

PUTIN AND THE PRESIDENTS

*We
develop a passion
for Teaching!*



INFINITY PODCASTS 1359

>> A stunning retreat
by Russia overnight... >>
Humiliating losses on the
battlefields of Kharkiv... >>
Frankly, it's a sign that
they are struggling badly
on the Russian side. >>

NARRATOR: At St. George
Hall in the Kremlin,
in the midst of a crisis... >>
Russian losses are beginning
to spark criticism of the
Russian leader. >>

NARRATOR: ...Russian
officials packed the room.
They knew the war in
Ukraine

was going badly. >> ...calling
his actions

"detrimental to Russia's and
its citizens' future."

>> NARRATOR: Their
leader

was at a critical juncture. >>

(speaking Russian)

(fanfare playing,

audience applauding) >>

NARRATOR: Vladimir Putin
would make it clear what his
intentions were

and who the enemy really
was. >> (speaking Russian):

>> Vladimir Putin needs to
somehow justify the horrific
sacrifices

that Russians are making on
his orders by broadening the
aperture,
making this about something
bigger, into some kind of
conflict with
the United States, with the
West, with NATO--
take your pick.

>> (speaking Russian): >> I
think it's a very dangerous
moment.

It's a dangerous moment
for Ukraine. I think it's a
dangerous moment for
Russia, because it's hard to
see
what the pathway forward is.

It's a dangerous time.

>> NARRATOR: It was a
dramatic
escalation, Putin leaving no
doubt
his war was against the
United
States and the West. >>
(chanting in Russian):
>> NARRATOR: It is a war
that he
has been waging for years,
confronting five American
presidents on a path that has
brought
Russia
and the United States to the
brink.

>> NARRATOR: It began
during the
height of the Cold War... >>
There is such change taking
place in the communist world.

>> We must take actions to
assist the campaign for
democracy. >> NARRATOR:

...during the
presidency of Ronald Reagan.

>> ...Mr. Ronald Reagan.
(crowd cheering) >> Mr.
Gorbachev, tear down this
wall.

(crowd cheering) >>
NARRATOR: At the time,
Vladimir Putin was a young

KGB
officer
stationed in Germany, trained
to fight the United States. >>

He wasn't a professional
politician.

He was in fact a
professional agent for the
KGB. So he would have
learned about
the West

in the frame of the
adversary. You know, the
enemy,
or at least, certainly, all of
the reasons in which there
would be to be
suspicious about the West.

>> From ABC... >>

NARRATOR: For Lieutenant
Colonel Putin, the collapse of
the Soviet

Union,

spurred on by an American
president, was a defining

moment. >> ...in the
thousands,

they are here in the tens of
thousands. >> Here the

feeling is the end of the Cold
War is at

hand. >> You can only
imagine

what it must have been like as
a

young KGB officer. Your

country disappears,
or is in the process of
disappearing. You're there on
the front lines.

The Communist Party,
obviously,
will, will lose its raison
d'être. And so it must have
been
devastating.

And I think that must have
been
a severe blow. >> As we
celebrate Christmas,
this day of peace and hope...

>> NARRATOR: The
humiliation at
the hands of the U.S.

continued,
as the next American
president,
George H.W. Bush, declared
the end of the
Soviet era a triumph.

>> Eastern Europe is free.
The Soviet Union itself is no
more.

This is a victory for
democracy and freedom. It's a
victory for the moral
force of our values.

>> Vladimir Putin sees
American talk of human
rights,
democracy, freedom as a
cynical fig leaf,

something that the
U.S. uses to cover itself as it
cynically pursues
its interests across the globe,
as it pushes its agenda across
the globe.

(fanfare playing) >> Vladimir
Vladimirovich Putin. >> In
Moscow today,
an unprecedented peaceful
passing of power... >>
(speaking Russian) >>
NARRATOR: As he
ascended
to the presidency,
Vladimir Putin was
determined to restore Russian

strength
and empire. >> Russians are
looking for a
strong hand
to lead their country.

Vladimir Putin, it appears,
is their man.

>> He came to see
himself as almost ordained to
lead Russia at this moment
and to lead Russia back to, to
greatness. >> (speaking
Russian) >> If that is your
ordained
mission,
then there aren't a lot of
limits on the means you can
use to achieve that

goal.

>> President Clinton arrived
in
Moscow carrying a message
of

cooperation. >>

NARRATOR: As president,
Putin carried
his simmering grievance with
the

United States into his first
meeting with

President Bill Clinton. >>

Arriving at the Kremlin
for their first presidential
encounter, both leaders
want... >> President Clinton
wanted to

get a little bit of a feel.
He wanted to meet him in the,
in the Kremlin as president.
>> Two presidents, one near
the
end of his term,
the other beginning a new
era... >> NARRATOR: Putin
was wary of
the American president, who
had championed
the spread of liberalization
and democracy in Russia. >>
Putin conveys a huge amount
through body language.
He tries to show you that he's
the alpha male in the room
through the way he spreads

his
legs,
through the way he
slouches a bit in his chair,
through the way that he will
look at people and kind of
give
them

a dismissive hand wave. >>

His first meeting with
Clinton, he was a cold fish.
He had no interest in dealing
with Clinton.

