

# Living Forever: Putin, Xi and Djokovic

By Roger L Simon

I woke up this morning to this NY Post (the only paper I bother with nowadays) article: "[Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping ponder unsettling ambitions in rare hot-mic moment: 'Achieve immortality'](#)". It tells us:

**FAME!**  
**WE WANNA LIVE FOREVER.**  
**BABY REMEMBER MY NAME!**



*"The unnerving moment was caught as Putin and Xi walked alongside North Korea's Kim Jong Un as [the trio of tyrants](#) viewed a military [parade in Beijing marking the 80th anniversary](#) of the end of World War II.*

*"'Biotechnology is continuously developing,' Putin's translator could be heard saying on a livestream broadcast on Chinese state media.*

*"'Human organs can be continuously transplanted. The longer you live, the younger you become, and [you can] even achieve immortality.'*

*"'Some predict that in this century humans may live to 150 years old,'" Xi's translator responded, adding at another point: "Earlier, people rarely lived to 70, but these days at 70 years you are still a child."*

Oh, those dictators—what they chitchat about!

Well, actually. they chitchat about something most people of a "certain age" think about rather frequently, their morality, including yours truly who is about nine years the senior of these despots who are 72.

Nevertheless, the characterization "unnerving" above is arguably an understatement. The idea of Putin and Xi going on for another 80 years is anything but reassuring. Most of us wish they had never been around in the first place or, failing that, would disappear in the next ten minutes.

Still, they are human, alas, and share what many of us do. It's as if they, again like many, want to live out those lyrics from the 1980 film "[Fame](#)" (though in their cases we might add ... or else):

*I feel it coming together  
People will see me and cry  
(Fame!)*

*I'm gonna make it to heaven  
Light up the sky like a flame  
(Fame!)  
I'm gonna live forever  
Baby, remember my name*

Speaking of which, I was up late the night before—no surprise to those who know me—watching on television the aged (38) Novak Djokovic battle the youthful (27) Taylor Fritz in the quarter finals of the US Open. This is supposed to be the Serbs last chance to win a record-breaking 25th tennis grand slam. Indefatigable athlete that he is, also unsurprisingly, Djokovic prevailed and now must encounter Carlos Alcaraz (22) and, if successful climbing that mountain, must move on to Everest, Jannik Sinner (24).

Can he do it? Sure. Will he do it? Not particularly likely but anything's possible. After all, 38 is the new 23— or is it?

Do we live forever? Or are we tinkering with God's plan? Djokovic pushing the envelope on athletic performance is relatively benign, maybe even inspiring, but Putin and Xi at 150 is a nightmare.

And what's it worth to live to 150 anyway? Back when I was in high school, Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet from 1818, "Ozymandias," was a staple. (Do students still read that? Do they still read *anything*?). I know. I'm doing a lot of copying and pasting, but as a refresher it goes:

*I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. <sup>[d]</sup> Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:*

*And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
No thing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

Putin and Xi might well pay attention to those lone and level sands, even Donald J. Trump, much as I admire him.

But on a final note, I think Djokovic has things in a better perspective about the future. He seems torn in a good way between his extraordinary athletic career, pushing that envelope, and his personal, family life. He achieved victory over Fritz September 3 on the day of his daughter Tara's eighth birthday, though she was likely asleep in Serbia the moment of his triumph.

Nevertheless, to honor her after he won he did a dance she had taught him the even the forever-young Novak didn't know. It was to "Soda Pop" by the K-Pop Demon Hunters. Needless to say, I hadn't heard it either, despite being number one globally. (Hey, it happens sooner than you think.). So I played it. It's fun. I advise all readers of a "certain age," meaning, in this case, over 30 or so to play it too, that is if you want to "live forever," keep up with the dictators.

Okay, a little excessive, but falling behind is not to be recommended. So here is "[Soda Pop](#)".

*First published in [American Refugees](#)*