

# The Path to Violence, and the Responsibility of the Citizen

Frank Kaufmann  
October 23, 2023  
Podcast transcript



## Reflections on Russia, Ukraine, Hamas, and Israel by Frank Kaufmann

We are in a time of war.

The title of this podcast is, "The Path to Violence, and the Responsibility of the Citizen."

There are now two active, world-level wars cursing our planet, the Russia-Ukraine War, and the Israel-Hamas War.

These are happening during a period in which the perennial symbol for the harmonization of international differences, the United States of America has sunk into unimaginable internal strife in which the US government is holding political prisoners, and efforts are being made to imprison opposition party political candidates. Imprisoning political opposition is the characteristic of primitive, unstable dictatorships.

...

The population of Ukraine is 43 million. The country where I live has four million. Ukraine has a GDP of 200 Billion. The entire economy of Ukraine is 200 Billion. Since February 2022,

Ukraine has been given 350 Billion dollars in military and emergency aid from Western powers. 113 Billion from the United States

Russia has a population of 143 million and has spent 167 Billion on its aggression against Ukraine.

A billion of course is 1000 million. A thousand. How many of my listeners have 2 million?

A Glock or an AR 15 costs around 500.

If the military aid given to Ukraine were spent on guns, every baby ever born in Ukraine would be instantly given two AR15s.

How many of my listeners have AR15s?

On October 7, just now Hamas rained 2500 rockets down on Israel and infiltrated the country by air, sea and land. To the best of my knowledge military rockets are not manufactured in Gaza.

How many of my listeners have ever committed an act of violence? Acted in a way with the intention to deliberately physically maim another person.

It is my guess that possibly not a single of my listeners have ever acted with intent so violent as to physically maim another human being.

It would be my guess that the same odds would hold were I broadcasting in Russia, Ukraine, Gaza or Israel. I could be wrong, but I think most human beings have not in their lives personally acted with the purpose of physically maim another human being.

Yet as we speak and listen together, our leaders have taken your money and are spending 100s of Billions of dollars on doing nothing other than killing and maiming other human beings.

These considerations should suggest to us that there is a distinct difference between an average person living in the world, and people who have come to hold positions of "leadership" or power.

I myself have never spent a single dollar on plans and acquisitions designed to cause physical harm to another person, or even to a piece of property. Very likely a huge majority of you listening might be described identically.

So let's leave this here for a moment. You have not spent a single dollar on physically harming a person, and we live in a world where 100s of Billions of dollars are being spent to do just and only that.

You have never once in your entire life acted with the singular purpose to physically maim or take the life of some mother's son or daughter, yet there are people giving explicit orders to people to kill and destroy 1000s of people.

This is going on around us as we speak.

Have you ever been in the presence of an extreme act of violence? One person breaking another person's bones? Face? Eyes?

Now if we take these present wars happening now, besides the gargantuan investment in human and cultural destruction into which we have all been drawn, there exists matters in addition to the essential physical barbarity that curses our world and our lives.

There exists causes and histories. The pure causes of each conflict are totally independent of the grotesque industries of war.

Unlike participating in physical violence, we all have lived through (perhaps are even now involved) in conflict with others.

So the violence in the hearts of leaders who are at home with war I think is probably alien to us. We do not have a corresponding point of reference. How does one become a human being at home with war levels of violence and killing?

But the reality of conflict, on the other hand, is known to us. Beneath or within these wars are conflict, and this is something with which we all are familiar.

For all conflict in our lives, we have an opinion about it. We are built in such a way that we always have an opinion about "who's wrong and who's right." That's because human beings are moral in nature, and are always assessing everything in categories of better or worse, and right or wrong.

For example, if there's any conflict in our lives we probably think we're right. But that's just an opinion. Others may assess the situation differently. When it comes to who's right and who's wrong in any conflict all we can have is an opinion. Our opinions can be better or worse educated, or better or worse knowledgeable, but in the end, we have only an opinion.

An important thing to ponder is what is required of me because I have an opinion. How should I behave because I have an opinion? How do I treat and think of others whose opinions differ from my own?

Back to these wars. How many of you knew the geography of Ukraine before January 2022? How many of you knew the political structure of Gaza governance before October 7, just now? Are there other political factions in Gaza besides the Hamas Government? What is the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian authority? How often do they meet?

Again I would guess that many of us were not knowledgeable about these matters. Very possibly US Congress People and Senators may also come up short with this quiz. Yet these people have decided to send 113 Billion US dollars to a country with a 43 Billion dollar GDP.

How many of us have had to grow in our understanding to manage more than 5 million dollars? If we haven't personally felt the ownership of 5 million dollars, how sure are we in having an opinion about a 1000 billions?

My point. In an age of war, there exists the essence of conflict and the reality of war. These are two different matters. The reality of any given war is complex and difficult to command. I recommend it is important to learn as much about each war as you can. Its causes, its history, and both the bilateral and the multilateral realities and histories related to each war.

The second thing is to understand our own theories about conflict. The third thing is to understand how you relate to the fact that you have an opinion.

In the end, I recommend that your hostility to conflict is the most beautiful of the three. Your hostility to conflict is your north star. Your knowledge, what little you have been able to read, study and learn can be helpful. Even the fact that you have an opinion can be helpful.

But I believe that your rejection of war and conflict and your voice and manner of peace is the very best you can offer in these tragic and complicated times.