Clinton felt insulted and
rebuffed. Putin didn't want to
have

anything to do with Clinton.
>> If Mr. Clinton was hoping

for
a foreign policy triumph,
he won't get it here. >>
NARRATOR: Later that day,
Clinton received a warmer
reception from Putin's
mentor,
Boris Yeltsin. And he issued
a warning about
the new Russian president.
>> Bill Clinton looked hard
into
Yeltsin's eyes and said,
"I'm a little bit concerned
about this young man "that
you have turned over the
presidency to.
He doesn't have democracy in

his
heart." And he reached over
and poked him in his heart.
And I will never forget the,
the expression that came over
Yeltsin.

I think it really shook Yeltsin
a bit.

>> ...Vladimir Vladimirovich
Putin. >> NARRATOR: But
in front of the
cameras, Clinton walked a
careful line,
not revealing his concerns
about Putin.

>> If you want to know what
my
personal assessment is, I think

he is fully capable
of building a prosperous,
strong
Russia, while preserving
freedom and
pluralism and the rule of law.
It's a big challenge. I think
he's fully capable of
doing it. >> NARRATOR:
But from the start,
Clinton's private fears about
Putin were being realized. >>
(echoing): Ura!

(crowd applauding) ("State
Anthem of the Russian
Federation" begins) (singing
in Russian)

>> From the very beginning,
you saw in Putin somebody
who
didn't have
the values of the West. Piece
by piece,
he is dismantling the
structures
of democracy, fragile though
they were, that had been put
in place, and reconsolidating
control in
the Kremlin.

That's not a Westernizer.
That's not a democrat, small
D.

That's an old-fashioned
Russian

autocrat that we saw, and
should have seen from the
very beginning.

>> Literally, one of the
closest
elections in American history.

>> NARRATOR: It was the
start of
a new presidency in the U.S.

>> ...electoral votes will
go to George W. Bush, the
governor of Texas. >>

NARRATOR: And the
winner had
expressed optimism about
being able

to get along with Putin.

>> ...big Texas howdy to the

new
president of the United States.
>> I look forward to working
with, you know, Mr. Putin,
and explaining my point of
view, and my attitude about
the post-Cold War era.
I'm going to look him right in
the eye and say, "You're no
longer the enemy. "And we're
not your enemy--
surely we can work together.
"We're a peaceful nation, and
that we look forward
to working together..." >>
Putin saw in President Bush
someone that he could do
business with. He was

seeking
a new great power
relationship,
that President Bush could be a
leader who he could work
with to redefine the
international
system.

>> NARRATOR: Putin's
early moves
consolidating power and his
past as a KGB agent
didn't deter the Bush team.

>> Didn't bother me that
Putin
was KGB. In the KGB, you
were taught
to think for yourself.

So actually, that struck us as
an opportunity. I, I don't think
anybody was
looking at this
through rose-colored glasses,
but we thought,
at the strategic level, there
were real opportunities
to work together.

>> President George Bush
has

called for a new approach...

>> NARRATOR: The two
presidents

would size each other up... >>

A meeting with Russian
President Vladimir Putin...

>> NARRATOR: ...at a

summit in the former
communist state of
Slovenia. >> This is more
about the
president and Putin
developing
a personal relationship... >>
Vladimir Putin, as someone
who had,
I'm sure, a very thick dossier
on President Bush, was trying
to find his weaknesses,
appeal to his personality
traits. >> NARRATOR: Putin
went for
Bush's strong Christian faith.
>> President Putin told
President Bush about the time

his dacha
burned down,
and a religious medallion,
which
had belonged to his mother
which had gotten lost,
and he thought this was
irretrievably gone, and then a
fireman brought him
this

kind of almost like a holy
relic. It was a very affecting,
emotional story and had some
effect on President Bush.

>> Question to President
Bush. Is this a man that
Americans can
trust? >> I'll answer the

question:

I looked the man in the eye.

I found him to be very
straightforward. I was able to,
uh,

get a sense of his soul.

He's a man deeply committed
to

his country and the best
interests of his country.

>> And Bush gives that
line, right? That "I looked
into his eyes

and got a sense of his soul."

And we go, "Uh-oh." And
Condi does her version of
not comfortable.

She just reacts,

just for a second. >>

NARRATOR: For the
moment, Putin had won over
the American president.

>> He was trained not to
reveal his, so to say, soul,
if he has any.

His life experience didn't
allow
him to reveal any inner him,
any true him,
to any
representative of the West.
West, for him, remains to be
the
enemy.

And United States, as the
leader of the West,

is the enemy number one.

>> The countdown to war,
it appears, is now underway.

>> NARRATOR: And soon,
more fuel for
Putin's grievance with the
U.S.

>> ...U.S.-led attack on Iraq...

>> NARRATOR: The Iraq
War. >> America at war--
tonight, shock and awe.

>> NARRATOR: Regime
change at
the hands of the Bush
administration. >> The Stars
and Stripes have
come to town. Saddam

Hussein's reign
of terror is over.

>> The Iraq War was
absolutely a
turning point and a very
significant moment of
rupture
in the relationship between
Putin and President Bush. >>

NARRATOR: For Putin,
echoes
of the final days
of the Soviet Union. >> The
tyrant has fallen
and Iraq is free.
And everywhere that freedom
stirs, let tyrants fear.
>> An adventure like the Iraq

War shows him that, "Look,
they'll, they'll
just come in,
"and they'll just take out a
government, and think
nothing of it." And that's not
the way he wanted
the world to work.

