

Earth Manifesto

Sow Justice, Harvest Peace!

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
Begun in 2008, latest revision April 1, 2022

History is written, to an extent, by the victors of war, so the claim is sometimes made that might is right. Since the strong generally rule over others, they have the power to impose their laws, worldviews, ideologies and moral codes on those they dominate. Moral judgment, however, is much more complex than simplistic ideological doctrines or self-justifying rationales.

"When morality comes up against profit, it is seldom that profit loses."

--- Shirley Chisholm

Most people would agree that a triumphalist "to-the-victor-go-the-spoils" attitude is critically tainted when an aggressor's primary purpose for going to war is to gain the spoils of victory. We are just at the beginning of an era in which conflicts over resources will radically intensify. This trend will heat up as needs grow for fossil fuels, strategic minerals, fertile land and fresh water. Several fundamental developments of modern times are driving these intensifying pressures, including the depletion of non-renewable resources and rapid growth in human numbers and expanding needs and desires, along with a growing ascendancy of autocratic politicians and rulers in many countries.

The principal motivation behind the creation of the Earth Manifesto has been the recognition that there are much fairer ways to structure our societies and to deal effectively with the most significant economic, social, and ecological challenges of our times.

"I realize that the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war ... But we have no more urgent task."

--- President John F. Kennedy

The counterproductive aspects of wars counsel us to seek a consensus in finding better ways to achieve fairer and more farsighted goals, like those of effectuating peace and creating meaningful jobs, economic stability and greater social justice, as well as reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, conserving energy, and establishing more expansive global protections of biological diversity, fresh water resources, the world's oceans, and healthy ecosystems in general. Instead of stubborn intransigence in the defense of entrenched interests and the status quo, we should be seeking fairer ways to balance the needs of competing constituencies. We should strive with more sustained efforts to defuse antagonisms and conflicts, and to prevent other people from being galvanized into revolutionary fervor, desperate acts and even terrorist assaults because of frustration, injustices, prejudices, self-righteousness, fear, despair or hatred. Simply put, if we sow justice and non-violence, then we will improve our chances of being able to harvest social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. When we sow injustices and violence, we harvest discord and social turmoil and heightened risks of retaliation.

"Shall we? That is, shall we go on conferring our Civilization upon the peoples that sit in darkness, or shall we give these poor things a rest? Shall we bang right ahead in our old-time, loud, pious way, and commit the new century to the game; or shall we sober up and sit down and think it over first? Extending the Blessings of Civilization to our Brother who sits in Darkness has been a good trade and has paid well, on the whole; and there is money in it yet, if carefully worked - but not enough, in my judgment, to make any considerable risk advisable."

--- *To the Person Sitting in Darkness*, Mark Twain, 1901

How We Have Arrived at the Status Quo

Insightful understandings of the socioeconomic interdynamics between the distinctly contrasting goals of consumers and investors and good citizens are valuable, because they allow us to more clearly comprehend the macroeconomic picture of people's motivations and behaviors.

There is a conundrum in human affairs that Robert Reich discusses in detail in his book *Supercapitalism*. As consumers, we generally want good deals and low prices. This is why Costco and Wal-Mart have been so successful. In our roles as investors and speculators, we want the best possible returns on our investments. In contrast, as good citizens we want to have important things that are often contrary to what we want as consumers and investors. We want healthy communities and social justice, for instance. We want good quality public education and a fair shake for workers. We want affordable health care. We want a social safety net, and safeguards of our liberties, and equitable institutions, and clean air and water, and protected public lands and parks and open spaces. We want what is, in essence, *The Common Good, Properly Understood*.

In other words, as consumers and investors we DO NOT want products and services to contain all of the costs of a healthy society, because we want prices to remain low and profits to be high. As good citizens, however, we DO want prices to include the fair and sane treatment of workers and sensible protections for communities and the environment. Over the last few decades, things have gotten better for consumers and investors in many ways, but worse for citizens.

The economic ideology that dominates our society shrewdly advocates that the benefits of capitalism should be privatized, while as many costs as possible should be socialized. This is broadly irresponsible. Big corporations are allowed to externalize many costs onto society such as those related to the welfare of workers and resource depletion and environmental damages. Also, corporations have used misleading misinformation, ideological rationalizations, and excessively powerful influence to reduce the amount of federal taxes they pay. The Congressional Budget Office once reported that American corporations pay 60% less of the share of the federal budget that they paid in 1960 -- and this was before Republicans slashed corporate taxes by 40% in December 2017.

