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## EDITORIALS

# A year later, Ukraine stands tall.

The US and NATO must help it finish the job.

**O**n the eve of Russia's invasion of Ukraine a year ago, as the Kremlin positioned more than 150,000 troops along the Ukraine border, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had this message for Russia, its soldiers, and its despotic commander-in-chief, Vladimir Putin:

"When you attack us, you will see our faces, not our backs."

A year has passed since Putin illegally and audaciously blitzed troops into Ukraine with the sinister purpose of absorbing a sovereign nation into his self-serving vision of an imperialist Russia, and in doing so denying Ukrainians their culture, language and identity.

And yet, that steely resolve in Zelenskyy and every other Ukrainian has never waned. There's no sign it ever will, and that should serve as the anchor to an unyielding commitment from the U.S. and NATO to help Ukraine preserve its territorial integrity — every inch of it.

At first, the globe expected Ukraine's fall to be devastatingly quick. Russia's military machine dwarfs Ukraine's armed forces, and still does. With lightning speed, Russian forces had moved deep into Ukraine's eastern Donbas region and swept through towns on the outskirts of Kyiv, the country's capital. No one — except Ukrainians, of course — could have imagined what would happen next.

Ukraine began winning. Ukrainian fighters, some of them ordinary folk taking up arms to defend their country, retook regions around Kyiv and kept the capital safe, and then overwhelmed Russian troops in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, and later regained control of the southern city of Kherson and other parts of the Donbas.

Through it all, the world has been at once amazed and inspired by Ukrainian courage in the face of criminal barbarity from a leader who has never shown regard for the lives of others, or even the lives of his own people. That courage was hailed by President Joe Biden through his surprise visit to Kyiv Monday and his meeting with Zelenskyy. The wail of an air raid siren as the two leaders walked by St. Michael's monastery made clear the risk inherent in the visit, but the mere fact that an American president could visit Kyiv in wartime cemented just how resilient Ukrainian forces have been in the face of Russian aggression.

Wars have a way of changing how America perceives and interacts with the world, and even the way Americans interact with each other. World Wars



SCOTT STANTIS/FOR CHICAGO TRIBUNE

I and II, the Vietnam War and the war on terror spurred by the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the U.S. are examples.

So is the ongoing war in Ukraine. The everyday lives of Americans have palpably changed. It costs us more to drive to work, or to take the kids on a road trip. The war isn't the only force driving inflation, but it factors heavily in the trajectory of rising prices.

But our view of the world has changed as well. For America, the war has made Putin Public Enemy No. 1. He has always been an unpredictable antagonist on the world scene, poisoning adversaries with nerve gas agents and even taking an unabashed stab at influencing the results of the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

But the wanton brutality he has exhibited in Ukraine has made clear how he should be perceived now — as a war criminal profoundly indifferent to the consequences of his actions on the lives of innocent civilians, young and old.

Putin has also resurrected the queasy angst of the Cold War, when worries about a nuclear attack were real and ever-present. He has raised the specter of turning to nuclear weapons during the conflict in Ukraine, and again stoked doomsday worries when, on Tuesday, he announced suspension of Russia's participation in the new START treaty, the last remaining U.S.-Russia nuclear arms control pact. Though the world isn't yet on

the cusp of another nuclear arms race, Putin's actions have stoked legitimate concerns about that unnerving prospect.

Putin has forced all this change on America and the rest of the world. But his actions have also led to a profound transformation within the West — a unification of Western nations and agendas into an alliance committed to helping Ukraine defeat Putin and his forces.

Up until the war, fissures within Europe on issues ranging from disparities in defense spending to reliance on Russian energy had weakened NATO. By invading Ukraine, Putin single-handedly renewed the Western military alliance's sense of purpose. The former KGB chief bet on NATO fragmentation — and lost.

Ukraine will need a unified West as the war moves into its second year. All signs point to a Russian offensive in coming weeks that will severely test Ukrainian forces in eastern Donbas lands. A renewed push by Russian forces to take Kyiv could also come from the north, with help from Putin's sycophantic ally in Minsk, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Whether China will lend Moscow a hand remains unknown. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has warned Beijing of providing Moscow with the kind of "lethal support" that would help replenish Russia's depleted military stockpiles. Any kind of rearming

assistance that China provides Russia would deal a serious blow to Ukraine's chances to fend off a Russian offensive.

