

## **Urban War, Logistics for the Upcoming Battle in Ukraine, and Putin What Happens Next – 04.17.2022**

Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein.

What Happens Next is a podcast where the speaker gets to present his argument in just Six Minutes and that is followed by a question-and-answer period for deeper engagement.

Today's discussion will be on the War in Ukraine.

Our first speaker will be Anthony King is the Professor of War Studies at the University of Warwick in the UK. Anthony's latest book is Urban Warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century which is incredibly informative as to what street fighting will look like in Ukraine. There is much to learn from Chechnya and Iraq about urban war and what is necessary to win or achieve a stalemate.

Our second speaker will be Retired General Paul Kern and former Commanding General of the Army Material Command. Critical to the success for the war in Ukraine will be logistics and whether the warring party can resupply troops. Who better than Paul to help us understand the nature of the problem and how to solve it?

Our third speaker will be Angela Stent who is Professor Emerita at Georgetown and Director of the Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies. She is also the author of Putin's World. I am excited to hear Angela's reaction to Putin's decision to attack Ukraine and what it means for his continued hold on power. Angela is an expert on all aspects of Russian leadership and Putin in particular so I can't wait.

Check out last week's What Happens Next with Nicholas Eberstadt who discussed why he thinks North Korea will attack South Korea and Irv Gellman who discussed his book entitled Campaign of the Century: Kennedy, Nixon and the Election of 1960.

You can find transcripts for this program and all of our previous episodes on our website [whathappensnextin6minutes.com](http://whathappensnextin6minutes.com), and you can listen on Podbean, Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Let's begin with our first speaker Anthony King.

Anthony King:

On the 24th of February 2022, Russian forces invaded Ukraine. The initial attempt was to depose the Zelenskyy regime in which little military force would be required.

The opposite happened. Zelenskyy regime consolidated, and the Ukrainian armed forces fought successfully.

The last six weeks of combat has taken place in major cities in Ukraine. Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol and Kherson have been decisive, and the battle of Sloviansk is about to begin. Urban fighting

has been at the forefront in contrast with Russian expectations. The Ukrainian fighters have operated from urbanized fortresses using javelin missiles.

Why is this interesting? If we look at western military history and doctrine for the last century, urban warfare is the subordinated element of military operations. From the first World War, armies sought to fight in the field through large-scale maneuvers facilitated by the tank. The Battle of France would be an excellent example in 1940, where the Wehrmacht sought to punch its way through with its heavy armored divisions through the French lines and did so successfully.

Using large-scale maneuver in the field was a recurrent feature of 20th century warfare. The last example of this is the 2003 American invasion of Iraq where the Americans mounted a very impressive assault on Baghdad.

What shocked the Russians is the potency of the urban defense blunting heavy attack in the field.

The lesson of Ukraine will be Western armies need to reverse their traditional expectation of maneuver in the field towards a military operation which has more in common with medieval than with modern warfare that the siege operation to defend that fortress has taken priority over every other form of land warfare.

Larry Bernstein:

Technology often plays a critical role in the changing nature of war. In the US civil war, improvements in the accuracy of the rifle made defense easier and forced armies to attack in new ways. What was the change in technology that moved fighting with heavy armor in the field to urban warfare?

Anthony King:

The proliferation of long-range precision weaponry and the unmanned drone and this has pushed urban defense into the fore.

There's other important factors. Cities are a lot bigger and there's more of them.

In 1960, .5 of a billion people lived in cities. Today, 3.5 billion. There's been a massive expansion of urban areas, and they have become operationally unavoidable.

Not only are weapons more lethal, more precise, longer-range. Not only are cities bigger, more sprawling, and more important, but militaries are small and getting smaller.

In the 20th century, very large militaries don't exist. Forces no longer form fronts. Smaller forces advance into a theater and effectively converge on urban areas with transport nodes, critical national infrastructure, key civilian centers of gravity.

In Ukraine, the combat has congregated onto key urban areas. Mariupol, Kherson, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Izy, and now Sloviansk and Severnaya Donetsk.

Larry Bernstein:

In the Battle of France in June 1940, the German Blitzkrieg punctured the French Front and the French government declared that Paris would be an open city. Why was Paris preserved while Ukrainian cities are turned to rubble?

Anthony King:

This is a great point. The Battle of France is an extreme example, because in the second World War, most belligerents did not concede their capital city.

The typical second World War decisive battle would be a massive engagement in the field and then a final battle in a city. The final Armageddon at Berlin would be an example.

That French example is an unusual one. In the second World War, cities did end up getting destroyed because armies did not capitulate like France in 1940. They fought over everything. A horrible paradox to 21st century warfare, you'll converge on the very thing that is valuable to you, and if your opponent seeks to contest it, you will destroy what you want to fight for. The tragedy of all warfare is ultimately pyric, as Wellington's famous phrase: there's only one thing in the world worse than a battle won and that's a battle lost.

When we come to urban warfare, it's Wellington's aphorism to the power of 10.

if we're going to fight, we need to win a war. And we need to accept that the very thing that we'd like to preserve will be destroyed. The civilian population will bear, as in Ukraine, the unbelievable suffering, it's a horrible tragedy of 21st Century conflict.

