



**MAY:** As feared and anticipated, Vladimir Putin has sent his troops over the border into Ukraine, an act of aggression and a blatant violation of international law. If Ukrainians over the days ahead display courage, defiance, and determination, can they stop Putin from stripping them of their right to independence, sovereignty, and self-determination? Having shown little will to contain Putin after he dismembered Georgia in 2008, and after he seized Crimea from Ukraine and annexed it in 2014, what can and what should American and European leaders do now? If Putin emerges victorious from this war, will that sate his appetite or whet it?

I'm Cliff May. Discussing these issues with me today are James Brooke, FDD visiting fellow, who has lived in and covered Russia for *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg*, *The Voice of America* and other publications. Also, with us is Ivana Stradner, Jeane Kirkpatrick visiting research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and John Hardie, research manager and research analyst at FDD. I'm pleased you are joining us too, here on *Foreign Podicy*. So John, let me begin with you. It's a fast-moving situation. As we record this on Thursday morning, what's the military situation? What do we know? I know you've been tracking a million different sources online and elsewhere. Go ahead.

**HARDIE:** Right. Yeah. Thanks, Cliff. As you say, there is fast moving information flying about, but I'll try to give you the best sense I can as of early this morning. So late yesterday morning Moscow time, Putin released a speech which was actually prerecorded on Monday, announcing that Russia is beginning a special military operation. The goal of which is to demilitarize and dematify Ukraine, which is basically to install a puppet regime, but will cut military ties with the U.S. So as expected, Russia has conducted numerous missile and airstrikes against key Ukrainian military targets and infrastructure, talking about things like air defenses, command posts, air bases, ports, bridges, and weapons storage facilities. This is throughout the entirety of Ukraine.

So, this includes the capital, east, west, et cetera. Meanwhile, airborne troops are dropping behind Ukrainian lines to seize critical points, including one of the capitals airports. Meanwhile, Russian ground forces are attacking from multiple axes, including from Belarus, Northeastern Ukrainian, Donbas and Crimea. The Russian forces will likely conduct inter movements to encircle Ukrainian forces in the east, where the bulk of the Ukrainian military is located. The goal there is to cut them off from a capital to prevent them from conducting an organized retreat. Then another pincher movement will attack the capital and overthrow the machine.

**MAY:** Let me just follow. Do we have any sense that Putin is demanding or asking President Zelensky of Ukraine to surrender, capitulate, get in a plane, or get out of the country? Any sense of that?

**HARDIE:** Yeah. So, in his speech, Putin said to Ukrainian forces, "Lay down your arms and you won't be harmed." Zelensky tried calling Putin and that apparently went unanswered.

**MAY:** Right.

**HARDIE:** So, I don't think Putin's really interested in negotiating at this point. I saw one, I have to stress, an unconfirmed report that there was Turkish military transport aircraft in the capital potentially to take away the president. But again, that's unconfirmed. So, I can't validate that.

**MAY:** Got it. Ivana, I think a little background just reminding people. I mentioned that in 2008, Putin carved two chunks out of Georgia. He didn't take over the whole country. He took two provinces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and they are essentially vassals of Russia and have been ever since. In 2014, I mentioned he invaded Crimea and had plenty of forces there already. He annexed it in a very short order. But also, which I didn't mention in 2014, he began to support separatists



in the Donbas region. This is the whole eastern region. Just talk a little bit about what has happened and what our reaction in the West has been to what's been going on in the whole Eastern section of Ukraine that borders Russia.

**STRADNER:** Yeah, absolutely. So let me maybe just give you a timeframe, how we actually – how it got to be this way. So everything started already, the crisis in Ukraine in 2013 against the President Victor Yanukovich, because he decided not to move forward with a European Union integration. There was a huge crackdown – a protest in the country that escalated further. He decided to leave the country in February 2014. Guess what? Immediately, the month later, Russia decided to employ its well-known hybrid warfare doctrine and employ a little green man. So basically, Russia was like, “We have nothing to do with this.” They took their troops actually to control over the Crimean region. Guess what? It's a very similar situation like now. So everything that our intelligence cited about, the pretext, it's really nothing new, because that's precisely what Russia was doing even back then, arguing that was the need to protect the rights of Russian citizens and Russian speakers living in Crimea and Southeast Ukraine.

