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What happens in Ukraine should matter to all of us

By LYNDON ZAITZ

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the largest military action in Europe since World War II. Though Kyiv is almost 6,000 miles from Oregon, what is happening there is a concern for what may come next.

Pundits try to understand what Vladimir Putin's goal is. He is concerned about NATO encroaching on Russia's border. It is all about security for Putin. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s it was the hope that Russia would join the international community. It has, but is insecure about the West's intentions.

The Russian leader put his nuclear forces on high alert, which set many teeth on edge. Some called for military strikes against the 40-mile long military convoy that entered Ukraine. Though the invasion of Ukraine is unjustified and unprovoked, hitting the invading forces can come to no good end.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a former actor and comedian, has demonstrated his leadership in the face of overwhelming odds. He has stayed in his capital and rallied the citizens of his country to resist the invasion. So far, the people have heeded the call to arms, frustrating Putin's plans. Zelenskyy could have taken refuge in some allied country, or flew off to some peaceful location to lead his country from behind. He takes his position as president seriously. Events shape a man's character and his character is exactly what his people need. He is my front runner for the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize.

The invasion of Ukraine is more than an abstract event happening far



from American shores. It is a living illustration of what leaders will do to achieve their goals. A large majority of Americans agree Russia's invasion is unjustified and a big bipartisan majority support economic sanctions to punish that country for its actions.

The U.S. and its allies have to hit Russia where it will hurt most, its economy. There are risks with that strategy—how will Russia respond? Much of Europe gets energy from that country, especially natural gas. Economic sanctions need to target those that support Putin's geopolitical misadventures, especially the oligarchs that help keep the Russian president in power.

We can't forget the human element of invasion. Almost a million Ukrainian refugees have fled, many heading to Poland. People's daily lives are shattered by rockets striking their homes. Russia has started targeting civilian neighborhood. Though the number of civilian casualties is relatively low, we should send more than thoughts and prayers.

Ukraine needs military hardware. European Union countries are sending arms as should America. The best outcome would be to frustrate Putin's plans to the point that he pulls back and heads to negotiations with Zelenskyy.

If Putin is not stopped in Ukraine, who knows where his attention may turn next.

(Lyndon Zaitz is editor and publisher of the *Keizertimes*.)

Americans think the state of our union is a disaster

By MARC A. THIESSEN

Normally in a State of the Union address, the president steps onto the rostrum of the House of Representatives, touts the administration's achievements in the past year and lays out a plan to build on them.

That model won't work for President Biden. Most Americans don't think the state of our union is strong; they think Biden's first year has been disaster. Since he took office, we have experienced the worst inflation in 40 years; the worst crime wave in many cities since the 1990s; the worst border crisis in U.S. history; the worst foreign policy debacle in recent memory, in Afghanistan. The worst global health crisis in a century is still upending our lives. And we are witnessing the worst act of unprovoked aggression in Europe since World War II.

Little wonder that a new *Fox News* poll shows (like many other polls have found) that Biden's approval is underwater across the board on every major issue: COVID-19 (51% disapprove), foreign policy (58%), crime (59%), the economy (61%) and immigration (62%). When it comes to Ukraine, 56% say Biden has not been tough enough on Russia, and 54% say they are not confident in his judgment in a crisis. A *Politico-Morning Consult* poll found that 50% say Biden is responsible for Russia's invasion. In *Economist-YouGov* polling, 56% say Biden is a weak leader (38% say "very weak"). And 56% of respondents to *NPR-PBS NewsHour-Marist* say his first year has been a failure—with 36% calling it a "major failure." No modern president has fallen from grace so far, so fast, so early in his tenure.

If Biden tries to convince these Americans they are wrong—and paints his first year as a series of major successes, pushing for the same partisan agenda—he will fail. And at such a time of international crisis, we cannot afford to have the president fail.

So, what should Biden do? Simple. Do what he promised, but failed, to do from Day One: Unite the country.

The war in Ukraine is an opportunity to do just that. Americans have been inspired by the courage and tenacity of the Ukrainian people, who have held off the Russian invaders. They look at the bravery of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy—who turned down Biden's offer to help him flee his country,—and think: So that's what a strong leader looks like. Biden should channel his inner Zelenskyy (if he has one) and use his State of the Union address to rally Americans to help Ukraine defeat Russia's assault on its democracy.

He should use his speech to tell the



stories of brave Ukrainians who have taken up arms to defend their country and seat their American family members in the first lady's box. He should spell out a concrete plan to help them. He should make clear that, whether Kyiv stands or falls in the coming days, our country will continue to provide arms and intelligence to the forces of a Free Ukraine. He should call out Russian President Vladimir Putin's war crimes and unroll even stronger sanctions -- including on oil and natural gas. Most important, he needs to say something he has not said yet: "This aggression will not stand." He needs to make clear that the United States will support the Ukrainian people until Russian forces are gone from their country.

He should then say that with freedom under siege abroad, we must unite at home as never before -- and spell out a bipartisan agenda to achieve that. In his inaugural address, Biden promised to put his "whole soul" into uniting the country. But a majority of Americans say he is doing more to divide than unite us.

The fact is, Biden is going to have to pivot to bipartisanship in a few months whether he wants to or not. Come November, it is likely that Republicans will take control of at least one house of Congress, if not both. When that happens, there will be no more radical, multitrillion-dollar Democrat-only reconciliation bills. He will need Republican support to pass anything. So why not make a virtue out of necessity? If he pivots to a bipartisan agenda now, at least he can make it seem like a choice.

The worst thing that has happened to Biden's presidency was the narrow Senate majority that came from Democrats winning Georgia's two Senate seats. It deluded him into thinking that he could be a transformational president like Franklin D. Roosevelt. But if Americans had voted for a transformational president, they would have given him FDR-like majorities. Instead, they elected a 50-50 Senate and a razor-thin House majority. That wasn't a mandate for socialism; it was a compromise.

In his first year, Biden failed to meet that mandate. The State of the Union is a chance -- perhaps his last chance -- to fix that error, which has hobbled his presidency.

(Washington Post)

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