It does remind me of ancient warfare where the essential deal between combatants was who loses has their cities destroyed and their population enslaved. Although we all think we're terribly modern and liberal, 21st Century warfare is closer to ancient warfare of city destruction, enslavement and dispersal of the population.

Larry Bernstein:

Russian supplies in their initial advance were insufficient and their inability to resupply forced a retreat. Supply and logistics are critical to the modern army, why has Russia performed so miserably here.

Anthony King:

The 40-mile column sitting outside Kyiv for a week was just extraordinary. One of the key things about urban warfare, especially in attack, you need lots of fuel, food, ammunition to reduce the fortifications before you can even begin to attack.

That 40-mile column showed that Russia is completely incapable of adequate logistics in the contemporary environment.

Look at the Iraq invasion. Americans ran two divisions 300 miles in a few weeks, extraordinary. The defenders in urban are massively advantaged, a figure of 10 to one and the Ukrainians have been tactically and operationally advantaged. They must have created depots of supplies in the cities to continue the fighting.

The Americans and British have supplied them very effectively. The advice and assistance in terms of the distribution of those supplies is the key with logistics. It's not just about bulk. It's about breaking that bulk down and getting it to the positions that you need.

Larry Bernstein:

What will be the next critical battleground in the war in Ukraine?

Anthony King:

The upcoming battle of the Sloviansk pocket in that triangle, Izi, Sloviansk and Sievierodonetsk will be the critical battle. The fundamental question who will have more military supplies? Will those two brigades holding Sloviansk and Sievierodonetsk have enough supplies to hold off the Russian divisions?

It will be tight because they've lost a lot of equipment and expended ammunition stocks.

Larry Bernstein:

Russia just retreated and both sides will have time to resupply. Ukraine needs to be resupplied by NATO neighbors, will Russia challenge NATO from resupplying Ukraine?

Anthony King:

That rocket attack two weeks ago hit a Ukrainian base that was a depot for supplies coming in from NATO.

Larry Bernstein:

How important is Russian air superiority to preventing Ukrainian resupply?

Anthony King:

Supply lines are always in the deepest battle space beyond the range of ground long-range missile systems. You've got to be looking at deep air strikes. The Russian Air Force has been mystifyingly weak, and they still haven't got air superiority. They're struggling to identify lucrative supply targets to hit. And therefore, the supplier from NATO countries has been successful.

Larry Bernstein:

Is the problem that the Russian generals were just as surprised as the outside world about Putin's war plans? Did the generals think Putin was all bluster and accordingly didn't make proper war preparations?

Anthony King:

These are all critical questions. There is no doubt that the Russians thought that they would achieve their mission to depose Zelenskyy and put a puppet regime in place. To take Kyiv that was the mission.

They thought that they would do that by a demonstration, seize Hostomel Airport and everything would fall into place.

The Russians presumption that they made was the Zelenskyy regime would collapse. They had no plan B (laughs).

The Russians had a large force on the border from Belarus to Crimea. But those forces were taken totally by surprise by the order after day three of (laughs), "Right boys, it's an attack. We're now invading," because plan A was a demonstration. Plan A doesn't work, so then it's full-on high intensity invasion of a sovereign territory with an effective determined enemy. It was insane.

In that first Chechnyan war in 1994-1995, the early weeks of the operation were a complete and utter disaster. Russian generals made the same mistake. Totally underestimated the Chechnyan insurgence and their military capabilities. And then the Russian reconfigured, and they fought a totally dreadful but very effective fight for the city.

Now, the question is, are they gonna reconfigure the forces and effectively create an effective operation in that Sloviansk pocket? It is entirely possible. But, I'm doubtful. It's not just a matter of an individual general running operations. You need a professionalized staff and an operational level that they don't have.

Larry Bernstein:

As you think about the upcoming critical battles for the Ukrainians, the big issue is can they resupply their troops.

Anthony King:

The Ukrainians have lost an awful lot of heavy equipment. 90% of their tanks and armored vehicles have been destroyed. They've been attrited to a far higher than the Russian Army. Just through the force of attrition, the Russians could force a passage through that Sloviansk pocket and create that corridor of land, which is their strategic and operational aim.

Larry Bernstein:

Can Ukraine get resupplied with heavy equipment?

Anthony King:

Great question. Poland, Eastern European countries, the Czech Republic said they'll supply tanks. But the actual practicality of getting working tanks and crews to work them to the Sloviansk pocket in the next week, I wonder whether that's possible.

Larry Bernstein:

Your argument is that armored battles are becoming less important than urban warfare. In Chechnya insurgents couldn't get resupplied in the cities. But here, ammunition, drones, Javelins will be resupplied, and the Russians lack sufficient troops to win a siege.

Anthony King:

Anti-tank weapons don't seem difficult to supply. To defeat that assault, they're gonna need more than NLAWs and Javelins. You're gonna need armed UAVs, deep-strike aircraft with precision bomb striking, guided multiple launch rocket systems would be great. But I can't see them being provided.

