

**EDITORIAL**

## Stepping back from the brink

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is troubling, to be sure. Russian president Vladimir Putin's unwarranted, brutal aggression destabilizes not only Europe, but the world.

Yet some of the reactions by commentators, both in print and on TV and radio, have been a bit hysterical.

References to Russia's invasion being the possible precursor to "World War III," for instance, have been numerous.

This implies that the circumstances today are comparable to the situations at the onset of the first and second world wars. This is not convincing. Worse, it frightens people unnecessarily.

One prominent reason the First World War broke out a month after the June 28, 1914, assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is the series of rigid alliances among world powers including Germany, Russia, England and France. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine hasn't, and needn't, trigger anything like the responses that followed Germany's invasion of Belgium in August 1914. In addition, the comparatively crude nature of early 20th century armies — which relied far more on the horse than on the truck (tanks were unknown and airplanes all but irrelevant) — meant that those armies needed days or even weeks to get ready for combat. This reality prompted governments to order mobilizations lest they give their opponents an advantage. The result was an inexorable progression toward a wider war, a domino-like situation that has no parallel among modern militaries.

Nor does a comparison hold between Putin's actions and the onset of World War II. Although there might seem to be a superficial similarity in Putin's past aggression in Georgia and the Crimea, and Hitler's expansionist policies in the 1930s, Hitler did not have the then-unimaginable deterrent of America's nuclear capacity to counter his megalomania.

Yet a recent analysis by John Daniszewski of The Associated Press referred to "a nightmarish outcome in which Putin's ambitions in Ukraine could lead to a nuclear war through accident or miscalculation" and "the disturbing possibility that the current fighting in Ukraine might eventually veer into an atomic confrontation between Russia and the United States."

It's certainly a disturbing vision.

But it's hardly a new one. Moreover, it strains credulity to believe that the invasion of Ukraine poses a more grave threat of a nuclear confrontation than Cold War episodes such as the Berlin Airlift in 1948, the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

Daniszewski references the doctrine of MAD — Mutual Assured Destruction. That's the idea, ugly though it surely is, that the number of nuclear warheads is so great that any large-scale exchange of such weapons would prove so devastating to both sides — the U.S. and the Soviet Union, during the Cold War — that neither side, no matter the circumstances or the provocation, would ever initiate such a war.

Daniszewski then writes that "amazingly, no country has used nuclear weapons since 1945."

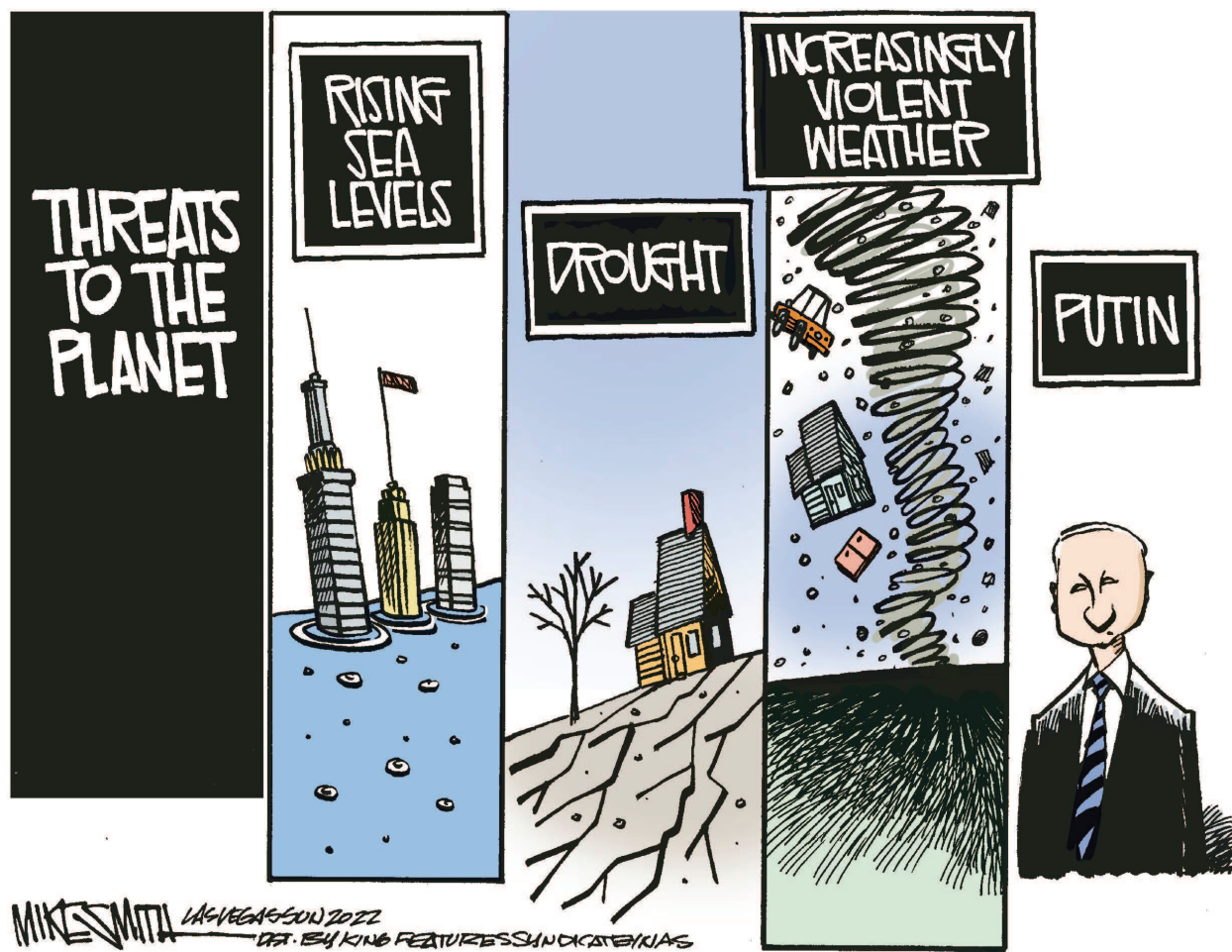
But that's not amazing at all. It shows only that political leaders, despite often acting irrationally, including starting or escalating conventional wars, have consistently recognized the singular threat that a full-scale nuclear exchange represents and refused, for nearly 77 years, to take that irreversible step.

