



RUSSIA THEN AND NOW - HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF?

By Gonzalo Santos

A proper understanding of the deeper historical meaning of what is happening in Ukraine today may be gained by comparing Russia's naked imperialist war against Ukraine with a similar one a little more than century ago, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05.

Though the contexts are different, the polarized geopolitical conditions, logic and intensity of renewed great power rivalries— especially in Eurasia - are actually quite the same: the earlier war reflected the “scramble for Asia,” as British global hegemony waned and the overextended British imperialists found themselves increasingly unable to “catch ten fleas with ten fingers.”

The present war reflects a renewed “scramble for Europe” in the post-Cold War years, under conditions of waning US global hegemony, as the hobbled American imperialists have been working overtime to retain, expand, and repurpose its European NATO “iron fingers” to “catch many more fleas” – with some successes (Bosnia/Kosovo, Libya), but some spectacular failures (Iraq, Afghanistan). And now it's come up against a direct challenge by the Russian Bear (with an assist by the Chinese Dragon).

The major actors have remained pretty much the same, despite the dramatic *do-over* of the world's architecture of power after World War II envisioned, built, and enforced under American leadership during the Cold War era (1945-1991) – which, no small feat, restored peace among the world's great powers, transferring all “hot” policing or proxy wars to areas of the Global

South, then called the Third World, and a few behind the “Iron Curtain” in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe. After the bipolar world order crumbled in 1989, and the lost its logic and appeal to all actors on the world stage, it was just a matter of time that global geopolitical tensions among the major powers would arise again.

Today’s atrophied world governance architecture is precisely what recent American presidents have been calling the “rules-based international order” (with the notorious exception of Trump, an extreme unilateralist outlier). The US has been harshly enforcing it since December, 1989, just one month after the fall of the Berlin Wall, against much lesser powerful Third World challengers – Noriega’s Panama, Milošević’s Serbia, Hussein’s Iraq, Taliban’s Afghanistan, the Ayatollahs’ Iran, Gaddafi’s Libya, Kim’s North Korea, and of course, through Israel, continuously against the Palestinian Authority.

The novelty lies in that this “order” has now been directly and militarily challenged by Russia, if over the course of the past two decades it’s been economically challenged by the BRICS countries – thus the creation of the G-20 enlarged forum for airing grievances against the US-imposed economic order, with limited results. The US-built world order is now being increasingly challenged by *other* world powers, besides lesser powers in the Global South.

Back to comparing, in more detail, the Russo-Ukrainian war today with the Russo-Japanese war of 1904. The attached 1904 cartoon, published in the famous satirical British magazine *Punch*, could have easily been published and understood today, just substituting “Ukraine” for “Manchuria.”

I. RUSSIA’S IMPERIALIST WAR WITH JAPAN: The Russo-Japanese War was fought between the Empire of Japan and the Russian Empire in 1904 and settled on 1905 over rival imperial ambitions in China’s Manchuria and the adjacent Korean Empire.

The decisive military action of that war was the naval battle at Port Arthur – the Russian naval base “leased” from the crumbling Chinese Empire in the province of Liaoning, Southern Manchuria –, where a powerful and modernized Japanese navy surprised and defeated the Russian navy on 9 February, 1904.

The stunning victory for Imperial Japan’s nascent naval power – the crown jewel of the Meiji Restoration (1868-1889), surprised international observers and transformed the balance of power in both East Asia and the world, signaling Japan’s emergence as the only Asian world power on par with rival European Empires and the U.S. (though the cartoon, published just after Japan’s victory, minimized it in typical Eurocentric fashion). It also signaled the steep decline of the Russian Empire’s prestige and influence in the Pacific Rim region and eastern Europe. It even sparked the first, unsuccessful, Russian Revolution of 1905.

This early 20th-century war set the stage, among other inter-imperialist tensions, for World War I breaking out a mere ten years later - a generalized global imperialist war among *all* major powers for the re-division of the world (1914-18). In its wake, it sparked the successful Russian Revolution of 1917-22, which abolished the Russian Empire altogether and ushered in the socialist USSR “superpower” (1922 to 1991), capable of soundly defeating the revanchist

German Nazi threat (1939-45) and carving for itself all of Eastern Europe as its primary “sphere of influence” after the Yalta Pact with the rising and departing global hegemon, the US and the UK respectively.