The logic of the castle's been forgotten in 20th century. It's not that you can't take a castle. It takes time for a field army to reduce it. The opponents have time to build up their own field army and to then defeat that attacking force. If you turn Sloviansk and Sievierodonetsk into old-fashioned medieval castles, they buy time and that could be enough to shift that balance in combat power, not tomorrow, not next week, but if those fortresses hold for two weeks' time that could be quite significant.

Larry Bernstein:

How many Russian soldiers have been killed and injured and at what point will that become a critical?

Anthony King:

Russian casualties are high. My guess is the Russians have lost 1,000 troops a week killed, and if you take 1,000, that's 4-5,000 wounded. So we're seven weeks into the campaign, I think they've lost 7,000 soldiers killed probably 30,000 wounded. It's a huge number and every week will become more.

Larry Bernstein:

Russian army personnel are estimated to be 250,000. Well 30,000 wounded and 7,000 dead and that is 15% of the entire army destroyed in 7 weeks. This rate is unsustainable.

Anthony King:

There's a myth about combat effectiveness where everyone's fighting until everyone gets killed. It never happens. What happens is armies can take about 30% casualties and then they can't go on the offensive. If a unit or a formation takes about 30% casualties and takes them quite quickly, like they have in Ukraine, you stop being able to attack.

And sometimes, 30% casualties are enough for an army to utterly collapse. You think of the political discussion over lost service personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan, about 5,000 over a 10 year period, a tiny percentage of the force stretched over a decade.

15% of the force, potentially, has been killed or wounded, it's massive. And once you get up to about a third, they just can't get an attack together.

The battle for Sloviansk pocket could really be the last throw of the dice.

Larry Bernstein:

Can the Ukraine benefit from untrained citizen soldiers like in Chechnya?

Anthony King:

I'm skeptical. I was surprised that the Zelensky regime gave out Kalashnikovs to every citizen in Kiev because that just was dangerous. It made everyone a target. If you've got an armored column coming down the street or a major attack, a load of unorganized, untrained civilians with Kalashnikovs are a hindrance to the organized defense force.

The next phase will be decided by the regular and organized Ukrainian Army. Not a partisan war. You need it organized into sectors which are controlled by companies and platoons to make it effective.

You're gonna need sophisticated long-range weaponry. The NLAWs and Javelins whose range is 1,000 meters, need to combine those with the deeper-strike weaponry. A citizen militia ain't gonna do that. You need an organized force which is commanded properly.

A general partisan uprising, I don't think it's relevant. The only thing it will do is get more civilians killed. How well can Ukraine Army command a defense of Sloviansk and Sievierodonetsk? That for me is the key issue. And if they can connect those two fortresses, creating kill boxes between them for their air forces or the long-range armor, for long-range artillery that presents a difficult problem. A double fortress presents a difficult tactical problem for Russian generals.

Larry Bernstein:

A few years ago, General Stan McChrystal spoke at my book club. And he describes his war room looking sort of like mission control for the Apollo program. There's a big screen. He can speak directly with the soldiers in the field while hearing and seeing the battle live. Fantastic technology. And above ground, there are layers of airplanes that can participate in the battle as needed. And when you combine capable and effective central command with decentralized empowered soldiers and air superiority, it's very powerful.

Anthony King:

Yep.

Larry Bernstein:

But the Russians seem to have none of these advantages. The Russian generals are inferior to McChrystal, they lack the drones and are on the blind during the battles, they do not have air superiority and their weaponry is less advanced.

Anthony King:

Air-land integration became very important. And the US are masters, they're so far ahead of every other nation, also what you described in McChrystal, the capabilities of commanders in headquarters to coordinate highly complicated multi-layered air operations. That's difficult, but then to integrate them with what's happening on the ground, it's very challenging.

To run an effective inter-state war, you need to gain air superiority, and then for an attack to be successful, there needs to be a complete fusion with a suite of airplanes spread out across their altitudes into what the ground forces are doing. And to reduce the Sloviansk pocket that's what the Russians would need to do. They seem incapable of coordinating strikes from the air and that makes life difficult.

There is an operational issue here, the Russians attacked across a northern, eastern, and southern front. They've distributed their forces widely, they have so much air space to deal with. They seem incapable of having concentrated their air assets, their surveillance, their targeting on one particular area.

They won't remotely get close to what McChrystal was able to do. It's not just a question of the quality of the individual generals. What seems at fault with the Russians, the horsepower of their headquarters seems way too low for 21st century military operations.

They haven't got the sophistication of planning and execution to deliver a full dimensional, deep-close-rear battle at the same time, in stark contrast to the US, who have become the masters of that operation.

Larry Bernstein:

There is a chapter in your book about the war fought over the internet, with twitter and the global media. Russia seems to be losing badly the global media war. Every day there are new photos of atrocities. Biden has called Putin a war criminal and stated that Putin cannot stay in power. On the other hand, Putin seems to be winning the battle over hearts and minds in Russia where his popularity has been increasing during the war. What is happening?

