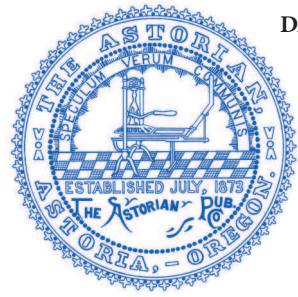


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OUR VIEW

Today is about the cost of war

Today we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice — giving their life because their country sent them to war.

Americans answer the call. Generation after generation, the urge to serve our nation draws excellent people into military service. They defend us from foreign threats, protect vital interests around the world, and gain unique experiences and job skills that strengthen the U.S. once they return to civilian life.

Living here as we do in small communities and rural areas, we take special pride in personally knowing servicemen and women. Spring high school graduation ceremonies often include news about local kids making the leap into becoming adult women and men by joining the armed forces. We then follow their accomplishments and adventures on their parents' Facebook pages and in printed news items. It is among the signature experiences of small-town life to encounter young people we witnessed growing up — perhaps playing on the basketball court — now returned on leave from a military assignment someplace far away.

These relationships between civilians and active-service personnel are some of the strongest glue holding the nation together. It is fundamental to the essential national DNA of the U.S. that we respect and appreciate our fellow citizens who man the guard posts of democracy.

There was a time when Congress and the White House contained many veterans. They had personally witnessed the horrible cost of war, in the form of friends shot down before their eyes. Because there is no draft, there are now few veterans among our nation's top leadership — nor do many of their children serve in the armed forces. War has become something they send other Americans' children to do. And in all fairness, fewer U.S. citizens in general have close kinfolk in the line of fire. Most of us, though, in every station of life share a deep and sincere appreciation for our honored war dead.

Since the awful events of Sept. 11, 2001, it is generally reported that more than 5,000 U.S. service personnel have died. More than 50,000 have been physically wounded. Many more suffer from combat-related stress disorders. So even though the generations that fought in World War II, Korea and Vietnam are passing away, we will be paying tribute to modern American warriors for the next half century or more.

President Ulysses S. Grant — as good a general as the U.S. ever had — said, "There never was a time when, in my opinion, some way could not be found to prevent the drawing of the sword." Our sad drumbeat of wars in the 20th and 21st centuries informs us that we are still too far away from learning this lesson.

But war is not the true subject for Memorial Day. We honor the personal sacrifices that men and women have made in the name of our nation and its Constitution.

We who live in the relative comfort of 2017 cannot ignore these sacrifices. We cannot commend one soldier's valor and minimize another's, depending on whether we deem one a "good war" and the other not.

What we honor this day is selfless service to the country. But if this day is to be anything but an excuse for a day off from work, we must put meat on the bones of otherwise empty promises.

History teaches the danger faced by powerful nations where the majority of the citizenry no longer remembers the hardship and realities faced by its defenders. It becomes far too easy to expend their lives for meager pay to achieve too little, then bringing them home and forgetting them.

Repairing the disconnect between decision-makers and these sacrifices is essential to the long-term survival of America's great experiment in democracy. Honoring life is the best payment we can make to the dead.

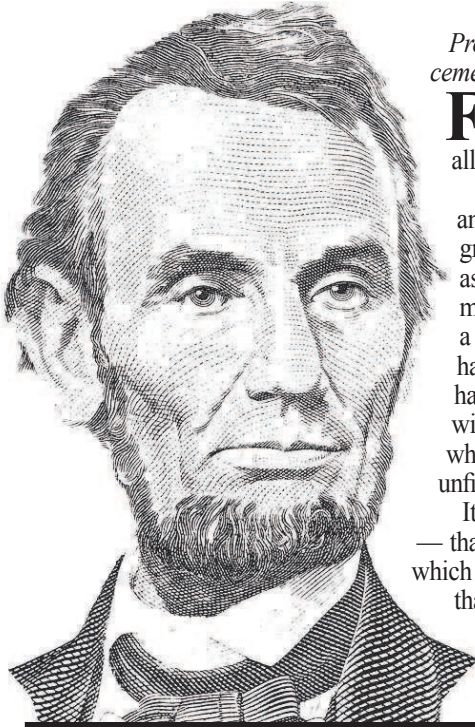
Meanwhile, genuine respect for America's war dead is best translated into remembering living veterans and tending to their needs. Memorial Day is only the start, not the finish, of recognizing the debt we owe to veterans. Truly honoring them means embodying their values and honor in our own lives every day of the year.