>> And it is both our
responsibility and our
privilege to fight freedom's
fight.

(audience applauding) >>
NARRATOR: Bush called it
the Freedom Agenda, a plan
to export American
democracy around the world.
Putin saw it as a direct threat

to his own plan to restore
Russian greatness.

>> Vladimir Putin concluded
that
the United States, when
possible, would use its
power and leverage to depose
leaders that it did
not agree with.

And from Vladimir Putin's
perspective, that was an
existential threat.

>> The Bush Doctrine is
spreading freedom around the
world... >> NARRATOR:

Under Bush,
that threat was extending
to Putin's own backyard. >>

...possibility around the world to extend freedom... >>

NARRATOR: Popular uprisings in former Soviet republics. >> Bush really believes that democracy can be planted almost anywhere. >> Americans respect your courageous choice for liberty. The American people will stand with you. >> Putin concluded that these were efforts by the United States and our intelligence services to in fact install in

these
neighboring countries
regimes that would be
anti-Russian. >>

NARRATOR: Putin had seen
enough.

He would fight back. >>
Russian President Vladimir
Putin

is speaking at an international
conference in Germany... >>

NARRATOR: He'd do it in
Munich, Germany,
issuing a warning to America
and the world. >> (speaking
German) >> And so he comes
to the
security conference in

Munich
and says, basically, "I don't
have to
mince words, do I? I can say
what's on my mind."

And then he, he just lashes
out, and he lists all these
resentments. >> (speaking
Russian):

>> My head snapped. It was
so searing and blunt, and I, I
felt...

This was the real guy. >>
(speaking Russian):

>> Putin echoed Cold War
rhetoric by accusing the U.S.
of making
the world unsafe. >> Premier

Vladimir Putin left
no doubt
who he sees as responsible for
the current global crisis... >>

Putin clearly in this speech
was drawing a line and
saying, "We're not going to
try anymore.

"We're just giving up on you.

"And we're going to make our
own

world in which we are the
master."

>> It's one of Putin's harshest
attacks on America in his
seven-year term. >> After that
speech,
we saw the first long-range

nuclear bombers by Russia.
We saw the devastating cyber
attack in Estonia in 2007.
We were starting to see steps
taken that represented a
Russian
assertiveness
that we had not seen. We did
not necessarily
understand that 2007 is the
date
where he wanted to stop that
democratic encroachment.
>> The leaders of NATO
begin a
two-day summit today... >>
It's been six
years since the establishment

of the NATO-Russia
Council...

>> NARRATOR: But Bush
ignored

Putin's warning. >> The
decisions taken by this
summit will affect the future
of the alliance.

>> NARRATOR: Ratcheting
up the
conflict-- encouraging
Georgia and
Ukraine, two former Soviet
republics,
to join NATO.

>> I must make clear that
NATO

welcomes the aspirations of
Georgia and Ukraine for their
membership in NATO.

(people calling out) >> The
Russians were obviously
very, very concerned that the
Bush administration
was moving towards allowing
both Georgia and Ukraine to
get
into NATO.

Which was, for them,
a huge red line. >>

NARRATOR: Putin rushed
to Bucharest to confront
Bush.

>> There's this amazing
moment. Putin shows up early

and crashes the dinner
with the NATO members. He
has basically shown up as the
skunk in the garden and
challenging them for, for
what they've done.

>> NARRATOR: In a
meeting later,
Putin was adamant to Bush.
Georgia and especially
Ukraine
were in his sphere of
influence. >> He leaned over
and said,
"Ukraine is not a real
country."

He had no respect for the
sovereignty of the Ukrainian

people. We should have seen
it earlier.

Maybe we didn't want to see
it,

but if we... It was clear, if we
wanted to see it,
the direction

that President Putin was
going. >> NARRATOR:

Putin made it clear
he wouldn't accept Bush's
plan

for Georgia and Ukraine. >>

It basically waved the red
flag in front of the bull.

It was extremely provocative
for

Russia. It provoked Russia

and made
Russia angry.

>> NARRATOR: Just four
months

later, Putin attacked Georgia.

>> Russian troops backed
by tanks and armored
vehicles...

>> The Russians were
prepared, and perhaps even
eager,

for a conflict with Georgia.

>> There appears to be little
to stop the troops... >> And

part of that was
motivated by, "We're going to
show the

Georgians that getting too

close to NATO has a price."

>> Russian planes again
bombing... >> NARRATOR:

Putin seized and
held nearly 5,000 square
miles

of Georgian territory. >> And
another town is burning,
more civilians have been
killed... >> From Putin's point
of view,

this wasn't just about Georgia.

>> A fierce battle broke
out today on the fringe... >>

This was about Ukraine,
this was about
what he saw to be the West's
interest in, you know,

eventual expansion of NATO,
potentially, to include
Ukraine and Georgia. >>

Some of those Georgian
soldiers were saying, "Where
is the United States?"

>> NARRATOR: As the war
broke

out, Vladimir Putin and
George W.

Bush happened to be at the
Olympics in Beijing.

>> Bush finds himself at the
Olympics sitting in the same
row as Putin.

He has his wife, Laura, and
the

king of Cambodia move aside

so he can sit next to Putin and
talk about it.

But he knows the
cameras are on him. So he's
trying not to make it a
big visible confrontation.