Putin did, in his address prior to Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, state that "today's Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states."

But that sort of saber-rattling is hardly surprising given not only Putin's record, but those of his predecessors in the USSR. When Nikita Khrushchev said in 1956 that "we will bury you" his remark, although misunderstood as a physical threat to the West rather than a claim that communism would triumph over capitalism, did not, to use Daniszewski's words, "veer into an atomic confrontation."

It is of course reasonable to consider the possible wider implications of Putin's bellicosity. But hyperbolic allusions to 1914 and 1939 not only ignore how dramatically the world has changed, but also that much larger conflicts than what's happening in Ukraine — the aforementioned wars in Korea and Vietnam — didn't lead to another world war, much less a nuclear exchange.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor


**OTHER VIEWS**

## U.S. can still punish Russia for invasion

**Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:**

The most conspicuous victims of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine are the people who will lose their lives in defending their country against a brutal (and nuclear-armed) neighbor. But Vladimir Putin's decision to launch a many-pronged attack — an audacious operation the United States predicted but was unable to prevent — is also a devastating assault on international norms and potentially a harbinger of a wider war in Europe.

Last week's attack fully justifies the significant sanctions the U.S. and its allies are moving to impose on Russia. Sadly, it's not clear whether these measures will cause Russia to relent in its aggression against Ukraine. They may, however, put Putin on notice that Russia's economy, and its "corrupt billionaires," will pay a heavy price for this act of aggression — and an even steeper cost if Russia were to menace a member state of NATO.

On Feb. 22, President Joe Biden indicated that sanctions would be ratcheted up to match Russian escalation in Ukraine. On Feb. 24, he made good on

that commitment, unveiling new sanctions that would impose real hardships on Russia and members of its ruling elite — but not on Putin directly, though Biden said that is still an option. Russian banks and companies would be cut off from access to the U.S. financial system and restrictions will be imposed on the export of U.S.-made technologies to Russia.

Regrettably, the measures did not include a move to exclude Russia from participation in the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT: a consortium whose secure network enables financial institutions to complete transactions by their customers.

Biden said in a speech Feb. 24 that targeting Russian participation in SWIFT "is always an option, but right now that's not the position that the rest of Europe wishes to take." The president suggested that the other sanctions he unveiled were "of equal consequence — maybe more consequence than SWIFT."

The sanctions were designed to "maximize the long-term impact on Russia," Biden said, noting that the measures

would "strike a blow to their ability to continue to modernize their military" and "be a major hit to Putin's long-term strategic ambitions."

We can hope, as Biden surely does, that by punishing Russia economically the U.S. and its allies can pressure Putin into cutting short his war in Ukraine. But Putin knew an invasion would likely result in such sanctions, and he attacked anyway. (Indeed, in a rambling, bitter speech on Monday the Russian president described the sanctions as "blackmail" and said their only purpose was to "restrain the development of Russia.")

But Biden was thinking not only about Ukraine when he said Thursday that new sanctions would rein in "Putin's long-term strategic ambitions." The president stressed that "we're also taking steps to defend our NATO allies, particularly in the east."

