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زبانهای اروپایی

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## **There Is Only One Spaceship Earth**

### **Freeing the World from the Deadly Shadow of Genocide and Ecocide**

When I was in the U.S. military, I learned a saying (often [wrongly attributed](#) to the Greek philosopher Plato) that only the dead have seen the end of war. Its persistence through history to this very moment should indeed be sobering. What would it take for us humans to stop killing each other with such vigor and in such numbers?

Song lyrics tell me [to be proud](#) to be an American, yet war and profligate preparations for more of the same are omnipresent here. My government spends more on its military than the [next 10 countries](#) combined (and most of them are allies). In this century, our leaders have twice warned of an “[axis of evil](#)” intent on harming us, whether the fantasy troika of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea cited by President George W. Bush early in 2002 or [a new one](#) — China, Russia, and North Korea — in the Indo-Pacific today. Predictably given that sort of threat inflation, this country is now [closing in on](#) a trillion dollars a year in “[defense spending](#),” or close to two-thirds of federal discretionary spending, in the name of having a military machine capable of defeating “evil” troikas (as well as combatting global terrorism). A significant part of that huge sum is reserved for producing a [new generation](#) of nuclear weapons that will be quite capable of destroying this planet with missiles and warheads to spare. [Cross, Austin Best Price: \\$16.96 Buy New \\$21.47 \(as of 12:07 UTC - Details\)](#)

My country, to be blunt, has long been [addicted](#) to war, killing, violence, and massive preparations for more of the same. We need an intervention. We need to confront our addiction. Yet when it comes to war and preparations for future conflicts, our leaders aren’t even close to hitting rock bottom. They remain in remarkable denial and see no reason to change their ways.

To cite two recent examples: Just before Easter weekend this year, President Biden swore he was personally [devastated](#) by Palestinian suffering in Gaza. At the same time, his administration insisted that a United Nations Security Council resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza that it allowed to pass was “[non-binding](#)” and, perhaps to make that very point, reportedly [shipped](#) 1,800 MK84 2,000-pound bombs and 500 MK82 500-pound bombs off to Israel, assumedly to be used in — yes! — Gaza.

The Biden administration refuses to see the slightest contradiction in such a stance. Men like Joe Biden and his chief diplomat Antony Blinken confess to being disturbed, [even shocked](#), by the devastation our bombs deliver. Who knew Israel would use them to kill or wound [more than 100,000](#) Palestinians? Who knew that they’d reduce [significant parts of Gaza](#) to rubble? Who knew that a blank check of support for Israel would enable that country to — it’s hard not to use the phrase — offer a final solution to the Gaza question?

Not to be outdone by the Democrats, Republican Congressman Tim Walberg of Michigan recently cited the examples of [Hiroshima and Nagasaki](#) in seeking a “quick” end to the conflict in Gaza (before walking his comments back somewhat). For him, Israel remains America’s greatest ally, whatever [its actions](#), even as he argues that Palestinians in Gaza merit no humanitarian aid from the United States whatsoever.

With that horrifying spectacle — and given the TV news and social media, it truly has been a spectacle! — of genocide in Gaza, America’s leaders have embraced the very worst of [Machiavelli](#), preferring to be feared rather than loved, while putting power first and principle last. Former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, recently deceased, rightly vilified for pursuing a [Bismarckian Realpolitik](#), and deeply involved in the devastation of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, might even have blanched at the full-throttled support for war (and weapons sales) now being pursued by this country’s leaders. Dividing the world into armed camps based on fear seems basic to our foreign policy, a reality now echoed in domestic politics as well, as the Democratic blue team and the MAGA Republican red team attack each other as “fascistic” or worse. In this all-American world of ours, all is conflict, all is war.