II. RUSSIA & EUROPE AFTER THE COLD WAR: The USSR – which I will not examine in its heyday as the “other” nuclear superpower in the Cold War era of U.S. global hegemony (1945-1989) – broke apart into 16 independent republics on Christmas Day in 1991, a mere two years after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, without a single shot fired. Armed to the teeth and by far the largest country by geographic size, it essentially imploded by the weight of its own insoluble contradictions – a bureaucratic empire with a chronic stagnant economy, an oversized military industrial complex, and a ruthless, centralized, authoritarian state. Among the new republics formed along the contours of the former Moscow centrally-managed “Soviet Republics,” the diminished heir to both the USSR superpower and the previous Russian Empire was rebirthed as the Russian Federation. The Russian Bear such as it survived this “extreme haircut” reemerged incongruously growling with nuclear teeth, indulging in rampant consumerism, fomenting crony capitalism, and renewing the old Orthodox Russian Church – State iron-clad marriage for good measure. By 2000 it became clear where all this mix was heading in Russia: *Putinism* in pious and irredentist defense of *Mother Russia*. (It’s uncanny how the US, too, has transformed itself since 9/11/2001 in the same jingoistic, nationalistic, authoritarian direction, though it has never shed its *American exceptionalist* bipartisan sense of being *the* God-ordained hegemonic “indispensable nation” of the world.)

The geopolitical architecture of Europe, too, was transformed after the dissolution of the USSR. From being previously divided into two rigid and rival ideological/military/economic camps – the two “spheres of influence” hegemonized by the US and the USSR – it quickly reunified as a single European zone of the Global North, but with the pared-down Russian Federation only *semi-incorporated*, invited to join the G-7 club of rich powers as the poor cousin of the now enlarged to “G-8.” The East European-Soviet military alliance (Warsaw Pact) immediately dissolved, while its counterpart, the West European-US-Canada NATO *Atlanticist Alliance* immediately expanded: first allowing a reunified Germany to join – a hard pill for Boris Yeltsin to swallow – then admitting 13 other East European countries and former Soviet republics, all done at the urging of the US and *without* showing any inclination to eventually include an eager Russia into this enlarged pan-European/American security arrangement.

This humiliating, and in time unsustainable, geopolitical imbalance – initially more the product of the need to launch and execute pressing new US-led policing operations around the world (starting with the Baltic wars of Yugoslavia’s partition), and Russia’s own severe economic downsizing, signified the unfinished business, in geopolitical terms, inherited from the previous Cold War partition of Europe, and as such, planted a ticking bomb that was sure to go off if and when Russia recovered economically and consolidated its authoritarian state, both of which it did by 2008.

When that happened, the US, embroiled in its own “endless wars” in Central Asia, was not interested in accommodating Russia as a reemerged world power with long-earned legitimate claims (the defeat of the Nazis, foremost) to be included in the security architecture for Europe. Instead, beginning duplicitously in the neoliberal Bill Clinton-Boris Yeltsin “honeymoon years,”

and more overtly after the arrival of the neocon regime of George W. Bush, the US planners easily fell back into their customary zero-sum mentality, turning the eastward expansion of NATO into its instrument to contain and encircle the Russian Bear, to great acclaim by the eastern European countries, quite besides deploying it in the service of US global policing functions and empire-building ambitions. The US use of NATO in Central Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa, would in time boomerang back into Europe. The unfinished business and unaddressed geopolitical imbalances left over from the Cold War would, in time, set off today's direct military Russian challenge.

Why did it take so long? The geopolitical imbalance in Europe at the expense of a reconstituted Russian Federation was mitigated by a few major counter-trends, delaying by three decades today's war:

* As Russia converted its bankrupted, centrally-planned socialist economy into an oligarchic "crony capitalist" one, major infusions of mostly western European capital helped cushion the tremendous "shock therapy" that pauperized its population and created a class of billionaire oligarchs overnight. There was international capitalist elite collusion with the former Communist Party bosses in Russia to re-integrate Russia into the financial and interenterprise circuits of the capitalist world-economy under a US-imported neoliberal, plunderous model of "primitive accumulation" that placated –even satiated – the new rulers of Russia. Vladimir Putin rose to power and enriched himself and his cronies in this era, with the blessings of the U.S., whose top investors and speculators also profited handsomely – none more than the Carlyle Group, which manages the Bush family's wealth, and whose scion George W. famously looked into Putin's soul and was most pleased. He had a very good reason to like him.

