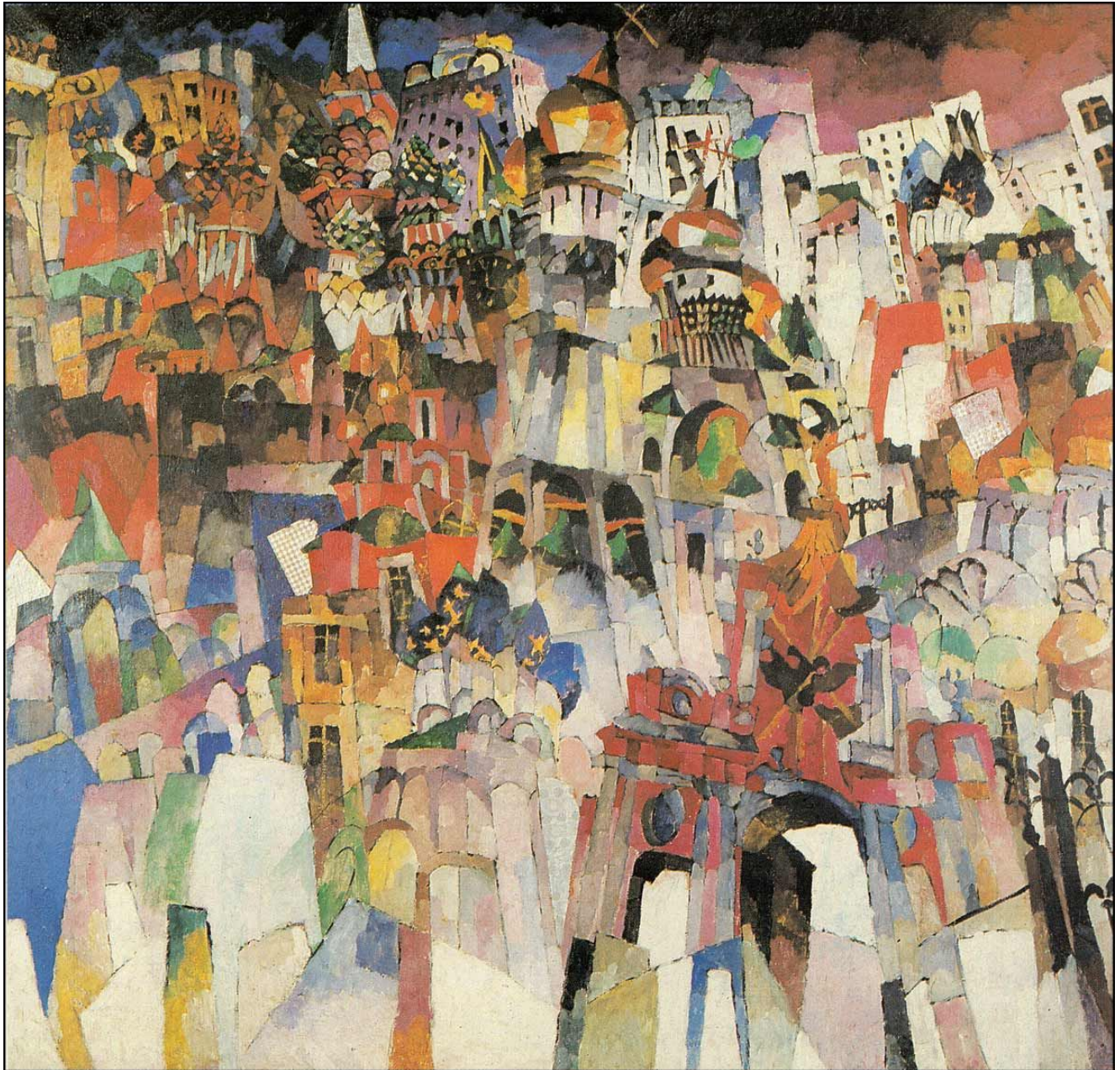


To Russia with Love

by [G. Murphy Donovan](#) (March 2023)



Moscow, Aristarkh Vasilievic Lentulov, 1913

A harmful truth is better than a useful lie. –Thomas Mann

Note: In January, a producer at Russian Television

International contacted the editors of the New English Review to request an on-air interview with Murphy Donovan, an NER contributing editor and retired USAF Intelligence officer who writes about the politics of culture and national security.

