

OUR VIEW

Stepping back from the brink on Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is troubling, to be sure. Russian president Vladimir Putin's unwarranted, brutal aggression destabilizes not only Europe, but the world. Yet some of the reactions by commentators, both in print and on TV and radio, have been a bit hysterical.

References to Russia's invasion being the possible precursor to "World War III," for instance, have been numerous. This implies that the circumstances today are comparable to the situations at the onset of the first and second world wars. This is not convincing. Worse, it frightens people unnecessarily.

One prominent reason the First World War broke out a month after the June 28, 1914, assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is the series of rigid alliances among world powers including Germany, Russia, England and France. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine hasn't, and needn't, trigger anything like the responses that followed Germany's invasion of Belgium in August 1914. In addition, the comparatively crude nature of early 20th century armies — which relied far more on the horse than on the truck (tanks were unknown and airplanes all but irrelevant) — meant that those armies needed days or even weeks to get ready for combat. This reality prompted governments to order mobilizations lest they give their opponents an advantage. The result was an inexorable progression toward a wider war, a domino-like situation that has no parallel among modern militaries.

Nor does a comparison hold between Putin's actions and the onset of World War II. Although there might seem to be a superficial similarity in Putin's past aggression in Georgia and the Crimea, and Hitler's expansionist policies in the 1930s, Hitler did not have the then-unimaginable deterrent of America's nuclear capacity to counter his megalomania.

Yet a recent analysis by John Daniszewski of The Associated Press referred to "a nightmarish outcome in which Putin's ambitions in Ukraine could lead to a nuclear war through accident or miscalculation" and "the disturbing possibility that the current fighting in Ukraine might eventually veer into an atomic confrontation between Russia and the United States."

It's certainly a disturbing vision.

But it's hardly a new one. Moreover, it strains credulity to believe that the invasion of Ukraine poses a more grave threat of a nuclear confrontation than Cold War episodes such as the Berlin Airlift in 1948, the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, and the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

Daniszewski references the doctrine of MAD — Mutual Assured Destruction. That's the idea, ugly though it surely is, that the number of nuclear warheads is so great that any large-scale exchange of such weapons would prove so devastating to both sides — the U.S. and the Soviet Union, during the Cold War — that neither side, no matter the circumstances or the provocation, would ever initiate such a war.

Daniszewski then writes that "amazingly, no country has used nuclear weapons since 1945."

But that's not amazing at all. It shows only that political leaders, despite often acting irrationally, including starting or escalating conventional wars, have consistently recognized the singular threat that a full-scale nuclear exchange represents and refused, for nearly 77 years, to take that irreversible step.

Putin did, in his address prior to Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, state that "today's Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states."

But that sort of saber-rattling is hardly surprising given not only Putin's record, but those of his predecessors in the USSR. When Nikita Khrushchev said in 1956 that "we will bury you" his remark, although misunderstood as a physical threat to the West rather than a claim that communism would triumph over capitalism, did not, to use Daniszewski's words, "veer into an atomic confrontation."

It is of course reasonable to consider the possible wider implications of Putin's bellicosity. But hyperbolic allusions to 1914 and 1939 not only ignore how dramatically the world has changed, but also that much larger conflicts than what's happening in Ukraine — the aforementioned wars in Korea and Vietnam — didn't lead to another world war, much less a nuclear exchange.



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Everyone deserves one great dog

“Everyone in their lifetime is entitled to one great dog,” said a friend.

I wondered if that the statement also applied to other animals and pets.

An uncle once owned a prized, well-trained sorrel mare — his one great horse. The uncle proudly showed her off to anyone who came to visit. The rule: No one rode the mare except the uncle. When nieces and nephews visited, he borrowed older bay geldings from the neighbors for the kids to ride around on the farm.

As for cats and cat owners, many related tales of what makes their cat a “one great cat” pet. From silly cat tricks to endearing cat aloofness to tales of cat kindness when the owner was laid up and the cat kept them company, cat owners shared memories of their one great cat.

The owner of one great parakeet remarked on the beauty of birdsongs her blue-and-green parakeet chirped.

All of the “one great pet” stories varied greatly, except for the “one great chicken” stories.

They had a universal ring, and the chicken story usually went like this:

“My one great chicken ate bread scraps and cracked corn from my hand. This hen followed me around the yard. I loved to pet her, and she was so tame I carried her around while I did chores. The family fell on hard times. I discovered my hen ended up in the Sunday dinner soup



Jean Ann Moultrie

pot. I didn't eat chicken for the rest of my childhood.”