* The mighty European Union was formed in 1993 by 12 rich western European countries, which subsequently expanded eastward to conform today's 27 countries – the world's second-largest economic block (with a 2020 GDP of over \$15 trillion, compared to the US's \$20.9T and China's \$14.7T). This had the *dual* stabilizing effect of enticing oligarchic Russia to willingly move towards its fuller integration with the EU, *and* diminishing considerably the influence of the United States in European economic affairs. Sure enough, when oil prices rebounded, the EU sought – and the US opposed, unsuccessfully – building major oil and gas pipelines linking it with Russia. The House of Europe might still shed its security asymmetries as well down the road, it was dangled to Putin – a plausible prospect which the US seemed then to be helpless to prevent.

* The United States underwent a series of spectacular, debilitating financial and "burst-bubble" crises, a string of disastrous wars in central Asia, and evermore severe social polarization and internal political turmoil in the 1990s and especially after 9/11/2001 – all of which sharply set it back as a world power and reduced its global influence. The "sole remaining superpower," so ballyhooed by American strategic thinkers and US media, turned out to *also* be on a steep decline, not just its former nemesis. This gave comfort to Russia and alarm the US's allies, aghast at the reckless military adventurism of Bush II and its unrestrained imperial hubris.

* The spectacular rise of China to economic superpower status since it joined the World Trade Organization in December, 2001, which helped to grow the global economic system in East Asia's favor (less so the geopolitical system). Russia now saw itself as not so encircled and menaced, but well-poised to benefit from renewed strategic relations with its economic powerhouse neighbor in East Asia. The Chinese, in turn, diplomatically coordinated with the Russians to collaborate on defusing hot spots such as assisting in the negotiations for an Iranian nuclear deal, to rein in *both* the US and Iran.

III. THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR: In this era of renewed great power rivalries and increased chaos in the interstate system, the Russian Bear began rattling its sabre, venturing as far as Syria in 2015 to successful prop-up and save the brutal Bashar al-Assad regime, not just from its own people but from an array of hostile, competing, external actors; it invaded Georgia in 2008 and retaining some of its territory; it annexed the Crimean Peninsula and occupied the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine in 2014. Accelerated by US open overtures for Ukrainian accession into NATO, the Russian-European-American ticking bomb previously described finally blew off on February of this year - though the Americans and Europeans were quick to disingenuously disavow having played any role in assembling it in the first place.

How is the Russo-Ukrainian war now raging playing out? And what are the prospects of reaching a negotiated outcome – one that would accommodate all players, prevent triggering a much larger NATO-Russian conflagration, stop the destruction of Ukraine and help rebuild it, and set Europe, Russia, and the United States on a path towards building a new, more stable, more inclusive, European security architecture? And even if all this is achieved, what are the broader prospects for world peace in this new era of great power rivalries? In this section we look at the timing, execution, and immediate prospects for this war.

Putin's full-fledged, all-out war with Ukraine was clearly timed to preempt Biden's recent accession to power (just like Trump's January 6 insurrection was timed to prevent it), to take advantage of NATO's disarray previously caused by Trump's retrenchment from Europe, Europe's dependency on Russian oil & gas, and, finally timed to quickly establish new "facts on the ground" that would throw the US & the European Union out of balance and drive a wedge between them.

Resentment and retribution for three long decades of the *Atlanticist alliance* not taking seriously Russia's great power claims no doubt led to the final decision to invade Ukraine this past February 24. Putin also felt confident that China (who if not "laughing," as the 1904 cartoon depicts it when Russian Emperor Nicholas II declared war on Japan, had quietly provided encouragement) would function as an alternative economic outlet, a vast haven from western sanctions, and a strategic ally in case all-out war broke out with the NATO.

Furthermore, Putin's strategists calculated, correctly, that all major actors in the Global South – India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico - would abstain from involvement in sanctions or much else substantially, having a clearer understanding that this war resulted from renewed world power rivalries, aside the righteous, universal indignation and repudiation the unprovoked attack on a democratic, peace-loving Ukraine would elicit. The US/NATO fingerprints were everywhere,

and Biden would have a much harder time rallying *these* countries behind his harsh sanctions.