With or without China's involvement, the war is sure to press on for months, if not longer. This week, Zelenskyy asked Western nations to provide more arms and military equipment to his forces. This time, however, he had one additional request. "We need to hurry up," he said. "We need speed."

The U.S. and its NATO allies should ensure Ukrainian forces are replenished, and should heed Zelenskyy's plea for haste. In his state of the nation speech to Russians, Putin made it clear he is digging in, and won't stop until Ukraine is firmly and irrevocably absorbed by Russia.

The U.S. and NATO also must not assume that Putin's imperialist ambitions end with Ukraine. Putin has often lamented the Soviet collapse, and the nations that comprise NATO's eastern flank understandably worry that a Russian victory in Ukraine would put them in Putin's crosshairs.

And so, regardless of the war's duration, Ukraine and the West cannot acquiesce, and cannot accept anything short of complete preservation of Ukraine's sovereignty. To their credit, Zelenskyy and his fellow Ukrainians have shown the willingness and capability to stop Putin in his tracks. Helping Ukraine finish the job isn't just one of several options the West should weigh — it's the only option.

## VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

### Ukraine will endure

President Joe Biden is right: Ukraine will never be a victory for Russia. As we've reached the one-year anniversary of war, speaking as a Ukrainian American — the granddaughter of a soldier who was killed protecting Ukraine from the Nazi invasion of 1941 and the great-granddaughter of a soldier who defended Ukraine against Bolshevik forces between 1918 and 1920 — I know Ukrainians are committed to the cause of freedom for the long haul.

Supported by its allies, Ukraine will ultimately withstand every attempt at conquest by imperious zealots, Vladimir Putin being only the latest. His mission to seize Ukraine is doomed, since that mission is tethered to his fate, which is inevitable. A mere man, he will one day wither, succumbing to greater forces.

But Ukraine will never die. Our radiant blue and yellow flag will continue to rise proudly, climbing to heights where everyone can see it — embracing the wind, undaunted by the clouds — ascending so high that it becomes unreachable, confidently and eternally evading the grasp of anyone who deigns to tear it down.

— Larissa Kosmos,  
Cleveland, Ohio

### Ukrainians a bulwark

Political polarization is the perpetrator of innumerable human casualties. The most profound victim of democratic division is the sacred gift of common sense. Our fascist foes feed upon factionalization as they launch World War III. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy correctly warns us that when the Chinese Communist Party inev-

itably supplies Vladimir Putin with weapons, and it has and will continue to in exchange for fuel and food, we will see a catastrophe unfold if we fail to stand strong with Ukraine.

In spite of the polar extremes in Western leadership, the good peoples of the world remain in resolute support of Ukrainian freedom fighters as they are the true bulwark against global symmetric conflict. The Ukrainian battalions are the brave barriers that insulate us from the ravages of ubiquitous 21st century bloodshed. Not only do they serve as our unwavering hope, but they also are a reminder of what will befall Chinese President Xi Jinping when he tiptoes into Taiwan.

As the world celebrates the valiant sacrifices of the Ukrainian people, and the United States marks the one-year anniversary of Xi and Putin's long march to

universal domination, we must be wary of our own senseless notions. The West's defenders are not the catalyst of this war but the protectors of our free way of life. While dissent is encouraged during times of peace and plunder, we must exhibit caution to preclude ourselves from losing those rare rights and playing into the enemy's propaganda.

I say we must arm Ukraine; it is an investment in our children and children's children that cannot be valued in mere dollars. The freedom of expression is a power like none other, but we must use it to advance the very liberties that allow us to exercise it.

— Henry J. Wilson, Washington

### Waging a proxy war

Are we essentially at war with Russia? If so, it had better stop now! If it becomes firmly established that the U.S. was involved in the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines, it's game on for World War III. This terrorist act would clearly be understood as an act of war by Russia.

How on earth did we reach a point in which waging a proxy war with Russia over Ukraine would be worth risking the very existence of humankind? We are now in the midst of a situation in which something could easily go wrong and set the world on fire. This is insane!

— Scott Thompson,  
Bloomington, Indiana

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