My own “one great dog” story began as I ambled by myself through an arboretum in a forest. A row of Forest Service buildings bordered the arboretum, so I wasn't concerned I'd get lost or hurt. In the afternoon, I heard a rustle in the underbrush. The noise stopped when I stopped, and continued when I walked.

I looked over at the buildings — not a vehicle or person in sight. I'd visited and tracked the trees in the arboretum for years and felt confident wild animals would have scattered if they'd heard me. I concluded whoever was following me was the two-legged sort. I raced to my car and left with the resolve I wouldn't return until I had a dog with me.

The search for a dog went into high gear. I found an ad for a 7-month-old Australian shepherd pup. I drove there and spotted the dog on the front porch. He barked as I approached — a good watchdog bark.

While the owners recited the dog's history, which dipped into reasons why the dog had had placements that “hadn't worked out,” the dog came over to me and leaned against my leg while I rubbed

behind his ears. Instant bonding. The dog seemed to say, “Get me out of here!”

And that's how I got my “one great dog.” Only he wasn't quite to the level of “great” initially. He stood frozen with fear with legs splayed out at noises such as car tires zinging through rain puddles. He barked and growled at other people and animals.

At the vet clinic, the staff tossed me a muzzle to put on the dog before they'd enter the room. The results of the exam: “insecure dog probably as a result of prior abuse.”

An ad flyer in a pet store caught my attention. I signed the dog up for obedience training.

The first day of class, he spent time in “timeout.” By the second class, he turned out to be a star pupil. If someone asked me what was an outstanding characteristic of my dog, I would have said, “Gentle.” For all his bluster, he was a gentle dog, especially with me. The next great characteristic I noticed — how intelligent he was. He functioned at levels beyond dog species.

In obedience training, my dog aced beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. He was a devoted companion pet. With patience and training, he transformed to my “one great dog.”

Jean Ann Moultrie is a Grant County writer. Her dog enjoyed forest hikes, family picnics, and serving as a buddy to grandchildren.

M110 makes meth problem worse

When it comes to methamphetamine, there are two certainties. Users of methamphetamine lie, and users of methamphetamine steal. While not always a certainty, a third common factor is that users of methamphetamine often hurt others through assaultive and aggressive behaviors.

Until 2017, possession of methamphetamine was a felony. First-time offenders were offered a conditional discharge if they would obtain an evaluation and complete treatment as recommended in the evaluation. Following successful completion, the felony would be dismissed. For subsequent convictions, offenders would be sentenced to probation that included 10 days in jail, along with a mandatory substance abuse evaluation and a requirement that they complete recommended treatment. Users were given the resources to obtain help for their use and addiction.

In 2017, Oregon determined that users of methamphetamine and other drugs should receive less punishment and more help with their drug use and addiction. The “more help” that they were tout-



Jim Carpenter

ing at the time already existed in every conviction. Possession of methamphetamine became a misdemeanor where possessors would be sentenced to probation with a mandatory substance abuse evaluation and a requirement to complete recommended treatment. This change reduced the penalty for possession, but retained the exact same obligation to get help for their use and addiction.

In 2020, Oregon determined that the laws for possession of methamphetamine and other drugs were still punishing those who simply needed help with their use and addiction. Ballot Measure 110 was proposed and passed. Methamphetamine possession is now a Class E Violation — no longer even considered criminal conduct. The penalty is that a methamphetamine possessor must call a hotline for a substance abuse screening. The end. No follow-through. No obligation to go to treatment. Simply make a phone call. The penalty for not making the phone call is a fine

of \$100. There is no penalty for not paying the fine. The practical reality is that there is no penalty, and there is no incentive to get help to change behavior.

Since its passage in 2020, Measure 110 has been applied to over 1,200 possession of methamphetamine cases. Through 2021, of those cases, there were only 55 verified calls to the hotline for substance abuse screening. In other words, of those cited, 95.5% never bothered to make a phone call.

In proposing ever-decreasing sanctions for drug possession, absolutely no thought has gone into the correlation between drug use and increased crimes against property and people. Further, absolutely no thought has gone into the cost to victims affected by the increase of drug-fueled crime.

Methamphetamine users lie and steal. They often hurt others. Now they face zero consequence for possession and use. Lock up your things. Prepare to protect yourself. Your community is no longer a safe place, and without a change in direction, the future looks grim.

Jim Carpenter is the district attorney of Grant County.



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