

President Biden takes on President Putin

President Biden suffered a major reversal when he left Afghanistan with too much haste and secrecy, failing to inform or win over his allies to his chosen course of action. Afghanistan soon fell to the Taliban once US forces had gone, reversing the hard won gains of many years of strife and loss of life in a few days.

He has been more willing to consult NATO allies over Ukraine, and has warned Mr Putin of serious adverse consequences if he presses ahead with an invasion. The President and the US intelligence and military services have kept the whole world advised of Russian troop and weapon deployments near to Ukraine and have forecast early invasions. They seek to win the information war and to make it more difficult for Russia to seek to occupy Ukraine. President Biden did let slip the view that the retaliation would not be so tough were Mr Putin to make a limited incursion into Ukraine. Although his staff did their best to correct this and he himself changed his words, it looks as if Mr Putin decided the US President meant what he had let slip. So Russia has made a more limited incursion than a direct invasion with massed forces aiming at the capture of Kiev and the toppling of the Ukrainian government by force. The US has led a response based on targeted sanctions against individuals and certain banks, whilst stressing there would be much worse to come for Russia if she plans a bigger military attack.

The USA is still concerned about a further Russian attack using the large firepower Mr Putin has assembled. It is possible that Russia will foment the strife and tensions within the two provinces that she has now recognised as independent, seeking to drag Ukraine into a war in the east. It is also likely Russia will look at how to destabilise the government of Ukraine, adding political pressures to military challenges created in Donbas. What is clear is the Franco-German initiative to reach a diplomatic peace through creating two self governing provinces within Ukraine is now badly damaged by pre-emptive Russian action. What do you think the USA should do next?