

Elections Have Consequences, And 2020's Was War

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There is a plethora of misinformation in corporate media on the potential World War III. Shocking, I know. Let's clear a few things up: Vladimir Putin hasn't lost. The West did not pull together under Joe Biden's "leadership." But Ukraine has most definitely won the propaganda war.

The weakness and incompetence of the Biden administration was irresistible to a tyrant like Putin. That left Ukraine pretty much on its own as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and United States were essentially irrelevant. The Ukrainian forces have exceeded expectations, but thus far Putin has not gone full Golden Horde on them. There is also a lot of smoke and mirrors in play, and as noted information warfare strategists Chuck D and Flavor Flav have advised, "Don't believe the hype."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is no longer a former comedian, he's a World War III rock star. When pictures of him in full battle rattle out with the troops were published, apparently the United States offered to whisk him to safety. His response was famously, "I don't need a ride, I need ammo."

Add that to the Snake Island defenders telling a Russian warship threatening them to "Go f-ck yourselves" right before the shells started raining down. Then throw in a squad of supermodels carrying Kalashnikovs and 80-year-old guys showing up to fight with a couple of

sandwiches and a bad attitude.

That is a tremendous narrative of the plucky patriots fighting for their families and freedom. Those stories are all true, or maybe not. Zelensky [is confirmed](#) to have made his request for ammo, but the Snake Island heroes were captured, not killed. The supermodels are at least real on Instagram, and the same with the old guy and his lunch.

At some level, perception is reality, and Ukraine has done a brilliant job of getting its message out. Now they are getting support based on the combination of information warfare and actual battlefield action.

They seem to have stopped the Russian blitzkrieg. Kyiv has not fallen and the Russian advance appears [to have stalled](#). There are also reports of major Russian casualties and destruction of equipment.

But reports are not reality, and it's worth examining them. Many came from the notoriously reliable interwebz and have run the gamut from unverified to happened seven years ago to absolute B.S.

Information warfare is important in the modern social media battlespace, but it means less than the truth on the ground, which is far from certain. A [few pictures](#) of Russian vehicles abandoned by the road can be a sign their logistics aren't up to snuff. Or show that when 10,000-plus vehicles are rolling through enemy territory, some break down or get ahead of fuel convoys.

Video of Spetsnaz [looting food](#) from a store can show their troops are starving. Or it's a reminder that Spetsnaz are commandos who operate well ahead of the chow wagons in the rear. It is clear that Ukraine was not toppled in a weekend, but that does not mean it couldn't still be or that was even the goal.

It has been my belief all along that Putin never wanted to own and occupy Ukraine. Assuming he does topple the government, and I think it's premature to say he couldn't, then he will face a massive insurgency. He was around for Afghanistan, and I can't see why he would take that on again.

He does want ownership of the two Russian-speaking provinces on his border with Ukraine in the west and official recognition of Crimea. Making a larger assault gives him bargaining chips to ensure he can trade a promise to not destroy the infrastructure for land deeds and removal of sanctions.

There is talk of [peace talks](#). Also, as if to punctuate his previous threat, Putin put his "defensive" nuclear forces [on alert](#). However, talk is cheap until a deal turns into tanks rolling back to Mother Russia or at least back to the newer additions.

But we can't ignore that for the first time in decades mass formations of tanks rolled in Europe and the leader of a major power threatened nuclear attack. The damage and danger to Ukraine are huge. The return of nuclear brinkmanship is the real loss for the whole world.

The failure to simply roll into Kyiv as the Russians thought they would is a major blow to their military morale and Putin's image as the strong man. While the wins for Ukraine are not a bad thing, a wannabe tough guy with wounded pride could be.

Putin now has to salvage something he can call a win and at a minimum now he needs to have Russian vehicles rolling in the streets of Kyiv. Even if he doesn't topple the regime, that visual may be enough to salve his ego. But that means the gloves are all the way off and civilians

are in the crosshairs. There are already credible reports of cluster munitions in built-up areas.

We also must consider that Vlad wants a legacy worthy of his exalted image of himself as a major force in Russian history. Until now, he has done nothing worthy of that. Losing the Ukraine scrap is not an option for him. If it starts looking really bad, his inner megalomaniac may dominate. Making Russia the first country other than the United States to use a nuke in battle would certainly cement his spot in world history.

You would have to go back to the fall of the Soviet Union for the last time there was a real concern that a rogue faction would grab nukes and use them. But this is the rightful(ish) leader threatening to use them against us or anyone else who intervenes. You can't un-ring that bell.

Neither the United State nor NATO was a serious threat to Putin's plans, which is a problem. He can do a lot of damage without ever directly encroaching on a NATO country and triggering, theoretically, a response. And while Germany claiming they will spend 100 million euros on their military is a welcome sign, what if they had done so when President Trump pressured them to? Maybe a little peace through strength would have been an actual deterrent.

Now we confront the worst-case scenario of a Dragon/Bear alliance between Russia and China. Xi and Putin met during the Olympics and Xi likely told Vlad. "Just hold off until after the closing ceremonies." Then they made an [energy deal](#) to ensure Vlad had an outlet to replace Nordstream2.

Love him or not, Donald Trump kept Putin, Xi, and even Kim Jong Un

from causing major problems. He kept the Russians engaged and far from partnering up with the Communist Chinese. He put all of them on their back feet wondering kind of a deal might be possible but also worried what he might do if they stepped over the line.

Biden can barely be certain what decade this is, let alone present a worthy adversary for these world-class tyrants. They are stealing Joe's (and the world's) lunch money while he wonders if today is butterscotch or chocolate pudding.

This was mildly amusing during the campaign, but has gotten progressively more horrifying until now we approach a nuclear showdown. Sadly, the vision of Biden as Slim Pickens riding the nuke like a cowboy in Dr. Strangelove seems an actual possibility.

What happens when Xi decides Taiwan and all its chip factories are perfectly ripe for the picking with no one even marginally competent to be found in the U.S. leadership? One year and one month have led us to the point where World War III is not a joke; it may have already started. That hype you can believe and the only thing we can do is "Fight the Power."

I don't mean get ourselves in a war or even a skirmish at this point. We have to fight the woke left's fundamental transformation of the United States into a toothless, doddering mirror image of Biden they can operate like a puppet. While the left is having a momentary spasm of bellicose fantasy, it is not real and will quickly pass. Their nature is to be subservient, and that is what they want America to be.

We must fight against their view of America as the soy-latte sipping, artisanal arugula-nibbling, one nation among many. That means peace

through strength, which just happens to be the best way to avoid getting drawn into anybody's wars.

But first we need to hope Biden doesn't somehow throw more gas on this potential nuclear barbecue. Elections have consequences.

Jim Hanson is president of Security Studies Group and served in U.S. Army Special Forces.