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Incentives: Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin possible moves – Donbass crisis.

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By David Sant for the Saker Blog

Several analysts have written articles about how Russia is likely to respond in the theater to an offensive by Ukraine to restart the Donbass War. My purpose in this article is to look at the psychology and incentives of Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin and the possible moves that each of them may make in response to the Donbass crisis.

The Nature of the Dispute

It is fairly well established that two primary motives seem to be driving the Atlanticist pressure on Russia and continuing eastward expansion of NATO. The larger issue is that Russia, Iran, and China seem to be increasingly resistant to the rule of the Atlanticist monopolar hegemony enforced by the US Military and NATO. As someone recently said, the American empire is a currency empire sustained by forcing all energy transactions to be priced in US Dollars, and controlling energy transit points. By moving away from using USD for oil and gas transactions, Russia, China, and Iran

pose a mortal threat to the empire.

The secondary issue, the one driving the timing, is control of oil and gas pipelines. In short the USA wants Europe to use American-controlled gas and oil, which means Saudi and Qatari oil, and American LNG. They want to create pipelines and delivery routes for American-controlled energy, and close or prevent delivery routes for Russian energy. The three current flashpoints are Syria, Ukraine, and the route of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, all three of which are current or potential pipeline routes.

Several years ago the US successfully pressured Bulgaria into cancelling the South Stream Pipeline through the Black Sea. However, US sanctions have been unable to deter Germany from allowing the Russians to complete the Nord Stream 2.

With the completion of the project only a few months away, the US seems determined to stop it at any cost. This appears to be the motive behind instigating the Ukrainian government to invade Donbass. If Russia defends Donbass, she will be demonized in the Western press, and this will be used to pressure Germany to cancel Nord Stream 2. From the American perspective, getting the Ukrainians to fight the Russians weakens both at no political cost to the US.

It is my opinion that the Biden Administration is making a major miscalculation by continuing this approach. For the past seven years, Russia has absorbed round after round of sanctions and provocations by the US government in Ukraine and Syria. The Biden regime seems to assume that if they instigate a war in Donbass now, that Russia will continue as they have before, to absorb the blow without striking back. I suggest that this time it will

be different.

The History and Psychology of Biden and Putin

Vladimir Putin was handpicked by the Western handlers to replace Boris Yeltsin in 1999, largely because he was known to be reliable. However, Putin surprised those who appointed him by turning against the oligarchs and reigning in the chaos that was dismembering Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Putin enforced the law and cracked down on corruption, including corruption by the Western interests that put him in power.

Displeased by this turn of events, the West, led by Bill Browder, has spent the past fifteen years demonizing Putin. For example, when Russia granted asylum to Edward Snowden in 2013, multiple US politicians used scripted talking points calling Mr. Putin “a schoolyard bully.” That analogy was rather inept, as Russia did not invite Snowden, but rather got stuck with him, as his passport was cancelled while in transit, making it impossible for him to board his flight out of Russia. Putin actually said that as a former intelligence officer himself, he did not view Snowden’s leak of classified information in a positive light.

The problem with demonizing one’s opponent is that it can lead to strategic errors if you make the mistake of believing your own propaganda. If we look at Mr. Putin’s past behavior we see four consistent characteristics.

First, he follows the rules. Whether it is the START treaty, the chemical weapons accord, or the Minsk Agreements, the Putin regime has consistently tried to keep the old treaties alive and to follow agreed upon UN procedures for conflict resolution.

Second, when Mr. Putin has taken steps to oppose the Atlanticist

agenda, he has done so in a way that allowed his opponents to save face. When the US was preparing to invade Syria in 2013, Putin persuaded Assad to agree to eliminate his chemical weapon stockpile. This pulled the rug out from under the US invasion, but it did not make the US look bad.

When Russia entered Syria to fight ISIS, they did not publicly expose the fact that the US and Israel were the primary backers of ISIS. Putin went along with the ruse and said, if America is fighting ISIS we will fight ISIS too, and did so legally at the invitation of Syria. Russia's work allowed Trump to take credit for defeating ISIS, even though it completely ruined eight years of CIA efforts to train and arm those terrorists.

Third, Mr. Putin keeps his word. When he draws a red line, he enforces it. He speaks quietly but it is wise to listen carefully to what he says. We have seen this in the way that Russia dealt with terrorist groups that agreed to deconfliction versus those that did not, as well as the ones that agreed and then went against it.