The interview was to be hosted by Anna [Chapman](#)—a somewhat controversial, if not notorious, alleged Kremlin Intelligence agent, now a television celebrity host in Russia.

Russian concerns, as expressed by RT's questions, seemed to be serious, relevant, and topical.

RT America ceased broadcasting in the US in 2022 after losing cable and satellite coverage in the wake of the Ukraine war. Alas, given the ease with which a live or taped interview could be manipulated or selectively edited by either side, Donovan refused the on-air interview, but he did agree to answer the questions posed by Russian interlocutors on the pages of New English Review. That colloquy, verbatim questions and answers, follows here.

RT questions appear below as received.

RT: What is the role of PMCs and mercenaries in GV? Western countries were the first to attract them—Why? What is their role in the conflict in Ukraine from the Russian and Western sides?

Donovan: There's nothing new about paramilitaries or mercenaries, such units go back to Alexander and the Caesars. Paras are special purpose or clandestine forces. They give sponsors "plausible deniability." Sometimes, it's just more convenient, cheaper, or effective to use ready made or foreign paramilitary units. Like the mafia, government, yours or mine, often use "cutouts," as tactical proxies.

[Blackwater](#) is probably the most infamous American mercenary company. Mission and purpose dictates the nature of the military instrument.

At the moment, if we were to [compare](#) the Wagner (Russian) and Mozart (American) mercenary groups in Ukraine, I would say the difference is marginal, although Americans are not recruited from prisons. Still, it wasn't that long ago that many an American criminal before the bar was often given an option—the Army or jail. Realistically, mercenary units from the West probably spend more time bragging, drinking, whoring, and fund raising than they do fighting.

Sometimes even the *NYT* gets it right.

Mercenaries are unique today to the extent they have training, experience, digital toys, more killing power, and global access to the BBC soap operas—and internet porn.

RT: Halford [Mackinder](#) formulated the principle a hundred years ago that whoever controls Eastern Europe controls the Heartland, who controls the Heartland rules the whole world. Explain his idea, and is it possible to say that the conflict in Ukraine within the framework of this concept is a Civil War, the outcome of which determines who will be the leader of the whole world?

Donovan: I'm not a theorist, nor a political scientist. I was an Intelligence analyst, then assessments manager. I used to think good data and honest analysis enabled us "to speak truth to power." Unfortunately, truth today is just another commodity, like advertising; whatever you're willing to sell or believe on the Internet.

Objective reality doesn't necessarily matter in a virtual world, especially for government flaks. The newly minted Global Engagement Center ([GEC](#)) at the US State Department now has 27 "releases," 17 of which target Putin or Russia.

US/NATO Intelligence today, especially where it matters, is mostly a cultivated political narrative. “Russians bad, Americans good” captures the meme. For various reasons too tedious to address here, official American analysis and diplomacy prefers to kiss Chinese and radical Muslim asses whilst demonizing Russia.

Recall that General Clapper, former Director of National Intelligence actually said the he believed the Russians were [genetically](#) defective. That view is common, on the right and left here, inside the Beltway, especially by partisan ‘influencers’ like Victoria Nuland at the State Department, Max Boot at Council on Foreign Relations, and Fiona Hill at Brookings just to name three of the usual suspects.

Recall also that Clapper was the mendacious mandarin who claimed that NSA didn’t spy on Americans. We might as well believe also that [Bluffdale](#), Utah is a Mormon retreat.

Russophobia has been weaponized by both political parties who now compete to see which can throw the most dirt at Russia. It would be very difficult to justify American Intelligence and Pentagon budgets without a very scary menace. Russia is playing into that stereotype at the moment.

Don’t forget that national security “threats” are big business today. America leads the world in arms sales, one of the few consumer goods still produced in the US. Sometimes we are what we make.

Chekhov’s gun must go off.

Americans are hysterical today about hand gun control today at home, but seem oblivious about flooding a corrupt regime in Eastern Europe with unaccountable arms of every description.

Then again, the ghosts of Saigon and Kabul will never haunt the oblivious.

