

“IF WAR GOES ON...”: THE IMPERATIVE OF ‘JOINED-UP THINKING’ IN THE SEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Remarks in Response to Assigned Question: “Can International Security and Cooperative Security Be Combined?”

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My title alludes to *If the War Goes On*, ‘Reflections on War and Politics’ by Hermann Hesse, from which I’d like to read two quotes, first from a December 1917 essay, *Shall There Be Peace?*: “The bigger, the bloodier, the more destructive these final battles of the World War prove to be, the less will be accomplished for the future, the less hope there will be of appeasing hatreds and rivalries, or of doing away with the idea that political aims can be attained by the criminal instrumentality of war.” And from a December 1918 article, *The Path of Love*: “Good ideas are in the air – the brotherhood of man, a League of Nations, friendly cooperation among all peoples, disarmament. There has been much talk of them both here and in the enemy countries, some of it not very serious. We must take these ideas seriously...[f]or never again must we revert to what we were: a powerful people with a great deal of money and many cannon, governed by money and cannon. ... To do so would be to renounce everything which, prompted by deep affliction and desperate self-knowledge, we have done and begun...”

The ‘Great War,’ I believe – and the catastrophically non-cooperative ‘peace’ supposedly ‘concluding’ it – continues to haunt and distort our geopolitics. Sarajevo in 1914 opened the door to total industrial war, a ‘path of hate’ leading in just 30 years to the unprecedentedly devastating ‘criminal instrumentalities’ of both the Holocaust and Hiroshima. And how understand the tragedy of Sarajevo in the 1990s except as a recurrence of the nightmare triggered by a fanatic assassin in the occupied territories of an unsustainable – insecurely non-cooperative – empire?

And what do we see ‘in parenthesis,’ in the ‘short twentieth century’ bracketed by these ‘two Sarajevos’? We see millions of people, and many governments, take *very* seriously the ‘good ideas’ of brother- and sisterhood, cooperation and disarmament, demanding an end to what the United Nations Charter, “prompted by deep affliction and desperate self-knowledge,” called unequivocally, and with Zero Tolerance, “the scourge of war.” In his December 1918 article, Hesse wrote that if the overthrow of the Kaiser’s autocracy “has been a mere attempt to get off easier, to shirk some part of our fate, then this revolution is worthless.” Hopes of a sustained *German* commitment to peace, of course, perished in the perfect storm of the Versailles Treaty, the Great Depression and the Hitler dictatorship; but the broader *human* point is that by the time the UN Charter was penned, it was clear *The Fate of the Earth*, as Jonathan Schell would call his 1982 masterpiece, would be sealed if we continued to “shirk” *the* task at hand: the non-violent overthrow of “money and cannon”.

Schell’s critique, however, was directed at the persistence since 1945 of precisely that ‘dual monarchy,’ its self-serving, zero-sum, weaponized logic twisted into the surreal ‘new’ shape of the nuclear arms race, a Superpower cycle of hot and cold rivalry broken only by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s *deadly* serious embrace of cooperative, mutual, demilitarized security across and beyond Europe. “It is evident,” Gorbachev told the UN in December 1988,

“that force or the threat of force neither can nor should be instruments of foreign policy,” and that “this mainly refers to nuclear arsenals, but not to them alone.” “Life” itself, he argued – the existential threat to humanity, from humanity – was “making us abandon traditional stereotypes and outdated views”: “The very idea of the nature and criteria of progress is changing. To assume that the problems tormenting humankind can be solved by the means and methods that were used...in the past is naïve.” “And now,” he concluded, “for the most important thing of all, without which no other issue of the forthcoming age can be solved, that is, *disarmament*,” the reversal of nothing less than what he called, I think perfectly, “*the militarization of thought*.”

As the Soviet scholar Evgeny Pozdniakov wrote in *New Thinking & International Relations* (1989), a “negative” peace based on “deterrence, fear and intolerance” is “contrary to the idea as such” of the “democratisation and humanisation” of the global order, the shaping of a “positive peace” in which war “in effect [is] done away with as a means of policy in the framework of integration-based alliances.” In the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* (November 1990), leaders declared that the Continent “is liberating itself from the legacy of the past”: a legacy dominated since at least the Concert of Europe in 1815 by armed blocs and a ‘balance’ of power. What, surely, such ‘liberation’ implied and required was the creation of a post-bloc, pan-European, radically demilitarized, completely denuclearized security framework. And what, in the place of such ‘positive peace,’ did we get? The most negative development imaginable: the expansion of NATO.

