

## Russian Tanks Reach the Atlantic near Lisbon...

### Description

by [Gilbert Doctorow](#)

The “fake news” title to this article provides a vision of where current U.S. and EU foreign and military policy towards Russia may be taking us if we do not think things through and make a course correction. My point in this article is that no one in leadership positions on this side of the New Iron Curtain seems capable of seeing beyond one move in the grand chess game of the Great Powers now proceeding before the eyes of the world. I dedicate this article in particular to the unidentified but very welcome readers in the U.S. Army who are following me on LinkedIn.

---

The starting point for today's discussion is where I left off in my expose two days ago of the conformist and ill-considered presentation of the Russian-Ukraine war by *The New York Times* senior diplomatic correspondent in Brussels, Steven Erlanger, at a prestigious downtown club in this city.

I closed that expose by expanding on my question to Erlanger at the start of his Q&A: why were Europe and the U.S. so unprepared for the land war that Russia unleashed on 24 February 2022 given the way they all had taunted the Russian bear ever since 2014 in a manner that could only lead eventually to war. The last insult handed to the Russians came in the period from December 2021 through early February 2022 when the U.S. and NATO rejected out of hand Russia's demand to enter into negotiations over its proposals for a review and revision of Europe's security architecture.

The United States and Europe gloated at the way Russia stumbled in the opening days and weeks of the Special Military Operation. They concluded publicly that Russia was far less strong than anyone had supposed. However, the Russians comforted themselves with the old folk wisdom that they as a people are slow to saddle their horses but quick on the course once mounted. Indeed, Russia's military gradually came into stride and we began to hear from Western military observers that the war had evolved into a full-blown “war of attrition,” a throw-back to the trench warfare and artillery battles of WWI, as opposed to tank battles or carpet bombing from positions of air superiority that the U.S. and its NATO allies have practiced over the past three decades when engaged against Third World victim countries.

Then it turned out that the Russians were firing up to 60,000 rounds of artillery a day, outdoing the Ukrainians firepower by a factor of from three or five to one. Casualty rates on the two sides rose in parallel with the disparity in firepower. The smiles were driven from the faces of our television commentators and political leaders. Now all attention was directed to propping up the Kiev regime with ever more lethal military hardware while cleaning out the armories in Europe to an alarming degree. The Russians were finally understood to have the world's biggest accumulation of munitions, backed up by the world's biggest manufacturing capacity in this domain. This is not to mention the new wonder weapons like the hypersonic Kinzhal which the Russians began to introduce on the field of battle a

year into the war.

My question was and is: why were these aspects of the coming war in and about Ukraine not foreseen by those in power in the West? This bespeaks gross irresponsibility and incompetence...and, surely, also vast corruption. How else can one understand that the three or four hundred billion euros spent collectively by the EU member states on defense each and every year for the past twenty years versus the 80 billion euros of the annual Russian military budget yielded such a discrepancy in war readiness when it finally came in early 2022? And of course, by extension, why did U.S. stores and manufacturing turn out to be so paltry given its military budget greater than most of the rest of the world combined?

Now that I have flushed out that issue, let us move on. I do not see signs that current leadership in the U.S. or Europe has drawn any lessons from this experience. Instead by all their latest moves on the chessboard they are heading us straight for the checkmate described in the title line to this essay.

Great attention in the Western media has been devoted all this year to the decisions taken in Washington, London, Berlin and Brussels with respect first to shipment to Kiev of advanced tanks, namely the American produced Abrams heavy tank and the German Leopards, then to the shipment to Kiev of American F-16 fighter jets from out of fleets in Europe.

Very little is being reported about the build-up of NATO troop strength and materiel all along the Eastern frontier with Russia. Very little is being reported right now in Western media about the threats coming from Poland to support an armed uprising being planned against the Lukashenko government in Belarus. Indeed earlier this week Polish television interviewed a former deputy minister of defense General Skrzypczak, who is actively pushing for his country to intervene militarily in support of any such uprising, crossing the border into Belarus just as Ukrainian forces in the guise of anti-Putin Russian militia invaded the RF oblast of Belgorod over last weekend causing mayhem, including the destruction of more than 500 houses and shootings that sent Russian civilians to the hospitals with injuries or to the morgue. These "terrorists" as the Russian television describes them were liquidated by Russian security forces, but the threat of further such incursions has raised the temperature and the aggressiveness of Russian public discourse.

Some Russian nationalists, like the head of the Wagner mercenary company Yevgeny Prigozhin, are quoted today in *The New York Times* for their demands that Russian elites be called to order, that the country be put on a full war footing, that martial law be introduced. Other nationalist orators are saying that traitors like the gal who handed a fatal bomb to the journalist Tatarsky in St Petersburg several weeks ago be summarily executed.

However, a lot more is being said on mainstream Russian television like *Sixty Minutes* that goes unreported by our press and that goes well beyond cracking down domestically in Russia. The panelists on this show are not just talking heads from think tanks and Moscow State University. They include Duma members from United Russia, LDPR and the Communist Party. And among the Duma members are predominantly heads of relevant Duma Committees like Defense.

One of the most cogent such Duma member panelists is a retired general who has some very specific recommendations on military strategy that our boys in DC would do well to consider.

A lot of print has been spilled and all too many words have been spoken by Western analysts on

whether or not Russia will use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine. This is empty talk that ignores two facts. The first is that the Ukraine regime can be decapitated at any moment of Russia's choosing using the hypersonic missiles at Russia's disposal equipped with conventional warheads. Secondly, Russia is holding its nuclear option in reserve for use against NATO, as this Duma member made crystal clear. Let us all remember that Russia has the world's largest stock of tactical nuclear arms, just as it is the world's leader in strategic nuclear arms.

If the hare-brained regime in Warsaw proceeds with plans to do Washington's bidding and create a "second front" by invading Belarus under the guise of local insurgents, Russia will certainly intervene. President Putin specifically stated that yesterday, but you will not find his citation in today's NYT. If as a follow-on, NATO begins to move against Russia along the vast front line that it has recently manned, then the Russian general's proposed response is also ready to hand: to use tactical nuclear weapons against these NATO forces, destroy them and move tanks past them to the next point of resistance where it again uses nuclear weapons. This game of leapfrog would logically take those Russian tanks to the Atlantic somewhere near Lisbon as I have indicated in the headline.

And what would the USA do about the destruction of its European allies? An informed guess is nothing. If Washington is now pussy-footing over whose tanks go to Ukraine, over whose F-16s go to Ukraine, all for the purpose of keeping the fight with Russia at the level of proxies, then why would the USA risk instant destruction by Russian strategic missiles just because Europe is burning?

©Gilbert Doctorow, 2023