

Lament for What is Required

by [Larry McCloskey](#) (November 2023)



Beach at Walmer, Sir Winston Churchill, 1938

It's not enough to do our best; sometimes you have to do what is required. –Winston Churchill

President Roosevelt was never going to allow the United States to be dragged into war. Hitler was a problem as were Nazi victories in Europe. Something would have to be done when, as

seemed inevitable, Hitler defeated Britain. But not war. Lend-lease would have to do. Something eventually could be negotiated to at least limit Hitler's sphere of influence to remain separate from American. Besides, Hitler had a point about Russia—if not Germany, the United States would eventually have to deal with Stalin's communist ambitions.

Though not explicit, Churchill's best day of the Second World War is arguably December 7th, 1941, when Japan audaciously attacked the US naval fleet at Pearl Harbour, killing 2,403 and wounding 1,178 sailors, soldiers and civilians. For all his bluster and persistence, Churchill was not sure Britain could hold out against Luftwaffe air-attack and anticipated Nazis invasion. Churchill won the war for Britain because he inspired hope for a hopeless cause when needed most. What is often forgotten about victory is that the odds were spectacularly against Britain and the allies defeating Hitler until Japan woke up the sleeping American giant.

The unprecedented manufacture of American supplies and armaments has been well-documented against which neither Japan nor Germany could compete. Winning battles in war is often calculated by the availability of weapons, the number of soldiers and the logistics of supply lines. Far less acknowledged is the intangible human response to what is required to win a war. In London during the Blitz, in the United States after Pearl Harbour, and eventually all allied troops responded with an unequivocal determination to win at all costs.

Today, we equivocate. It is our caring, enlightened way. That is, western progressives—far too many of whom presently hold high office—who are never going to be subject to the consequences of prevarication, weave and bob, dodge and avoid, wanting to seem supportive, but never committing enough for caring to have meaning. Worse, the pretence of caring has a hugely detrimental effect on the determined action needed to deal with evil deeds. Unless otherwise motivated, humans have

a natural tendency to compromise and settle. Not a bad quality for community building but, in order to win a war, people have to grow Churchillian tendencies antithetical to their cooperative human nature.

Progressives reared on John Lenin's "Imagine" and 'let's give peace a chance' sentiments fail to have grasped lessons of the 20th century about how to achieve peace. Giving peace a chance by the dictates of a song lyric is weakness; giving peace a chance by the assertion of strength, is what is required. It is called deterrence.

Israel is the product of 20th Century democracies doing what was required. The Holocaust was enacted against Jews because as integrated citizens of Europe they could not fully comprehend Hitler's malevolent intent even with its explicit rendering in his how-to manual written in Landsberg prison and published in 1925. By 1939, Hitler's two volume opus Mein Kampf had sold 5.2 million copies, and by the end of the war that figure rose to 10 million copies sold or distributed in Germany. In 1933, an English translation also existed, just in case anyone thinks Hitler's plan to eliminate the Jews of Europe was hidden from the West. (I'll channel the wisdom of an anonymous psychiatrist here: "All psychological pain can be derived from not being able to reconcile the world as it is from what you would have it be.")

We were supposed to 'never forget' the Holocaust that murdered over six million Jews to ensure 'never again.' And then we forgot. From 2015 until 2022, the UN General Assembly has adopted 140 resolutions against Israel versus 68 for all other countries. The resolutions may differ in detail but thematically oppose Israel doing 'what is required' in order to survive. The absurdity of UN resolutions give unfortunate truth to the lie that owning the narrative is more important than history, facts or truth. Joseph Goebbles, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, knew this as do modern progressives

and the enemies of Israel.

As such, we fail to understand the astonishingly unlikely bloody miracle that Israel's continued existence is. Claiming oppression is the currency of Western modernity. Israel's greatest crime for which they get little praise or sympathy is that they have been spectacularly successful. How dare they transcend oppression!

The October 7th terrorist attack on Israel is on a whole new level of brutality. Israel will respond as they always do, with strength and determination because they have to. And what they have to do has been ratcheted up, which means they will do more and will be criticized and suffer more UN condemnation.