But he's telling Putin,
"What are you doing here?
This is not right--
you can't be doing this."

And Putin is basically telling
him to butt out.

>> NARRATOR: The
president who
had looked into Putin's soul
had now reached a different
conclusion about just who
Vladimir Putin

was.

>> I remember the president saying, you know, "I don't know how, but we've lost him." Putin was going in a different direction.

And there was little that the administration, in President Bush's mind, could do to put Putin back on that course.

>> NARRATOR: Nearing the end of his presidency, Bush would leave the increasing conflict with Putin to his successor. >> They let

Vladimir Putin,
arguably, get away with it
in Georgia. One message that
Putin clearly takes from that
in hindsight is that he is able
to use the military
as a tool of achieving his
political ends outside the
borders of Russia,
and that the West will
complain
and lecture, but basically will
let him get away with it.
That's a terrible message, and
I think it is the prologue
for the Ukraine disaster.

>> All Americans can

celebrate,
red or blue, Black or White...
>> ...first African American
president of the United
States...

>> President Obama is
set to land in Russia... >>
NARRATOR: Less than a
year
later, Vladimir Putin would
meet
newly elected
Barack Obama face to face.
>> President Obama has a
big meeting ahead... >>
NARRATOR: Sizing up his
third
American president.

>> Shadows of the Cold War
will
loom over his summit... >> I
remember their first
meeting in July of 2009
at Putin's dacha, you know,
just
outside Moscow. They're
much
different personalities.
President Obama's initial
question, about ten seconds,
led to a
45-minute, you know,
monologue
by Putin. >> Putin is
extraordinarily
calm, matter-of-fact.

He doesn't get ruffled. He may say hard things, but he says them in a very calm, almost matter-of-fact way. Unfortunately, President Putin simply speaks mistruth after mistruth and tries to misinform. But he does it as easily as he breathes. >> Putin obviously did not respect him. Putin looked at the United States, and I think it surprised him that a Black man would be elected president of

the United States.
I think that was a, that was a
surprise to him. And, who
knows,
I think there well could be
just
an element of flat-out racism.
That he somehow thought
Obama
was not his equal.
That Obama did not deserve
to be
treated as his equal.
>> Clearly the relationship
is not quite as warm as maybe
he has with other... >>
NARRATOR: Leaving
Russia,

the new president had another
way to deal with the problem
of Vladimir

Putin. >> Putin gave him an
hurlong
lecture,
and I don't think Obama likes
to

be lectured. That was a real
clash of the egos there. >>
President Obama has gotten
to

Moscow,

and Putin is not buying it,
and Putin is still in charge. >>

NARRATOR: He gave the
Putin

file to his vice president, Joe Biden.

>> Biden sometimes joked that his job as vice president was to do the things that Obama didn't want to do, and that does include the subject of Russia. And here's Joe Biden, who's been talking about Russian issues since 1973, and they said, "All right, Joe Biden, this is your issue." >>
NARRATOR: A senator over four decades and chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, Biden,

like Putin, had been
shaped by the Cold War.
>> Speaking for myself, I
don't
trust the Soviets. I don't trust
them to do
anything short of what they
can get away
with.

>> The paradigm through
which he
saw Putin was similar to the
paradigm
through which he viewed
the other authoritarian
leaders. He saw them as
thugs. >> I caution against
being

excessively optimistic
about Mr. Putin and his
intentions.

>> NARRATOR: Now as
vice
president, Biden traveled to
Moscow
to meet with Putin.

The two men smiled for the
cameras, but later, things
were
different.

Putin argumentative. Biden
wary.

>> It's a seminal meeting in
part because of the mythology
that is created out of it. It's
kind of like a marker

being put down, I think,
between two men who
ultimately
would find themselves in this
great clash that we're
in today.

>> NARRATOR: Biden
would write
about the moment in his
autobiography. >> It was long
and contentious.

Putin was ice-cold calm
throughout, but argumentative
from the start to finish.

>> Well, I was there with,
with
then-Vice President Biden.
The message that, that he's

sending is, um...

"Let's not, um, we're not here to kid each other. We need to speak clearly, we need to speak directly."

>> "I'm looking into your eyes,"

I told him, smiling. "I don't think you have a soul."

He looked at me for a second and smiled back. "We understand each other," he said.

And we did. >> When Biden said that to me, I hadn't heard it before, and my immediate reaction was,

"This sounds like a movie
line.

Is that what really happened?"

And he said,

"Absolutely, positively. That's
who this guy is."

>> NARRATOR: And Biden
wasn't

done. In front of students, he
urged the Russian people
to stand up to Putin's regime.

So, I urge all you students
here, don't compromise on the
basic elements of democracy.

You need not make that
Faustian
bargain. >> For Putin to see
an

American vice president
go talk to students
and encourage democracy, he
sees it as a threat. "Who are
you to come here and
foment trouble in my
backyard?"

It's aggravating
and offensive to Putin to see
that kind of action.

>> NARRATOR:

And later that year, protesters
right outside
the Kremlin. It looked like
what Biden
had been calling for.

