

Michael Brown: Are We on the Edge of World War III?

What are the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine? Could it be that we are on the edge of a massively costly, truly disastrous, global war? And what does this feel like for the people of Ukraine?

The brother of my personal assistant is married to a Ukrainian woman (they both live here in the U.S.), and as of Thursday morning, my assistant received this report from his brother: "Her parents, who live now in Nova Kakhovka [in Ukraine] have Russian flags planted in their city. Roads and bridges and some airports have been blown up. There's no access to fuel and the grocery stores have no food."

And that was within hours of the invasion. What is coming next?

Because of my lack of expertise in European-Russian geopolitical affairs, I have not offered my own commentary on the current crisis, relying more on the opinion of those much-better versed in these important subjects. Yet some of what these experts have to say is quite alarming.

On my Thursday broadcast of the *Line of Fire* I interviewed Fred Markert, who came to faith in 1973 while living in Berlin and immediately got involved with smuggling Bibles into communist Eastern Europe. Since then, he has ministered in 150 countries and served as a leader in a worldwide missions organization.

But he is not only keenly aware of what is happening spiritually around the world. He has a real grasp of world history and understands some of the key geopolitical developments taking place today.

He explained on the broadcast that, unlike America, Russia has no natural barriers on its borders, whereas we are protected by the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Pacific to the west (Markert called them “the two largest moats in the world”), with friendly countries neighboring us to the north and south.

In contrast, Russia is surrounded by plains and has been invaded six times in the last few hundred years, and thus there is a certain paranoia about being invaded again. Accordingly, Russia feels more secure when it has buffer countries around it.

In keeping with this, Eliza Mackintosh explained on :

Ukraine was a cornerstone of the Soviet Union until it voted overwhelmingly for independence in a democratic referendum in 1991, a milestone that turned out to be a death knell for the failing superpower.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO pushed eastward, bringing into the fold most of the Eastern European nations that had been in the Communist orbit. In 2004, NATO added the former Soviet Baltic republics Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Four years later, it declared its intention to offer membership to Ukraine some day in the distant future—crossing a red line for Russia.

Putin sees NATO’s expansion as an existential threat, and the prospect of Ukraine joining the Western military alliance a “hostile act”—a view he invoked in a televised speech on Thursday, saying that Ukraine’s aspiration to join the military alliance was a dire threat to Russia.”

Heightening the tension was the NATO declaration in 2008 that it would bring both Ukraine and Georgia into NATO. This was perceived as a further provocation by Putin, similar to China or North Korea or Iran moving some of their armies into Canada or Mexico. How would we feel? (Think back to the Cuban missile

crisis.)

In Russia's eyes (or, in Putin's eyes), the expansion of NATO, coupled with the growth of Western democracies, is perceived as a very real threat. And this, coupled with Putin's apparent megalomaniacal vision to reconstitute the Soviet Union, is a recipe for disaster. Also, given the fact that Stalin resettled Russians in different neighboring countries during the time of Soviet expansion, Putin can say today that he is fighting for his own citizens in countries like Ukraine. "It is about our own people's freedom and independence," he can argue.

When I asked Markert what the worst-case scenario was, he pointed out that our failed withdrawal from Afghanistan reminded the world that we are not the only superpower today, as we had been since 1992. Rather, there are three, America, Russia and China, meaning there is real potential that Russia's invasion of Ukraine could provoke World War III.

He said that "this is not a minor thing," describing it as a "hinge of history" and "a pivotal moment." He also opined that how the West responds will determine the future of the next 100 years.

Yet, Markert stated, "We are between a rock and a hard place" in terms of how we respond. If the West engages militarily, "it could easily escalate into World War III."

If we don't engage militarily, it will embolden countries like China and North Korea and Iran to take similar action. (Just look at China's recent sword-rattling when it comes to Taiwan.)

Thus, in many ways, it is a lose-lose situation right now. Certainly, we need to be praying!

As for international Christian perception of Trump and Biden, Markert said that the Christian leaders he knew around the

globe did not like Trump in terms of his personality. But they did like his policies, and because he was considered unpredictable, that kept these aggressive, foreign nations at bay. (Think back to Trump's threat to North Korea's "rocket man" that "my [nuclear] button is bigger than yours!")

In contrast, these leaders see the current administration as weak, which is why we are seeing these aggressive acts by Russia (today) and perhaps others in the future. (At this point, this observation would appear to be self-evident.)

Interestingly, according to Markert, the biggest world issue today is the ongoing decline of America. And, he stated, the reason for our decline is our immorality, both internally (it is destroying us) and externally (we are exporting it around the world through our movies and music and porn).

Yet, he believes, if America can regain its moral footing, God will bless us and reestablish us as the world's superpower, resulting in many, positive, international results. This is why Markert is devoting so much of his time and attention to working towards a Great Awakening in America.

So, the situation really is quite critical, and we should cry out to God for mercy and wisdom and intervention. Many lives hang in the balance.

But God can turn this crisis into something positive if we respond to Him rightly.

(There's much more to this fascinating interview, which you can watch here.) {eoa}

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