Businesses have managed to gain such privileges by using the influence of lobbyists to get deficit-financed tax cuts, direct subsidies and favorable loopholes. They shelter profits through accelerated depreciation and a wide variety of special perks. Many big corporations evade taxes by using offshore tax shelters. By allowing these corporate gambits, we give benefits to established industries at the expense of small businesses and innovative companies that are struggling to compete with them. This discourages new technologies and more efficient production methods. It also foolishly delays the development of better, more energy efficient and 'greener' products.

It should come as no surprise that oil companies, with their powerful influence in the administration of George W. Bush, made the biggest profits in world history at the time, and that they have a much lower effective income tax rate than other kinds of businesses. We should change this, and instead of allowing generous oil depletion allowances and other tax breaks and subsidies, these companies should be taxed so that the proceeds can be used to contribute to the development of cleaner alternatives and to mitigate the harmful effects of the combustion of their products. See the Earth Manifesto essay *The Reality and Ramifications of Peak Oil* for a better understanding of these issues.

Capitalist economic systems have largely triumphed over centrally planned communist ones in the past 75-plus years since the end of World War II. Even in communist China, rapid economic growth has been achieved in recent decades by adopting many capitalistic methods. Capitalist systems, however, are failing to address monumental modern problems. This failure is primarily due to unyielding opposition by moneyed interests to satisfying worker needs or finding fair remedies to wealth inequalities and social ills that were the motivating energy behind the idealistic aspects of socialist and communist ideologies in the first place. Capitalism's shortcomings in these regards, and with respect to catastrophic collateral impacts of altering the global climate, are dangerous to the future well-being of all of humanity.

Detecting the deficiencies in having dominating interests define the status quo is as simple as pie -- heck, even the mad hatter Tea Party compatriots can do it! Quizzically, indeed almost comically, our friends in the Tea Party have been tricked by Movement Conservatives into demanding solutions to daunting current day problems that actually have a downright dumb outcome of giving more money, power and influence to the dominators themselves. This is a not good! It is bad for democracy, bad for fairness principles, bad for personal liberties, bad for economic prosperity,

rather bad relative to fiscally responsible principles, and bad for peaceful coexistence between Americans. We can, and must, do better!

I feel strongly that democratic fair-mindedness is crucial to the common good in the long run, and that the prospects of our descendants in future generations should be taken into account in all evaluations of what truly contributes to the greater good. To guarantee what is most likely consistent with the common good, we need to courageously renew the commitment our Founders made to fairer representation in our government.

We make our destinies by the gods we choose, and surely we should choose the blessings of peaceable coexistence, equitable justice, broad fair-mindedness and inclusive personal freedoms, all within an overarching context of ethical social responsibility, decency, sustainability and ecological sanity.

Corporate Domination of Our Politics

Our political system can much more accurately be understood as a form of 'corporatism' than as a fairly representative democracy. Enormous corporations have much greater influence than citizens. Corporations control decision-making and the legislative process through insider access and big money contributions, which are forms of institutional bribery. The corporate strategy of obtaining tax breaks and other benefits, and profiting from government largess, allows companies to charge lower prices and make bigger profits for their shareholders. By externalizing costs onto society and paying less tax, corporations effectively understate the costs of their products. This affects resource allocations, and upsets rational forces involved in supply and demand. Thus it perverts the free market system. To create a far better system, we need to ensure that all products are required to fairly include all costs related to their production, plus a fair share of taxes.

The compulsion to make ever-bigger profits is the corporate bottom line. The corporate mission is to maximize profits; it is the corporate reason for being. It is even the legal mandate for corporations. This precedent was established by a Michigan Supreme Court ruling in the *Dodge vs. Ford Motor Company* case in 1919. By failing to require fairer rules and regulations, the government allows corporate America to diminish and undermine almost everything we want as good citizens. This creates colossal challenges and presents us with profound existential dilemmas both domestically and abroad.

Why do we allow corporations to fleece us with these strategies? Why do we let the Establishment stand in the path of creating better societies? Why do we hype growth and create speculative bubbles? Why do we let corporations violate basic understandings of fair competition by merging to create monopoly behemoths that are in violation of anti-trust laws? The reason seems to be simple, and narrowly focused: we do this to benefit CEO's, investors and speculators, often at the cost of the greater good. It is because of inertia, complacency, fear of change, ignorance, delusion, self-deception, emotionality and vested interest opposition that we allow entrenched interests to impede the causes of fairness and progress and farsighted planning. We have the power to change this system, but to begin to make this change, we need to be clear about its true nature.

