

A Decisive Time in World History



by Conrad Black

What began a couple of months ago as another dismal, dishonest compromise with what had been long considered the fundamental principles of the West has suddenly turned into a thunderous sequence of earth-shaking events.

The Chinese secrecy over the coronavirus, as it did nothing to restrain its spread to the world and induced a self-inflicted economic and sociological shutdown disaster across the West, assisted in the removal of the most purposeful leader the West has had since Ronald Reagan, led to a succession of terrible, self-administered humbling acts by the United States.

America instantly ceased to be energy self-sufficient and, in homage to self-destructive green tyranny, it reduced energy production while preaching to the Chinese, the world's greatest polluters, the virtues of fighting climate change. It begged Russia and Iran to increase oil production to make up for what President Joe Biden had himself curtailed. When

Russian hackers shut down gasoline distribution in the southeast, Biden meekly asked Putin to exempt a number of targets while approving large blackmail payments from the U.S. private sector.

The green movement gained immense momentum when it was taken over by the international left after its defeat in the Cold War and has surged under Barack Obama and Biden. The United States is suffering skyrocketing energy costs while Russia and Iran are enjoying the fruit of \$100 per barrel oil with Europe and America among their principal customers.

In the frenzied election year, the Democrats effectively embraced American self-hate, and taught its schoolchildren, university students, and even the members of its Armed Forces that America was a slave-holding enterprise. The debacle in Afghanistan, in which America betrayed its allies, abandoned thousands of its own citizens, and left billions of dollars worth of military hardware behind for Islamist extremists, was followed by the de facto collapse of the puny Obama–Biden attempt to persuade Iran not to become a nuclear power, as China voided the long-promised “crippling sanctions” on that country.

At the beginning of last week, all indications were that the West would contrive to inflict another colossal defeat on itself by responding very inadequately to the long-anticipated Russian assault on Ukraine. Instead of seriously arming Ukraine, the West wasted months importuning the Russians to confine themselves to a takeover of a few provinces of Ukraine. Biden prattled endlessly on about “defend[ing] every inch of NATO territory.” As none of it was under threat, this was just a euphemism for telling the Russians to do whatever they wanted in Ukraine. The United States offered to evacuate Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelinsky and his family; it was hopeless. Russia would crush the western option within Ukraine, and we would pat ourselves on the back that no NATO country had been attacked.

The facts that France and Germany had guaranteed Ukrainian security when it gave up its nuclear weapons in 1994, and that Ukraine had been a Western ally in Afghanistan, were ignored. As Vladimir Putin publicly prepared his illegal strike on Ukraine, there was a crescendo of fatuous advice that Ukraine should be declared permanently inadmissible to NATO, and that we should have brought down sanctions before Putin had moved one soldier out of Russian territory. We were complacently going around in circles in a Putin-directed dog-show. All observers knew that Russia's force of about 120,000 trigger-pullers could not occupy a country larger than Luxembourg unless it had sealed borders and a great many traitors within. It was assumed either that Putin would just take the eastern provinces, or that Russia would trample Ukraine underfoot with little difficulty. The West's decline would become a fall.

Suddenly, came one of history's dramatic moments: The Ukrainians fought savagely. As Winston Churchill said of the Finns when they were attacked by Stalin in 1940: "Only Ukraine shows what free men can do." What a contrast they are from the vapid woke protesters of the West. Their resistance has been magnificent, and Zelinsky, who began his career as a comedian and debuted on the world stage in the fatuous first impeachment of Trump, has emerged in just a few days as a Demosthenean national hero.

As Russian difficulties became obvious, the Western powers scrambled to catch up with their own outraged domestic opinion. The United States and NATO abruptly increased the quantity of anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles and other assistance to Ukraine's 44 million patriotic defenders. The United States led the Alliance toward the substantial expulsion of Russia from the international banking system—here at last was a severe penalty.

The assumption that Ukraine had no chance of survival had led the Biden administration to pander to the Buchananite (Pat not James) Fox News isolationists and pretend that it was an

achievement that no NATO nation was attacked. It was soon obvious that Putin would either have to accept part of the loaf or gamble on mass attacks against urban civilians reducing Ukrainian resistance before NATO could sufficiently reinforce it. Russia's GDP is smaller than Canada's, and it doesn't have the means to conduct a lengthy war on that scale. And provision to Ukraine of advanced weaponry was very possible. What had started as another important waystation in the decline of the West was suddenly starting to look like the overwhelming reassertion of the half-forgotten power of human freedom.

On Sunday morning, the new ostensibly leftist government of Germany suddenly announced to almost unanimous agreement in the Bundestag a massive program to build German Armed Forces to the appropriate size for Europe's greatest power; [a 100-billion euro defense build-up](#) almost on a voice vote. This will change the correlation of forces in Central Europe dramatically. Bismarck united Germany in 1871, but since then, only the foolish Wilhelm II and the satanically evil Adolf Hitler have exercised Germany's full strength. Finally, it will be asserted responsibly and within the Western Alliance. Earth-shaking events are piling in on top of each other. Just 105 years after President Woodrow Wilson made World War I "a war to make the world safe for democracy," there's a chance that the valor of Ukraine may produce a more promising attempt at the same project.

In the next few days, it will be clear whether the United States can seize this strategic opportunity to reinforce Ukraine without getting into a direct exchange of fire with Russia and transform this into a decisive victory for freedom: the resolution of the status of the former Soviet republics and the reassertion of the Western perimeter, including Taiwan.

World War I rid us of the irresponsible hereditary monarchic despotisms and gave us the communists and Nazis in control of

Great Powers. World War II rid us of Nazism; the Cold War rid us of the communists, but Chinese and Russian nationalists are trying to undo the Western victory. We can stop it now, or not. The sleeping giants awake in righteous wrath one after the next: Germany, and now must come the United States. Apart from the necessary increase in military assistance (without NATO personnel in combat roles), the logical next step is to throw out the fifth column of charlatans consciously or otherwise promoting totalitarian victory through renewable energy.

Russian absorption of Ukraine would be a disaster. If an independent Ukraine survives, it confirms the dissolution of the Soviet Union and turns back the recent tide against the West. Ultimately, we must have Russia in a West that will stand from Vancouver eastward (and westward) to Vladivostok. Then it will be our challenge to bring China into the West also. This will be the apotheosis of democratic government. The appropriate end to the present Ukraine conflict will be the concession of the Russian-speaking eastern Ukrainian provinces to Russia and the acknowledgment of the complete liberty of the ethnically rationalized Ukraine that would remain to join NATO and the EU, as soon as it will have met their criteria for membership.

What began as a virtual delayed reaction sequel to the suppressions in Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968 is beginning to look like one of the great revolutions for human and national liberty in modern history. If we can help save Ukraine, it will save the West. It's also the last chance for this appalling administration. We got to the crossroads: surrender or resurrection. Heroic resisters may be galvanizing unheroic leaders into heroic acts. These are memorable times.

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