

# COMMON SENSE II

*Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today’s series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.*

March 2022

War Issue

Vol. 17 Issue 3

## The Horror of War—Again

By Vicki Andrews

Ukraine is a country 233,032 square miles; Russia is 6,600,000 square miles. My first thought when this recent war began was “How can a country as large as Russia attack a country the size of Ukraine?” Then I started thinking about the recent history of the United States, a country



that is 3,800,000 square miles in size. In recent years we have attacked Iraq, a country of 169,235 square miles, and Afghanistan, a country of 251,827 square miles. I suppose it is easier to “beat up” a smaller country than one that is our size or larger. Isn’t that what bullies do? Perhaps we do have more in common with Russia than we thought.



The reasons given for going to war vary, but they always seem phony when you look at them closely. We attacked Iraq because they had allegedly developed “weapons of mass destruction,” and we had to protect the world. We attacked Afghanistan allegedly to stop terrorists who were sheltering there and threatening our country. Russia attacked Ukraine allegedly to protect the people from Nazis. Looking back to the days of the “Orange Revolution” from late 2004 through early 2005, we can remember that some Russian Nationalist circles linked it to Fascism due to the involvement of some extreme right-wing groups. Others believed the revolution was steered by the CIA. The leaders always seem to come up with reasons to justify their actions, and they convince many of their people that the war is necessary to save their country,

their families, and their friends.

There doesn’t seem to be a legitimate reason for this war; it is obvious that Russia is much larger, has a larger military and more advanced weapons. As far as we know, Ukraine wasn’t attacking Russia or threatening it in any way. It may be that Vladimir Putin wanted to defeat Ukraine and take it back under Russian control, where he believes it belongs. The history of the Russian and Ukrainian relationship goes back many years and has often been very volatile.

Regardless of the causes of this war, regardless of the forces behind it, the fact that a larger, more powerful country has attacked a smaller country and especially the horrible destruction of hospitals, shelters, apartments, and other buildings housing children and families and the huge toll this is taking in the lives of those children and their families is irrefutable. The horrific events are being broadcast up close and personal by the dedicated journal-



[https://ifjnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/photo\\_2017-11-25\\_10-35-57.jpg](https://ifjnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/photo_2017-11-25_10-35-57.jpg)

ists who are covering this war, and we are seeing it day and night from the comfort and safety of our living rooms. Like other wars in recent history, for example, the U.S. attacks on Iraq

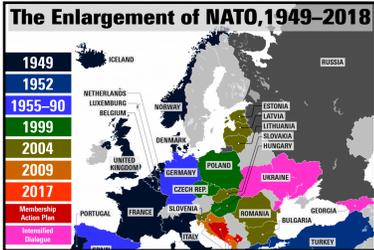
and Afghanistan, we are getting an idea of what being in a war zone is like. We can only hope that some may learn from this that war is brutal and an atrocity. Children and other innocents are targeted—intentionally or not—and suffer deeply from the violence as do their families. Perhaps witnessing this—if only on television—might raise our awareness of the horror of war. Perhaps the next time our country begins planning a war, we will speak out against it. Perhaps we will eventually choose peace.

# Ukraine and Existential Threats

By David Alban

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is illegal under international law, and as with all wars, will cause horrible suffering, inflicted mostly on innocent civilians. However, the U.S. has zero credibility lecturing others about war considering our actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, and dozens of other countries that the U.S. has bombed in order to try to topple governments and install puppet regimes.

Europe has invaded Russia many times in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, so it's not unreasonable for Russia to feel threatened by the expansion of NATO right up to its border. Since NATO's purpose was to counter the possible threat from the Soviet Union (our ally, by the way, in World War II), it's not clear to me why NATO still exists long after the collapse of the Soviet Union.



