

It's a profoundly odd feeling knowing that people in a country you've never laid eyes on are busy trying to kill you. On Russian TV, political analysts, generals and parliamentarians routinely spout crazed, mad, bloodthirsty things about wiping Ukraine off the map, nuking European capitals, and drowning children. One is tempted to treat this as some kind macabre theater, not to be taken seriously. But then this morning a massive cruise missile explosion set off car alarms on the street where I was walking to get a coffee. This happens with disturbing regularity all over Ukraine. People pause and look around, then check their phones for updates. Unfortunately cell connections are weak because much of the country is suffering from power outages (Russian missiles again) so there's often no internet and the phone networks are overloaded.



It's tempting to believe that we humans are all very similar, and probably even essentially good. I've certainly lived my life based on that assumption. Back in 1985, Sting had a hit with a quasi-political song which suggested that the "Russians love their children too". Maybe they do, but the number of them who are happy to send their sons into the meat grinder that is Ukraine suggests there is something deeply wrong with the psyche of Ukraine's neighbors to the East.

British intelligence calculates that Russian has suffered over a half a million casualties, killed and wounded. Considering that the USSR had a total of 9,500

combat deaths in Afghanistan over nine years, this is staggering. And still, according to a recent poll, 71% of Russian citizens support the “special military operation”.

In a couple of weeks, Switzerland will host a peace summit to seek ways to bring an end to the war Russia is waging on Ukraine. Russia of course has refused to attend, as has China, its “brother forever” in Putin’s words. So of course the conference is doomed before it begins.

Ukrainians hate the notion of an endless war. But if that’s the only option, they’ll square their shoulders and get on with it. As someone texted today, “if we in Odesa don’t have electricity, we’ll kill the invaders with stones”. Hard truth.

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