Anthony King:

Information warfare should never be separated from the reality. And I disparage all commentators who say, "The narrative is the important thing," that the information is the important thing. False. Reality is reality. But in warfare we can amplify reality to encourage our supporters and discourage others.

What happens in the 21st century, information is resonant among particular populations. We see that a battle at one site, Kyiv, Mariupol, Kharkiv resonates across an urban archipelago, attracting, encouraging recruiting political, ethnic, racial aligned diasporas. And the Ukrainians have essentially recruited Ukrainians overseas and Western populations very effectively. The Russian people have a social commitment to support Putin. Therefore, they accept the propaganda.

We can disparage what he's done, but we should also understand the point of this war, that Ukraine is vital economically in terms of industry, grain, and it gives Russia access to the Black Sea fleet in Crimea.

Larry Bernstein:

Russia already has the Black Sea warm water port in Crimea. What have they won by turning this industrial base and agricultural empire into rubble? If the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is about the value of its people, why are they killing them or making them flee?

Anthony King:

At the beginning they thought they could take over it really easily. Putin was worried about the Kyiv regime becoming part of EU. Although he had Crimea, if Ukraine is in NATO, NATO forces are 60 miles from his strategic naval base in Crimea. That's unconscionable because it's not a holdable port.

The Russian public are aware of the importance of Ukraine and that Ukraine should be part of Russia.

If the polls are to be believed, his support is very strong. Pre-existing social commitments in war those solidarities solidify and that's what is happening with the Russian population.

Larry Bernstein:

What happens next with the war in Ukraine?

Anthony King:

It depends on who wins the battle of the Sloviansk pocket of where the politics will be. But even if Ukraine did repel the Russians a second time, they're gonna have to accept that Russian keeps those districts of Donetsk and Lansk that it already has. It will keep a corridor through Mariupol down to Crimea, and it will keep Crimea. And the flip side is that Russian will be forced to recognize an independent Ukraine and an independent Kyiv regime with Zelenskyy as President. And here's the kicker, that regime would be non-aligned and neutral, and that it would not join NATO and the EU, but it would enjoy good relations with NATO and privileged trading with the EU.

If you go for either throwing the Russians back to their pre-2014 borders or insisting that the Kyiv regime joins NATO, you'll end up with a sort of Korean standoff, that it would just go on for years until, finally, three years later everyone goes, "Let's accept the status quo."

Larry Bernstein:

What I think is truly tragic and absurd is that Putin probably could have got his war aims without war? Why didn't Putin bluster until he got what he wanted?

Anthony King:

Totally insane.

He probably couldn't have got a corridor to Mariupol. But Mariupol is now a ruin that's gonna cost him billions to reconstruct.

Putin has taken his regime on a completely ridiculous campaign, which he'll end up with a little bit better than he had before..

I thought, "Oh. He's never gonna invade. He's not that stupid. The most he'll do is a small operation around the Donbas to make a demonstration, give Ukraine a bloody nose, and then get a deal that he wants."

I was naïve.

Larry Bernstein:

I end each episode on a note of optimism. What are you optimistic about this war?

Anthony King:

Russia will be chastened by the experience. It's completely united NATO. It's demonstrated that raw land power is real.

Air power and sea power is crucial. But you can't do without an army.

The Germans have increased their defense spending, finally. The British army is starting to take land warfare seriously. The problem is six million refugees are suffering. The cost is appalling. But there is an important lesson that's beneficial to the West to learn.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Anthony. Let's move now to our second speaker, Retired General Paul Kern, who was the commanding general of the army materiel command. The big topic in Ukraine is logistics and the ability to resupply the Ukrainian army. Go ahead Paul.

Ret. General:

I am glad that people are paying attention to logistics and its impact on warfare. That is something that is a strength of the US and a failure in Russia.

Larry Bernstein:

Where do we Americans excel with logistics that separates us from the other great military powers?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Number one, almost all of our wars in the last 100 years have been overseas from the United States; therefore, we have to plan how to support ourselves, get there, and plan how to support ourselves in that new location, could be in the Pacific, in the Atlantic, but we don't know.

Second, is that you need to look at the structure that we put together, we have a whole command called TRANSCOM that's nothing but logistics. That's a major command, just like CENTCOM is for the Middle East or EUCOM is for Europe. Third, and maybe the most important, is our logisticians in the US have an ethos that says we will not let the war fighters fail. In the past when people have run out of bullets or fuel, that's been something which we earned the lessons the hard way. We said, "We're not going to do that again."

Larry Bernstein:

We don't fight wars with contiguous countries like Canada. What advantage does that have for Russia, given that it lacks logistical capabilities?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

One of the principles of warfare that gives you an advantage is interior lines. The border that they have is contiguous to the place they're fighting, so they don't have to cross into enemy territory to support as they own it. It should be a significant advantage for them. And Belarus I consider an adjunct to Russia itself, no different, so the interior lines applies whether they're in Belarus or in Russia.