When asked about such an addiction to war, your average government official will likely claim it’s not our fault. “Freedom isn’t free,” so the bumper sticker says, meaning in practice that this country stands prepared to kill others without mercy to ensure its “way of life,” which also in practice means unbridled consumption by an ever-shrinking portion of Americans and unapologetic profiteering by the richest and greediest of us. Call it the

“moderate” bipartisan consensus within the Washington Beltway. Only an “extremist” would dare call for restraint, tolerance, diplomacy, and peace.

### **A Common Cause to Unify Humanity**

Short of an attack on Earth by aliens, it’s hard to imagine the U.S. today making common cause with “enemies” like China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia. What gives? Isn’t there a better way and, if so, how would we get there?

In fact, there is a common foe — or perhaps a common cause — that should unite us all as humans. That cause is Earth, the health of our planet and all the life forms on it. And that foe, to state the obvious (even if it regularly goes unsaid), is war, which is unhealthy in the extreme not just for us but for our planet, too.

War turns people into killers — of our fellow humans, of course, but also of all forms of life within our (often very large) blast radii. In addition, war is a mass distraction from what should truly matter to us: the sacredness of life and the continued viability of our planet and its ecology. Call it a cliché but there’s no way to deny it: there is indeed only one Spaceship Earth. As far as we know now, our planet is the sole body in the universe teeming with life. Of course, the universe is incomprehensibly vast and there could well be other forms of life out there, but we don’t know that, not with certainty anyway.

Imagine, in a dystopic future, America’s “best and brightest” (or the “best and brightest” of another country) acting in a nuclear fury, employing the very weaponry that [continues to proliferate](#) but hasn’t been used since the destruction of two Japanese cities on August 6 and 9, 1945, and so crippling Spaceship Earth. Imagine also that our planet is truly the universe’s one magnificent and magical spot of life. Wouldn’t it be hard then to imagine a worse crime, not just against humanity, but life itself cosmically? There would be no recompense, no forgiveness, no redemption — and possibly no recovery either.

Of course, I don’t know if God (or gods) exists. Though I was raised a Catholic, I find myself essentially an agnostic today. Yet I do believe in the sacredness of life in all its diversity. And as tenacious as life may be, given our constant pursuit of war, I fear the worst.

If you’re of a certain age, you may recall when the astronauts on Apollo 8 [witnessed earthrise](#) as their spaceship orbited the moon in 1968. The crew [read](#) from Genesis, though in truth it could have been from any creation story we humans have ever imagined to account for how we and our world came to be. Specific religions or creeds didn’t truly matter at that moment, nor should they now. What mattered was the sense of awe we felt as we first viewed the Earth from space in its full glory but also all its fragility.

For make no mistake, this planet is fragile. Its ecosystems can be destroyed. Not for nothing did the inventor of the atomic bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer, turn to the [Hindu scriptures to intone](#), “Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds,” when he saw the first atomic device explode and expand into a mushroom cloud during the Trinity test in New Mexico in July 1945.

In the febrile postwar climate of anti-communism that would all too soon follow, America’s leaders would decide that atomic bombs weren’t faintly destructive enough. What they needed were thermonuclear bombs, 1,000 times more destructive, to fight World War III against the “[big fat commie rat](#).” Now nine (9!) nations have nuclear weapons, with more undoubtedly hankering to join the club. So how long before mushroom clouds soar toward the stratosphere again? How long before we experience some version of planetary ecocide via a nuclear exchange and the [nuclear winter](#) that could follow it?

### **Genocide and Ecocide on a Planetary Scale**

The genocide happening in Gaza today may foreshadow one possible future for this planet. The world’s lone superpower, its self-styled beacon of freedom, now dismisses U.N. Security Council resolutions to stop the killing as “non-binding.” Meanwhile, Israel, whose founding was a response to a Holocaust inflicted during World War II and whose people collectively said Never Again, is now killing, starving, and displacing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the name of righteous vengeance for Hamas’s October 7th attack.

If the U.S. and Israel can spin mass murder in Palestine as not just defensible, but even positive (“defeating Hamas terrorists”), what hope do we have as a species? Is this the future we have to look forward to, an endless echoing of our murderous past?

