

In Ukraine, There's No Substitute for Hard Power

The ongoing Ukrainian counter-offensive, if successful, could reshape the war and the geopolitical contours of Europe.

It is a testament to Ukrainian pluck and staying power but, above all, to the advanced weapons that the West has put in the hands of the Ukrainians.

Soft power, the coinage of political scientist Joseph Nye for the ability of a country to get others to do what it wants without coercion, is important; hard power is absolutely indispensable.

This is easy to forget in a West that believes deeply in democratic ideals and moral example. Even if it is true, as optimists believe, that the arc of moral history bends toward justice, an armored division can smash and bend it back.

The history of the West is in part the history of arms races, in fortresses, cannons, ships, rifles, aircrafts and much else.

Empires have risen and fallen on the strength of military hardware. Cities have conquered or been destroyed. Armies have triumphed or dissolved.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy had bucketfuls of soft power. He was the most admired man in the world. He spoke at the United Nations, to Congress and other national legislative bodies, and even at the Grammys. What did that get him? It helped solidify the good will of Western countries, which was essential. He constantly tried to leverage that sentiment, though, for the hardheaded priority of more weapons.

Zelenskyy could still be admired in death, or in a Russian prison, or as an exile. Yet, if he wanted to continue to be admired as the leader of an independent country, he needed sheer firepower.

Ukraine's cause hasn't gotten any more just or inspiring over the last couple of months; it's gotten better armed.

Ukraine couldn't win a straight-up artillery fight with the Russians, and in fact it was losing one in a grinding war of attrition. A HIMARS, or high mobility artillery rocket system, versus artillery fight, though, is a different matter.

The Ukrainians have used these long-range, precision systems provided by the U.S. to hit Russian artillery parks, ammunition dumps and logistical hubs. The strikes have caused breakdowns in Russia's fuel and ammunition supplies as well as in the cohesion of its troops and command-and-control.

The Ukraine war has been a conflict of stark phases and strategic adjustments and re-adjustments. The Russians will presumably have their answer to the current Ukrainian push, and if they don't, one reason will be that they are running out of those pillars of hard power -- men and materiel.

Paul Lockhart writes in "Firepower," his book about the history of weapons of war: "Technological sophistication and military might are, to be sure, not synonymous but closely connected, and military might is a vital factor in the calculus of international relations. Great powers tend to have great weapons, or at least a lot of really good weapons."

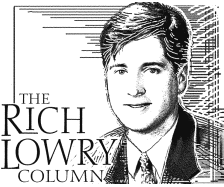
We should be mindful of this, not just in the assistance we provide to Ukraine but in our priorities for ourselves. Our military budget needs to be much bigger, and our defense industrial base is wholly insufficient to the new, more threatening international environment. We would run out of rockets quickly in a war with China. Even supporting Ukraine at the current level has been a strain.

The United States is a marvel of soft power, binding allies to us, attracting people all over the world who want to come here, and reaching the most far-flung places in the world. What we've been able to provide Ukraine that has been most telling, though, hasn't been diplomatic or moral support, rather a system that can put a rocket directly on a target up to 50 miles away.

That's been the game changer, as better, more sophisticated military technology has always been from long bows, to arquebuses, to fighter jets. There is simply no substitute for hard power.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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THE RICH LOWRY COLUMN

Hiatal Hernia Is Not Correlated to Asthma Medication

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 80 years old, still work full-time and have generally good health, except for adult-onset asthma. Advair 250/50 was prescribed for me over 10 years ago, and I've been taking it regularly each morning, thoroughly rinsing each time to prevent thrush. About five years ago, I developed an abdominal hernia just below my waistline. My primary physician referred me to a general surgeon, who did a very thorough exam, including an MRI from the jaw down. He discovered an esophageal hernia in addition to the abdominal hernia, and told me that a specialist would have to perform the double surgery. His advice was to avoid surgery, leaving it as a last resort. He prescribed famotidine twice daily to preclude acid reflux. That generally works, but not always.

My question is, does Advair 250/50 cause or contribute to an esophageal hernia? -- D.A.A.

ANSWER: A hiatal hernia ("hiatus" means "gap" in Latin), also called an esophageal or paraesophageal hernia, is when the hole in the diaphragm through which the esophagus passes is larger than normal, so other abdominal organs, especially the stomach, can slide through the hole from the abdomen into the chest.

Most hiatal hernias are thought to be congenital, meaning you were born with the propensity to have a larger-than-needed hole in the diaphragm. Most people with this condition have no symptoms and do not need treatment. The unusual person with symptoms from a sliding hiatal hernia is usually treated medically. Like you, they are prescribed famotidine, which reduces stomach acid. In the rare case when the paraesophageal hernia is so large that the stomach gets stuck inside the chest, or when other abdominal organs enter the chest, a person may require surgery.

Neither asthma nor Advair, a combination of an inhaled steroid (fluticasone) and a long-acting beta agonist (salmeterol), is related to hiatal hernias.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 63-year-old male who does weight-bearing exercises three or four times a week. Also, I am on multiple blood pressure meds, including atenolol, which slows the heart rate. What is the target heart rate while on this drug, for maximum cardiac health? -- H.C.

ANSWER: There are two ways to answer your question, the difference being the target resting heart rate and the target exercise heart rate.

The goal for atenolol as a blood pressure medicine is not the resting heart rate, but the resting blood pressure. However, atenolol and other beta blockers are seldom used as the first medicine to treat blood pressure, except in cases where beta blockers are also useful for something else.

Still, when a person requires multiple medications, beta blockers are often used as a second- or third-line treatment. If a person has good control of their blood pressure at a heart rate of 80, the medication is successful. However, most times, the resting heart rate needs to be in the 50s or 60s for the blood pressure to come down to goal in a patient taking a beta blocker.

The target exercise heart rate is usually recommended to be between 55% and 85% of your maximum heart rate, which can be measured by a stress test, or estimated by a calculator. Unfortunately, the calculator is only a rough guide at best, especially in women and middle-aged (or older) people, and beta blockers have variable effects on individuals.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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to Your good health WITH Dr. Keith Roach

Third Annual DeweyCon at PBC Main Library

The Palm Beach County Library System will host its third fan-based convention, DeweyCon, on

Saturday, Sept. 24 at the Main Library from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Lovers of pop culture, television, film

and animation can attend this free event, which includes cosplay, contests, gaming, giveaways, food trucks and more.

Sponsors include Cosmic Times, Read It Write It Book Festival, FlamingoCon, hoopla Digital, Macmillan Author Jess Redman, TATE's Comics + Toys + More, Right-StufANIME, Scholastic Graphix and Seven Seas Entertainment.

Presenters include Cosmic Times, Read It Write It Book Festival, FlamingoCon, hoopla Digital, Everglades Squad-501st Legion, Macmillan Author Jess Redman, Cox Science Center and Aquarium, and Face Art by Daisy.

DeweyCon is being sponsored by the Friend of Palm Beach County Library.

For more information, visit www.pbclibrary.org/deweycon-2022.

The Palm Beach County Main Library is located at 3650 Summit Boulevard, West Palm Beach.

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