It would be ironic if Russian aggression against Ukraine, supposedly motivated by a fear that Kyiv might someday join NATO, resulted in greater solidarity among the countries that already are part of the alliance.

## Feds' free COVID-19 tests were too late

**Editorial from The New York Daily News:**

On Jan. 18, the day the federal government's website allowing Americans to order free at-home COVID tests opened (one day before its official launch, and the only time anything in this story happens ahead of schedule), we requested ours. At 1:44 p.m. came the U.S.P.S. order confirmation email, which added: "At home COVID-19 tests will ship free starting in late January."

Our bubble-wrap envelope arrived Wednesday, one day after it was mailed from Jersey City. That's 36 calendar days and 24 workdays later. Or, measured in pandemic time, eternity.

It was Dec. 21 when President Joe Biden, warning about the omicron hill

we had to climb, first announced the feds would be mailing out 500 million free at-home tests. On that day, the U.S. registered 194,000 new COVID cases. About three weeks later, on Jan. 14 — a day with 933,000 new cases — the president said the tests were coming soon. In a fact sheet that day, the White House said "tests will typically ship within 7-12 days of ordering" (clarifying those "typical shipment times," a senior administration official said "we hope that those and we anticipate those will shorten as we ramp up this program"). By the day our two little boxes arrived, there were 84,000 positive COVID tests nationwide; the omicron surge was in the rearview.

They say success has many fathers while failure is an orphan. In this case, either the test producers just weren't able to churn them out in the numbers Biden promised — even though that same senior administration official boasted that "starting as early as last February, the administration has used the Defense Production Act, industrial mobilization, as well as \$3 billion in advance purchase commitments to ramp up supply of testing, including at-home rapid tests." Or maybe the kits were bought but sat in warehouses too long before getting sorted to their destination.

We don't know who botched this, but we do know where the buck stops.

**YOUR VIEWS**
**Biden administration has wasted previous progress**

*Editor's Note: This is the letter the writer sent to President Joe Biden.*

Dear Mr. Sock Puppet:

Well, you and your boss, Obama have really got us in a mess and now, one outcome has hit the Ukraine. What feckless move will you make next? We all know you for what you are. What is surprising is that so many in your administration go along with your criminal acts. In your first day in office you wiped out all of Pres. Trump's good works. That was stupid. If you had left everything in place you could have taken credit for the continuing prosperity. Obama was right when he said, "Everything Joe does he gets wrong." You should be ashamed.

Only the dull-witted will be surprised at this news. You can bet Hunter Biden won't be called up if our young men are sent to battle. Worst, China is already planning to dance on Taiwan's graves. Do we think South Korea will escape?

The day O'Biden took office America was stronger and more unified than any time since the end of WWII. It is official, we are a nation betrayed! Stand ready for events to come. Gas prices are up. Food shortages are in evidence. Crime is sweeping our cities.

Here, in Baker City, things are peaceful enough. Still, when I leave the house I carry the most potent handgun suitable to my attire. Usually something

in .45 ACP. I don't want to use it but I want to hit as hard as I can if it becomes necessary. I have been down this road in the past and made my peace with the realities of life as we find it, not as we wish it were.

If you carry, remember it is not for show or intimidation. Be circumspect. When it may be necessary to draw, keep it from view. The line between "Shoot, don't shoot" is razor thin. Be neither agitated nor emotional. Be focused but avoid tunnel-vision. Shoot center of mass when forced to it by the actions (not words) of your assailant. Say only, "I shot to make him stop." If you take the shot, once the event is over, holster your fire arm and/or totally comply when law enforcement arrives. Make no moves other than as directed. Remember, they will be wound pretty tight and likely have you in their sights. All they know is there was a shooting and YOU are vertical. Say nothing other than "I will comply" with your hands in plain view. DO NOT reach for your weapon!

A wounded police officer, a stabbing victim, was killed by a responding deputy because he had his gun in his hand. Life can be dangerous. Thinking ahead is always a worthwhile exercise. Sort of like defensive driving — "what do I do if this car approaching crosses the center line?" That sort of thinking saved me from harm many times over the years. You don't get to be old by being thoughtless.

**Rick Rienks**  
Baker City

**CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

**President Joe Biden:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

**U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (2nd District):** D.C. office: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515; 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97504; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario, OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. bentz.house.gov.

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; [www.governor.oregon.gov](http://www.governor.oregon.gov).

**Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read:** oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

**Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum:** Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

**Oregon Legislature:** Legislative documents and information are available online at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us).

**State Sen. Lynn Findley (R-Ontario):** Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., 5-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: [Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov)

**State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane):** Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., 5-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: [Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov)

**Baker City Hall:** 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Councilors Jason Spriet, Kerry McQuisten, Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Dean Guyer.