I refuse to believe it. It truly should be possible to imagine and work toward something better. Yet, in all honesty, it’s hard to imagine new paths being blazed by such fossilized thinkers as Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

“Don’t trust anyone over thirty” was a [telling catchphrase](#) of the 1960s. Now, we’re being told as Americans that we’ll have to place our trust in one of two men almost at or exceeding 80 years of age. Entrusting and empowering [political dinosaurs](#), however, represents an almost surefire path toward future extinction-level events.

Let me turn instead to a 25-year-old who did imagine a better future, even as he protested in the most extreme way imaginable the genocide in Gaza. This February, fellow airman Aaron Bushnell lit [himself on fire](#) outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C. He sacrificed his life in a most public way to challenge us to do something, anything, to stop genocide.

America's "leaders" answered him by ignoring his sacrifice and sending more bombs, thousands of them, to Israel.

Aaron Bushnell did, however, imagine a better world. As he explained last year in a [private post](#):

"I've realized that a lot of the difference between me and my less radical friends is that they are less capable of imagining a better world than I am. I follow YouTubers like Andrewism that fill my head with concrete images of free, post-scarcity communities and it makes me so much more prepared to reject things about the current world, because I've imagined how things could be and that helps me see how extremely bullshit things are right now.

"What I'm trying to say is, it's so important to imagine a better world. Let your thoughts run wild with idealistic dreams of what the world *should* look like and let the pain and anger at how it's not that way flow through you. Let it free your mind and fuel your rage against the machine.

"It's not too late for you or anyone. We can have the world of our dreams tomorrow, but we have to be willing to fight today."

His all-too-public suicide was a fiery cry of despair, but also a plea for a better future, one free of mass murder.

Earlier this week, millions of people across America witnessed a total eclipse of the sun. It's awe-inspiring, even a bit alarming, to see the sun disappear in the middle of the day. Those watching took comfort in knowing that it would reappear from behind the moon in a matter of seconds or minutes and so gloried in that fleeting moment of preternatural darkness.

But imagine if the moon and sun were somehow to become permanently stuck in place. Imagine that darkness was our future — our only future. Sadly enough, however, it's not the moon but we humans who can potentially cast the Earth into lasting darkness. Via the nuclear winter that could result from a nuclear conflict on this planet, we could indeed cast a shadow between the sun and life itself, a power of destruction that, tragically, may far exceed our current level of wisdom. [Schweizer, Peter Buy New \\$15.99](#) (as of 10:32 UTC - Details)

We know from history that it's far easier to destroy than to create, far easier to kill than to preserve. Yet when countries make genocide or ecocide (from nuclear winter) possible and defensible (as a sign of uncompromising "toughness" and perhaps the defense of "freedom"), you know that their leaders are, in some sense, [morally obtuse monsters](#). And who or what are we if we choose to follow such monsters?

As human populations rise, as vital resources like water, food, and fuel shrink, as this planet grows ever hotter thanks to our intervention and our excesses, we'll need to cooperate more

than ever to ensure our mutual survival. Far too often, however, America's strategic thinkers dismiss cooperation through diplomacy or otherwise as naïve, unreliable, and impractical. "Competition" through zero-sum games, war, or other hyperviolent urges seems so much more "reasonable," so much more "human."

To the victor goes the spoils, so it's said. But a planet despoiled by thermonuclear war, cast into darkness, ravaged by radiation, disease, and death, would, of course, offer no victory to anyone. Unless we put our efforts into ending war, rather than continuing to war on one another, such conflicts will, sooner or later, undoubtedly put an end to us.

In reality, our worst enemy isn't some "axis" or other combination of imagined foes from without, it's within. We remain the world's most dangerous species, the one capable of wiping out most or all of the rest, not to speak of ourselves, with our folly. So, as Aaron Bushnell wrote, free your mind. Collectively, there must be a better way for all creatures, great and small, on this fragile spaceship of ours.

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