

# Some Reflections on War

## Many required to stop what one can start

By Frank G. Splitt  
May 4, 2022

It was the spring of 1990, just two years after the book *Breakthrough: Emerging New Thinking* was published in the United States at the behest of the Beyond War Foundation.<sup>1</sup> In the book, co-edited by Professors Anatoly Gromyko and Martin Hellman, Soviet and Western Scholars issued a challenge to build a world beyond war.

At the time, my wife Judy and I were active in the Beyond War Movement. I was the vice president of technology planning for the Central Region of Northern Telecom Inc. My counterpart at Ameritech was Dr. Joel Engel, its chief technology officer.

On the occasion of one of our frequent business luncheon meetings, Joel said he really admired the Beyond War Foundation's efforts to address the challenge of building a world beyond war, but warned that no matter how many converts that we made to the cause of enduring peace in the world, it would only take one person to trigger a war. How right he was.

Only a few months later, on August 2, 1990, Dictator Saddam Hussein was the "one" who led Iraqi troops in the invasion of the oil-producing nation of Kuwait.

It was truly unfortunate that Ken Burns' informative documentary film "The War" would not be available for viewing for another six years. It was ironic that Episode Seven: "A World Without War" began with compelling anti-thematic remarks by the late Samuel Hynes, a WWII Marine fighter pilot who went on to become a prize-winning author with a long career as a renowned professor of English literature at Swarthmore, Northwestern, and Princeton. His remarks follow:

The world contains evil. And if it didn't contain evil we probably wouldn't need to try to construct religions. No evil no God I think. No of course, no evil no war, but this is not a human possibility that we need to entertain. There will always be plenty of evil. And there will always be wars because human beings are aggressive animals.

There is a popular phrase warning against complacency in the face of evil: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Today we have Russian President Vladimir Putin and his aggressive war against Ukraine, a sovereign neighboring nation, as today's "one." We also have a good man, Pope Francis, who, though not complacent, appears to be on the road to irrelevancy as he refuses to assert his moral authority—framing Putin's aggression against Ukraine as Cain-and-Abel-like fratricide and prompted by NATO. This is a position that is sure to ring hollow in the annals of history.<sup>2</sup>

We also have the hamstrung United Nations where Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, invaded Ukraine and has done everything that this institution was created to prevent. Because of Russia's veto power on its Security Council the U.N. is currently proving to be irrelevant, unable to assert its moral authority. If Ukraine falls and the Russian aggression is allowed to stand, it is likely that the U.N. in its current form will fall as well.

On the other hand, if there is a negotiated peace that results in Russia gaining the entire eastern region of Ukraine, it would likely be seen as payoff for Russia's aggression, coerced by Putin's repeated threats of nuclear war. That would surely put an end to post-WWII world order as we knew it. There could be potentially dire consequences with regard to world peace and security.

It could also be argued that it's the price to be paid by the West for its cavalier, sometimes provocative if not condescending, post-cold war relationship with Russia. A practical Realpolitik view would see this as an opportunity for a do-over based on the Ukraine learning experience. More importantly, it would also provide motivation to avert a nuclear holocaust.<sup>3</sup>

World War II was successfully fought to end the imperial ambitions of despotic evil leaders—Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo. Putin is no less despotic. It is time to think of the future and political countermeasures. For example, Pope Francis can speak clearly about Putin's murderous war against Ukraine and its civilian population.

The Pope's declaration could possibly provide an incentive for the U.N.'s General Assembly to do whatever it takes to either remove the veto power from members of its Security Council or reorganize with its original main purpose of maintaining international peace and security, but structured in way to prevent deadlock by a member state armed with a nuclear arsenal.

Finally, the West still does not have an exit strategy for the dangerously volatile situation in Ukraine—letting emotion, rather than logic and reality, govern its actions would be a recipe for disaster. Therefore, Realpolitik should be the order of the day, but what else?

We must consider the possibility that Putin may, for whatever reason, break the nuclear taboo.<sup>4</sup> So, if it is not already doing so, the Biden administration should take full advantage of the related deep experience and strategic thinking of George Beebe,<sup>5, 6</sup> Martin Hellman,<sup>7, 8</sup> and Robert M. Gates.<sup>9-12</sup> Their wisdom, coupled with that of Pope Francis and others, could be representative of the “many” required to stop the war in Ukraine—rendering breakthrough deterrence of a nuclear holocaust.

## REFERENCES

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