

World War IV, by Stealth
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The 20th Century saw three World Wars: World War I (1914-18), World War II (1939-45,) and the Cold War (1947-1981). A closer look would show us that World War II was actually a continuation of World War I, which had ended in a temporary armistice.

The Cold War, which has never officially been labeled World War III, could also be said to have unresolved issues from World Wars I and II. World War II could be said to be democracies against dictatorships, except for our alliance with the Soviet Union, a dictatorship that fought on our side.

The competition between liberal democracies (participatory governments and rule of law) and dictatorships (rule by the big fist) has gone viral. During the Cold War, actual fighting was done by surrogates (Korea, Vietnam, Israel and the Arab States), in which the US and our allies fought in wars stage-managed by Russia and China.

During that time, Russia continued a campaign begun before the birth of the USSR: propoganda assaults to discredit the United States. For example, the Soviets circulated a lie in Central America that the US was harvesting organs to transplant to wealthy Americans. This lie, unfortunately, led to the deaths of missionaries and American visitors when the natives believed this lie.

We responded with the Voice of America, broadcasts that put the best face on our values, cultures, and freedom, enchanting many in the Russian dictatorship who listened clandestinely.

By sheer luck, the US and USSR never went to open warfare with each other, which would have been nuclear war, a horror to both sides. But this costly war finally brought down the Soviet Union, which ran out of money and whose ideas had grown stale. The Soviet Union collapsed, leaving a much-reduced Russia surrounded by its former colonies, now nominally free new countries. They reabsorbed the Central Asian colonies, but not the European ones.

As the 20th century ended, Russia underwent ferment as its new government took shape. Russia was a pretend participatory government with elections, parliament, and free press. A new leader, Vladimir Putin, took over. Putin was a former Soviet intelligence officer. With characteristic Russian patience and intentions of getting revenge, he gradually destroyed each of the institutions supporting a democratic state.

He attacked the free press, imprisoning and murdering many journalists. Parliamentary elections soon became rubber stamp, and presidential elections were rigged to permit no competition to Putin. He now sits atop a dying state, its population plummeting, its wealth doled out to Putin and his inner circle of billionaires. Yet his personal power isn't enough for him; he wants revenge against the US, which he has managed in such a way that we scarcely recognized that he had declared war on us.

This clever man knows that in a conventional war with us, Russia could never win. He is waging a very effective war against us on the cheap. Russia's oldest tool, disinformation, has proven effective to attack all the institutions of the democracies. He has directed his attacks to our and Western Europe's darkest underbellies: the ignorant, resentful, gullible sectors ready to believe anything anti-government. Hacking the Internet is his chosen weapon.

He groomed a presidential candidate, Donald Trump, for years before the 2015 election, a feat that seemed impossible to the majority of us. This success gave the Russians what they wanted: a cudgel against our institutions. In Europe, he financed Brexit, the British campaign to leave the European Union. In the US, Trump cancelled our years of multilateralism, withdrew from the Climate Accord, insulted our former friends and allies, and embraced dictatorships. He publicly affirmed his belief in Putin, not his Intelligence community. Trump has also managed a hostile takeover of the Republican Party.

Putin clandestinely supported the Anti-Vaccination conspiracy, science scoffers, the National Rifle Association (hampering gun control), Afghan Taliban paid a bounty for killing American soldiers, and then the Trump election campaign in 2020, which fortunately ended their winning streak,

Our new administration is catching on. Putin's poison is no longer clandestine. We

are awake now and Putin no longer has a puppet in the White House.

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