Robert Reich notes that "The only way for the citizens in us to trump the consumers and investors in us is through laws and regulations that make our purchases and investments a social choice as well as a personal one." We must redesign our laws and restructure our economies and institutions with this in mind.

An Aside on Inflation

Inflation has become a big problem in early 2022, and it is influenced to a surprising extent by corporate greed. One of the worst culprits is the Big Oil industry.

Giant oil conglomerates are reaping huge windfall profits from the Russian war against Ukraine. And as crude oil prices hit the highest levels since 2008, "Big Oil has hit a gusher." Even before Putin's war against Ukraine, oil prices had begun to rise due to tight inventories and the recovery in global demand from the pandemic recession. "In 2021, when Americans were already struggling to pay their heating bills and fill up their gas tanks, the biggest oil companies (Shell, Chevron, BP, and Exxon) posted profits totaling \$75 billion. This year, courtesy of Vladimir Putin, Big Oil is on the way to a far bigger bonanza."

It is a big problem when the "free market" means allowing vested interests to make windfall profits from pandemic relief efforts and inflation, creating an ever more radically inequitable society, in addition to foisting costs onto

society, crushing worker organizations, remaking laws, eliminating sensible regulations, gaming the political system ever more extremely to the narrow advantage of corporate entities at the expense of the public, and damaging the environmental commons.

Unsurprisingly, the most egregious examples of the media regurgitating right-wing talking points on gasoline prices often come from Fox News. White House reporter Peter Doocy has parroted oil industry talking points at White House briefings and insinuated that the Biden administration is being dishonest about the cause of inflation. It's increasingly obvious to those outside the right-wing bubble that the "news" side of Fox often serves as a content provider for the *MAGA* propaganda machine.

As explained in the clear-seeing *Hightower Lowdown*, the pandemic strategy of corporate profiteers has been to gouge consumers and blame Joe Biden and Democrats. This is also the case with the scourge of inflation. Right wing politicians and media weaponize the public's concern about rising prices by blaming it on pandemic relief measures.

"What the GOP bemoans as America's inflation problem, is actually a corporate greed problem."

"For over 40 years, corporate-directed government policies have (1) intentionally promoted (even subsidized) mega-mergers; (2) gleefully green-lighted anticompetitive business tactics; and (3) aggressively inculcated and celebrated the economic lie that bigger is better. Thus, in short order and with practically no public awareness, much less discussion, America has been transformed into Monopoly Nation."

The inflationary economy is a boon for monopolies, for it gives them cover to flash their pricing power, mug you and me, and scamper away with a record-busting share of America's total economic output."

"In 2019, the year before Covid-19 hit, big U.S. corporations hauled in roughly a trillion dollars in profit. Only two years later, during the pandemic, they grabbed more than \$1.7 trillion. Antitrust analyst Matt Stoller finds that his huge profit jump accounts for 60% of the inflation now slapping U.S. families" in early 2022. And these corporations use stock buybacks to give the rewards of monopoly-enhanced profits to CEOs, top management and other big shareholders.

"It's not widely discussed, but market concentration is a devastating double-edged sword, cutting deeply not only into household budgets, but also into the financial heart of small businesses." ... "This doubly whammy is the direct result of our government's abdication of its antitrust responsibility."

"The concentration of corporate power can no longer be dismissed, for it's all too real. It wreaks real havoc on entire economic sectors, workaday families, communities and our nation's essential uniting value of freedom." The status quo is becoming increasingly risk-laden. And don't forget that the Republican tax cut swindle in December 2017 slashed taxes on corporations by 40%, again giving most of the benefits to the richest 1%.

As Joe Biden recently observed, "Capitalism without competition isn't capitalism, it's exploitation."

For the purpose of making bigger profits, Big Pharma engages in a variety of scurrilous tactics that cause life-saving prescription drugs to be too expensive in the U.S., and Big Gun Manufacturers encourage hotheaded young people (and others) to buy military-style assault weapons that have been used over and over and over again in mass murders. And the Big Military-Industrial Complex wields too much power to get debt-financed public funding for gargantuan amounts of military spending every year.