In June 1997 President Bill Clinton received an Open Letter from over 40 luminaries of the bipartisan American foreign and defence policy establishment, convinced that “the current U.S.-led effort to expand NATO...is a policy error of historic proportions,” bound to “decrease allied security and unsettle European stability.” In Russia, they noted – which “does not now pose a threat to its western neighbors” – NATO expansion is “opposed across the entire political spectrum” and will only “strengthen the non-democratic opposition, undercut those who favor reform and cooperation with the West” and “bring the Russians to question the entire post-Cold War settlement.” Such sage (may we say Pugwash-ian?) advice fell on deaf presidential ears, a whisper of wisdom drowned by the drumbeat of the new Cold Warriors. At the recent funeral of former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Clinton stated that “the cancers of the 20th century” were “born” of the belief “that domination was better than cooperation.” Yet through the old, cold thinking of ‘to the victor belongs the spoils,’ Clinton, Kohl and other Western leaders spurned the chance to eliminate the disease of division from 21st century Europe.

Canada was the first NATO state to endorse expansion: and the only one to do so without a vote, by Order-in-Council. As NDP MP Bill Blaikie complained to an almost empty House of Commons in June 1998: “Through NATO enlargement we are committing...Canada’s armed forces to the defence [of] new members such as the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. Was this ever debated in parliament?” “We did not,” Blaikie pointed out, “just commit our armed forces to the defence of those three countries, we committed Canada, given NATO’s flexible use doctrine when it comes to nuclear weapons, to a nuclear exchange with whomever would breach those boundaries...without so much as a sentence being uttered in defence of that...decision.”

I need not describe to anyone here the precipitous decline in international security in the last 20 years: the squandering of the promised ‘peace dividend’, the multiple hypocrisies and depravities

of the ‘war on terror,’ and in Europe the near-total collapse of the Gorbachev agenda and the roaring return of ‘negative peace’ (and fresh bloodletting) complete with a blurring and lowering of the nuclear threshold. Reflecting this rehabilitation of “deterrence, fear and intolerance,” a speech on Canada’s ‘foreign policy priorities’ by Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland on June 6 this year, omitting *any* mention of disarmament, referred to the “use of force” as something which “must be part of our future,” without which “diplomacy” is apparently worthless. “Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments”: we take our 21st-century cue, it seems, not from Hermann Hesse or Mikhail Gorbachev but the 18th-century King of Prussia, Frederick the Great. And the day after Freeland spoke, Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan unveiled ambitious plans to expand the Maple Leaf ‘orchestra’ – by 88 fighter planes, 15 warships, armed drones, a 70% increase in non-cooperative ‘hard power’ spending over 20 years compared to *no* increase for a supposedly new ‘feminist’ foreign aid policy and a conspicuously absent commitment to peacekeeping.

To conclude: such perverse priorities reflect the lack of what the Government of Ireland has taken to calling “joined-up thinking” with regard to international security, the coordination of response and research, analysis and action on a range of pressing issues around the unifying – Ireland says, the ‘horizontal’ – theme of disarmament, “the most important thing of all.” Now, exactly what a joined-up foreign and defence policy for Canada would look like has been articulated in detail, for example in the July 2016 ‘Submission by Leading Civil Society Organizations’ – including Canadian Pugwash – ‘to the Defence Policy Review,’ entitled *A Shift to Sustainable Peace and Common Security*. The Submission urged that, “with no direct military threat to Canadian territory, we should restore and expand emphasis on war prevention and peaceful conflict resolution and give priority to building the United Nations envisaged by its Charter.” Noting recent UN resolutions and reports “embracing the language and perspective of sustainable peace,” it then enumerated interlocking recommendations for converting that ‘embrace’ into policy: reinvigorating peacekeeping, improving rapid response mechanisms, prioritising civil capacity over military capability, banning the world’s most indiscriminate weapons, etc., etc. And it then fell on deaf ears.

So the question isn’t really *can* international and cooperative security be combined, but *why* they haven’t been. And the answer is *war*.

A hundred years ago, shortly before Hermann Hesse charted his *Path of Love*, Wilfred Owen anticipated ‘The Next War,’ far greater than the so-called ‘Great’ one, when “every fighter brags/He fights on Death, for lives; not men, for flags.” Instead, humanity’s worst nightmare has come true: the War goes on...

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