So, in terms of the pretext, it was absolutely a similar thing. Several months later we saw a pro-Russian separatist in Donetsk in the Luhansk region of Eastern Ukraine, and that they actually had a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine. Of course, Russian troops, they fully took control over Crimea before they annexed it. So, this is really nothing in terms of that. Then he continued in 2014 because it further escalated with the European Union. I don't know if some of you can remember, where there was actually a Malaysian Airlines flight that was shot over the Ukrainian airspace. That was really a landmark moment for this particular crisis. Then of course, everyone asked like, “Why Putin was acting this way?”

Probably he's thinking why not? Because even then, on the United States and the European Union, they were quiet about this whole thing. But then in 2015, they decided to seize this violence with the means of course that you were going to hearing later, probably hear it every single day and now in the news. So, this was a shot of history and by then yesterday, actually two days ago, he [Biden] said that the invasion began two days ago. That was, I think, very wrong because the Russian invasion already started in 2014. This is just the continuation of what Putin has been doing over the past eight years and I think we should really perceive it through those lenses.

**MAY:** Jim, I'm going to ask you a threshold question here and Ivanna and John, think about it, if you want to answer it too, you can. I can imagine somebody listening to this podcast and saying, “You know what? I don't know anything about Ukraine. I don't care about Ukraine. Why are they all so upset about Ukraine? It was a part of the Soviet union. Now Putin wants it. Part of Russia. This is not important to me.” Why should America care about this?

**BROOKE:** Yeah, thank you, Cliff. Well, there are 40 million Ukrainians who want to be part of the West, who want to be part of the EU who look west, who vacation, work, and study in the EU and they're really overwhelmingly oriented westward. They want to be part of that. I think in the bigger picture, we will remember today, February 24, the way people remember December seven and 9/11. This is a turning page in history. For the first time in 75 years, a European state has attacked another European state. It is the end of the post-Cold War benefit time when the Germans can get by with a 65,000-man army. We're in a new world now, and either you stop the Russians now, or you let them keep moving and next will be the Baltics. It's very significant that the Kremlin has gobbled up Belarus and swallowed it up.

They've stationed 30,000 troops. Half of them are coming into Chernobyl right now, as they're fighting over Chernobyl, which is a potential radioactive disaster. But Belarus borders on two NATO member states, Latvia, Lithuania, which both happened to be former Soviet socialist republics, and both are quite happy being free market multi-party democracies. They do not want to be part of Russia. So, this is very important to stop Russia now. This is 1938 with the



Germans and Sudetenland. Yes, the convenient thing was peace in our time, and at the end of that process, 50 million people were killed.

So, it's very significant that the U.S. act now and keep sending anti-ship, anti-tank, anti-craft, and anti-drone missiles to Ukraine. Ukrainians do not want American boots on the ground. Ukraine has been fighting Russia for eight years. They have the second largest army in Europe after Russia –200,000 men and women. They have battle, experienced veterans. They have reservists, they have their own militia and they have a history of partisan warfare. From 1944 to 1954, more Soviet security personnel were killed in Western Ukraine than during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. So the Ukrainians can seem meek and mild and polite and nice, which they all are. They also can be very tough, and I think we're going to see that toughness coming out in coming days and weeks, starting today.

**MAY:** I'm going to make another point, but you're free to disagree with, agree with or add to. That is this, that we fought World War I, to stop an evil empire from conquering Europe and another evil empire from conquering Asia. They were alive. They were the Axis powers. We felt it was necessary not to let the world fall under the Jack Boots of such totalitarians. Then we fought the Cold War, because even after World War II, a lot of Europe was still under a totalitarian a totalitarian jackboot, that of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw Pact was not like NATO. The Warsaw Pact was like the Hotel California. You can check in, but you can't check out. Remember Hungary in 1956. Remember Czechoslovakia in 1968. So that's why we fought the World War II.

That's why we fought the Cold War. Now, if we are to say, "Yeah. Putin can go ahead, and he can take over Belarus. He can take over Ukraine. He can finish taking over Georgia. Then he can turn on Western Europe, more broadly the Baltics," which we'll talk about in the minute, we're essentially saying, "You know what? No. There was no need to fight World War II. There was no need to fight the Cold War, because we don't really care if the rest of the world ends up totalitarian and if there's no freedom and no democracy in the rest of the world. We've got oceans to protect us. We have borders." Although the Southern border is not –it's like a swinging screen door at this point. Anybody can walk in. Anybody can walk out.