Larry Bernstein:

The Ukrainians are resupplied by NATO, with its contiguous border in Eastern European NATO countries. How will the Ukrainian resupply work given that it is in a war zone and its supply lines are being harassed?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

I think you've already seen that. One of the first attacks was on the major airport outside of Kyiv. *The Russians* had assumed that they could take that down. They didn't expect the fight that they got when they were there. And they also then had a long line back to the border to keep it supported. But the advantage of interior lines, applies to the NATO border countries. And we have been able to conduct resupply to those borders.

That does not stop Russia from attacking as they have done it.

Larry Bernstein:

In Ukraine does resupply accomplished by rail, truck, boat or air?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

The answer is by all. Rail is the way that the Russians prefer to do it, but rails are easily defined and attacked. Road networks you have to plan for convergence of those intersections. And sea, with the exception of Odessa, Russia has managed to block off most of the sea lanes into Ukraine. But you don't choose one, you choose as many as you possibly can.

Sometimes we do it by air drop.

Larry Bernstein:

Can you get significant amounts of material dropped by air or is that too limiting?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

No, we do it all the time. We have aircraft designed to refuel from the air. And we also have ordinary aircraft that can go anywhere. They can sling load supplies as well as carry supplies internally. It's an area which we plan for multiple avenues to support operations and not just one or the other. But air is a very significant part of it.

Larry Bernstein:

President Biden made an announcement that he was not going to engage US troops in the war zone. Who is flying those planes?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

We can bring the supplies into those countries and then have Ukrainians come in and pick it up, so we avoid entering into the war zone.

Larry Bernstein:

What caused Russia's 40-mile supply column backup?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

I was very surprised that they would get themselves in that kind of a position. When you have a column of armored vehicles and then you have wheeled vehicles behind it in the winter, even on hard surface roads with icy conditions, you have problems. And the same thing is true on the muddy roads that they got stuck in. Tracks have a better capability than wheels in most cases, but they were getting all of them stuck. It was very poor planning in using the transportation routes. They didn't appear to have any alternatives that would have alleviated some of those problems.

I can add to that the great fighting that the Ukrainians conducted against these lines. They saw that as a vulnerability and they attacked it.

Larry Bernstein:

What happens to an armored column that is under attack that is literally stuck in the mud?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

They are predominantly stuck because the conditions off the roads were very muddy and once you run a few tracks vehicles through you make it worse. And then the wheeled vehicles find it impossible to get through. Finding a different route out of the road was a challenge.

Larry Bernstein:

The Russians have retreated back home to resupply, will they improve their logistics on their reentry into Ukraine.

Ret. General Paul Kern:

The answer is yes. But also expect Ukrainians to better as well. They learned lessons at the same time. The terrain is very different in the east in the Donbass region all the way down to the Crimea, which they're going to try to link up there. It's an area which the Ukrainians have been fighting in as contested area for many years now. So, they know the terrain and how to fight in that area. Both sides will be learning from the past. And it's a different terrain in terms of being stuck on single roads that the Russians I'm sure will avoid. But at the same time, it opens up other vulnerabilities from different modes of attack.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned the problems with icy roads and mud. We are in mid-April and the weather will be improving. Does warmer weather improve the attacker's supply lines?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Yes, it will. It gives them some advantages. We expect that once you get out of the thaw, it's better. They still have rain to deal with. The Dnieper River creates one big boundary.

All military planning considers weather, but the other is the mission, enemy, the troops, the terrain, all have to be considered in the time you have available.

Larry Bernstein:

Experts have said that the two things that the Ukrainians most desperately need is more ammunition and more armored vehicles. Is that something that's easy to resupply?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Well, supply chains are always a challenge. I take nothing for granted. Ammo is heavy. They need ammo, fuel, water, medical supplies. All of those have to be accounted for in this next phase on both sides. They've seen what their consumption rates are and they should know better as they plan for the next phase.

Larry Bernstein:

Who has the edge with logistics?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Russia has a long supply line which has not been attacked behind it. And that supply line remains intact, whereas Ukraine has been under constant attack for some years now. So, their supply lines have been broken up and they knew how to fight through it, but it's still under attack, while Russia supply line has not.

Larry Bernstein:

Can NATO help Ukraine with logistics planning and execution?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

They've been studying Russian tactics and vulnerabilities for some time now. NATO has been giving them insights into what the Russians are planning to do. And they have an opportunity to be forewarned and not be surprised and that gives them an advantage as well.

Larry Bernstein:

Russia has been unable to achieve air superiority? How important is air superiority for resupply and logistics?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Well, in modern warfare you look at it from a combined operations, air, land and sea. On land, you use indirect fliers, missile fires, all the capabilities and you provide your air defenses. It's an integration of all of these capabilities that gives you the real advantage. Russia has not been able to do that. In previous, earlier battles inside Ukraine, prior to 2014, they were pretty good at it. They seem to have failed to learn their own lessons.

Larry Bernstein:

Are both sides using drones?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Russians have significant amounts of drones and have used them very effectively.

And Ukraine has, with support from NATO countries, been able to use drones effectively. And we're giving them new capabilities, we'll call them the suicide drones, that can loiter and attack their columns.