Let's Talk about the Military

One of the worst aspects of laissez-faire capitalism in nations governed by wealthy oligarchs and giant corporations has been its inadequately disciplined propensity to try to gain advantages by military means. It is preposterous to suppose that any sort of agreeable justice can be obtained by taking the huge and unjust gamble of invading and occupying other countries.

In 2022, the authoritarian autocrat Vladimir Putin is bringing down death, destruction, severe insecurity and economic calamity upon countless millions of people. He is a global menace who is committing war crimes and making Russia into a pariah nation, with catastrophic consequences to the Ukrainian people. This brutal conflict is also causing severe hardships to the Russian people, as well as to many, many others around the world harmed by the chaos. Russia's massive military is invading the sovereign country of Ukraine to expand its territory and influence, and to

satisfy Putin's egomaniacal ambitions. Millions of civilians are fleeing their homes, and Putin has made nuclear threats in his effort to expand Russia. And Putin is destabilizing Western societies by causing mass migrations of refugees into Europe and other countries from nations like Syria and Ukraine.

Admittedly, every major foreign policy undertaking involves many complexities and uncertainties. There are conflicting ways of interpreting any event, as anyone knows who has served on a jury in a criminal case, and thus had the responsibility for honestly evaluating evidence and testimony.

Justice itself is relative. The word justice has a variety of meanings and nuances. True justice should involve a degree of fairness, and it is disingenuous to treat justice as merely a synonym for harsh retribution and punishment. People have a natural tendency to bandy around concepts like "morality" as if they are not relative, but it is demonstrable that in almost any situation that involves moral judgment, there is relativity. *Consequential relativity.*

War, in particular, is foggy enough that the concept of any war being a 'just war' is bizarre, for war is an "anything goes" kind of undertaking, and in the heat of battle both sides justify immoral killing and maiming with equally plausible, and implausible, rationales and judgments.

Many war crimes are committed in the tragic miasma of the fog of war, whether or not the leaders in charge ever face trial and justice. Someone may be 'not guilty' because they are on the winning side of a violent conflict, but this is a rationalization, not particularly a sign of rectitude or moral good.

The administration of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney adopted a 'preemptive war' policy that set a dangerous precedent. We are beginning to regret our preemptive wars because of the extremely high costs and far-reaching negative consequences of these military ventures. The wanton uses of drone bombers to kill suspected terrorists in places like Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia present new risks of blowback retaliation. Both our domestic well-being and our international standing in the world are being undermined by our aggression in these precedents. But few people acknowledge the fact that our superpower dominance will one day diminish much more dramatically than it has done so far, and that we may come to rue the day that we set precedents of preemptive war and dropping bombs on people in sovereign countries as acceptable foreign policy.

Besides, let's be practical. America's wars in the last 65 years since the Korean War that began in 1950 have largely been a fiasco. The U.S. fought a costly war in Vietnam from the early 1960s to the fall of Saigon in 1975, and after we left, our side fell to the communist north. Not only were the monetary costs huge, but there were more than 58,000 U.S. troops killed and 300,000 injured, and more than 1 million Vietnamese civilians were killed and millions were injured. Likewise, our mad invasion of Iraq in 2003 and subsequent military occupation was not only extremely costly, but Iraq began disintegrating, and by the summer of 2014, murderous sectarian violence began tearing the country apart and the ruthless Islamic State took over large swaths of the nation near war-torn Syria and Jordan and Turkey. Iraq became a deeply unstable country after a decade of war. And millions of American veterans of the Vietnam War, the Iraq War, the Afghanistan War and all the other wars are still suffering terribly, and scandals are embroiling their underfunded health care, and suicides, drug overdoses and homelessness are epidemic.

Aggression in war is not only a supreme international crime, but it turns out to be a bad plan from the standpoint of outcomes, to boot. Post-traumatic stress disorder affects hundreds of thousands of Americans, and in a sense our society as a whole.

"Seeing is different than being told."

---Kenyan Proverb

Vladimir Putin and his Grotesquely Unjust War against Ukraine in 2022

Putin is truly a villainous and evil megalomaniac who is acting like a dictatorial barbarian in his murderously violent invasion of Ukraine. His ruthless ambitions are endangering the world, and his actions in Chechnya, Syria and now Ukraine show that he is willing to be indiscriminately brutal toward others in pursuit of power.

