luke's father. Luke barely escapes, Lando and Chewbacca head to Tatooine to free Han and Luke and Leia.

Episode 6: Return of the Jedi

Luke and Leia head to Tatooine to save Han, but Leia is taken as a slave and given a super-hot metal bikini. Using super-Jedi powers, Luke infiltrates Jabba's palace and gives Jabba one last warning. The crime boss ignores it and captures Luke. He takes him, Lando, Chewy, and Han to

a Salic pit intending to drop them in to be digested over many years, but they turn the tables on him. Luke goes for more training and Yoda reveals that Darth Vader really is his father. Meanwhile, Han and Leia try to stop the completion of a second Death Star by knocking out an energy field that is protecting the construction site. Vader brings Luke to the Death Star to meet the Emperor, who tempts Luke to give in to his dark side. At one point, the Emperor even asks Luke to kill Vader to take his place, but Luke won't do it. he's a Jedi, he says, 'like my father' That redeems Vader, who kills the Emperor, but dies in the process but not before revealing to Luke that he still has good in him. The forcefield down, the rebels destroy the second Death Star and there is much rejoicing. Leia tells Han she loves him.

(The guerilla war waged by the Rebel Alliance against the Galactic Empire mirrored the battle between an insurgent force and a global superpower that was playing out in Vietnam as Lucas wrote “Star Wars”. The filmmaker, who was originally set to direct to the Vietnam War film “Apocalypse Now” in the early 1970s before moving on to “Star Wars,” said in an audio commentary on the 2004 re-release of “Return of the Jedi” that the Viet Cong served as his inspiration for the furry forest-dwelling Ewoks, who were able to defeat a vastly superior opponent in spite of their primitive weapons. As William J. Astore writes in “Star Wars and History,” both the Viet Cong and Ewoks were well-served by their “superior knowledge of the local terrain and an ability to blend into that terrain.”)

Conclusion

The bane of war is the worst curse human beings have cast upon themselves and ironically, they have willingly done so since time immemorable. It’s the fragile human ego mixed with greed and power that has always been the core reason for all the wars in the world.

with myopic vision, limited with greed, ego, and power humans fail to see the sufferings caused by themselves to themselves, as well as others. It’s the most senseless thing humans can do and still, this is what they keep doing in the guise of some reason or the other. But war is a war is a war. The raging wars in the world, have led to the total breakdown of the economy of many countries. In case of the war by the USA on Vietnam, shattered her economy. people suffered loses of their dear ones in Vietnam as well as the USA. Postwar, Vietnam was slapped with inhuman sanctions which did not allow her economy to come back to normalcy till date. In the fictional world of Star Wars, the galactic empire took a loan to build the first Death Star, which was destroyed by Luke Skywalker in episode 4: a New Hope. To build the second Death Star, which was 10 times larger than the original one, they raised the taxes across the universe. After the fall of Emperor Palpatine, the economy of the galaxy spiraled downward. It took the New Republic nearly twenty years to bring it back to normalcy. In light of the above arguments, the economy seems to be the tool of power for any country. And whenever it is misused it’s the end of the world. What I really want to say, that humanity is doomed. The world is a hoax, and it will end, and everyone will die.

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