But that's essentially what we're saying. It's a very different view of the world. Ivanna or John, you want to comment on that? You're welcome to. If not, I know exactly where I want to go from here.

**STRADNER:** I would like to say a few things. I really think that this is a threat to the entire world. I think as of yesterday, the world does not look in the same way. This could be the end of the international liberal order. I mean, think about this. Yesterday evening, there was an emergency session in the United Nations Security Council. While permanent member states were putting forward their arguments, Russia started an invasion. In the midst of this whole thing, just to make a notion about the UN, I mean, we should also not forget that Russia is actually in February has a presence in the United Nations Security Council. That's one thing that I would like to add.

The second thing is no matter what, I'll put it bluntly, the unilateral world order is over. We are really in the midst of the competition with China and Russia. For many, many years, people were thinking, "Who cares about Russia? It's absolutely not a great power, weak economy, et cetera, et cetera," and Putin thrives on this type of misunderstanding. The third thing is I'm afraid that Putin is not going to end here. Whoever thinks that Donbas, that's it, I'm afraid that is going to be up for disappointment very soon. I'm very concerned about what's going to happen in Moldova, because what's going to happen in Moldova in Transnistria. It can have a serious impact on Odessa and the Black Sea. Then also Romania is at stake, the Baltic states, but also the Balkans. Let alone we should also maybe even consider what Russia is doing even in cyberspace to challenge us.



The fourth thing that I would also like to add in this conversation, for many years, we've been having problems with the Transatlantic partnership. I think this is also wake-up call for our European partners. Let's not forget that only three days ago, the German Chancellor who openly stated, "I cannot imagine a war in Europe." I think that's a very problematic thing. I sometimes think those people live in a parallel universe. This could be at least one positive thing to make better ties with our European partners.

**MAY:** I just want to highlight a couple things you said there. One is that after World War II, the victors, really the U.S. in particular, created the UN and the UN was supposed to prevent conflicts and solve conflicts. It doesn't do that at all. Russia was put on, or the Soviet Union was put on the Security Council. Now it's Russia. China is on the Security Council. The UN is unhelpful here. Then you have within the UN, organizations like the UN Human Rights Council, which is a place that violators of human rights go to have impunity from criticism and Americans pay for all of this. We also have had this belief that if we just pronounce the word diplomacy, if we just say we're looking for a diplomatic solution, all these things go away. This is magical thinking. This is a fantasy.

Meanwhile, NATO looks strong in a way, except for the fact that it's really a defense alliance. People get into it and then they expect the United States to protect them, because most of the European countries are spending less than 2%, 3% or so of their GDP, and they're not capable and they're not ready. Let me just go to you, John, on this one in particular, because let's suppose Putin emerges victorious and he says, "Okay. There are ethnic Russians in Estonia. There are ethnic Russians in Lithuania. There are ethnic Russians in Latvia and I have a province. It's called Kaldenberg, which is west of Lithuania and not attached to Russia by land. There is land bridge and I want a land bridge. I want to protect the poor Russian people in Lithuania who are suffering under the heel of the West." Is NATO prepared? We have an Article 5 NATO commitment to defend Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Is NATO prepared to do that successfully? John, you want to take a crack at that?

**HARDIE:** Yeah. Well, to your point, Cliff, I think we are not prepared and we need to invest a lot more heavily in getting prepared. A Russian attack against the Baltics is not a likely scenario, but if you had asked me a year ago, would Russia invade Ukraine in attempt to overthrow the regime in Kyiv, I'd told you no. Hell no. So, I think we need to be prepared for the fact that Putin seems to be in a different sort of head space than he was even just a couple years ago. So predicting his next moves is not going to be easy and we need to be prepared for a broad range of contingencies. That means boosting our defense investment in Europe. It means investing in military mobility across the continent. It means preparing for the implications of a greater permanent Russian presence in Belarus. So there are a whole range of new threats in the European security environment that we and our allies need to prepare for.