>> Tens of thousands
came out on the streets to tell

Vladimir Putin
they've had enough. >> Those
hundreds of thousands
of people who were marching
in the streets of Moscow
shouting, "Down with
Putin"... >> (shouting in
Russian) >> For him, it was
like,
it could, it couldn't be so.
It couldn't happen. >>
(shouting in Russian)
>> He was thrown by
the protests. He was taken
aback by
the passion of the opposition,
and had to look for a place
to point the finger.

He pointed it at us. >>
NARRATOR: Putin cracked
down.

>> The Russian police
have arrested about 200... >>
The arrests appear to be part
of a broad and deliberate
crackdown.

>> ...questions about justice
in Vladimir Putin's Russia...

>> (speaking Russian)

>> The most repressive
Russian regime to... >>

NARRATOR: Many of
Putin's
opponents inside Russia fled
the country.

>> ...forced into exile

into England after... >>
...opponent saying, "I'm
scared that Putin will kill
me..."

>> NARRATOR:
Others died mysterious
deaths. >> ...Putin aide
discovered dead
in a D.C. hotel room... >>
NARRATOR: One who
nearly died
twice from poisoning
was Vladimir Kara-Murza.
>> Bad things often happen
to... >> There's been a very
high
mortality rate
in the last several years

among the people who have
crossed the path of
Vladimir Putin's Kremlin--
independent journalists,
anti-corruption campaigners,
opposition activists,
opposition leaders. Many
people have died, some in
strange and unexplained
deaths,
others in just straight-out
assassinations.

>> NARRATOR: Putin
extended
his offensive beyond Russia.
>> Ukraine is stuck very
much

in the middle. >>

NARRATOR: In the
Ukrainian
territory of Crimea.

>> ...armed Russian troops
arrived in the Crimea region.

>> NARRATOR: His
campaign began
with the arrival of unmarked
Russian soldiers.

>> They moved in with what
the Ukrainians called
little green men. And they
were clearly,
by the way they handled
themselves and their
weapons, professional
military. Wearing Russian-

style combat
uniforms, but no insignia.
>> Russian forces in the
thousands seizing territory...
>> That invasion, sending
these
little green men...
>> More Russian soldiers
have
reportedly arrived in Crimea.
>> ...sending these Russian
soldiers without insignia
into a neighboring country,
into Crimea, was such a
shock.
This hadn't happened since
World War II. >>
...occupying sovereign

territory that belongs to
Ukraine. >> NARRATOR:

He seized Crimea
and said it was now
part of Russia. And he didn't
stop there.

He opened another front
in Ukraine's East. >> He used
another form
of deception,
which was to send in
irregular forces, mercenaries
who had been
recruited. Putin claimed,
"There are
no Russian forces in this
war."

But, in fact, he was

organizing
the whole thing behind the
scenes. >> Ukraine crisis
looks pretty
similar to World War II...

>> We are seeing
a very gross violation of
international law... >>

NARRATOR: It was just the
start of what would become
an unrelenting focus
on finally taking Ukraine. >>

The humanitarian crisis
in Ukraine

is getting worse and worse.
>> Frightened residents have
been warned to stay indoors.
>> He felt emboldened,

and felt he had been able to
make his move in Georgia,
and nobody tried to do
anything
about it. >> An average of 36
people a day
were killed in the conflict...
>> And in Ukraine, he
gambles that the West isn't
really
going to do anything about it.
>> ...chaos and carnage to
mourning, with questions of
what's next
for the country. >> The West
is going to
complain about it,
but they're not really going to

do anything to stop it. >> ...40
children perished
as the result...

>> ...and rekindled fears
about Russia's intentions in
regard to its neighbors. >> A
sovereign nation is invaded
by another country.

That kind of aggression is not
something we should tolerate
anywhere in the world. >>

NARRATOR: At the White
House,
President Obama

was struggling to respond. >>
How do you deter behavior
when the other side is

basically denying
that it's even taking place?
When the other side is saying,
"I don't even know what
you're talking about,
we're not involved"?

>> President Obama says he's
deeply concerned about that...

>> NARRATOR: On the
phone, Obama confronted
Putin

about his forces in Ukraine.

Tony Blinken was in the
Oval Office for those calls.

>> Putin denied their
presence.

And it was striking
and flat-out lying about

Russia's presence
in Ukraine.

And Obama would say to
him,

"Vladimir, we're not blind.
We have eyes, we can see."
And Putin would just move

on,
as if nothing had happened.

>> NARRATOR:

Inside the administration,
Vice President Biden
urged a tough response. >>

Joe Biden knew that
in this case,
Vladimir Putin was acting
like
a playground bully and would

continue to act
like a bully. >> NARRATOR:
C.I.A. director John Brennan
also wanted to get tough. >>
Bullies try to intimidate,
and they keep moving
forward
unless they get their, their
nose bloodied a little bit. Mr.
Putin really needed to get
his nose bloodied.
>> NARRATOR: Officials at
the
Pentagon and State
Department joined with
Biden.
They advocated arming
Ukraine

with Javelin anti-tank
missiles. >> They're all
saying,
"You should give
"military assistance to
Ukraine. "You need to step up
what
you're doing "against Russia.
Putin is getting the wrong
message from us." And
Obama wouldn't do it. >>
NARRATOR: Biden lost.
Instead of weapons,
Obama went with sanctions.
>> From Obama's
perspective,
nobody had elected him
to the White House to be

focused on Russia and
Ukraine. And now you have
your
vice president bending your
ear

about the need to draw
a bright line and say that
Russian aggression
cannot stand.

