

UKRAINE: HISTORY AND A THREAT TO WORLD ORDER

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We live in a global village with both science and technology to live in harmony with each other. Since the industrial revolution in the 1900s, the spread of knowledge has slowly and invariably been shrinking the world. We can now fly around the world and destroy targets on the other side of the hemisphere; we can talk to people instantly and quickly provide them with false information that they think is knowledge; we can feed the world and create enough economic inequity that thousands can die each day of malnourishment.

Societies have been slowly losing their physical boundaries while maintaining their psychological limits. The result has been a clash of cultures resulting in worldwide conflict to destroy the world. Today we are seeing the precursor of this changing world order with the capacity to provide an underpinning of more significant conflict. Thus, all free people have no choice but to support Ukraine's independence and autonomy completely. History tells us the perils of turning our backs on this country or any other country seeking

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freedom and independence. We are foolish if we do not learn from history.

Two weeks short of 93 years ago to the day that Russia invaded Ukraine, German troops marched into Czechoslovakia in 1939. They took control over Bohemia and established a protectorate over Slovakia. Germany would invade Poland six months later, breaking through the border to quickly advance on Warsaw, the Polish capital. Thus, began World War II in Europe. The underpinning of this war started with World War I, but Adolf Hitler thought the best way to stabilize his country politically and economically was the expansion of Germany. The effects of this war would last until the early 1990s with the breakup of the Soviet Union. However, independence would be short-lived. In March 2014, Russia invaded and subsequently annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine. Directly or indirectly, countries had earlier come under Russian influence and control. These countries include Russian-occupied territories Transnistria (since 1992), Abkhazia (since 2008), South Ossetia (since 2008). The crown jewel would be Ukraine which it should never obtain.

Over the last two decades, we have been rightfully preoccupied with the rise of terrorism amongst free and democratic states. Osama bin Ladin attacked the United States in 2001 because he saw this clash of civilizations as a threat to his religion. Many groups joined his “Jihad” (holy war), and we will continue to fight this ill-conceived misuse of religion to commit acts against free and democratic societies. While terrorism will persist as a threat, it has never been a threat to the world order. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a threat to the world order.

According to President Biden in his declaration last week, “In the battle between democracy and autocracies, democracies are rising to the moment, and the world is choosing the side of peace and security. We will save democracy” The war in

Ukraine has focused the world's attention. Regional conflicts often have a way of wreaking havoc well beyond the battlefields; Syria's civil war, for example, similarly sucked in the United States, Western European powers, and Russia. But the war in Ukraine has almost instantly restructured global power dynamics, partly because of Putin's nuclear saber-rattling and in part because the world has become so much more interconnected in recent years — in trade, technology, media, and politics.

In less than two weeks, we have seen a fundamental shift as Europeans take on more responsibility for their defense, highlighted by five decades of German attitudes overturned toward Russia and even the Swiss joining the European Union in its sanctions. A few weeks earlier, German politicians were sending a supply of helmets to Ukraine and then found themselves denounced as 78 percent of Germans said they supported a massive increase in defense spending reversing the German public's decades-long rejection of military force abroad.

And if President Vladimir Putin thought that threatening the use of his nuclear arsenal would be a deterrent from others supporting Ukraine, it may have had the opposite effect. The United States has never officially responded to this threat. But, as a schoolchild during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and going to the school's bomb shelter, any nuclear attack will result in mutually assured destruction. Putin may be a madman, but he's not insane. Instead, citizens have come together to rally around the Ukrainians in a deeply divided ideological United States. Internationally, Russia looks increasingly isolated, even if China won't condemn it. Western sanctions will really bite in the coming weeks, as imports to Russia slow and hard currency grows scarce.

Intelligence analysts see an isolated Russian leader who underestimated the West's support for Ukraine and overestimated his own country's ambitions and military

capability. But if Russia's war on Ukraine heralds a new era, what does this mean?

As we have learned from history, to ward off aggressive superpowers is to create a strong union. After World War II and particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many Europeans believed a European Union and NATO support would create a new dynamic in which brute force was no longer the primary factor in how nations compete with each other. The war in Ukraine is testing that notion severely. At a minimum, the West has made it clear that Putin's perception of weakness and discord in the world's democracies was not accurate. This unity among all the countries instituting sanctions against his country should logically make Putin take a step back and reconsider what he's done. He is learning how few ordinary Russians support his senseless war. But this war is not about Russia, it is about the Ukraine and the importance for it to remain a free and independent nation. It's identity will never be subsumed under Putin's attempt to relive history. Likewise, all nations must stand together and support Ukraine in its fight against this aggression. While we live in a global village to live in harmony, we also have the power to destroy each other unless we remain united. History is our witness.