**MAY:** I'm going to make this point before I go to you, Jim. That is I believe, I think most of us at FDD believe that the U.S. capitulation to the Taliban and its de facto ally, al-Qaeda, after all these years in Afghanistan, that sent a strong message not the least to people like Putin. I think he probably asked himself, "If the Americans aren't willing to fight the Taliban, I mean, these guys –really they should be no match, then he's not going to fight me. So, if I want to take Ukraine, what am I waiting for? This is a great time."

Meanwhile, as we talk and as we speak, negotiations are going on in Vienna, in which we believe, I hope I'm wrong, that the U.S. is about to capitulate again, this time to the Islamic Republic of Tehran by giving them billions of dollars in exchange for an agreement that provides no help, at most delays very shortly possibly, I doubt it, their acquisition of nuclear weapons while they are also dominating Lebanon through Hezbollah. [They] may having turned Lebanon into a failing state, while their militias operate with impunity in Iraq, while they support the Houthis in Yemen, while they give weapons to the Palestinians in Gaza, so they can foment wars there. None of this will change from this ad yet we're going to hear, I'm afraid, American diplomats saying, "What a victory we have just achieved in Vienna," vis-à-vis Tehran. All of this looks so weak.



Now saying that, Jim, I want to have you talk a little bit about sanctions, because a lot of people think, "Okay. That's what we need to do, sanctions." President Biden is putting sanctions on Russia, but from what I can tell, tell me if I'm wrong, they're not crippling sanctions. Not at this point and I think from Putin's point of view, he's already discounted the sanctions. He knows what they'll do and what they won't. It's an inconvenience, but it's unlikely to stop him. What do you think?

**BROOKE:** Yeah. Well, I agree with you and Russia has \$600 billion in cash reserves. They have a huge pillow that can get them through the next couple of years and Putin himself may well be the world's richest man. So, the feeling is that the sanctions are going to be tough, but probably not stop Putin. A few hours ago, Boris Johnson, the UK Prime Minister, asked for Russia to be expelled from SWIFT, which would be very important. That would really hurt them in terms of their foreign trade and –

**MAY:** People need to know – SWIFT is an international banking system. If you're off SWIFT, it's very hard to be –

**BROOKE:** North Korea.

**MAY:** Yeah. Right. Right. Right. Right.

**BROOKE:** You're North Korea. You're out of it. No. I agree with you. By the way, one little correction, the date is February 24. I was looking forward to spring. But we will – February 24 as the date. I think what will carry the day, it's the missiles. It's the military aid. In terms of Europe, I hope this has been a wake-up call. We've had six months of repetitive lies by Russian officials saying, "We will not invade Ukraine." Peskov, the spokesman for Putin and the spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry have said this again and again, "We are not planning to invade Ukraine."

So, if people were asleep, hopefully they woke up to the fact that you cannot trust what the Kremlin says. I do fear and I do recognize, that the Afghan debacle was a green light for the Kremlin. I was in Kyiv in August. I remember this happening and I remember reading the Kremlin media outlets saying basically, "Ukraine, you're next." They were saying that six months ago, back in August. The signal was, "The U.S. is weak. The U.S. bugged out of Afghanistan. The U.S. sold them down the river, let them fall apart. And surprise, surprise, Ukraine. Start packing your bags for the West." So that is an obvious lesson in the impact of being weak. I do think I agree with you, Ivana, on what's called the "salami tactics", "Oh, we'll just give them Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Odessa, and maybe they'll be happy with that," and it just keeps going, and going, and going. The famous Soviet approach to diplomacy is that, "What I have mine is mine and what is yours is negotiable."

**MAY:** We can talk about that. Ivana, do you have any other comments as to, do we have any sense of how Russians are responding to this? That's a hard thing to know because I don't trust some of their polls, but I don't really trust the polls. We have seen demonstrations that have been closed down. I don't know. What's your sense of how Russians are perceiving what's going on here?

**STRADNER:** I'm monitoring, quite closely, the information space in Russia. First and foremost, it's very, very polluted, but it's nothing new because Russia has been pedaling its agenda and propaganda for a very long time. So in terms of the Russian opposition, we already know how the Russian opposition ends up over there, in prison and completely silenced. So there were a couple of people who tried to protest and they were immediately arrested. I do not also foresee any big protests against this type of war. I'm not surprised because we already know what happened last year and the year before, when people actually tried to protest against Putin's regime.



