**Shock and Awe in Ukraine? Not Yet**

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Make no mistake. What Russia is attempting in Ukraine is shocking and awing. It is not Shock and Awe. I should know. In 1995, I chaired the group that originated the concept of Shock and Awe. But first, what were Russia’s aims and strategy in Ukraine?

President Vladimir Putin laid out his demands for a new European security framework; NATO’s retraction from Europe and cessation of expansion; and denying Ukraine NATO membership and limiting its westward aspirations. Russia’s military strategy for Ukraine was one of intimidation to force a quick negotiation.

A broad “reconnaissance in force” with relatively small numbers was launched across Ukraine as the low-cost option to minimize casualties and damage, reinforced by the threat of unleashing the full might of Russia’s military on Ukraine’s borders. From current reports of a major offensive, scenes in Ukrainian cities do not yet resemble London during the Blitz; Stalingrad in 1942; Hue City in 1968; and Baghdad in 2004-6.

So far, Putin’s strategy is not working even though, at this point, significant Russian forces are closing in on Kyiv. Would Shock and Awe have worked?

Shock and Awe was developed as an alternative to Desert Storm and the 1991 Iraq War where an overwhelming force led by the United States required 400,000 troops to eject Iraq from its occupation of Kuwait. In 2003, could regime change have been imposed without marching to Baghdad with an overwhelming military force?

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Shock and Awe was designed to affect, influence and control the will and perception of an adversary. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who was a “rump” member of the shock and awe team later put it this way: “to get the other guy to do what we want and stop doing things we do not want him to do.”

The aim was to win without fighting using a variety of military and non-military instruments to place the enemy in such a desperate situation that the blunt choice was surrender or suicide, capitulation or catastrophe.

How would Russia and Putin have employed a real Shock and Awe campaign in Ukraine? First was to control Ukrainian will and perception with a massive shutdown of command and control, internet and external communications; TV and radio except to broadcast Russian propaganda; airports and roads choking off all transportation including imports of Russian natural gas, oil, fuel, electricity and food to Ukraine. And, Russia would have cut or threatened to cut its gas pipelines running through Ukraine to Europe, applying economic pressure to divide NATO.

Concurrently, selective targeting and decapitation of command and control elements would occur. Inserting “deep fakes” on cell phones falsely depicting the annihilation of Ukrainian forces would induce panic. Deep fakes portraying President Volodymyr Zelensky surrendering and ordering his forces to cease resistance would add to the confusion. Faked distress text messages calling for help from family and civilians at home to Ukrainian soldiers would intensify the sense of despair and hopelessness. And Russia would promise humane treatment to those who gave up now but not later. units would disrupt Ukrainian road and rail choke points, carrying out selective assassinations and kidnappings to induce more panic. High above Kyiv, Lviv and Mariupol, a continuous barrage of deafening and blinding explosions, as well as sonic booms to frighten and disorient Ukrainians, would be conducted.

The aim was to make Ukrainians believe their country could not defend itself. Thus, capitulation would become the least bad option for Kyiv. That has not happened.

Russia’s strategy has failed so far because it overestimated its ability to make Ukraine quickly capitulate; greatly underestimated the resistance of Ukrainians and its president to fight, and deployed insufficient forces resulting in an anaemic initial onslaught. While the overall Russian military outnumbers Ukraine’s, the defence’s 250,000 is numerically superior to the 170,000 troops massing on the border.

Now Putin has two options: negotiation and/or escalation or, in Russian doctrine, escalate to de-escalate. After the Soviet and NATO Afghan experience and America in Iraq, Putin and his generals understood occupation of Ukraine was a very bad idea. One form of escalation is ordering more forces into the fight. Putin has also chosen nuclear escalation emulating Richard Nixon during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War presumably to force an outcome. At this stage, two facts are indisputable: Russian actions are shocking and awing. But they are not Shock and Awe. Still, who knows how this will end.

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