[https://1.wp.com/transnational.live/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-enlargement-of-NATO-1949-2018\\_cropped\\_3x2.png?fit=1024%2C683&ssl=1](https://1.wp.com/transnational.live/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-enlargement-of-NATO-1949-2018_cropped_3x2.png?fit=1024%2C683&ssl=1)

U.S. sanctions on Russia will inflict damage on Europe and the U.S. as well as on Russia, and it is unlikely to deter the Russians until their objective of a neutral Ukraine is obtained. The U.S. has sanctioned many countries—think



<https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/>

Cuba for over 60 years, China, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, etc. In none of these cases have sanctions produced positive results for the U.S. but have produced suffering among the innocent citizens of those countries. What the current sanctions

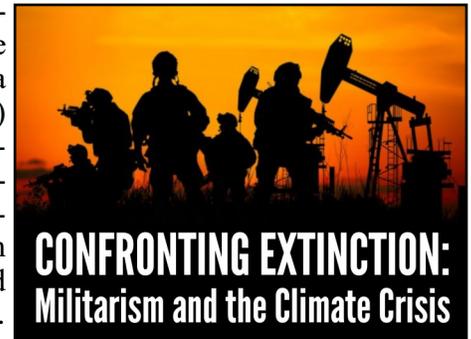
on Russia does do is drive Russia and China closer together and encourage them to create a new financial/credit system not based on the dollar.

The dollar as the world's reserve currency will end, and the financial hegemony, which the U.S. has enjoyed since the end of World War II, will be over. The American empire has had a great run for the last 70 years, but like all past empires, our decline is inevitable. Our leaders are in denial, believing they can still control the entire planet. It's hard to believe that they (we?) are that delusional, but it seems to be so.



<https://redoubtnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/blockchain-3.jpg>

The two existential threats facing the entire planet are nuclear war and climate change. Solving these threats will require the U.S. to negotiate with Russia and China. It appears to me that our President and Congress—both owned by the arms and fossil fuel industries—are more interested in a new cold (hot?) war than undertaking serious negotiations with Russia and China. If U.S. leaders are incapable of or unwilling to work with Russia and China to address the nuclear war and climate change issues, they must be judged as failures and a threat to our very survival. Perhaps it's time to retire most of them and replace them with others who more clearly understand the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



<https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/confronting-extinction.png>

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

### Event

### Date /Time

### Location

DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)  
 Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)  
 DFL Central Committee Meets  
 DFL Social Club & Lunch  
 DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)  
 Deadline for *Common Sense II*

Thursdays 2:00-5:00  
 3rd Tuesday 6:30  
 4th Monday 6:30  
 1st Wednesday Noon  
 3rd Wednesday 5:30  
 April 8, 2022

DFL Headquarters  
 DFL Headquarters  
 Hybrid  
 DFL Headquarters  
 DFL Headquarters  
 conray@arvig.net

# Foreign Policy and Perspective

By R. W. Passi

Here we are in the midst of a foreign policy crisis, needing to make reasoned but significant choices about options and strategy. It should be a helpful part of any of that discussion to put things into perspective by providing a context.

The tendency is to decide who the “good guys” are and who the “bad guys” are. Unfortunately, this is usually done by deciding who are seen as our friends and whom we have designated as our enemies. This distinction is often based on who agrees with our foreign policy goals, and who does not whole-heartedly accept and support them, or whom we need for some strategic reason beyond the scope of the current events, like oil production.

**We also pretty much refuse to make any comparison with our past actions and those of the “bad guys” in the present moment.** What we wish to apply to them now ceases to apply to our past actions, since what we do is different because we always see ourselves as the “good guys,” therefore justifying our actions.

For instance, **we have a long history of being directly involved in “regime change.”** One needs only look at our actions in Central and South America, in Viet Nam, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, not to mention other Middle East nations; Iran comes to mind. We used whatever we found effective whether it was undermining the present regimes with the use of CIA and dark ops or with direct attacks, again look most recently in Iraq. Every nation that does this finds similar ways to justify its actions to the world, whether it is purported atrocities and human rights abuses or a populace being unhappy with the present regime.