I'm also concerned about one particular thing. Some people would claim, yeah, we can actually spread information on social media platforms. And Putin knows this thing. Last year, he made this new law on social media, which is, in my view, a Draconian law because everything that Putin doesn't like, he immediately punishes social media platforms. Not only that, he already has capabilities for an alternative internet, Rунet. He already made alternative social media platforms. So whoever – you know thinks that young Russians can actually, in the future, can have real information, that I think, will be up to debate.

In terms of what the Russian media is saying, if that was also your question, some people are claiming that they are the victims of genocide. All of those things that our intel community has been sharing about pretext and full slag operations. So, information is absolutely polluted and the information space over there just mirrors what Putin wants his audience to hear.

**MAY:** So, my two cents on this is that, if Putin wins and wins quickly and cleanly, a lot of people say, "You know what? He's strong and he's standing up for Russian interest and that's great." If a lot of body bags come back, they'll say, "What did he get us into this for?" That's natural psychology. Go ahead, Ivana.

**STRADNER:** I just wanted to add one more thing. One of the major concerns that I had over the past few months, I was very, very concerned by reading Russian news, the rhetoric, was absolutely like the Soviet era. They absolutely changed the rhetoric and this rise of nationalism over there has been rapidly rising. In terms of how many people die in Russia, first of all, I am not even sure that Putin has any obligation to disclose this information. Secondly, does actually really Putin even care about those things? Look, every single American soldier who died, we have a memorial wall, et cetera, et cetera. Something like that does not exist in Russia. They are just going to knock on the first available door and get another 18 year old and send him to fight for Russia. So I really think, about this crisis, we really need to start thinking like the Kremlin thinks.

**MAY:** FDD houses the Barish Center on Media Integrity, and this raises some really interesting issues that I hope we'll study more. I'll maybe go to you, John, on this to begin with and that is the extent with which and the skill with which Putin manages to use disinformation. People don't know that disinformation is not an English word. It comes from the Russian word, dezinformatsiya. Right? It's different from misinformation. John, just tell us a little bit about that and Jim, you know a lot about it, too, from your years there.

**HARDIE:** Yeah. Thanks, Cliff. So, the Russians and the Soviets before them have a long history of using disinformation as part of active measures to influence, subvert, shape foreign countries and their governments and their people. Disinformation has really been a huge, integral part of this conflict for months now, whether it's the false flag attacks in the Donbas and elsewhere, trying to create pretext for Russian military aggression. So, Putin is always trying to shape the way people look at Russia, their pressure on their government, their faith in their government, and undermining confidence. It's really integral to the way that the Russian Special Services conduct activity abroad.

**MAY:** Jimmy, you want to add anything on that?

**BROOKE:** Yeah. Just a couple things, if I could. One, Ivana, I had a friend in Moscow who sent me a message on Viber saying, "Jim, you know what's going on. What's going on?" She's in the Russian media capital and she doesn't understand what's happening. There have been a couple opinion polls of Russian men between 18 and 25, overwhelmingly disinterested in attacking Ukraine. As we know, there are probably million minimum Russians who have relatives in Ukraine. There's a lot of family ties there. If this were a war against Chechnya, there might be more popular support.

I think, also, on the genocide issue, I did this piece for FDD that was put up on the website about 48 hours ago. Just as the Georgian War started, then President Medvedev started accusing Georgia of genocide and of killing South Ossetians en



masse, in thousands. He used the word thousands and the Kremlin media immediately picked it up as thousands, thousands, thousands killed. The Ossetians later said this desensitized us to the ethnic cleansing of Georgian villages. When we heard about the thousands killed, we said, "Screw them. Burn them out. Send them down to Georgia," whatever. These are communities they'd lived next to for hundreds of years.

Now, this is what's happening and then six months after the war was over, the Russians came out with an official death toll of 168, not thousands, but 168. So it's very much part of their blueprint, their MO of disinformation, which has concrete impacts and just distracting people and setting up very, very bad views of things.