While Israel does the grunt work for survival, the Hamas attack is ultimately less about what Israel does, than it is about the West doesn't do. We do not have, cannot resurrect, or do not want to respond to our enemies as we were once required to do to defeat Hitler. We seem to have forgotten that substantive stuff is required to do exceptional things.

And there are always reasons for partial action, delayed action, or inaction—we have to consider all sides, all arguments, everyone's personal truth, while drowning in an ocean of ambiguity for which there is no objective truth. Besides, conflict in the Middle East is 'over there' and we have bigger issues to contend with here. Incredibly, recent polling particularly among young people, prescribes surrendering economies to questionable climate change initiatives untethered to pesky outcomes, and reconstructing the world according to contradictory EDI imperatives. Is it any wonder young people have alarmist views about poorly understood problems while barely reacting to actual existential threats? On Monday less than 48 hours after the most brutal civilian attack in Israel's history, White House official John Kirby, dismissed the implicit threat of world

war that the attack on Israel represents, quoting President Biden's actual concern. "The only existential threat humanity faces—even more frightening than a nuclear war— is global warming; going above 1.5 degrees in the next 10 years."

The existential threat distraction combined with the 'over there' argument are formula for inertia, which is hopelessly naive (not the correct word but too many invectives to otherwise choose from). Israel is the only functioning democracy in the middle-east and is often likened to a canary in the coal-mine as context for its regional importance. But its more than that. I would argue—particularly at this moment—Israel's existence, its ability to survive and thrive is the canary in the coal-mine for the survival of the West, in its entirety.

This statement may seem over-stated to some—for progressives, the right to prevaricate never ends. Never deciding anything beyond fidelity to woke causes is, in their parlance, to remain open-minded. But history says otherwise. Empires, civilizations, the most powerful armies collapse and are ground to dust in a historical heart beat. It happens even if we do not take notice.

It is happening and we are not taking notice. The upstream cultural and downstream political preoccupations of recent decades have much to do with utopian ideals and little to do with the health, safety and prosperity of its populations, which are the only substantive reasons politicians were spawned and exist. A sure sign of corruption and decline—check out the Roman demise for more—exist in the decades-long catalogue of frivolous political preoccupations at the expense of what is required.

Israel cannot afford the indulgence of frivolous preoccupation. As Israel fights for survival – while being outnumbered about 100 to 1 in their hostile neighbour—Canada's national broadcaster, the CBC, has instructed its media

outlets not to refer to the murderers of children and women as terrorists. The imperative to see no evil does not lessen the prevalence of evil. In like manner, the Holocaust happened because the West was slow to see what was going to happen, what was happening, and what actually happened.

What happened on October 7th was premeditated murder, a precursor to genocide, and for emphasis, desecration of victims on a world stage. The question is, why? It will take time to unravel, but some things that will not be discussed in the progressive media are obvious. Hamas is the puppet, not the puppeteer. For all the outpouring of sympathy for the plight of Palestinians these decades on—which I share—it never seems to occur to progressives that Israel is not the barrier to peace and prosperity. Palestine is a problem Israel would love to solve as much as Palestinians because Israel's present existence and future survival depends on resolution. But the narrative of oppression by terrorist groups and terrorist sponsoring countries upholds that destruction of Israel is the only means for liberating the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, many in the West buy this deception, and do not understand that Hamas (fully evident in their Charter) and not Israel is the reason for continued Palestinian oppression. (For which there is a history: one example among many—Yasser Arafat won a Nobel Prize despite epitomizing peace offer intransigence in 'never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity'). After the historic Abraham Accord, and with Saudi Arabia intending to normalize relations with nuclear Israel, the Israeli destruction narrative required a more pernicious addendum which we just witnessed.

We know that the Hamas attack, either in whole or in part, was planned with Iran. Iran cannot tolerate Arab countries making peace with Israel, particularly given that they are either moments from or have achieved nuclear status. The fact that Benjamin Netanyahu became prime minister for the third time on the promise that Iran will never achieve its nuclear

ambitions, may account for attack timing.

