



# PERSPECTIVES



by **Rinaldo S. Brutoco**

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## Vladimir Putin's Big Mistake

### *The Depth of American Values Wins the Day*

How did **Vladimir Putin** fail? January 6, 2021 must have been the biggest surprise and disappointment of his entire life. He worked diligently in 2016 to sew dissension amongst Americans to undermine our democratic institutions. He used all his skills, his deceit, and his incredibly powerful “asymmetric warfare” apparatus in the FSB (formerly the KGB), together with the best hackers in the world to effectively install **Donald Trump** as president. And upon his inauguration, Trump as president began actively assisting Putin in unraveling America's power and prestige in the world such that it would be reduced to a second-rate power. Yes, in 2016 Putin actually “won,” and won bigger than he ever imagined.

Actively redesigning foreign and domestic policies to line up with Putin's goals, investing in Trump paid an even greater dividend on his “investment” than Putin anticipated. Trump threatened the very existence of NATO. He badly injured the unique relationship the US has shared with the European Union since its inception. He created so much international insanity and instability (pulling out of the World Health Organization during an international pandemic, the Iranian nuclear deal, etc.) that Trump became a “Pariah President.” Internationally perceived as boorish and a bully, Trump was shunned by previous allies and embraced by then-current dictators and fascists like North Korea's **Kim Jong-un**, Brazil's **Jair Bolsonaro**, Turkey's **Recep Erdogan**, Saudi Arabia's **Mohammed bin Salman**, and, of course, **Putin** himself.

What Putin did in 2016 was to lay the groundwork for what he anticipated would be the “final nail” in the coffin of American relevance with the 2020 re-election of an incompetent president. In addition to the Mueller Report and numerous other validated reports, it is clear, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Russia did interfere in the 2016 election in order to install his ally, his “useful idiot” (national security language) as the way Putin

would destabilize the US. As history reflects, the plan worked brilliantly.

Most thoughtful observers believe that Russia also interfered in the 2020 US election. Until last week, however, much of what we knew was unofficial or from trial transcripts from the numerous lawsuits (63 at last count) Trump brought, and lost, in fighting to overthrow the 2020 Presidential election that he lost by over 7,000,000 votes. Now we have definitive evidence that Putin tried again.

The recently released *Intelligence Community Assessment*, drafted by “the National Intelligence Council, and CIA, DHS, FBI, INR, and NSA...” which is virtually the entire intelligence apparatus of the US Government, clearly documents Russian attempts to influence the 2020 election. Here's one stunning conclusion from that report:

***“Key Judgment 2: We assess that Russian President Putin authorized, and a range of Russian government organizations conducted, influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party, supporting former President Trump, undermining public confidence in the electoral process, and exasperating sociopolitical divisions in the US.”***

So why did Putin fail in 2020 when he was so successful the first time around? Two important reasons: First, he overestimated Trump's ability to illegally retain control of the government as a result of the coup that he started planning in the summer of 2020 and culminating in the Insurrection at the Capitol on January 6th that year; and second, he grossly underestimated the American people's fundamental commitment to democracy and conducting a fair election.

From Putin's perspective as a dictator for life, he assumed that once Trump had power, he would be able to retain it as long as a significant percentage of the

public would support him to the point of waging an insurrection to keep him in power. The widely reported remarks of former general (and convicted felon) **Michael Flynn** leave little doubt on this approach to the 2020 election: find a pretense for invoking martial law and retain power indefinitely.

Aided by his brother Lieutenant-General **Charles Flynn**, this pretense nearly came to pass. Charles Flynn had been serving as Deputy Chief of Staff since 2019 when the Capitol Insurrection occurred, and he actively participated in the decision to deny National Guard troops (who were standing by) the authority to assist the Capitol Police *for more than three hours and fifteen minutes after the attack on the Capitol had begun and was being seen on tv around the world.*

The ridiculous reason given by the general in that call was that “the optics” of National Guardsmen surrounding the Capitol would be “bad”. This preposterous conclusion was maintained for hours after the entire world saw “the optics” of the US Capitol under siege. Many thoughtful observers believe that General Charles Flynn was in on his brother Michael Flynn’s desire to have a crisis big enough to merit declaring martial law. Under this interpretation, the reason troops were withheld was precisely so that the mob could literally stop the wheels of government or worse. Up until the Insurrection was quelled and the counting of votes completed much later that night, Putin most likely thought he’d won again, and that Trump would illegally retain power. After all, that is what dictators like him, and fascists generally, like to do.

The second reason Putin failed was his complete misunderstanding of the deep roots of democracy, anchored in our democratic republic. It was probably inconceivable to Putin, as a dictator, that members of Trump’s own political party, like the Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and numerous other Republican state elected officials, would refuse Trump’s efforts to get them to cheat on electoral college votes.

Amazingly, despite incredible White House pressure that has since been well documented, *not one single Republican in a key position chose to lie for the President or to cheat on the vote counts.* It was all Republicans in responsible positions who refused to “take a dive.” Raffensperger, Governor **Brian Kemp**, and even the State Republican officials from Michigan who Trump invited to the White House all refused to falsely change the electoral vote counts in their respective states. In revenge, Trump is now actively campaigning to replace all of these honorable officials with more pliable loyalists.

Putin didn’t realize that in our country, where we value democracy at every level of society, the “little people” who actually run the election machinery in the country would perform their duties with such integrity. Nothing like that could have occurred in Russia, so of course he didn’t see it coming. It is understandable that he wouldn’t even imagine that could have happened, and that *was* his big mistake.

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