I think Putin is very sensitive about body bags. We saw this. I was in Moscow during the Second Chechen War and he was breaking up these mothers of soldiers movements, groups, and secret burials. We've seen that with Russian officers and soldiers killed inside the occupied parts of Ukraine. Photographers are chased out of cemeteries. Tombstones do not show where these men were killed. They've really tried to throw the cloak over the death toll there. I know the Ukrainians now are gunning for Russian soldiers and determined to run up the death tally. And Putin will have to—

Stalin lost a quarter million men in Stalingrad and he called it a victory. The demographics of Russia are totally different. This is a society that is slowly imploding. The Slavic portion is imploding slowly. There's a shortage of young men, families, communities, and apartment blocks do not want to lose their young men. So he's going to have to keep the wraps on the death toll and keep the death toll down, if he can, which I don't think was going to work, but that's where we are.

**HARDIE:** Can I just jump in quickly to pick up on Jim's point? It's not just contract soldiers participating in this operation. There's actually conscripts, as well and think about the fact that Putin didn't only lie to the West and to Ukraine about his intentions in Ukraine, he also lied to thousands of families of Russian soldiers who—they were sent to Belarus or wherever from thousands of miles away in Russia's Far East, saying, "Oh, you're here for exercises." Well, that drags on. Now, they're participating in military operations, including conscripts. This can have a very destabilizing effect on the social political environment, including on military retention and recruitment. So this could have far-reaching impacts.

**MAY:** Go ahead, Ivana.

**STRADNER:** I just wanted to add one more thing, in terms of Russia's disinformation. Last year, Russia just had a new national security strategy and for the first time since Putin came to power, they mentioned, for the first time, information security in the national security strategy. A few months ago, actually, Russian Minister of Defense, Shoygu, he said that information has become a weapon and not only that, in 2017, Russia also established information troops. So Russia pays so much attention to information security because Russia correctly understands whoever has information superiority actually can win the war.

**MAY:** And this is another subject, but I do not think the U.S. does information [security] very well, but I'll leave that for another time. We've got less than five minutes and I want to get into a couple more subjects. We're not going to, obviously, touch on—there's so many ramifications. We can't touch on everything. One is, okay, we talked about banking sanctions. The ones so far are not robust enough, SWIFT would be—People talk about oil and gas sanctions. That's difficult because oil and gas sells, even though the current administration really wants us all off oil and gas and to use electric cars and wind and solar power and that sort of thing. But China will buy whatever oil and gas Russia has and they'll get it at a discount if others don't buy it. Germany has gone and made itself more dependent on Russia. Now they're talking seriously about not letting Nord Stream 2 be completed. That's an oil and gas pipeline from Russia direct to Germany, cutting out



Ukraine. Representative Dan Crenshaw, somebody I admire, he has pointed out that we import in the U.S., 595,000 barrels of oil per day from Russia.

The Keystone XL Pipeline, which was closed down under the current administration, would've produced 830,000 barrels per day. One of the things I think the West—and by the way, the Germans have also shut down their nuclear reactors, which are emissions free. It seems to me, one of the lessons out of this is that energy policy needs to be reappraised in the West. Jim, I think you're nodding. I'll go to you first on that.

**BROOKE:** It's tricky because 40% of the EU's gas imports come from Russia. A fast move would be traumatic for the EU. Surprise, surprise. The sun does not shine very strongly in Northern Europe in the winter and the wind is somewhat erratic, so they need gas to compensate for the ups and downs of the renewable production. Not enough is coming up from Algeria, or down from, I guess, Norway and Holland—the Netherlands. This is a wakeup call and the people who thought that Russia was a reliable gas supplier are in for a big surprise. Putin pinched the hose this summer and this fall and the prices went way up. I think at some times there have been eight times increase in 12 months. Putin has racked in. There's been a huge transfer of wealth from West to East due to these high gas prices.

Presumably, the Europeans can draw the conclusion that Russia is not a reliable energy supplier. There's an interesting proposal, and the Turks are building this Istanbul Canal, which would allow LNG into the Black Sea, which would be a game changer for Ukraine in its little part of the world. But I think I'll leave it to that. One quick point about Putin's future. It's not smart to lose a war in Russia. In 1905, they lost against the Japanese and the Czars were almost toppled.

We know what happened in 1917 when they were losing the war. We know what happened in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union collapsed within a couple years of Afghanistan. We forget that in about, I think early July 1941, when the Germans had almost driven to the outskirts of Moscow, a unit trotted up the road to Stalin's Dacha and he came out and said, "You're here to shoot me. Take me prisoner." Because he so massively mishandled the defense of Russia. If Russia loses, it's going to be very hard for Putin to hold on to power. So put that in your pipe and smoke it for the future.