Larry Bernstein:

It has been 20 years since the Iraq War, how has technology changed the nature of war since then?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Armor today is much more capable. The vulnerability as you've noted, has been the top attack, and that's been one of the real keys to both the Javelin and the NLAW that the UK has provided to use top attack, which is the weak point against armored vehicles.

We have significant air defenses. Very clever radars that we can track and move our weapons to follow. But they also can be jammed. And so electronic warfare is a modern part of the battle as well. It's always been there, but it's significant in today's battles. Russia has been modern communications. And we use very different communications. Satellite observance, satellite both for reconnaissance and for communications has been around for a while but is a big player in today's wars.

Larry Bernstein:

NATO is considering giving advanced equipment to the Ukrainian army that is untrained in using them. Can the Ukrainians be properly trained to use these weapons?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Well, one of the things you've seen is, there's a transfer of the S300, which is a former Soviet air defense system to Ukraine. We're giving Ukrainians systems that they know how to employ.

We're trying to not give them something that they've never seen before, but we also have brought training for things like the Javelin and the NLAW to them.

Larry Bernstein:

How do you see this war playing out in the next few months?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

It's gonna be ugly. It's gonna be lessons learned on both parts. It's going to be a continuation of the civilians caught in the war fighting. We've always concerned about the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. That escalation would be a major turning point which would really put us on the edge of a major long-term war. I don't think Russia is going to be able to just walk in and defeat Ukraine very rapidly.

Larry Bernstein:

We've heard estimates of 7000 Russian soldiers killed and 30,000 wounded or 15% of the active soldiers. How does this affect their fighting force? Anthony King says a unit with over 30% casualties is incapable of offensive actions.

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Logistics has to account for casualties by providing medical resources and evacuation of personnel. And then you have to reconstitute units which are below the 30% reduction. The logistics plan is how do you reconstitute and evacuate casualties and equipment, rebuild and get it back into the fight.

Larry Bernstein:

Ukrainians have untrained volunteers. How can volunteers help?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

It is difficult to get people to be fully trained in a short period of time, but they can become effective. We've seen during World War One, World War Two, training can be done in a very quick, rudimentary way. When you have to prepare people for casualties, it's hard to train for that. And that's why we make our training very stressful. You want to induce those stresses in people before without hurting them. But the mental stress has a way of replicating some of those experiences.

Larry Bernstein:

What about using untrained volunteers to assist with logistics and away from the battlefield?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

Absolutely. If you go back and look at World War Two that's what we did. We took people who had the capability in their commercial jobs and that's the jobs we aligned them with in the military. Not 100%, but that's what our goals were, to, to do that. So, you take advantage of that.

Larry Bernstein:

I end each episode on a note of optimism. What are you optimistic about?

Ret. General Paul Kern:

I'm optimistic about Ukrainians. They have shown a will to fight, they've shown a capacity to fight a superior technically and by numbers force, and win. I'm just absolutely positive that we'll see that to continue, and I expect Russia to continue to suffer because of it.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Paul. Let's move to our final speaker, Angela Stent, professor emerita at Georgetown, and author of the book *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest*. Go ahead Angela.

Angela Stent:

I have four questions and answers about Putin. Question one, why did Putin invade Ukraine now? He believed that Zelenskyy was moving against Russian interests *and* was mad that Zelenskyy hadn't been willing to make peace on Putin's terms.

Secondly, he thought the US was weak. He looked at the disastrous exit from Afghanistan, our polarized politics and thought that the US was too distracted. Thirdly, he thought the Europeans were too distracted. The Germans were going through a new coalition, the French were in the lead up to the election, Britain was pre-occupied with Brexit. He did not believe that the Western alliance would impose really tough sanctions on him that there would be no unity on that.

His invasion was based on a number of serious miscalculations. Number one, the Russian army isn't as strong as he thought it was. Secondly, the Ukrainians fought back instead of collapsing

in 72 hours. They're well trained and are fighting for a cause, whereas Russian teenage recruits don't even know why they're there.

Another miscalculation was Transatlantic unity. The Europeans stepped up to the plate. They joined the United States in presenting a united front against Russia. And the Japanese, South Koreans, and other Asian countries did as well. And they imposed very tough sanctions on Russia.

Where are we now? The Russians were unable to take Kiev, which they thought they were gonna take in 72 hours. They've now retreated and focusing on the Southeastern Donbas region.

They've completely decimated Mariupol, the port city where allegedly they used some chemical weapons. And they have managed to cut off Odessa from the rest of Ukraine. The Ukrainians cannot export their grain, not because of sanctions, but because the Russians have cut them off.

Putin would like to announce on the ninth of May, Victory Day, that he has had a major success in Ukraine and that they've taken back the Donbas. Let's see whether he is able to do that. We have a united West. Yes, the US, Europe, and our Asian allies are together on imposing sanctions, but the rest of the world is not; it's not only China. India has refused to condemn Russia *or* to join sanctions.

Other major countries: South Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Mexico, Brazil, countries in Southeast Asia, in Africa, none of them are willing to condemn Russia. And those countries, if you look at the UN votes, represent more than half of world's population.