Putin lies profligately and propagates devious disinformation by using state-run media to promote his twisted Orwellian falsehoods. For three weeks, what are known as Russia's "federal channels" -- separate state-controlled news networks that offer different flavors of the same Kremlin-fawning fare -- have been serving up Putin's spin on a war that his government calls a "special military operation."

"Russia's domestic television propaganda machine has reached such an intensity during Putin's war against Ukraine that a tiny — but previously unthinkable — crack in Moscow's state news juggernaut broke open earlier this week with an on-air protest by a courageous woman who opposes the war and misinformation about it."

As Wes "Scoop" Nisker used to say, "If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own!" And strive to make it positive news.

Putin is clearly committing many atrocities and war crimes in Ukraine with his desperate attacks against civilians in hospitals and apartment buildings across Ukraine. War crimes are defined in international law by the Nuremberg Principles, a set of guidelines for determining what constitutes war crimes.

Principle VI defines war crimes under international law, including:

(a) Crimes against peace:

(i) Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of an aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances;

(ii) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i).

(b) War crimes:

Violations of the laws or customs of war which include, but are not limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labor or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory; murder or ill-treatment of war or persons on the Seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.

(c) Crimes against humanity:

Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts done against any civilian population, or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, when such acts are done or such persecutions are carried on in execution of or in connection with any crime against peace or any war crime.

Leaders, organizers, instigators and accomplices participating in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes are responsible for all acts performed by any persons in execution of such plan.

Complicity in the commission of a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity as set forth in Principle VI is a crime under international law.

In a report on March 18, *Putin calls opponents "scum and traitors" as Moscow announces new crackdown on "false information"*, CBS News wrote:

"Facing stiff resistance in Ukraine and crippling economic sanctions at home, Russian President Vladimir Putin is using language that recalls the rhetoric from Josef Stalin's show trials of the 1930s. In an ominous speech on Wednesday, Putin likened opponents to "gnats" who try to weaken the country at the behest of the West — crude remarks that set the stage for sweeping repressions against those who dare to speak out against the war in Ukraine."

"Meanwhile, Russia has been battered by devastating Western sanctions that cut the government's access to an estimated half of the country's hard currency reserves and dealt crippling blows to many sectors of the economy."

"With his hopes for a blitz in Ukraine shattered and economic costs mounting, Putin unleashed a venomous diatribe at those who oppose his course." He actually said, "The Russian people will always be able to distinguish true patriots from scum and traitors and will simply spit them out like a gnat that accidentally flew into their mouths -- spit them out on the pavement. I am convinced that such a natural and necessary self-purification of society will only strengthen our country, our solidarity, cohesion and readiness to respond to any challenges."

CBS News: "The coarse language carried ominous parallels for those familiar with Soviet history. During show trials of Stalin's Great Terror, authorities disparaged the declared 'enemies of the people' as 'reptiles' or 'mad dogs.'"

Not only is Putin engaging in deeply dishonest and manipulative schemes, but he is using repressive divide-to-conquer ruses. He is cunning in demagoguery and political intrigue, and in his uses of cyberwarfare and microtargeted social

media propaganda and emotion-manipulating misinformation.

He has been abusing power by engaging in public graft and ruling in league with rich oligarchs.

He is a domestic threat because he imposes authoritarian rule over the Russian people and represses them economically, with help from ruthless police forces. He has become a global menace not only by engaging in military aggression against Ukraine, but also by using petroleum politics to corruptly influence national decision making.

In a woe-filled world of Putins

Be the courageous sunflower seed woman.

Subtleties of Framing

Issues are framed in certain words and ideas. Knowledgeable linguists tell us that issues are framed, in general, in ways prejudicial to a speaker or writer's point of view. Uses of established frames of reference often distort the way we perceive things in subtle but significant ways. Studies show that our perceptions of the world are deeply colored by the belief systems we have come to hold.

Consider the matter of framing that is reflected in the naming of major military operations. The war in Iraq, for instance, was called Operation Iraqi Freedom. We delivered a brutal kind of destabilizing freedom over there, causing horrible social instability and stoking sectarian conflicts. Millions of Iraqis would have preferred a more honorable and effective savior!