**In the present situation of Russia and Ukraine, part of the issue goes back to the end of WWII.** We must remember that capitalist Western Europe had been opposed to the Russian Revolution from the start and was opposed to the very existence of Communism as an article of faith. After the great sacrifices the Russians made to stop Hitler—probably making WWII winnable for Europe and America—some payback was required. In that

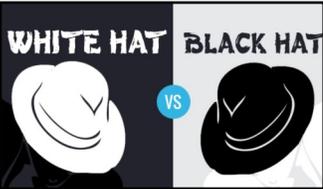
context there was an understanding that at the end of the war, the USSR was allowed to have a set of buffer states protecting it from capitalist Western Europe in exchange for allowing Greece to go back to a right-wing monarchy at the insistence of the British, to protect its shipping in the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal in an attempt to keep its trade with its faltering empire. This was significant since the Greek Communists had defeated the Germans and would have easily retained power.

**Ever since then, the U.S. and Western Europe have tried to expand NATO into many of the countries which had been a part of that buffer. For perspective, think of how the U.S. would react if Mexico or Canada were to sign a treaty with Russia to receive military aid.** We have a long history of reigning over all of the Americas from the Monroe Doctrine on, not even allowing any deviation from the U.S. policy, with the exception of Cuba, which we still seem to get apologetic about every once in a while.

**This war in Ukraine is an example of a large national power wanting to protect its flanks by finding ways to dominate or control another nations.**

**That does not make it right or fair or just, but the foreign policy of most powerful nations rarely is.** So, whenever we, as a nation, are identifying the “good guys” and the “bad guys,” we must remember that we are not exactly coming from a neutral or objective position but more likely from a position that fits our foreign policy desires. We no longer inhabit the moral high ground that we may have had in some now distant past. It is important to realize that other powerful nations are behaving similarly to the way we have behaved in the past and may well behave again in the future.

**Something about pots calling kettles black.**



<https://technofaq.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/White-Hat-vs-Black>

are. Unfortunately, this is usually done by deciding who are seen as our friends and whom we have designated as our enemies. This distinction is often based on who



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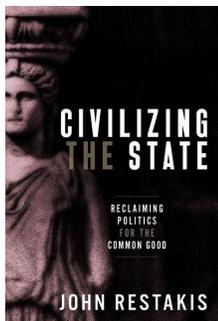
## The Case for the Common Good

By Roger Francis

Capitalism is based on competition. Its efforts promote the capitalists' good; any benefit to the whole is happenstance. Democracy is based on cooperation; any competition is aimed at arriving at the common good. In *Civilizing the State: Reclaiming Politics for the Common Good*, John Restakis notes:

Disillusion with the state as the steward of public welfare is deepening—and with good reason. From this vacuum of state leadership, there arises a resurgence of the right and demands for radical reform on the left. These are the twin forces unleashed by a global capitalist imperium that has set the world on a suicide course to extinction.

Simply stated, this book is a real time assessment of the long standing debate of democracy vs. capitalism. It opens with the historical and political antecedents to the present and then goes into the political and economic powers that govern our present socio-economic condition. This is followed by capitalism's systematic plunder of the planet's commons and to the deepening crisis of legitimacy that has sparked resistance and reaction the world over.



To give credence to the possibilities he will propose, Restakis offers four real world examples of bottom-up, community created governance: Following the 2008 housing bubble crash, the Arab Spring in 2011, the 2011 Spanish anti-austerity uprising, and the successful woman's revolt in 1859 Kerala, India.

We are facing two major world crises on a conscious global scale: the climate crisis and the COVID-19 health crisis. Restakis has chosen to use the health crisis to shine a light on the crises addressing state governance fundamental to all our global governance problems. His underlying hypothesis is "human societies must constantly grapple with the tension between two tendencies: co-

operation for common benefit and competition in pursuit of self-interest." Cooperation is the relational life blood of civil society and embraces the values, principles, and morality that make civil life meaningful. Competition is the economic or ideological expression of the individual and corporate efforts to privatize ideas, resources, and material products for economic gain. The fundamental challenge for the state is to bring about the harmonizing and balancing of these two tendencies to act for the betterment of the common good.