The best outcome would be a negotiated settlement, however, I do not believe the Russians are interested in a negotiated settlement, but if they were, the Ukrainians have said that they would give up trying to join NATO, but they would want security guarantees from the West. They've said that they're willing to discuss the status of Crimea and of the Donbas with Russia. But the condition for making these concessions is for Russia to withdraw at least those troops that invaded on the 24th of February. We have had no sign from the Russians of any concessions that they would make.

If there isn't a negotiated settlement, this war can continue for a long time. It can be a low level war of attrition. It could also escalate, we've had signs of a possible use of a chemical agent. Putin has also threatened to use nuclear weapons. They're not off the table.

Once the US and NATO will have permanent troops on the Eastern front-line states. Putin's also achieved what he (laughs) always wanted to prevent, Finland and Sweden are now apparently poised to join NATO, something that they refused to do for the past 70 years.

Larry Bernstein:

Why is China supporting Russia in this war?

Angela Stent:

The Chinese have very significant economic interests in their relationship with the West, with Europe and the US, and not with Russia. They won't join in condemnation. They still *want* an authoritarian Russia as their partner pushing back against US and Western hegemony.

Larry Bernstein:

I am confused by India's neutrality. India lately has joined Team USA, what happened?

Angela Stent:

India *has* their own concerns about China and Chinese-Pakistani relations, and so they see Russia as an important balancer against China. They have a tradition during the Cold War of being neutral and a lot of suspicion of the United States.

In large parts of the rest of the world, a lot of this is determined not because of Russia's great, it's their resentment against the United States and hypocrisy. They will point to Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, et cetera.

Larry Bernstein:

Do you think Israel's more neutral policy relates to the large Russian Jewish population in Israel, the risk that Israel may need to evacuate the Ukrainian Jewish population, and its desire to work with Russia in Syria and Iran?

Angela Stent:

Israel did vote to oust Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council, and it has condemned Russia but it's not joining the sanctions. Their major concern is Iranian activities in Syria, and without cooperation from Russia, they can't fight back against Hezbollah.

The domestic population is extremely complicated. Natan Sharansky, the famous Soviet dissident, has condemned his government for not doing more, because he's always been very anti-Putin. Avidgor Liberman, who comes from Moldova has had a very cozy relationship with Putin and he won't criticize Russia.

There's three million former Soviet Jews that live in Israel, there's no unanimity on this. And then, there are the business ties. These wealthy Russian Jewish oligarchs have ties with Israel *and* with the Putin regime as well.

Memories of the way that Ukrainians treated Jews in the past isn't very good.

As the Israelis say, Russia's like a neighbor. It has enabled Israel to carry out all kinds of strikes against Hezbollah and Iranian-backed forces in Syria that are threatening to Israel.

Larry Bernstein:

What about the developing world?

Angela Stent:

None of the BRICS countries have condemned Russia: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Mexico. Do you know that after the war broke out, the Mexican parliament formed a Russia-Mexico friendship caucus?

Brazil: Bolsonaro feels that they've been neglected by the Biden Administration. The attitude towards the United States is clearly not what it used to be.

Larry Bernstein:

Why did Western analysts and their political leaders underestimate the risk of war in Ukraine?

Angela Stent:

Most Western analysts, and I would include myself, looked at Putin's previous behavior. The grievances he's had against Ukraine, against the West, they've been on display since 2007 when he made his infamous speech at the Munich Security Conference. And he's always said Ukraine *is not a real country*.

In 2008, Russia went to war with Georgia, but they didn't go to Tbilisi, they didn't take out President Zourabichvili, whom they loathed.

In 2014, they took Crimea in a bloodless coup, and then they started the war in the Donbas region, but it was limited. Most people thought that what Putin was going to do was to take more of the Donbas, what the Russians are trying to do now.

Most of us realize that Putin is now a much greater risk taker than he was eight years ago and doesn't have *a* pragmatic sense of where to stop.

Larry Bernstein:

Putin made a speech at the outset of the war in Ukraine. What do you make of Putin's justification of the invasion?

Angela Stent:

*Putin's* seized on this Nazi trope because that dehumanizes the Ukrainians.

It's just like World War II, we're gonna get rid of those Nazis.

The other part of his speech was it's the United States and NATO that's backing these Nazis, and it's using Nazi Ukraine as a platform to either invade Russia *or* to threaten it. And the foreign minister, Lavrov, said, "This isn't really a war about Ukraine, we're at war with the West, with the United States." Which is the way that they see it.

Larry Bernstein:

Why is Putin's popularity increasing during the war?

Angela Stent:

For most Russians, it's becoming increasingly difficult to have access to other sources of information, they're seeing state-run TV 24/7. We're fighting the Nazis, we're winning. The massacre in Bucha, it's done by the Ukrainians themselves or fake actors.

Russia is only targeting military targets and everything else is fake.

A lot of the recruits come from rural parts of Russia, and they're particularly badly informed.

Larry Bernstein:

You have explained how the war in Ukraine is in Russia's interest, but why does it make sense for Putin personally?

