

Road to Perdition

Sam Mendes directed the acclaimed 2002 film *Road to Perdition*, starring Tom Hanks and Paul Newman. In it, an Irish mafia 'soldier' in the U.S. embarks on an implacable quest for vengeance against the killer of his family, following the violent death of his wife and one of his sons. The revenge fulfils its purpose, but it also causes the deaths of many others, including the avenger himself.

The news we are receiving these days about the development of the war in Ukraine makes me think that the world has taken another road to perdition. To my surprise, with the exception of Ukraine and Russia, the world seems to be animatedly following along, as if watching a war film filled with destruction, others' pain, death, and triumph. A fictional spectacle playing on a bright screen, with no real consequence for our well-being other than the entertainment it provides.

In recent days, I've come across numerous reports and commentaries about the imminent authorisation by Western countries for Ukraine to use devastating weapons provided by them, to attack the heart of Russian territory. And many of these reports and comments are pressing, impatient, eagerly awaiting the serious bombardment of Russia's interior, without even a passing consideration of the extraordinary risks this action carries. It seems the profit of arms manufacturers is of greater importance than global security.

According to what I read in GPT, Russia currently has 5,580 nuclear warheads, 1,600 of which are already mounted on strategic vectors such as long-range missiles and bombers, as well as others equipped on medium-range missiles and artillery shells. What makes us think that Russia will endure all kinds of situations without resorting to its nuclear arsenal? And what will happen to our planet if nuclear war finally breaks out? The answer is simple: we would all lose that war. Even those who watch without seeing or understanding, without lifting a finger, while in the pursuit of power, honor, and profit, all steps are being taken that lead to death and total destruction.

It can be argued that, under international law, Ukraine is in the right and Russia is not, as the latter is the invader and the former the invaded. This seems clear to me, but regardless of my opinion, I imagine that Russia would also make arguments justifying its actions if asked.

Being of an older generation, I remember the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 quite well. Under international law, the Soviet Union could, with Cuba's consent, legitimately transport nuclear weapons to Cuba through international waters on their own ships. However, President Kennedy threatened to forcibly stop Soviet ships in international waters if they continued their journey to the Caribbean island. It wasn't a matter of complying with or violating international law, but rather of nullifying at all costs a grave threat to the very existence of the United States. With that wise decision and the subsequent dialogue between both powers, a balance was reached—a better situation for all of humanity. And it became clear that sometimes, in exceptional situations, international law is not a sufficient justification.

The Cold War years were marked by fear and caution. Not so today: now we ignore the existential threat looming over all humanity, while we merrily, confidently, continue down the road to our perdition.

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