## Whose War?

By Valerie Conner

Growing up watching black and white (in the moral as well as the visual sense) TV westerns, I remember an often used plot of the bad guys instigating a war between the cowboys and the Indians or between the cattle ranchers and the sheepherders. I also remember wondering why someone would do that. Why someone would deliberately promote death and destruction. At some point I figured out money was the reason; the bad guys were selling rifles to both sides while standing safely on the sidelines. In today's colorful (in the moral as well as the visual sense) world, the international plot is much the same. We can only surmise Putin's motives for his unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, but rest assured money or personal gain or satisfaction is high on the list.



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/ed/Lene\\_ranger\\_silver\\_1965.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/ed/Lene_ranger_silver_1965.JPG)

What if anything can the rest of the world do to stop the bloodshed?



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The sanctions may eventually be effective, but they will take time; meanwhile innocents are dying. The so-called peace talks are a joke. The only agreement that would make Ukraine as whole as possible would be for Russia to pull out now, stay out, pay reparations, and give back Crimea and the Donbas. Anything short of that and Ukraine loses. Russia also loses. If Russia were to agree to that deal, it still would have lost thousands of soldiers, materiel, and face. There will be no good outcome.

So far, President Biden has done a good job unit-

(Continued on page 6)

# A New Voting System

By Stephen Fuller

I have been interested in the voting process for as long as I have been following politics, which actually didn't start until the Bush-Gore fiasco in Florida and the resulting decision by the Supreme Court to award the Presidency to George Walker Bush. Punch cards and hanging chads aside, I worried about the digitization of the voting process—principally the ability of cyber hackers to manipulate the machines.

There are a lot of secure voting issues that could improve turnout and security:

- ◆ Voter ID, which I support, but any photo IDs must be provided at no cost to the voter.
- ◆ The option of voting by mail provides convenience as well as reducing the number of voting machines a precinct needs to buy. A voter's registration should be the application for a mail-in ballot.
- ◆ Paper ballots are needed as a back-up for recounts.
- ◆ Early voting provides convenience as well as shortened lines.
- ◆ Sufficient polling places speed the process so people don't have to stand in line for hours to exercise their franchise.



<https://www.democracynow.org/images/story/70/22670/splash/>

The list of what I think should be national standards of voting isn't my main focus today. It's the mechanics of counting votes and determining whom the population wants to represent them.

The Institute for Political Innovation founded by Katherine Gehl has put forward a plan called Final Five Voting. It all starts with what I call a jungle primary where everyone who wants the job is listed on the ballot; vote for one. The top five vote getters in the "jungle" primary go on to the general election where ranked choice voting is used. Now if any one candidate gets more than 50% of the vote in the jungle

primary, there is no general election because the majority has decided. (That's a good way to increase participation in primaries.) That holds in the general election, too. If no one gets the required 50%, ranking begins and continues until someone gets 50% of the vote plus one.

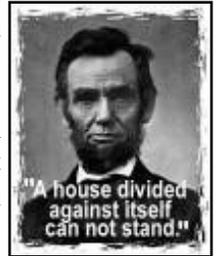


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The Institute of Political Innovation has a website, but just Google "final five voting" to view their short video explanation of Final Five Voting. I found their explanation clear and concise, and the short video has the best explanation of ranked choice voting I have seen.

Too many Americans are letting the elites at the party level or the fringe extremists, who vote in disproportionate numbers in the primaries, pick the candidates. I think that this change would bring more Americans into the fray, ultimately giving them the feeling of inclusion.