I think there was a piece of
Obama that looked at this and
said,

"Sorry, this is... This is just
not a top priority for us."

♪ ♪ >> Putin takes a lesson
from Ukraine when he's able
to invade

a country
and our reaction is minimal,
right? And so of course
he takes a lesson from that.

The lesson that he takes
from that is this kind of thing
can work if we gin it up
properly.

And that's not the message
that we really wanted to be
sending at the time.

>> The 2016 presidential race
is underway. >>

NARRATOR: Having tested
the United States' resolve,
Putin would go even further.

>> ...candidates are once
again... >> NARRATOR:

Striking at the
heart of American
democracy.

>> ...candidates
make a final push to shore
up... >> NARRATOR:

Interfering in the
2016 presidential election.

>> There's two goals there--
discredit our election and also
to discredit

the presidency,
to neutralize the United
States,

an adversary, to really tarnish
U.S. leadership as, you know,
the leader of
the democratic world, the free

world, the West. >>

NARRATOR: Putin's attack
was aimed at Washington,
D.C.--

Russian hackers breaching
Democratic Party computer
servers, email leaks designed
to undermine

Hillary Clinton's
presidential campaign. >>

This was the most aggressive
and most direct
and most assertive campaign
that the Russians ever
mounted in the history of our
elections. And what
characterized this
were the variety and intensity

of the techniques that they employed.

>> NARRATOR:

Misinformation, fake users designed to look like Americans, trolls supporting the Kremlin, an army of automated bots on Twitter, and targeted advertisements on Facebook and Google, calculated to hurt Clinton and help her rival, Donald Trump.

>> President Putin's view of Trump was a penchant for authoritarianism, a backing off of human rights,

and talking about wanting to
have a more positive
relationship with Russia.
What's not to like if you're
Vladimir Putin? It sort of
sounds like
he's one of us.

(chuckles) >> Well, Donald
Trump pulled off one of the
biggest political
upsets in American... >>

NARRATOR: On Election
Night,

a victory for Trump
and for Putin. >> In a
stunning upset,
Donald Trump is elected the
45th president...

>> Donald Trump shocking
the nation and the world. >>
President Putin called me up
very nicely to congratulate
me
on the win of the election. >>
From Putin's point of view,
he won. Not only did the
candidate
he favored come out on top,
he has disrupted Americans'
faith in their own democracy.
So that we're all turning
on each other and we're busy
fighting
with each other, and in his
mind, hopefully
too distracted to pose a threat

to him on the world stage. >>

President Trump's Helsinki summit

with President Vladimir
Putin... >> NARRATOR:

For the fourth time, Vladimir

Putin would confront
a new American president.

>> ...urging the president
to confront Putin about
Russia's interference
in the 2016 election.

>> Vladimir Putin is as
clear-eyed and cold-blooded
as any foreign leader
I have ever seen.

He knows exactly what he

thinks
Russia's national interest is
and he pursues it
unrelentingly.
>> We get the first images
of President Trump
and Vladimir Putin sitting
down
next to each other. And
President Trump is
sitting up in his chair,
looking as though he
really, really wants to get
something out of this
meeting. >> Well, first of all,
Mr. President,
I'd like to congratulate you on
a really great World Cup.

>> And Vladimir Putin is
kind of slumped in his chair,
not smiling, doesn't look like
he's having
a good time.

>> Getting along with Russia
is
a good thing, not a bad thing.

>> NARRATOR:

It was clear that in Trump,
Putin had a very different
American president. >>

Confronted with Donald
Trump,

this is like an open field
in front of a football player
carrying the football. Trump
never understood that,

never understood what the
nature
of Putin's game was. I think
Putin thought Trump
was a fool and easily
manipulable.

>> NARRATOR:

The cameras were sent away.
For two hours, they met
privately without any aides.

>> Putin didn't need the
KGB psychological profilers
to hand him a dossier on how
to

play Donald Trump. He was
able to read Trump. He had a
very good understanding
of how to flatter him.

He knew how to play Trump
like a violin. >>

NARRATOR: Afterwards,
when they faced the press,
a shocking statement. >>

President Putin denied
having anything to do with
the election interference
in 2016.

Every U.S. intelligence
agency
has concluded that Russia did.
My first question for you, sir,
is: Who do you believe?
>> "Who do you believe?"
That's the starkest possible
way
to put that question,

question to the president. >>

My people came to me. Dan

Coats came to me

and some others.

They said they think

it's Russia. I have President

Putin. He just said it's not

Russia.

I will say this: I don't see
any reason why it would be.

>> I felt frozen to my chair.

Like everybody else in the

room,

we couldn't believe it. >> I

will tell you that

President Putin

was extremely strong and
powerful in his denial today,

and what he did...

>> Everybody who was in the
room

with them just saw how
masterfully

Putin manipulated Trump.

He saw him as gullible,
and stupid, and easily
manipulatable.

And that he was just, you
know,

the Russian expression, that
he was just making
ropes out of him,
just braiding him like a braid.

>> Extraordinary moment
in American history,
something I thought I would

never see... >> ...a disgraceful
play by the
president of the United States

as he stood by Vladimir
Putin. >> NARRATOR:
Back in Washington... >>
Concern continues to grow
about what they said to each
other behind
closed doors.