Angela Stent:

*Putin's* done pretty well out of the collapse of the Soviet Union (laughing), if you look at how much wealth he and his comrades have accumulated.

He would show up to world meetings, and he's an impressive, strong man. He rebuilt the Russian economy, he seemed to create stability there. And everyone thought he's an autocrat *that we can do business with*.

Larry Bernstein:

How did Putin miscalculate the extent of the sanctions?

Angela Stent:

He thought that the sanctions that would be imposed on Russia would be similar to those in 2014. There'd be sanctions on banks *and* on individuals. But he did not believe that the Europeans would agree to these full frontal financial sanctions. The export controls are affecting their ability to get spare parts, to fly their planes, for their entire industrial base. He was an intent on this invasion and he thinks that Russia can weather these sanctions, but it's gonna be hard to see in the longer run how they do.

Larry Bernstein:

Do you agree with John Mearsheimer that it was US actions to expand NATO and encourage Ukraine to join the EU that set off the war?

Angela Stent:

I don't give very much credence to it. NATO expansion is not what has caused this. The West is not responsible for this.

Putin's desire to get back these lands has existed from the time that the Soviet Union collapsed and he lost his job as a KGB case officer. Before 2014, a majority of Ukrainians did not want to join NATO. Ukraine had neutrality in its constitution.

In the last year since the annexation of Crimea the Ukrainians changed their mind on this. Where I would fault the West is in 2008, when there was a NATO summit and the Bush administration did push a membership action plan for Ukraine, and the Germans and French were adamantly against it. They had a compromised communique which said Ukraine and Georgia will join NATO. Ukraine was not on any track for NATO membership that communique was a mistake because it's provided something for the Russians to seize on.

Larry Bernstein:

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, Putin will celebrate Victory Day for the war in Ukraine. What will Putin say he won?

Angela Stent:

Maybe by May 9<sup>th</sup>, they can say, "We took Mariupol, more of the Donbas," and cut off Ukraine from the Black Sea. "We've won." He can't go back and say, "We denazified the country," because Zelenskyy's still in power, and denazification was a code word for a regime change, Kiev. But he could present a territorial gain.

Larry Bernstein:

What insight do you have on the Ukrainian refugee crisis?

Angela Stent:

Putin thought that creating refugees would destabilize Europe *like* the Syrian refugees.

If you have large numbers of Ukrainian refugees living in different parts of Europe and integrating into Europe, you could get a European body politic that becomes even harder in its views of Russia.

Larry Bernstein:

What happens next with China and the Ukraine war?

Angela Stent:

The Chinese have continued to back Russia. They repeat all of the Russian tropes, including what happened at Bucha was either done by the Ukrainians or actors.

China used to say, "We don't believe in solving things through violence and military means," and they're not saying that very much anymore.

Major Chinese banks are complying with the sanctions. We'll have to see how much the Chinese help the Russians evade sanctions going forward. For Xi Jinping, the relationship with Vladimir Putin is very important. He's a fellow authoritarian leader who's increasingly

dependent on China. If China really wants to push against an American dominated world order, he needs Putin.

The February the 4th declaration that was signed between Putin and Xi Jinping in Beijing said it's a partnership that knows no limits, it's better than an alliance.

Larry Bernstein  
What are you optimistic about?

Angela Stent:  
I'm optimistic, about the way that Europe and Asian allies have responded to this. We hope that as the sanctions continue to affect you that we can keep that unity.

Larry Bernstein:  
Putin will demand an end to sanctions as part of any settlement. What happens next?

Angela Stent:  
Well, he's only going to get sanctions lifted if the Russians do what they promised to do. It's incredibly difficult to lift US sanctions, particularly if the US Congress has anything to do with it.

Larry Bernstein:  
Since you predict that neither side wants to negotiate, do you see a long war?

Angela Stent:  
Yes. It's going to continue for a long time or at least as long as Putin's in the Kremlin. We don't know how long he'll be President.

Larry Bernstein:  
Thanks to Anthony, Paul and Angela for joining us today.

That ends today's session. I want to make a plug for next week's show.

Our first speaker will be Tom Sancton who is an author and research professor at Tulane has a new book entitled *The Last Baron: The Paris Kidnapping that Brought Down an Empire*. The book is amazing, fast paced and a joy to read. It is a fascinating true story about the kidnapping of one of France's leading industrialists.

Our second speaker is Mitchell Schwarzer who is a Professor of Architectural and Urban History at California College of the Arts and the author of *Hella Town: Oakland's History of Development and Disruption*. I am very interested in urban economics and how new cities develop and grow.

If you missed last week's program, check it out. We had Nicholas Eberstadt on the upcoming war between North and South Korea and Irv Gellman on the 1960s Presidential Election between JFK and Nixon and who really won.

If you are interested in listening to a replay of today's What Happens Next program or any of our previous episodes or if you wish to read a transcript, you can find them on our website [Whathappensnextin6minutes.com](http://Whathappensnextin6minutes.com). Replays are also available on Apple Podcasts, Podbean and Spotify.

Thanks to our audience for your continued engagement with these important issues, good-bye.