The Biden regime erased Iran sanctions from the previous administration to demonstrate that the United States intends to be nice, so please don't hurt us. Then this week, epic niceness—as the keystone response to the Hamas murder of 25 Americans with another 13 held hostage, Biden pledged an additional \$100 million in aid to Palestinians. (So no thought to 'hey man, we'll give you \$100 mill for our 13 hostages'). Palestinian aid goes to Hamas—much, most, all, we don't know—is unaccountable for, and logically is used for purposes unrelated to anything resembling aid. Still, Biden did appear nice; that is, from Hamas' perspective. Niceness is a failing strategy, which has become endemic to failed Western diplomacy.

Though the world has come together with words of support for Israel—possibly even tempering the number of UN sanctions for a time—Israel cannot forget for one second that they are alone. When, as soon will happen, Israel is accused of using disproportionate force (the necessary, if unfortunate, requirement for winning war) by the same people offering support today, they will do what they do to survive knowing that the West will practice willful blindness and selective condemnation. The media stampede to blame Israel for the Hamas bombing of a Gaza hospital being a glaring, if typical, example.

Not alone in this war will be Hamas—many terrorists will not survive Israel doing what it needs to do to survive—but that will not matter. Unless Hamas is eliminated, they will replenish or else other terrorist groups (Hezbollah is already in play) will re-group for another attempt at the destruction of Israel.

Also not alone will be Iran. In addition to many united in the destruction of Israel, Iran has backing from Russia and China—who together intend to play havoc with what is left of

Western ways. The great irony is, the West radiates weakness even though it still has significant strength. But our strength is wasted if we refuse to use it as deterrence, which is all despots understand. We must give up the suicidal notion that playing nice and asking for forgiveness is somehow the route forward. We fiddle with our causes, our arrogant misaligned priorities, and our cultural indulgences, as Rome burns.

Russia cannot win the war with Ukraine, but is determined not to lose it. It has become a war of attrition and the West has a post-Second World War history of fleeing conflict when it gets tough or takes too long. Gorbachev's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 anticipated the collapse of the Soviet Union. Biden's Afghanistan withdrawal was not due to eminent collapse, rather it signals moral decline and exists as the lowest diplomatic moment in American history. Without that debacle and the incompetence of Biden in office, the Hamas & Co. attack would never have happened.

Same for Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Obama gave placid permission to take over Crimea in 2014, after which Putin waited for his Soviet redemption moment. The combination of Obama/Biden weakness, the Afghan betrayal and Biden's destructive energy policy convinced Putin to take the calculated risk to invade. With Europe critically dependent on Russian energy, and China buying and helping expand to new markets, Putin has the petrol-dollars required to sustain war and wreak havoc on the world.

Canada inadvertently contributed to Putin's energy war chest. Once Germany finally came to its senses regarding dependence on Russian gas, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz sought out Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to beg for a long-term supply of natural gas. Trudeau, with his usual sanctimonious climate change dribble, dismissed the Chancellor and the billions that could have gone into Canadian coffers, leaving Germany to seek a deal with Qatar, who just happens to be the number one

funder of Hamas. And who does Canada not dismiss? China is Canada's second largest trading partner, and to that beacon of climate enlightenment we sell over \$5 billion dollars' worth of coal each year. Trudeau has a history of doing what is required—but only for our adversaries.

It is no secret that China lusts for world hegemony. It is also possible that their ambitions will be fulfilled. Yes, they have big problems with their economy, with internal strife, and coming de-population, but none of this matters if the United States chooses self-immolation. Besides, nothing distracts from internal problems more than external meddling spun into international victory. Taiwan may be up next.

Clearly, there is a coordinated strategy to test, confound and demoralize the West, and the sad fact is, our moral vacuum of recent decades makes our decline and destruction, if not inevitable, at least possible. Our adversaries are patient, determined and are enacting a viable strategy. And we, in our passivity and faux-niceness, are willing supplicants. We flaccidly object to terrorists, to Russia, and to China to no avail. We have forgotten that condemnation without equivalent action is weakness in the jungle, where from our Western suburban mindset, we fail to recognize we reside.

With the declaration of war in 1939 under failed Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Britain was not hopeful. When Germany successfully and seemingly with impunity began bombing London, Britain could easily have fallen into despair. Churchill's words of hope resonated, but only because despite huge logistical disadvantages, Britain's response was unequivocal. (Britain's only tangible defence against the onslaught of civilian bombing was the outnumbered Royal Air Force, about which Churchill said, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.")