As for Mackinder, his [theories](#) are dated at best, and in my view irrelevant today, an academic artifact if you will. Pivot points of power move over time. Most of the former Soviet satellites, the Muslim border republics at least, have good relations with Moscow.

Mackinder considered Ukraine to be part of Russia, not a “pivot” point. Today, Ukraine is a hot mess, civil and surrogate war simultaneously, with more than a whiff of neo-Nazi corruption. [Stephan Bandera](#), Jew killer extraordinaire, is still celebrated as a patriot and a “nationalist” with statuary – and annual [parades](#) in Kiev.

Ukraine is a breadbasket maybe, but not anybody’s “heartland.” With enough meddling from Brussels, conflict today could be with any one of the Baltic states instead of Georgia or Ukraine. Great powers have always thought that they have spheres of influence.

American Monroe Doctrine confirms that precedent.

Due to proximity to Russia, ethnic affiliation, and considerable sentiment; Ukraine is naturally a strategic interest for the Kremlin. For cold warriors in the West, Ukraine is just another opportunity to bait the Bear. The real antagonists in Ukraine are the puppet masters in Washington, Brussels, and Moscow.

If there’s a theory playing out on the Russian frontier, it’s not “Heartland,” it’s a 21st Century edition of the [Great Game](#) where American empire (NATO) could be substituted for British Empire. Russians may have replaced “WOGs” or “Orientals” in the vernacular. Race now replaces ideology. The ugly Soviet is now the ugly Russian, a Slavic demon.

Race is the indispensable toxin in most political arguments today.

Recall that Afghanistan was also a proxy war circa 1979-89,

where American clandestine forces engaged the Red Army at Russia's back door. America tried to ally itself subsequently with the *mujhadeen* jihad and that strategic error became a 30 year case study of blowback, punctuated by 9/11, the rise of global Muslim terror, and America's ultimate 2020 humiliation in Kabul.

As for personalities, Zelensky is now a canonized pawn and a veritable foreign aid ATM, \$100 billion to date from the US alone. Still, he's both a tool and a fool, maybe even a "useful idiot." NATO and Washington are willing to fight Russia right down to the last Ukrainian. All wars are absurd, but Ukraine is unique for its [corruption](#) and mushroom cloud potential.

As for "world leadership," I would say that's a moot point, given the state of play in Europe at the moment.

RT: The United States is afraid of the unity of Russia and Europe. Now Moscow is reorienting itself towards its eastern partners, particularly in Beijing. Is China capable of replacing Europe in the logic of geopolitical confrontation?

Donovan: I think you are correct, but it's not fear, it's probably expedient political stupidity. And logic is not the word I would use to characterize today's standoff in Europe.

Yes, Moscow seems to be tilting towards the east, but Russia is at its core a European nation. The Kremlin knows that Lenin's, or Russian Marxism, is just history now. Moscow also knows that religious fascism and those *jihads* in the *Ummah* are not the future either. The Chinese political model today is *the* best cautionary, if not toxic, hybrid; a bizarre and untested strain of totalitarian Communist capitalism.

The state is the culture in China these days.

When we speak about hybrid war, consider China as first exemplar. Beijing's diplomatic, economic, Internet (see

TikTok), and imperial assaults are an excellent example of hybrid success, a war without guns. The CCP has a choke hold on the global supply chain too, without firing a shot. China may have already purchased a victory over the West.

Beijing also owns \$980.8 billion dollars of US debt. America is the world's [biggest](#) debtor nation. Russia doesn't even make the top 20 global debtors. Some argue also that China has already [purchased](#) the Biden family. As they used to say back in the Nixon era; if you want know who is screwing whom, "follow the money."

In contrast, consider Mister Putin; former *Chekist* and former Communist. He restored traditional religion, rehabilitated the Czars, and until recently was a pretty good business man, indeed a capitalist. If Putin were running for office in Davos tomorrow, he might run as a progressive.

Surely, Vladimir Putin is not the perfect autocrat, but compared to whom?

Speaking of Davos, that crowd is correct about a great "reset," but not the global corporatism that George Soros and Klaus [Schwab](#) talk about. The real reset in Europe was the fall of the Soviet bloc and the demise of Russian Communism. The entire left/right political paradigm in Europe and America was turned on its head at the turn of the 21st Century.