Such names are partly a kind of marketing propaganda aimed at American soldiers and the public and foreigners. When the U.S. began the post-9/11 attack on Afghanistan, the Department of Defense initially dubbed it Operation Infinite Justice. This name subtly reflected our conviction that God is on our side, for 'who' else can mete out infinite justice? Perhaps sensible heads in the marketing department recognized the probability that the war in Afghanistan would involve many years of an anything-but-just occupation of that country, and that a terrible amount of 'collateral damage' and social turmoil and other injustices would be perpetrated upon the Afghani people. The rubric Operation Infinite Justice was scrapped on September 25, 2001, no doubt reflecting these sensible realizations. Or maybe somebody brought up the fact that someday the attention of the world might be focused on our premeditated and impure motives in this invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, as discussed in the provocative book by Michael C. Ruppert, *Crossing the Rubicon - The Decline of the American Empire at the End of the Age of Oil*.

Maybe military leaders changed the name of the war in Afghanistan and the subsequent military occupation to Operation Enduring Freedom because they realized the truth that preemptive war is a dangerous precedent. Other peoples may have radically different ideas about how to manifest Infinite Justice in the world. For instance, Islamic peoples believe that Allah is the only one that could provide "infinite justice", and even George W. Bush probably felt serious reservations in the possibility that his military adventurism could be perceived as a modern religious Crusade. And perhaps the U.S. operation in Afghanistan would be more widely seen as Operation Widespread Injustice.

"All generalizations are false, including this one," declared the wily philosopher Mark Twain. While he was right about the fact that there are exceptions to all generalizations, it also is generally true that important kernels of truth are often contained in every generalization.

A Variety of Pithy Observations

Visualize an extraordinary understanding, as conveyed in the fine documentary film *The Diplomat*. The setting for this insight is the storied Dalmatian Coast of what was formerly Yugoslavia, home of the ancient walled city of Dubrovnik and the charming city of Split, which was originally built around a massive fortress-like palace of the retired Roman Emperor Diocletian that dates from 305 CE.

Richard Holbrooke was the U.S. Ambassador to Germany from 1993 to 1994, and in that position of responsibility he achieved great public prominence when he helped broker a peace agreement among the warring factions in the Balkan Peninsula that led to the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995. Yugoslavia had broken up into six federal states in the early 1990s: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The Bosnian War began in April 1992 and continued until the Dayton Peace Accords came into effect in December of 1995.

This peace settlement was not ideal for anyone, but there are great benefits of having peace instead of war. Today, most people in this region are prospering and safer than during the terrible war in which some 100,000 people were killed and over 2,200,000 were displaced. "The Bosnian war was characterized by bitter fighting, indiscriminate shelling of cities and towns, ethnic cleansing and systematic mass rape, mainly perpetrated by Serb, but to a lesser extent, Croat and Bosnian forces. This war displaced more people in Europe than any time since the end of World War II, and the suffering continues to this day for many people. In any case, one big advantage of preventing wars is that there are fewer collateral injustices during times of peace.

Personal observations and experiences have led me to a few basic conclusions and valuable insights. Aware of Mark Twain's comments on generalizations, and mine about relativity, I nonetheless venture to offer these ideas as grist for thinking and debate.

- Diplomatic conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts are better strategies than resorting to violence and war.
- Preemptive aggression and military interventionism are bad ideas that must be much more effectively discouraged. War should be a very last resort, and defensive not offensive.
- Making friends is a better strategy than making enemies, and being a good neighbor leads to more satisfactory outcomes than harboring hostilities and acting with arrogant hubris.
- It is healthier in relationships to accept differences and adopt live-and-let-live attitudes than to try to impose one's will on others or to be unempathetic, mean-spirited, domineering or driven by base motives.
- Fairness in competition and respect for the greater good and stronger protections of the ecological commons are more important to people today, and in the future, than narrow partisanship, economic injustices, irresponsibly laissez-faire corporatism and rashly misguided priorities.
- Addressing the roots of social problems is a more propitious approach than merely assaulting the symptoms, just as good nutrition and preventative medicine are better approaches for good health than relying excessively on drugs and surgery.
- Fair-mindedness and open-mindedness are more socially intelligent and salubrious than closed-mindedness and supporting discrimination and public policies that increase inequities.
- Comprehensive considerations lead to better outcomes than shortsighted, impractical knee-jerk dogmatism.
- Fiscal irresponsibility and huge national debts have serious future consequences, and financially responsible behaviors are better for the average American and our communities than irresponsible behaviors.
- Incentives for innovation and socially beneficial behaviors are smarter than harsh prohibitions or absurdly extravagant subsidies being given to entrenched interest groups, or loopholes for unethical activities, or giving excess influence to forces that exploit people using the shrewd strategies of 'disaster capitalism'.