And, lastly, when all else has failed and the other party crosses the red line anyway, Putin punches fast, hard, and unexpectedly, and often in a different theater than where the provocation has occurred. We saw this when Russia destroyed the oil smuggling network that the US and Turkey had set up in Northeastern Syria. We saw it again when Russia saved Mr. Erdogan from a US-backed coup only thirty minutes before he probably would have been captured.

Joe Biden

Joe Biden loved to tell the story on the campaign trail about his interaction with a black gangster named "Corn Pop" when he was

a lifeguard in college. They almost had a fight but Biden brought a chain with him, and they later became friends. The fact that he even tells this tale signals that Biden has no real experience against a serious enemy. Men with street credibility don't need to tell stories. They are known and respected.

The reality of Biden's career is that he has played second fiddle to stronger leaders and only appears to have gotten the presidential nomination because it was his turn and he was deemed to be controllable by his handlers. Biden obtained the presidency through a fraud seen so openly that he has one of the lowest presidential approval ratings in history.

Biden and Putin met for the first time alone in 2011 for talks in Russia. According to Mike McCormick, who was Biden's stenographer, Biden was halfway through his talk when suddenly the microphone, cameras, and lights were turned off and Putin and all of the media walked out leaving Biden humiliated. Something similar happened to Biden in China a few months later.

This is probably what Biden was referring to when he recently said that Putin was "a killer" with "no soul." That interaction tells us exactly what Putin thinks of Biden. He considers him to be a weakling with no substance.

Biden's team is stacked with Russophobes who are motivated by the desire to finish what they began in Ukraine under Obama. They believe they can successfully use information war and dirty tricks to isolate Russia from Europe and control all the energy conduits. Whether due to hubris or ignorance, they do not believe Russia would dare to strike back at the real instigator of the war in Ukraine.

Biden's response to a Russian strike would probably be a plaintive high pitched, "c'mon man!" However, if Kamala Harris is making the decisions the risk of escalating to a nuclear response is much higher. The problem is that both Biden and Harris were picked and installed by a "power behind the throne," so it is unclear exactly who would be making the decision of how to respond.

The Imminent Danger of the Current Imbroglia

There is no doubt that the US intends to create a war in Ukraine before the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline can be finished. This will happen within months if not weeks. It is also clear that Zelensky is being placed under tremendous pressure to force Russia into defending Donbass.

Russia has drawn a red line around Donbass. Ukraine had agreed to a peaceful resolution through the Minsk Accords. But with US encouragement, Kiev violated everything they agreed to, making it now politically impossible to re-integrate Donbass into Ukraine.

If Zelensky invades Donbass, then not just Ukraine, but the USA and NATO will be viewed by Russia as having crossed an inviolable red line. Yes, Russia will be forced to defend Donbass, because Putin will not allow Russians to be subjected to genocide. Russia does not want to fight Ukrainians, whom despite the jokes, they view as their Russian brothers. They are frustrated and angry that the USA has forced them into this position.

For this reason, I believe that Mr. Putin will do something that the Biden regime is not expecting with similar psychological impact to the sudden turning off of the lights and cameras. He will find a way to inflict debilitating pain on the decision makers who have forced Russia into intervening in Ukraine.

In addition to defending Donbass, Russia may strike the USA in a different theater. But they will do so in a way that cannot be confused with a nuclear attack. Unlike the previous chess moves that allowed the US leadership to save face, this one will neutralize and publicly humiliate the USA and the Biden regime as a paper tiger.

The Narrow Window of Technological Supremacy

While the US was busy invading third world countries as part of the War on Terror, Russia was quietly developing their defense technologies. They have now achieved technological supremacy over the USA in three areas: air and missile defenses, hypersonic missiles, and electronic countermeasures (ECM).

In the area of air defenses the Russian S-400 is an extremely capable platform which the West has very little experience fighting against. Russia has the capability to impose a no fly zone within about 500 kilometers of its S-400 batteries, of which there are several from Crimea to Kaliningrad. Israel's use of the F-35 to bomb Syria has given the Russians live data on NATO's most advanced stealth fighter.

The S-500 space defense system is scheduled to enter service in 2021. Since the S-500 can defend against ICBMs it may affect the balance of power of mutual assured destruction (MAD).

The Zircon and Khinzal hypersonic missiles are currently in service and are the most effective anti-ship weapons in the Russian arsenal that we know of. Their standoff range enables strikes on enemy ships from 500 to 2,000 kilometers. This means that Russia has the ability to strike ships in the Mediteranean and North Sea using assets based on Russian soil, not even counting the assets

based in Latakia, Syria. NATO forces currently have no defense against hypersonic missiles.

