

## ***The Future of World War III***

Make no mistake about it; we are currently fighting World War III. On the one side is Russia, Iran, and its more silent allies like China and the Arab world. On the other are the Allies; Ukraine, United States, Western Europe, and some of their supporters.

In studying World War II, one cannot help but be impressed by the military leadership. Books like *Team America*, and many others about our generals both in the field and in Washington, are impressive. What made that greatest generation of military leaders so successful? Part of the answer lies in their experience from World War I.

World War I was trench warfare, with lines frozen and modern innovations like airplanes and tanks not quite ready for prime time. The introduction of the American Doughboys turned the tide and caused Germany to sue for peace. Those who became American generals in World War II watched General Pershing in World War I and learned the lessons.

From the outset, there was a plan to win World War I which was based upon massive economic production at home, the commitment of millions of troops, and the willingness to see American soldiers die in significant numbers. The atom bomb was President Truman's answer to the bloodletting that America had endured since Pearl Harbor. Yet it is astounding that the United States, with the help of millions of Russians, was able to defeat the Axis powers in approximately four years.

How should World War III be fought? The leadership of both sides, and their commanders in the field, have shied away from tactical nuclear weapons but maybe not for long. Both sides in the current war are thinking about how to turn the tide in a significant and dramatic way.

There is no massive commitment of troops or equipment by the allies, or probably even by the Russians. The action is ramping up and will become significantly more bloody in the Spring of 2023. The question in the great capitals of the world is what is the next step to win what has become a World War I style trench war?

The United States thus far has been willing to spend billions of dollars on equipment for the Ukraine, but the current financial commitment is clearly not going to be enough. If the United States wants to see this war won, it will have to significantly ramp up its contribution both financially and in terms of more sophisticated military equipment, including aircraft. In other words, the United States will have to decide whether it wants Ukraine simply to fight a defensive war which will go on interminably or whether it wants to give Ukraine offensive capabilities to turn the tide against Russia. Taking on Russia will be no easy task. The Russians proved in World War II that they were willing to suffer the loss of millions of lives and to turn their economy into one big military production facility in order to win the war. That is beginning to happen now. Russia is converting into a society which is totally and completely dedicated to a warfare economy.

The western world has tried to use sanctions against Russia. Sanctions will not win the war alone. Russia has plenty of outlets for its discounted oil throughout the third world. Let us remember that the third world controls the United Nations and is able to sanction a free and democratic Israel, while allowing Russia, North Korea, and other bad actors of the world to skate. The UN is worthless in this fight and economic sanctions are of limited utility.

Ronald Reagan is often given credit for “winning” the Cold War by verbally standing up to Russia, building a great United States military, and opposing Russian intervention throughout the world. Reagan fought a cold war, using American resources, while committing no blood to the fight. The situation in Ukraine is far different than the old style cold war as well as from World War I and World War II.

The United States will learn in 2023 that fighting a “limited” war using rules of engagement intended not to win the war but rather to prolong it until one party or another simply gets tired, is unlikely to be successful. There is too much at stake for the combatants in the Russian/Ukraine War to assume that they will simply give up and leave the battlefield as Germany did in World War I. Let us not forget that what turned the tide in World War I was the introduction of American troops.

Will NATO commit troops, blood, guts, and more money to the Ukraine? If NATO or the European nations on their own do that, can the United States stay out of the fight for long?

None of this is an argument for ramping up the war against Russia or simply walking away from it. The question is whether our leaders in Washington have confidence in the judgment of their military commanders. Are our military leaders of the competence and capability of those who led our nation previously, and can the United States be victorious in a war where our people are demanding both guns and butter.

Lyndon Johnson found out the painful lesson in Vietnam, that Americans had no appetite for war when food prices were high and when the objective of the war is clouded, confused, and uncertain. This is a time that calls for leadership. It is going to be necessary for the President of the United States, with the advice and counsel of a military which knows how to fight, to articulate a clear vision for our continued involvement in the Ukraine/Russian War. Will Americans accept a war footing economy, and spending trillions of dollars to arm Ukraine with offensive capability and to support Europe? That answer remains to be seen, but we will find out this year.

If it is our President’s intention to have both guns and butter, Lyndon Johnson style, or to continue to fight a “limited” war without any end in sight, things are likely to go badly. If a clear and acceptable vision is articulated which is consistent with American goals, financial ability, and moral imperative, then perhaps our citizens will get behind the government and its policy in Eastern Europe.

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