The global Left, especially the English speaking British Commonwealth and America, is more Marxist today than Moscow. Remember when, the American Democratic Party and British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Left used to be the anti-war, peace parties?

Former *refusenik* parties in the West are now underwriting another "forever war" in Ukraine.

"Democratic" socialism, a mutation of Marxism, is trending toxically in the Commonwealth and America. Indeed, the global

Left, taking some cues from China, is nostalgic for the Orwellian *internationale* a world led by a Davos /WEF (or better still WTF) elite, a kind of global oligarchic *nomenclatura*.

Ideological recidivism, nostalgia for the *Internationale* in the West is now trending, if not a done deal.

In the smaller universe of common sense, what used to be traditional conservative parties, some say nationalists, are now the champions of democracy, the working man, the *lumpenproletariat*, personal freedom, and free speech. [Pragmatic](#) utilitarian, nationalism might be trending again, according to Yoram Hazony—and Elon Musk.

And socialist corruption is as much of a problem in Brussels and Washington today as it is in any underdeveloped country. With enough money, as George Soros can tell you, political control in a “democracy” is just another commodity. With the legacy Left, over time, things don’t necessarily get better.

Progressive doesn’t mean progress any more.

When we think about Russia, Europe, and America, we need to assess history, culture and people; not just the politics of the day. For the moment, Europe and Russia are like feuding neighbors, agitated and hopeful, yet still wary of public commitments. Recall, if you will, that it was Britannia and Rodina who sacrificed the most to defeat Nazis and fascists. Yet as a part of a pragmatic *manage a trios* with Uncle Sam, the Big Three managed to prevail.

So there’s a history—and a hope.

In the long run, the logic of shared culture, tradition, and common sense will overcome the venality of expedient politics. Europe, writ large, without Great Britain and Russia as cultural and geopolitical bookends is a house of cards.

RT: Is there any “manual” of Hybrid Wars? Who is its author? Is there any center where they develop the breastfeeding strategy? Describe how hybrid warfare technologies have manifested themselves in other recent conflicts: Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Yugoslavia.

Donovan: Of course there’s a manual for “hybrid” wars. Albeit, we call them proxy, surrogate, regime change, or “insurgent” wars. The bible for such conflict is available on the [internet](#) and from Amazon.

US Army Field Manual, FM 3-24 is an open source. I’m pretty sure the Russian general staff already has a copy. Unfortunately, our small wars manual was written by a chap, General David Petraeus, who never won a war. But, to be fair, he did conquer a few fetching female subordinates in Afghanistan before crash landing at CIA.

I’m not sure about “breast feeding strategy,” but let’s assume you mean the creation of barnacles, dependencies, or parasites that rely on conflict (forever wars) to thrive. Pentagon sutlers, US Intelligence Community contractors, and the [thousands](#) of “think tanks,” like RAND Corp and Brookings, that milk the national security state with yarns about Russophobic peril, are excellent examples of such cash cows.

So many teats, so little time!

And all those small wars you mention are cases where US intervention made things worse, especially Yugoslavia. NATO’s dismantling of Yugoslavia, I believe, is the trigger that stimulated Vladimir Putin to draw a line in the sands of Ukraine. Indeed, those incursions into Georgia and Ukraine were Mister Putin’s way of saying “enough is enough.”

We are still feeling the blowback from Yugoslavia. Bosnia and Kosovo, the two new Muslim majority states carved out of Tito’s old coalition in Eastern Europe, now [provide](#) the majority of ISIS jihadists to the Levant.

Global *jihad* now has two recruiting depots in the heart of Europe.

Blowback is the failure to consider the consequences of political, if not arrogant imperial stupidity. When the Berlin Wall fell and the Warsaw Pact collapsed, neither Brussels nor Washington could take yes for an answer from the Kremlin. And consider Libya too, once the most prosperous nation in North Africa Now, another hot mess after the NATO blitz, just a departure pier for most of EU's illegals.

The Clinton legacy was not Monica Lewinsky.

So here we are.

RT: Are the Sanctions War Part of the Hybrid War? How do you evaluate its intermediate results?

Donovan: Sanctions usually don't work and they often backfire. Again, sanctions are another tactic fraught with blowback.