If Biden attempted to make an inspiring speech today about the Hamas attack on Israel, he is unlikely to successfully read

the teleprompter without slurring words or else going into unscripted rage against MAGA and white supremacy. One cannot find hope from a hopeless leader.

Still, there might be a silver lining in the following contradiction that doubles as self-evident truth: for all the endless negotiations and history of failed attempts at finding common ground for lasting peace, the October 7th attack demonstrates that Palestinians and Israelis need exactly the same thing in equal measure—they must get rid of Hamas. If that fact was realized—and Iran neutralized—reasons for peace offering intransigence would fall like leaves in an November wind, and a workable two state solution could finally emerge.

So, the question(s) is—as Israel does what is required with determination and without compromise, in short everything the West should be doing, but isn't—can we respond as we need to do to combat the trifecta of Iran, Russia and China; will the West come to actually see the hatred of Israel and consequently the West for the threat that it is; do we still have the potential to act as did the greatest generation in winning the Second World War and laying the foundation for the world in which we live; do we still have the stuff?

This conflict is a proxy war for the survival of civilization. Before Pearl Harbour, the United States was not the country that won the Second World War. They had to transform themselves in order to do the hard stuff that was required. Who in the West will step up today, lead, and be the catalyst for change to allow us to become the best version of what the West, even at this late hour, can become?

Without Churchillian-like leadership that can pierce the collective sleepwalking of Western progressives to all issues unrelated to wake orthodoxy, we will lose Israel, the West, civilization. The terrorist attack on Israel could be the catalyst, the needed wake up call for the West just as Pearl Harbour was in 1941 to isolationist America, though that seems

unlikely. Make no mistake the terrorist attack on Israel is of Pearl Harbour proportions, and the 'rough beast' of enemy armies—both literally and metaphorically—are 'slouching towards Bethlehem to be born'.[*] This crisis is real and more important than expressing words of support about it, would be doing what is required.

Endnote: Israel is in tough. What is required is routing thousands of armed terrorists from vast networks of tunnels, buildings and hostile streets. An additional problem is that terrorists are purposely embedded into hospitals and schools to be among the most vulnerable civilians for cover, for dramatic effect and damming headlines whenever civilians are killed. I hate the term collateral damage, it dehumanizes, sanitizes, attempts to deflect from the fact that civilians die. Israel is severely disadvantaged dealing with terrorists because it values human life and will do whatever it can to prevent civilian deaths. This necessary regard for human life coupled with persistent accusations of disproportionate response for whatever Israel does will plague them in the media, on university campuses, in the UN. Israel cannot win the propaganda war, but they can carefully strategize what is required rather than overreact and be drawn into whatever toxic game the Hamas/Hezbollah/Iran trifecta has planned.

So, my wish is this—in the mix of required, short-term military action, I hope Israel plays the long game, as they have always done hunting down Nazis, those responsible for the Munich massacre, and other killers of Israelis throughout their 75 year history. With technology, with patience and persistence, and with the names of Hamas terrorists in hand (either they have this or must get it) Israel can make public

those who will be hunted down, who will henceforth have a target their back, and who will never be secure in the knowledge that they escaped the murder of Israelis. Once the borders are secure, Israel's best strategy might be to quietly enact perpetual, covert war against Hamas, starting at the top, and then one by one, however long it takes, until security teams can unceremoniously verify that the job is done.

[*] W. B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*

[Table of Contents](#)

Larry McCloskey has had eight books published, six young adult as well as two recent non-fiction books. *Lament for Spilt Porter* and *Inarticulate Speech of the Heart* (2018 & 2020 respectively) won national Word Guild awards. *Inarticulate* won best Canadian manuscript in 2020 and recently won a second Word Guild Award as a published work. He recently retired as Director of the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities, Carleton University. Since then, he has written a satirical novel entitled *The University of Lost Causes*, and has qualified as a Social Work Psychotherapist. He lives in Canada with his three daughters, two dogs, and last, but far from least, one wife.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)