AP Photo/J. David Ake
Members of the veterans support group "Ruck to Remember" walk along the National Mall in Washington Monday as they continue their Memorial Day march to Arlington National Cemetery.

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

'OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE'



President Abraham Lincoln delivered this address at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on Nov. 19, 1863.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.



AP Photo/Virginia Mayo

European Union flags blow in the wind at half-staff outside EU headquarters in Brussels. The flags were set at half-staff to remember those killed and injured in the attack at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester.

The way they kill now

By TIMOTHY EGAN
New York Times News Service

ARRAS, France — In the springtime of 100 years ago, nations that shared a Christian heritage slaughtered one another over a few miles of mud.



In just one battle, the great powers of Europe fought for more than a month outside this magnificently reconstructed medieval city, and suffered 280,000 casualties.

At the same time, French infantrymen began to mutiny after 200,000 of their young men fell — dead, wounded or missing — in another senseless grind of human flesh to the south.

All of that — the poisonous gas, the mowing down of teenage boys in ashen fields, the legless legions of the Lost Generation — is behind us. In its place, a century later, are cowards who kill children in the name of religious perversion.

Manchester, where the 22 died Monday and more than 60 people were injured in the worst terrorist attack on British soil in more than a decade, would seem small by comparison. Some perspective is in order.

But every war is awful in its own way. Manchester was badly bombed during World War II. Those planes were under the command of Adolf Hitler, a corporal in France during World War I, who later reached deeper into the bowels of hell searching for more sophisticated forms of savagery.

The homemade bomb that killed those kids at a concert a few days ago — one victim was an 8-year-old — packed a disproportionate amount of firepower. Old-fashioned war, as the saying goes, is diplomacy by other means. There's a certain warped rationality to it.

What happened in Manchester is unexplainable. The Islamic State called the killer — identified as 22-year-old Salman Abedi, a British-born citizen of Libyan descent — a soldier. Nothing could be further

from the truth.

Abedi was a psychopath — dispossessed in a tired part of England, perhaps, and warped by a toxic strain of Islam, but a psychopath nonetheless. The question of the moment is: Are there enough people like him to destabilize Europe? World War I, after all, started with the lone assassination of an obscure Balkan figure.

The child killers of modern Europe have no armies, no tanks or cannons at their disposal. They are stateless murderers plotting from failed-state ghettos like Libya. Their terror comes from the element of surprise, from turning a pop concert, a national holiday, a Christmas market, into its own peculiar Western Front. They bring an element of lethal menace to everyday life.

The autocrats of modern terror seethe and plot in the shadows, and their control is limited to a handful of fellow child killers.

When you see the prosthetics on display at the Museum of the Great War in the Somme Valley town of Peronne — fake noses and eyes for faces scraped of their features by artillery — when you try to imagine 630,000 war widows in France in 1919, you can't help but think that we have made progress of a sort.

After all, the Great War, as it was initially called, sucked up lives at rate of almost 50,000 a day at one point. The Germans committed atrocities against civilians in Belgium and reduced the Cathedral of Arras to rubble. The soil of northern France, pockmarked with war craters, is all

one big burial ground for lost souls — the graveyards you see, 410 military cemeteries, and the graveyards you don't see.

When the war ended, after 17 million deaths worldwide, a headline in Britain's Daily Mirror proclaimed: "Democracy Triumphs Over the Last of the Autocrats."

If only. Another hundred-year anniversary now marks the Russian Revolution — the collapse of the czar, power seized by the Bolsheviks, followed by decades of crimes against humanity committed by heartless and autocratic followers of Karl Marx.

The autocrats of modern terror seethe and plot in the shadows, and their control is limited to a handful of fellow child killers. Their design, such as it is, is to sweep away basic democratic values and put Europe in lockdown. Britain just raised its threat alert to the highest level, and the new French president, Emmanuel Macron, is seeking an extension of emergency powers for three more months.

No leader in Europe has shown Churchillian will or insight. Nor is anyone here looking to President Donald Trump for guidance. The 70-year-old Innocent Abroad is trying to get through his first foreign trip without suffering from exhaustion brought on by reading his cue cards.

For something stirring, Trump could look to his own passport, and the words of John F. Kennedy embossed inside: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to ensure the survival and the success of liberty."

Quaint words to Trump, and foreign, given his affinity for world leaders clamping down on liberty. Still, you never know when an acorn can find a blind pig.

And what exactly did Pope Francis tell him? Neither side is leaking. Francis is sly, though. He has enough sense of history to know that the wars of today could easily escalate into the wars of yesterday.