What's the point of sanctions that hurt innocent bystanders, in the Third World especially? I'm no economist, but even German left-wing economic seers like Sara [Wagenknecht](#) believe that sanctions are doing more damage to Europe and the US than Russia. Some analysts believe that the economic tit-for-tat could precipitate a global recession.

Who wins that war?

Today, economic sanctions could be a euphemism for inevitable blowback—or fiduciary masochism. When you boycott a creative, industrious, entrepreneurial state, Israel for example; the populace becomes tougher, more resilient, and ultimately, more successful.

National character is forged with fire.

No pain, no gain.

RT: Re the diplomatic war, almost a year after the start of the conflict in Ukraine, a vote in the UN General Assembly shows that the number of countries that support Ukraine has decreased by several dozen. Does this mean that in the international arena support for Russia's actions has increased? If yes, how do you explain it?

Donovan: Let's be realistic. The United Nations is a hot tub for political eunuchs, a retirement spa for failed domestic politicians. The UN doesn't negotiate, fight, or end conflicts. If you put the UN HQ in some Third World swamp or desert, instead of New York City, no one would show up for meetings.

There are no cozy limos, free parking, cold hookers, or fresh crudités in deserts or jungles.

Most international boy's clubs are failed Utopian experiments. If they worked, we wouldn't have shit shows like Afghanistan, Ukraine, or all those Sunni and Shia *jihads* and terrorists.

Votes at the UN don't matter much either, except possibly to lazy journalists. The majority of the world's population doesn't care about, or take sides, on the Ukraine cock fight. You could argue that China, India, the Muslim world, Africa, and "Latinex" America would like to see Ukraine become the graveyard for both American and Russian ambitions—and folly.

That's objective reality from a genuine global majority. And as the American left [likes to say](#); "it's only white people killing whites" in Ukraine. So what's the problem? America views itself, the world, and war today through skin colored glasses.

Unfortunately, war is bad for your children, your health, your farm, your business, the ice cap, polar bears, and Greta Thunberg too. The "world" doesn't support Brandon or Biden, Brussels or Putin in the ongoing Ukraine cluster fuck.

Western Europe is just playing 'follow the leader.'

RT: Do you agree that a Hybrid War is going on between Russia and Western countries now?

If so, what are the most striking examples in which it manifested itself, can you give?

Donovan: If you are asking about proxy or surrogate war, obviously Ukraine qualifies. If you mean a hybrid of mercenaries, disinformation, propaganda, economic sanctions, bullets, and bombs; the answer is yes also. The most striking example of this toxic stew for me is the Internet, especially social media, where platforms have become a toilet soup of warring invectives.

Virtual has little to do with truth anymore. We are now blinded globally by all the viral, virtual shit on the Internet and now in our eyes.

RT: Ukraine conducted many information campaigns to discredit Russia: a strike on the Mariupol maternity hospital, which, as it turned out did not exist; a massacre in the city of Bucha;

fake (news stories) that Russian soldiers were given Viagra to rape Ukrainian women. Do you believe these stories in the West? What effect do they have? What do you think of these stories?

Donovan: Look, I don't know what the "West" believes these days. I can only speak for myself. And we can only assess behavior, not intentions or motives.

I can't speak to Bucha or Mariupol either, or to the specifics of those battles. I'm too far removed to confirm or deny tactical ground truth. And surely only an idiot trusts the press on these matters.

I will say this about Mariupol and Donbas; Kiev made a strategic blunder to deploy the neo-Nazi Azov battalion to

Mariupol and send those [anarchist](#) “volunteer” units to Donbas near the Russian border. Sending anti-Russian nationalist zealots east just simplified the Russian Nazi targeting problem.

And now, you must know that nothing focuses the Russian General Staff or energizes a Russian soldier like the specter of German (nee Nazi) Leopards (nee Panzers) on the march again.

You could not sell this strategic shape shifter as a fictional Hollywood pot boiler. The plot doesn't make sense, the actors are grotesque, and the Ukraine story, unlike a massage parlor, does not have a have ending.

The Azov Battalion was crushed or captured as you may recall. And if you don't believe the Ukrainian establishment has legacy Nazi sentiments, recall that Zelensky's top [priority](#) in the post-Mariupol prisoner exchange was the return of the Azov commander and his deputy.

