WAR IN EUROPE

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Category: Observations

I don't want to comment on the war in Ukraine *per se.* I'm not qualified to do so and there is already more information online than anyone could actually read, so why add to it. What I'd like to do is to comment on some of the ways people have reacted to the war, and to do this, I'm going to focus on a quote from Prince William. During a visit to the Ukraine Cultural Centre in London, William said:

> *"For our generation, itâ€™s very alien to see this in Europe. Weâ€™re all right behind you. Weâ€™re thinking about you. We feel so useless.â€*

I'm not picking on the Prince in this. Lots of other people have said similar things; it's just his quote captures something of the *zeitgeist* and it is easy to source.

The first thing to notice, is his sentiments of support for Ukraine. In this he has captured the overwhelming feeling of people in this country. I have seen some barking mad posts from "Christians" saying that they support Putin because he is defending Christian values or he is ushering in the end times, which just goes to show that not knowing anything about Christian values or eschatology doesn't stop people posting things online. However, I digress.

The first part of the quote is more problematical. I'm sure that William (as many others have done) was simply expressing his befuddlement that this was actually happening on our doorstep. While I understand that sentiment, I think there are a few significant issues in what he said.

Borderline Racism. There is an unspoken impression that war happens in other parts of the world and that we in Europe are above that sort of thing. To be fair to William, he has been accused of saying that Â Brits were more used to seeing conflict in Africa and Asia, though there is no record of this (see here). Even without the added misquote, the statement is unwise and I've heard others being much more overtly racist over this question.

We Export Our Wars. For much of the twenty-first century the Western powers have been at war; most notably in the Middle East and Afghanistan. War might seem alien to people living in Europe, but that is because we've been careful to make sure it happened in other parts of the world. It is not my intention to discuss the justification for the various wars that we have been involved in, just to note that we have been at war almost constantly for 20 years now and we can't pretend that it is something that other people do and not us.

Memories are Short. It's not that long ago that war was raging in the Balkans. It is certainly within living memory, even for a relatively young second in line to the throne.

We've Not Grown Up. There is a thread to much of the comment that I've read, and it might be implied in what William said, that we thought we had evolved beyond needing to make war in Europe. Our stage of development was such that we've put things like this behind us. The war in Ukraine has pricked that bubble thoroughly (if it actually needed pricking, given recent history). Europe clearly has not reached a stage of development or maturity which renders war obsolete. In fact all we've really done is reached a stage of development where we can kill more people in a shorter time.

Given that I'm a Christian, this might all seem somewhat pessimistic; don't I see any hope in the future? No... and Yes.

No, because I don't believe that human beings are able to evolve or develop to the point where we render conflict, corruption and inequality non-existent. I think we have a fundamental problem which means that we will keep repeating the same mistakes. Getting rid of Putin would probably solve the problem in Ukraine, but there would be other wars down the line.

Yes, because I believe in the transformative power of Jesus to set things right; it starts in time, but it ends in eternity. By dying and rising again, Jesus has transformed history and shown himself to be more powerful than the USA, Russia, China or whichever superpower appears over the horizon. He is the hope of mankind, not our armies.