>> NARRATOR: ...they were
calling it a bromance. >>
There's been some sort of
bromance. >> A Putin-Trump
bromance.

>> Trump acted, in some
ways, as an arm of Putin's

foreign policy in this period
of time.

>> President Trump on the
attack, asking, "What good is
NATO?" >> Once again
questioning
the entire point
to one of
America's oldest alliances. >>

NARRATOR: And Trump
was
echoing Putin's talking points
on the key battleground
of Ukraine. >> The president
told leaders
that "Ukraine is one of
the most corrupt countries
in the world." >> He would

say, "Ukraine is a
really corrupt country." >>
The president is saying that
Crimea probably should
belong
to Russia, because everyone
there speaks Russian. >>
"Crimea is Russian,
everybody there speaks
Russian,
and wants to be part of
Russia." >> Donald Trump
parroting
Vladimir Putin, saying that
Ukraine is not even
a real country.
>> Where did he hear these
things? He heard them from

Putin. You know?
And he would just echo them.
>> Trump is actually helping
Putin reconstitute
the Soviet Union. >> It, it was
just too easy. >> Trump
suggested
it's pointless to continue
punishing Russia. >> He's
getting pretty much
everything he needs from
President Trump.
He's getting a smackdown
of NATO. (chuckling): The
humiliation of
our best allies. I mean, the list
goes on
and on and on.

And so, Putin was probably
betting on a second term of
President Trump
and hoping that he could
get his way on many things,
whether it's NATO, whether
it's Ukraine, without
using the instrument of war.

>> NARRATOR: But Trump
did not
get a second term. >> The
Fox News Decision Desk
can now project that former
Vice President
Joe Biden...

>> NARRATOR:
And with a new president...

>> ...President-elect

Joseph Robinette Biden... >>

Frankly,

we did win this election.

We did win this election.

(crowd cheers and applauds)

>> NARRATOR: ...an

escalation

of the chaos in America that

Putin helped foment.

>> The president showing no

signs that he's prepared to

concede this election... >>

NARRATOR: Division.

>> This is a contested

election.

Many people are nervous. >>

NARRATOR: Violence. >>

(shouting)

>> NARRATOR:

Insurrection. >> (chanting)

>> Nobody loved January 6
more than the Russians did.
Trump gave them four years,
which was one big gift, but
January 6 was like
the wrapping,
the beautiful wrapping,
you know, the package.

January 6,
apart from anything else,
leads directly to the war
in Ukraine. Because it looks
like America
is not just
morally discredited,
it looks like America is weak.

>> Historic meeting with
Russian
President Vladimir Putin... >>
NARRATOR: Soon, in
Geneva, Vladimir Putin faced
his old nemesis...

>> President Biden and
Vladimir Putin are facing...
>> NARRATOR: ...now the
president of the United States.
>> For neither of them is this
their first rodeo.
>> Tensions seem to be
a bit high. >> Putin is looking
at Biden
and saying, "This is a weak
American

president.

"He doesn't have the
overwhelming support "of his
public. "His people are so
divided,

just months earlier, they'd had
an attack on the Capitol." And
all he needs to do is hold
Biden off long enough
so that he can continue
to assemble the plan that he's
been putting together. >>

They're children of
the Cold War
and they see each other and
their, their countries
through the Cold War. Biden
saw Putin for what he is,

a KGB revanchist who wants
to,
to remake the Russian empire.

>> I just remember the body
language and them sitting
in that room together,
and it's, it's icy. I mean, these
are two people
who do not like each other.

>> NARRATOR: Antony
Blinken,
now secretary of State, was
once again in the room.

>> The tone of the
conversation
was professional. It was
direct. But it was very clear
where we had our differences.

President Biden made very
clear

where we saw things
differently. And so did,
so did President Putin.

>> ...try to determine where
we have mutual interests. >>

NARRATOR:

A top priority for Biden:
deterring Putin in Ukraine.

>> President Biden made
clear in
the meeting to President Putin
our commitment to Ukraine,
our
commitment to its
sovereignty,
to its independence,

to its territorial integrity.
(camera shutters clicking)
>> They wanted to park
Putin,
but he didn't want to be
parked. He wanted to be
the number-one problem
of everybody in the whole
world, but especially
the number-one priority,
the number-one threat, the
number-one problem that the
White House was dealing
with.

>> (speaking Russian) >>
NARRATOR: Putin began
laying
the groundwork

for the invasion of Ukraine.

>> And 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine's border are

fueling fears of a Russian...

>> Russia's forces start moving back toward Ukraine's borders. >> ...heavy military equipment, clearly taking an aggressive posture. >> Not just the eastern border, but no, the... All three borders.

>> Russian troops have been surrounding Ukraine for days now. >> The Ukraine border

with Belarus,
Ukraine border with Russia,
Ukraine border with
occupied Crimea.

>> Satellite images show
an increase in Russian forces
on the Ukraine border... >>

NARRATOR:

At the White House... >>

Tensions nearing a
tipping point...

>> NARRATOR: ...an
emergency
presidential briefing-- secret
information about
Putin's plans.

>> And it was in that moment
when the combination of

seeing
the forces deployed and then
having, from
the information we'd gotten,
real visibility on what Russia
was actually thinking and
what they were planning,
that's when we really saw
the storm rising and heading
in Ukraine's direction. >>

NARRATOR: Once again,
an American president was
facing
a critical decision about
how to deal with Putin. >> If
Russia is allowed
to get away with this,
if Russia stomps all over

Ukraine and takes it over, it affects the entire international order that we've been living under since World War II. The stakes were pretty high and they continue to be very high.