Zelensky is as Jewish as much as I am Gallic.

And on the Viagra question. What moron believes that any young man on either side needs a pill to abuse or find Ukrainian women attractive?

Even propaganda must contain at least a grain of truth.

Before I finish, let me make a few remarks that address the general thrust of the RT questions.

If we can ignore the Geneva Convention, as most armies do, and ignore the Swiss; whose idea of martial principle is neutrality, we might consider the real rules of engagement in war.

The first genuine rule of war is winning, because when you win, you get to make the rules. If you lose there will be a thousand rules. The second rule of war is to cover your ass.

Do that well enough and you will find there are really no rules in war, not for the winners anyway. The third rule of war is that truth is always the first casualty.

Accountability is not trending anywhere today.

So let's stop all the fondue pot moralizing and accept that international accounts today are settled by pissing contests, pique, or kinetic revenge. [General Curtis LeMay](#), US Air Corps, said after WWII: if America had lost the Pacific War, he would have been tried as a war criminal.

Indeed.

Heroes and heels often thrive under the silly same hats.



With a global Internet, every demagogue now has a tool to cook the data, the information, and the Intelligence books. And there are no virgins in the West either. Indeed the worst

purveyors of bull shit and fake news, besides social media and the Intelligence services, are the state controlled platforms like PBS, DW, and BBC. RT can probably take a bow here too. I actually had to go to RFE/RL, of all places, to get a report and photos on the Bandera demonstrations from last January.

State or official fake news vendors in the West are now infamous for what they will not cover. Woke in the West is no inside joke. Chinese state-controlled platforms like TikTok, for example, are playing adolescents, social division, and elections in Europe and America like banjos.

The Chinese are winning that war. Who cares? Not many. Not much.

And objectivity is not trending on the airways. Just the other day, American PBS released a video called "*Putin and the Presidents;*" a new [propaganda film](#) which claims to document Vladimir Putin's manipulation of four American presidents. This selective collage of facts, cherry-picked history, and Cold War rhetoric argues that Putin's objective in Ukraine is to "reestablish Russian (nee Soviet) empire." Guest commentators include an "A" list of far left Democrat Party pundits and Beltway Russophobes including Fiona Hill, notorious gal pal to Christopher Steele, unapologetic British SIS/MI-6 *desinformatsiya* and political sleaze specialist from the Trump era.

A candid enemy is less dangerous than a deceptive ally.

To this day, the American Democrat Party and American PBS still [argue](#) that Putin and Trump are in bed together. If this were spook fiction, such garbage would embarrass even Ian Fleming and John LeCarre. And now according to the global Left, we are supposed to worry about Elon Musk's antics at Twitter too?

As the *Washington Post* masthead puts it: "democracy thrives in darkness." There's little hope for daylight in

Russian/American relations, surely not for the next two – or maybe six years. The Ukraine war is not about freedom, democracy or even faux Zelensky's heroics. Ukraine is mostly about the next American presidential election. That's what matters.

Truth is painful.

Joseph Robinette Biden rode Russophobia, the Wuflu, and the Trump collusion hoax to victory in 2020. Every omen says team Biden will try to do the same in 2024 and beyond. Putin doesn't have to worry about his next election.

In short, it's official. Quaisi-democratic capitalist Russia is the enemy, totalitarian Communist China is just a "[competitor](#)."

As H. L. Mencken, America's last honest journalist put it: "Adultery is the application of democracy to love." Hard to know who to trust when confusion, deceit, and hidden agendas are virtues not vices.

My short term forecast is for more fear and loathing, maybe a mushroom cloud or two. Nations elect and reelect the leaders and politicians they deserve.

Thank you for your interest and concern about what one, slightly cynical, aging veteran thinks. I thought many of your questions were spot on. My best to Anna too, good luck with the chat show. Maybe we can do a beak-to-beak if and when the political ice thaws.

In the meantime, let's pray for better days in Moscow and Washington.

[Table of Contents](#)

G. Murphy Donovan is a former USAF Intelligence officer, Director of Research and Russian (nee Soviet) Studies under James Clapper at USAF Intelligence. He now writes about the politics of culture and national security.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)