On this point, Putin's calculation proved right, though he suffered an embarrassing symbolic defeat at the United Nations General Assembly, where 141 countries voted to condemn the invasion, reaffirmed Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and called for Russia's immediate withdrawal. Only Russia's veto power prevented the Security Council from previously approving a similar condemnation. But not much else by way of sanctions or, alternatively, UN-sponsored peace negotiations have been allowed to proceed. It's clearly a proxy war between Russia and the United States/EU and the UN Security Council is not equipped, by virtue of the veto power of its five permanent members, to handle this category of conflict. So much for the viability of the "rules-based international order."

The Chinese rulers, on the other hand, now in charge of the world's second, nonwestern superpower - and the US's greatest strategic rival -, have been dutifully delivering diplomatic cover at the UN and providing economic lifelines to Russia thus far, but in ways meant to benefit China from this foolhardy, doomed military adventure the Russian Bear got itself into - at the expense of both Russia *and* the EU/US *Atlanticist* alliance, just as it previously benefitted greatly from the foolhardy, doomed American military adventures in Central Asia after 9/11/2001.

Now that China has definitively arrived at the world stage, it will not be lectured by either the U.S. or Europe on how to abide by a western-created "ruled-based international order," which the Chinese foreign minister correctly rejected, telling his American counterpart recently, "And who gave you the right to speak for humanity and impose *your* rules?"

The Chinese strategic planners have been playing three-dimensional chess for a long time. Perhaps, depending on how things unfold or become exacerbated by the folly of both Russia and the US as they lock themselves into further battle, it may be tempted to strike at Taiwan, pursuing its long-sought "legitimate" aim of unification; or more prosaically, take over Russia's huge energy companies at bargain prices and convert Russia into its gas station. Either of these two developments, though, may trigger in turn very dangerous retaliatory US responses. That the US public and foreign policy establishment is now being methodically prepared for a frontal war with China, only partially distracted by today's proxy war with Russia, is an unmistakable sign of the dimming prospects for world peace - at least as it relates to the bellicose posture of the United States, still the most important and militarily powerful player on the world stage.

The romping Russian Bear is now clearly in serious trouble. Vladimir Putin not only badly miscalculated in the battle for elite international opinion, where practically no one has supported his invasion of Ukraine; his regime is now roundly condemned as a rouge regime by global civil society, just as not too long ago the Bush regime was, too (though the US planners didn't care). Putin badly miscalculated in two other crucial ways: the disastrous prosecution of the war itself, and the instant adverse geopolitical reaction it provoked in unifying the entire Global North against Russia - its closing ranks behind the bellicose but calibrated US response to "defend Ukraine to the last Ukrainian," and bleed and weakened the Russian Bear as much as possible and for as long as possible. This adverse situation now points towards a prolonged war with no exit ramps for Russia in sight.

Here's how the war has unfolded so far, to the dismay of Russia's strategic planners:

* The Ukrainians, not unsurprisingly to anyone aside from Putin's circle, put up a real fight! They had been militarily well-trained and amply equipped by the US, so they were not about to roll over; its untested leadership showed remarkable resolve and agility, and the Ukrainian people heroically responded, united as one, to the call to defend their national sovereignty and independence. The Russians are now deep in a quagmire of their own making, and it's only getting worse every day that passes. With the prompt infusion of over US\$50 billion in non-nuclear military aid to Ukraine, funneled through the sanctuary NATO states bordering Ukraine and aimed to *weaken* and *defeat* Russia, Putin is now trapped in an unwinnable conventional war of his own making.

The consequences for the Putin regime itself are enormous, as well as for the lives of thousands of Russian soldiers sacrificed in this misguided military adventure (there's unmistakable echoes of Afghanistan, which triggered the end of the Soviet era, or Manchuria a century before, which triggered the end of the tsarist era). In the internet era, how long can Putin and his strictly censored media keep a tight lid on news of his own growing casualties and stop a general popular uprising? Not for long!

* The European Union did not become paralyzed by, much less caved-in to, their deep dependency to Russia's energy or even the fear of a dreaded NATO escalation of the conflict; it quickly fell in line with the US and acted united to impose severe economic sanctions, while it opened its doors to the millions of Ukrainian refugees that fled the conflict. If Putin sought to divide Europe from the US, and increase Russian influence, he's achieved the exact opposite: he has immensely *strengthened* Biden's previously faltering leadership in Europe; he has even pushed historically-neutral Finland and Sweden into NATO's arms! Putin's sphere of influence has now shrunk to Belarus.