Final Five Voting may not be the answer, but the way the system is now organized has only increased the polarization of our society. In 1850, Sam Houston, the first President of the Republic of Texas said, "A nation divided against itself cannot stand." In 1858, Abraham Lincoln repeated this reference to the Gospel of Mark and used those exact words in his House Divided Speech when he addressed the national polarization over the issue of slavery. In a search for that more perfect union, we need to talk about how we elect the leaders of our nation.



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Here Comes  
The Sun!!

**Grand Rapids Solar Garden ready to start up! More next issue.**

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*\*computer generated/volunteer labor\**

# A History of U.S. and World Wars

By Jack Pick

This is a short history of U.S. involvement in the world wars including what some call the start of WWII.

WWI began with the June 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. The U.S. watched and then entered the war in April 1917 in response to German attacks on passenger and merchant ships carrying supplies to



<https://static.mirahere.com/rcallifevillainswiki/thumb/>

Europe.

WWII began in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. The U.S. watched and provided supplies until the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.



<https://technofaq.org/wp-content/>

Russia invaded Georgia in April 2008, and its military occupation of portions of Georgia continues today. Russia has faced no consequences. Some call this the beginning of WWII.

Russia invaded Crimea, the most southern province of Ukraine, in February 2014. The U.S. watched while imposing sanctions on Russia. Russia still occupies all of Crimea.

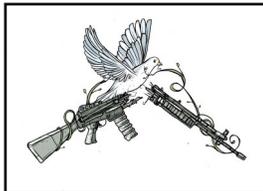
In February 2022 Russia again made an aggressive move. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, it recognized the breakaway eastern Ukraine provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent, thereby essentially making them Russian satellites.



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On the 24<sup>th</sup> Russia invaded Ukraine again, this time with all its military might. The U.S. and its allies continue to watch and to sanction and supply military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

What will be the final outcome of this war? Will Russia win by completely destroying Ukraine? Will Ukraine submit? Or will Russia simply end its aggression and retreat? None of these is acceptable to Russia which would eventually just continue its expansion efforts. Any



<https://wagingnonviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/wrlogo-1.jpg>

of these outcomes would only be a continuation of WWII. WWII ends only when Ukraine becomes geographically whole again; this includes the return of Crimea and the Donbas region. How this would happen is a very large question. The first thing that has to happen is that Russia must lose its

air dominance over Ukraine. This may mean that the U. S. and its allies must do more than watch. We've seen what happened in the past when the U.S. sat back and watched.

There will always be the fear of and the threat of a nuclear war, but that is our world. Let's all hope and pray this never happens.

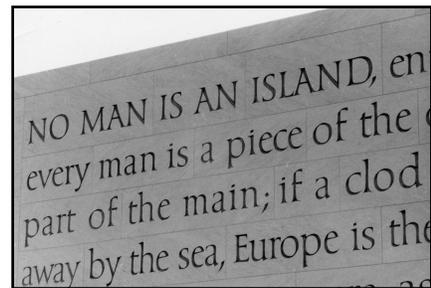
As true story: Some time back two scientists were discussing the possibility of a nuclear war. One scientist stated, "A nuclear war would eliminate all civilization as we now know it." The other quipped, "And that would be bad why?"

(Continued from page 4)

ing the West, especially NATO, to support Ukraine. It's a delicate balance. Any overt intervention on Ukraine's side, and Putin could retaliate by using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, which would affect the entire world. He seems not to consider his own losses in such a case. On the other hand, if we simply stand by and watch thinking that way we'll stay safe, an innocent country will likely lose its independence, and Putin will be emboldened to expand even further. There are no sidelines.

The West did not want this war. Ukraine certainly did not want this war. Undoubtedly most of the Russian people did not want this war. Apparently, only Putin wanted this war. Regardless, we all have it. And we are all being affected by it. It is up to us to contribute to the best resolution as possible, however we can. As John Donne wrote in his *Meditation 17*, in 1624:

No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a Clod be washed away by the Sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a Promontory were, as well as if a Manor of thy friends of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.



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