An Inoculation against Another War in the Middle East

"War is never inevitable, though the belief that it is can become one of its causes."

--- Professor Joseph S. Nye

There is a deep truth in the motto, Sow Justice to Harvest Peace. Unfortunately, ideologically-driven conservative politicians deceive us with specious arguments, contending that wars, first strikes and military occupations will lead to success and make us safer and more secure. Hawkish opportunists tell us, furthermore, that the best economic policies are those that curiously lead to more privileges for the fortunate few, and to increases in the disparities of wealth between people. In dramatic contrast, increased economic inequalities, worse healthcare inequities, and detrimental environmental impacts have far-reaching negative consequences.

Politicians who advocate offensive military undertakings often try to deceive people about their real intentions and motivations. They politicize science and use policy gimmickry, misinformation, secrecy and deception instead of being honest and open to reasonable negotiation, pragmatic statesmanship, sensible oversight, fair scrutiny and crucial accountability. Many of them figuratively bury their heads in the sand by embracing primitive religious Creation

myths, and then proclaim monotheistic supremacy and are intolerant of others and support male domineering aggressive militarism and nature-exploiting economic policies.

Let's demand that our leaders work for peace by sowing truer justice. Let's insist that the U.S. government gets us out of wars and avoids future episodes of aggression and military interventions. Let's support greater investments in peaceful coexistence and mutual security.

"Be an early adopter; oppose the *next* war, already!"

--- The underground Mole

Recognizing how we got into the war in Iraq could help us avoid another episode of international aggression by the U.S. The Bush administration goaded us into the extremely costly and destabilizing war in Iraq by playing on the public's fears, anger and a reactionary thirst for vengeance in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Our emotions were exploited and our foreign policies were hijacked through the use of exaggerations and flawed intelligence and distortions about facts and probable consequences.

Under the cover of this bloody diversion, our domestic policies were shoved far to the right, and this had calamitous economic and social impacts on the American people.

Read *Reflections on War - and Peace!* for deeper understanding of issues relating to war and peace. A good understanding about the facts concerning how the U.S. government got us into the costly war in Iraq can be gained by reading *What Happened* by George Bush's White House Press Secretary, Scott McClellan. Or watch the documentary narrated by Rachel Maddow titled *Hubris: The Selling of the Iraq War*, or read the book by Michael Isikoff and David Corn, *Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*.

In addition to exaggerating threats in the run-up to the Iraq war, the Bush administration radically underestimated the probable costs of war and ignored reasonable warnings about the risks of military involvements. Unrealistic outcome scenarios were advanced and facts about risks were suppressed. Dissenters were intimidated, and widespread collateral injustices were perpetrated. Our nationalistic passions were preyed upon, as well as the parochial righteousness of Christian believers. It is extremely dangerous to stoke such sources of conflict.

It is stunning to recall the evolving variety of disingenuous rationalizations and optimistic assessments that were provided to the public in the run-up to the attack on Iraq. We were told that this war was about fighting the evil dictator Saddam Hussein, and spreading freedom and democracy, and making us safer at home. A more honest assessment reveals that our actions were much more concerned with geopolitical considerations and trying to gain control over the flow of Middle Eastern oil, and with facilitating profit-making by investors and corporations involved in the military-industrial complex and war-services industries, and with attempting to achieve an uninterrupted American military supremacy and dominance over others.

Some people in conservative circles have tried the same tricks that were used to get us into attacking Iraq to involve us in new wars against countries like Iran. George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, John McCain and others at one time figuratively beat the drums by hyping up lies about Iran, and used distorted intelligence to stimulate people's pride and fears. There was even talk of a pending World War III starting in Iran, as the U.S. sent more aircraft carriers to the Iran vicinity.

We should throw open our windows like the half-crazy protagonist in the powerfully provocative 1976 film *Network*, and declare "We're as mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore." And today, we sure as hell should reject dangerous Trumpism and elect more Democrats and progressives in Congress in order to make the USA a safer, saner, more just and more peaceable country.

"Life is like a bicycle; in order to keep your balance, you must keep moving."

--- Albert Einstein

Let's make an overarching collective commitment to prevent the launch of another war in the Middle East, no matter what the supposed provocation. What do you think? Feedback is welcome at my email address, SaveTruffulaTrees@hotmail.com.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

April 1, 2022 (updated several times from the original version in January 2008)