



A needless war launched
by an irrational dictator

Description

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and its possible implications

By Irwin Rapoport

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The invasion of Ukraine is an ongoing tragedy and sadly, many people are being killed and wounded in this war of choice.

There is no legitimate casus belli for this invasion, which was launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin whom many consider irrational, having set aside any possibility of being considered a responsible statesman. Russia is governed by a dictatorship that has essentially cast aside democracy and democratic institutions.

The defenders of Kyiv and the country itself consist of men and women, young and old. It is truly heartbreaking to know that they are being killed in a needless war and that over a million people are fleeing their homes to either safer parts of the country or Poland and other neighbours of Ukraine.

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We are seeing images of people seeking shelter in subway stations, similar to what happened in London during the Blitz in 1940 and the V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks in 1944, and long lines of refugees fleeing cities and towns by train, cars and buses, and by foot.

Right now we have Ukrainians dying to defend their country – they are putting their lives on the line, knowing that they are often ill-equipped when taking on tanks and well-armed soldiers who are backed by powerful artillery, missile strikes, fighters and bombers. This is true courage in the face of possible death.

Their resistance is similar to that of the people of Warsaw who stood up against the 1939 German invasion of Poland, which had the Luftwaffe bomb the capital intensely for several weeks before the nation surrendered. It is



also eerily similar to the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is taking us back in time to the 1939, 1940, and 1941 Nazi invasions of Poland, Norway, Luxemburg, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Greece, and the Soviet Union.

But we are also seeing thousands of Russian citizens risking their future to protest their country's invasion of Ukraine. This is no small act of courage. The protesters know that they can be arrested, and thousands already have been. They may end up in prison to be beaten, tortured or executed without trial, with none of their family and friends having any idea of where they are.

The anti-war protesters in Russia are heroes too, and they need our support. Let's not hesitate to provide it by remembering that not all Russians are passive about this invasion. There is very little that we can do to help those who are being arrested but we can share videos and photos of those holding protests. As long as we promote their efforts and they know it, that can sustain them and encourage others to join them.

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The people of Ukraine need our help and support. They are experiencing the horrors of war daily, and the stories coming out of conflict are disturbing. Russian military forces are willy-nilly killing civilians in the occupied area. At one point, Putin may order their execution if the defenders of the country refuse to lay down their arms and surrender.

Putin is now openly committing war crimes to achieve his goals. And we already know that his government has killed many opposition leaders and arrested thousands of protesters in an effort to intimidate the Russian populace. In some cases, people have been poisoned via radiation or chemicals.

Some commentators have speculated that once Kyiv is occupied a puppet government will be installed, and the country will be forced to surrender. We could see such a government agree to cede large sections of the country to Russia or, at worst, hold a "vote" to join Russia.

It is a miracle that Ukraine has survived as a nation for thirty years. The Ukrainian people are not Russians but Russia, whether under Tsarist, Soviet, or Russian federation rule, has considered Ukraine as part and parcel of the Motherland. Ukraine consists of strategic territory, be it the coastal areas on the Black Sea or the inland areas.

There is not much we can do to intervene militarily in this conflict. No one wants a nuclear war to break out, and Putin has threatened to launch nuclear weapons. Ukraine is isolated and any Western military intervention could lead to a world war. Even if a nuclear war did not erupt, such a conflict would be long, bitter, destructive and cost many lives as well as have long-term economic impacts.

We are experiencing the nightmare of a waning Russian superpower getting away with open warfare and murder due to its having a nuclear arsenal. Putin and his advisors have been hard at work planning out this invasion for many months, anticipating Western diplomatic and military responses. They know the limitations of a Western response of sending troops into Ukraine and chose to invade. Calls for NATO to enforce a no-fly zone in Ukraine have been rejected so far.

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No one knows how long Ukraine will be able to resist, and Putin may desire to proceed slowly with the invasion



to kill as many Ukrainians as possible and force people to flee the country. We do know that Putin does not care about the lives his war is claiming through bombing raids, missile strikes and artillery bombardment. We already have seen footage of a Russian tank crushing a car blocking a road with the driver in it – the driver miraculously survived. Without question, the Ukrainian people are being deliberately killed, maimed and wounded by the operations of the Russian army.

This is no nightmare or fantasy that we are watching, but a most definite reality. We are living in a surreal time, be it COVID-19 or the Ukrainian invasion. I fear that Putin will get away with the invasion of Ukraine and that it will take many years for an independent Ukraine to be restored.

Russia can survive isolation from the West in the long-term if it has the support of China – be it openly or hidden. If this is the case, the West will have to re-examine its relationship with China, and this could lead to another isolation of that country.

This is more than a re-introduction of the Cold War but a possible uniting of Russia and China with immediate and long-term implications. The Chinese would love to gain access to Russian resources – oil, timber, iron, and other metals and minerals, as well as wheat and other foodstuffs.

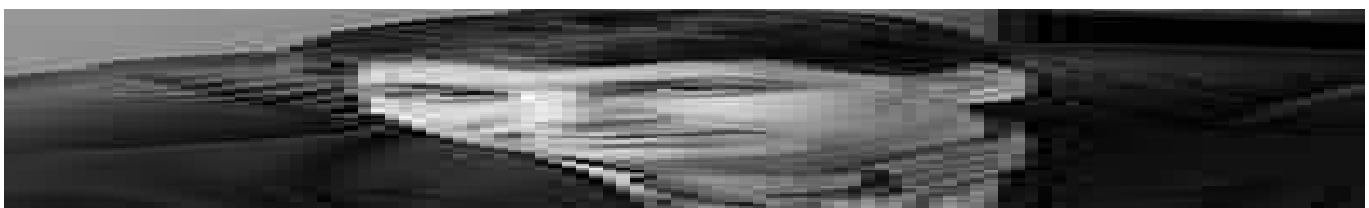
We may be entering a new world regarding diplomacy and military affairs. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in July 1914 led to the First World War and the changing of the world. It remains to be seen how the Russian invasion of Ukraine will affect the future.

Feature image: the Brandenburg Gate lit in the colours of Ukraine by [Leonhard Lenz](#), CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

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