>> NARRATOR: In a video conference with Putin, Biden warned him to pull back from the brink.

>> He's saying, "First of all, we see what you're doing, "what you're planning, what you're plotting. "And if you go ahead with what we're seeing,

"you need to understand
the costs and consequences
"to Russia will be severe,
and you need to know
that I mean what I say." ♪ ♪

>> NARRATOR: Putin's
response
was familiar: denial. >>
They're denying.
They're denying any
imminent
aggression against Ukraine.
They're saying that "That's
not
what we're doing."
But because we had
such extraordinary visibility

and extraordinary
information,
we knew in real time when
Putin
was saying something that
was in contradiction with
what was actually happening.

>> NARRATOR: Putin
ignored Biden and pushed
forward with
the invasion.

>> Vladimir Putin
understands the Western
ability to make
decisive steps pretty well.
He knew that when
President Biden said, "Don't
do this, or, you know,

there will be consequences,"
he knew that there were not
going to be any
consequences. >>

NARRATOR: For two
decades,
Vladimir Putin
had defied American
presidents. Invading
Georgia...

Seizing Crimea... Interfering
in a
presidential election...

And he wasn't stopping now.

>> He made a calculation that
Biden would not be able to
lead
an international group of

countries to support Ukraine.

And that there wouldn't be
the will to support Ukraine.

And even if it was there
in the beginning, it would not
continue. >> NARRATOR:

30 years after
the fall of the Soviet Union,
Vladimir Putin was now
pursuing
an all-out war to rebuild the
Russian empire.

(air raid siren blaring)

>> (speaking Russian):

(explosions pounding
in distance)

>> ...apocalyptic scenes
on the outskirts of the capital

city... >> A nonstop onslaught
over
the last 24 hours,

with massive casualties... >>
Tens of thousands of
civilians trapped in cities
under near-constant
Russian shellfire.

>> Putin wants Ukraine. He
wants this
pan-Slavic superstate
with Moscow as the capital.
He wants Ukraine. He doesn't
think it's
a real country.
I don't know how you
compromise

with somebody who just
wants Ukraine.

That's not something
you could build a bridge
across. >> Ukraine is calling
this

a full-scale invasion...

>> The biggest war in Europe
since World War II. >> The

world is waiting
to see just how far
Putin's 190,000 troops will
go into the country of
Ukraine. Will he stop?

>> NARRATOR: With the
battle

for Ukraine underway, Biden
went further than

any president before,
delivering weapons and
intelligence to the front lines
to help fight Putin.

>> The United States has
opted in to the fight. The
amount and scale of
the military support
for Ukraine's defense of itself
against Russian aggression is
enormous, it's staggering.

Clearly something that
Vladimir Putin did not expect.

>> The U.S. and NATO allies
are working quickly
to arm Ukraine.

>> Russian forces caught
off guard, apparently in

disarray. >> Russia thought
the invasion
would be over swiftly.
That was before their jets
were plummeting from
Ukrainian skies. >> He
clearly miscalculated
the capabilities
of the Russian military, the
capabilities of
the Ukrainian military, the
willingness of
the Ukrainian people
to fight for their
independence. This was a
miscalculation of
Napoleonic magnitude.
>> Ukraine's president

remains defiant. >> Ukraine's
resolve

has shocked the world and
frustrated the Russians.

>> Putin is facing the
embarrassment of this
offensive not necessarily
being pulled off
as smoothly...

>> NARRATOR: But even as
his army was pushed back,
Putin was doubling down.

>> Coming out of Russia,
where Vladimir Putin is
preparing for a longer and
more intense war
on Ukraine.

>> NARRATOR:

Mobilizing more troops. >>
President Putin suddenly
announcing he would call up
300,000 men
for military service.

>> NARRATOR:
Waging economic warfare.

>> No gas, no oil--
nothing, he said,
over a long winter. >>
NARRATOR: Raising the
specter of nuclear
annihilation.

>> Now threatening to use
nuclear weapons and Putin
says, "I'm not
bluffing."

>> It's all very concerning,

because what we saw was
Vladimir Putin
doubling and tripling down
on the aggression with the
mobilization, with the
purported annexation
of Ukrainian territory,
with the loose talk about
nuclear weapons. It's
evidence that
unfortunately, tragically,
this is likely to continue
for some time. >>

NARRATOR: Vladimir
Putin,
the former KGB agent,
hellbent on rebuilding
the Russian empire,

now a dangerous pariah
on the world stage, staring
down yet another
American president
to see how far he will go. >>
Putin is escalating it into a
war with the West more
broadly,
cutting off energy,
threatening nuclear weapons.
And part of the reason
is to undercut Western
resolve and to make the West
eager
to get this over with.
>> ...ahead of a looming
energy crisis this winter, as
Vladimir Putin cuts off

the continent's natural gas supply.

>> He's hoping that he can put pressure on the West to back off. >> Putin is counting on the fact

that the Western powers are just going to lose interest in Ukraine... >> How much longer the

United States can continue to help bankroll this war...

>> Will Ukraine ultimately be left to fight this war on its own?.

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