* The Biden administration lost no time to ensure all major US corporate and financial players shut down business in or with Russia, and cunningly offered US oil and gas to the besieged Europeans. Geopolitically, it turned the invasion as a long-sought, golden opportunity to reassert US hegemony in Europe, re-invigorating and re-purposing NATO along its own strategic priorities - not just vis-a-vis Russia or policing the "usual suspects" in the MENA region (Middle East/Northern African), but to project power vis-a-vis China, India, and all other potential challengers in the Global South. NATO had already become the main way for the US to circumvent the United Nations Security Council and violate with impunity its own "rules-based international order." This significant *reflation* of U.S. hard power has turned out to be Putin's greatest gift to his main adversary, the United States.

IV. THE DIMINISHING PROSPECTS FOR WORLD PEACE: The American war planners are now clearly busy at work aiming to *prolong* the Russo-Ukrainian war for as long as possible, even if that entails the utter destruction of Ukraine, strategically seeking to reduce Russia's military power and cripple its economy as much as possible, and firm up NATO for future projections of hard power around the world vis-à-vis China and the Global South.

The Global South looks on helplessly at the reduced role of the United Nations - the only forum where it has had a strong voice in world governance -, now barred from pursuing and securing a lasting peace in Ukraine; in dismay at the world's inability to stop the carnage and prevent a broader escalation as the US and Russia seem hell-bent to pursue their unrestrained rivalry in vain pursuit of restoring their past global and regional hegemonies.

Russian state-controlled media, and the pliant US corporate media, are both relentlessly bombarding their audiences with war propaganda, and so far, that has dampened the rise of a powerful domestic peace movement – in Russia there's the element of brutal police repression of dissent, in the U.S. there is the usual war cheerleading and media-induced amnesia; and in both countries, a long and popular tradition of big power chauvinism prevails. In that sense, Americans and Russians are more alike than they like to admit. No one in either country seems to be championing, with few admirable exceptions, setting up a diplomatic path to ceasing hostilities and achieving a negotiated settlement to the war, as a down payment towards launching a broader process to negotiate a new and enduring European security arrangement.

The Ukrainian leadership repeated offers to Russia to negotiate peace has fell on deaf ears in *both* Russia and the US. Ukraine deserves everyone's solidarity and a serious commitment to stop the war through negotiations – not by seeking unattainable military victory –, ensure a lasting peace, provide for reconstruction, and encourage reconciliation. No one should be advocating the expansion or prolongation of this truly fratricidal war (both parties are Slavic peoples with a shared history), to “punish” Russia at the expense of destroying Ukraine. This should include reining in the barely disguised bellicose American leadership through a massive US peace movement, demanding a peace process under UN auspices, as well as launching a massive domestic civil disobedience campaign in Russia to force Putin to the negotiating table. The Russian and American peoples have held their governments accountable before - even replaced them when they have deemed it necessary. Now is the time to do so again.

Around the world, humanity sees the dark clouds of a larger global conflagration gathering. The war in Ukraine must stop. The road to another world war should be averted. But the tragic truth of our present, turbulent era is that no one is leading the world to envision and build an entirely new architecture for stable, peaceful, sustainable, egalitarian and truly democratic global governance. The world's geopolitical system is broken and lacks a compelling principle that unifies not just the quarreling Global North, but also forges a lasting unity with the Global South.

As long as the world powers - the emerging ones as well as the declining ones – persist in playing the old "Big Game" of inter-imperialist rivalries, the world will stand precariously at the brink of yet another devastating global conflagration.

A final word regarding what ultimately economic causes that feeds such reckless world power rivalries.

We live in an era of systemic transition from the five-centuries-old, western-dominated, capitalist world-system to something else not yet fully envisioned – let alone built. Renewed geopolitical rivalries after the demise of US global hegemony and its “Cold War world order” constitute only a proximate cause overlapping a much older and deeper secular trend towards systemic crisis.

Undergirding these rivalries in the interstate system is a capitalist world-economy that continues to operate under the logic, principles, and interests of endless capitalist accumulation, which mainly operates for the benefit of the transnational capitalist class, and which has now reached both its social and environmental asymptotic limits. Just the top one percent of “high net worth individuals” (millionaires and billionaires) in the world had an aggregate net wealth of US\$26 trillion dollars in 2020; and while most of the world’s population suffered under a deadly pandemic, the world’s 10 richest people doubled their wealth while the world’s billionaires added \$5 trillion to their collective wealth, a new report by Oxfam finds.