Russian ECM capabilities have been somewhat exaggerated by news stories about the 2014 encounter with the USS Donald Cook. The Donald Cook was allegedly shut down by ECM attack while an SU-24 overflew the vessel. However, more accurate sources noted that any ECM attack, if there even was one, would have been executed using ground-based equipment, not the Su-24 fighter. If this attack really happened, the US Navy has presumably hardened its vessels against ECM in the seven years since.

We do know that Russian ECM systems in Syria were able to disable the vast majority of Tomahawk Missiles fired at Syria in April 2017. Other than aircraft carriers, the primary American method of projecting power is Arleigh-Burke class destroyers such as the USS Donald Cook which carry about 50 Tomahawk missiles each. The 2017 exercise in Syria probably indicates that Russia is able to jam volleys of Tomahawk missiles with better than 90% success. The remaining 10% of the subsonic Tomahawks can be easily shot down by anti-aircraft batteries.

The question is whether the US Navy has found a way to harden the Tomahawk missiles against Russian ECM since 2017. If not, then given the much smaller size and number of missiles that can be carried by Navy attack aircraft, the US Navy's primary weapon for ground attack has no teeth against Russian targets. Of course in any conflict, the first target of NATO's "wild weasel" aircraft will be SAM radars and ECM equipment.

Conclusion – Biden has Created Strong Incentives for Russia

to Strike First

The US is spending billions to catch up technologically, and the window of Russian supremacy may only last for two or three years at most. Russia can be expected to reach the peak technological advantage over NATO in late 2021 after the S-500 system has been fully deployed. However, the Donbass crisis may force Russia to act sooner than they are comfortable.

If Russia were to use the window of supremacy to attempt a debilitating strike on the US military the US Navy is the most likely target. Ships are the most exposed, are not located inside another country's borders, and are also the primary means of projecting US power. However, I would not rule out a non-missile attack on DC. For example, there are many ways that the US power grid could be turned off without using missiles. The ensuing domestic chaos might prevent the US from responding.

This is a very dangerous situation for the world because it could easily escalate to World War III or nuclear war, depending on the Biden Administration's reaction. Part of the problem is that it is not clear who is really in charge of the Whitehouse. A nuclear response to a devastating conventional weapons defeat would be a disaster for both sides.

Russia will only strike the USA if they believe they have no other choice. What they have learned from seven years of sanctions, attempted coups, fake poisonings, and other provocations is that the US will continue this behavior for as long as Russia continues to accept it, or until Russia is broken and conquered. In short, Biden's team may have finally convinced Russia that they have no other choice.

President Biden has handed Putin the justification for a first strike by openly stating his intention to conduct a cyber attack on Russia “soon.” That is a public declaration of war. The fact that the Russian ambassador was recalled from Washington and has not been sent back should be a wakeup call to America that DC itself is on the potential target list.

For these reasons I believe that there is a high probability that Russia will strike first before NATO can fully put in place the forces for planned exercises for this Summer. The strike will probably be non-nuclear, focused against US forces only, and its purpose will be to delegitimize the US power in the eyes of the junior members of NATO, and to weaken or cripple the US ability to project power.

If China and Iran see Russia strike the US military, it would not be surprising if they also pile on using their own hypersonic missiles to destroy US Navy assets in the Persian Gulf and South China Sea.

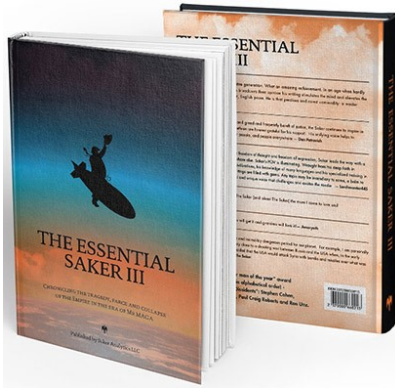
The Biden regime’s underestimation of Russia and failure to heed Putin’s warnings have created conditions which make possible a sudden and humiliating defeat of the US Navy, which could effectively end the US ability to project power overseas.

However, wars are rarely short, and victories rarely decisive. For this reason it would be better for all parties to de-escalate the conflict immediately. Unfortunately, the Biden regime is the only one in a position to do that, and they have shown no intention of doing so.





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