**MAY:** All right. I'm going to make this my exit. I've got a dozen more topics I'd like to bring up. I don't think we have time right now. We may come back another day, but I'm going to offer a question and comment, and you talk about it as you will. One is, people have to remember that we're talking about Russia, but Russia isn't a de facto alliance at this point with Xi Jinping, who has been, at best, ambiguous about that. But if Russia can take and conquer a foreign state or recognize a state with independence, Taiwan is, in Xi Jinping's words, "a rogue province." Do you really think the U.S. is going to do anything about that? At that point, Asia is pretty much gone for the U.S. Two, people are saying we have to pivot to Asia, but that means giving up Europe.

We need to be able to do a lot of different things. I would argue we don't have a military prepared to that. And the spending is not nearly where it needs to be in the capabilities. If America's military is charged with climate change, well, then we're not going to spend as much energy as we need to on our adversaries, our enemies and our perspective adversaries. I think it's also important to worry a little bit about this point, about what Putin might want to do to the U.S. If he sees the U.S. beginning to put pressure on him economically, or in other ways, sending military materials as we should have been to a greater extent for years, as we have been to some extent as we need to be, if the insurgency continues, he might say, "I have nuclear weapons. I'm going to threaten you with them."



There's hybrid warfare. He has already used cyber warfare against the U.S. including against, of course, Ukraine and against many other countries in Europe. All of these things remain. I'm going to start with, let me start with you, John, and you comment on whatever you think is important within this range of topics. John?

**HARDIE:** Cliff, you mentioned cyber. I think this can be hugely important in the weeks and months ahead. I'm very worried about our critical infrastructure and that of our allies in Europe. These things are vital to our way of life and economic prosperity, but they're not well defended enough. Russia has vast and very capable cyber units. They're very active. They've probed all of our critical infrastructure and things like power plants, et cetera. We need to be vigilant, and we need to invest a lot more in the type of cyber defense tools that our Center for Cyber [Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation at FDD] works on all the time. That's something to watch.

**MAY:** Very good. Very important. Go ahead, Ivana. Yes.

**STRADNER:** I would like to really echo what John just said in terms of cyber. Make no mistake, but Russia is definitely going to challenge the United States asymmetrically in cyber space. That's something that I really, really see, and it's nothing new. Russia has been doing that for years. Also, the real question here is what can WE do for Ukraine? In terms of cyber space, I think the United States and the United Kingdom are already helping, but we need to definitely invest more, not only in defensive cyber capabilities, but also to strengthen a number of offensive cyber capabilities.

The real question is, also, when it comes to our European allies, I'm not actually entirely sure that many of them possess offensive cyber capabilities. Some may claim that, actually, this is very important to mention that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a few weeks ago, openly stated that World War III has already started in cyberspace. They already think that we are at war with them. The problem, I think the most challenging part for us is how to challenge Russia asymmetrically, but not to be in direct conflict with Russia, because this can really, really escalate further and have serious repercussions for our security.

**MAY:** Jim, your closing thoughts for now? Because we're going to be you discussing this a lot more in the in the days and weeks.

**BROOKE:** I agree with Ivana and John. Ivana, I definitely agree with we need to take the offensive in cyber. For some reason, we put up with literally billions in dollars and millions of man and woman hours and repairing the damage. We send a note to Moscow saying, "Gee, I wish you wouldn't do that." I think it's time to slap back in an aggressive way and take out their capabilities. I was in Kyiv when the Russians turned out the power and they did it very subtly. It was just one corner of Kyiv between three and five o'clock in the morning on a Saturday night. Most people really didn't notice it. I think the Russians have enormous cyber capability. They have not shown their hand. They haven't shown what they are capable of doing. Watch this space. You may see this in Ukraine over the next week or two. That's my thought.

**MAY:** All right. To be continued. For now, thank you so much, Ivana. Thank you, John. Thank you, Jim and thanks to all of you, as well. We're out there and listen to us and we welcome your comments, your suggestions, your questions, your criticisms, whatever. Be with us here on *Foreign Podicy*.