Neither lasting geopolitical stability, nor arriving at systemwide solutions to the many systemwide problems afflicting humanity and the planet, like climate change, recurring pandemics, world poverty & hunger, human and drug trafficking, environmental degradation and contamination, declining biodiversity, and many more, can be realistically addressed or successfully resolved under today’s global system of ruthless, predatory, zero-sum *capitalist* rivalries.

Lenin predicted this in 1916, in the midst of World War I. He denounced that war as essentially an inter-imperialist war for the redivision and capitalist plunder of the world, and predicted that further world wars would become inevitable, more frequent and more destructive until and unless what he called the final, monopoly stage of capitalism – ruled by finance capital – was superseded by a more sustainable, rational, and just global social system, which he called “socialism” (which Stalin and others promptly misappropriated and distorted to fit their “socialism in one country” pursuits).

Lenin predicted World War II but he did not anticipate the deterrent effect the advent of the nuclear age at the end of that war would have on the capitalist world-system for the next half-century, especially as key element of a bipolar world order “managed” by the two nuclear superpowers, the US and the USSR. Focusing on the British and German modes of capitalist accumulation, he did not examine the dynamism of the American “Fordist” model of capitalist accumulation, which triumphant after 1945 ushered in the longest and greatest period of world prosperity, stabilized the interstate system, and bought class peace in the Global North.

But he was not wrong in the long term. The nuclear deterrence has worn off, and nuclear proliferation has been renewed with a vengeance (the Iranians and North Koreans are pursuing it, the Ukrainians regret they gave up their nukes, and Putin is recklessly toying with using “tactical” nukes).

As to Fordism, based on standardized assembly line production, vertical integration and formation of oligopolies of capitalist quasi-monopoly firms, unrestrained mass consumption via advertisement, and a new social contract guaranteed by the welfare state, in time it, too, faltered. Consumer waste and toxic contamination, resurgent extreme social and international inequalities and the retrenchment of the welfare state since the late 1970s, have led to a situation where humanity is choking the planet, altered its climate, depleted the biosphere and engendered both North-South wars, chaos in world governance, and now ominous world power rivalries again.

The tyranny of for-profit “small decisions” over more rational & sustainable, system-wide ones reins. And then, to top it off, there are the global merchants of death, egging on the world powers to start hugely profitable wars – profitable on both the destructive and the reconstruction side.

Humanity, stripped of its “isms” and narrow power & profit quarrels - Russians and Ukrainians, Chinese and Americans, Africans and Latin Americans, Muslims and Hindus - we are all in this together. The planet is in peril and needs us to *cooperate* to protect and heal it. Today it is Russia that has wantonly attacked Ukraine for power and glory, only generating more systemic chaos and further planetary destruction. Just yesterday, it was the U.S. in countries like Vietnam and Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan – not to mention the scores of “low-intensity conflicts” throughout the Third World. Before that, it was Germany and Japan, and before them Great Britain and France, everywhere.

We are not going to make it out of the woods if we do not figure out in the immediate period ahead how to get out of our destructive world economic and geopolitical systems and build much better ones. We urgently need to envision and design a post-capitalist, post-imperialist “rules-based international order.” Now *that* is the proper reply to the western imperialists of today!

Let's get serious, us in the Global North, by begin to ask our leaders, as many leaders and peoples in the Global South have been asking for decades, “Whose rules, after all?” Let's join *them* in the fight for protecting the planet and *all* of its inhabitants – including all living things.

Anything less will make us be part of the problem - duplicitous, hypocritical, self-serving, and deeply co-responsible – especially in the rich countries that claim to be democracies – in paving the way for yet another global conflagration to flutily *redive the world we are destroying*.

Can we and the planet afford yet another world war for profits and power, especially now that all major powers, several lesser ones, too, are armed or arming themselves with nukes? Can we keep warming the planet and destroying its biosphere to sustain our consumerist toxic “way of life?”

If not, what are we waiting for to join the rest of the world to end not just this criminal Russian war in Ukraine, but rein in the inter-imperialist rivalries and curtail the power of the polluting transnationals. If we do not, we will be co-participants in setting Europe, and then the world, on fire – again. After which, as Albert Einstein pointed out at the advent of the Nuclear Age, the next war will be fought with stones and arrows.

“There is no path to peace – peace *is* the path.” – Gandhi.

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