

# PUTIN'S WAR IS AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY

<https://www.2thepointnews.com/putins-war-is-americas-opportunity/>



People take shelter from Russian missile attack in a subway station in Kyiv

American policy conversations about Ukraine often assume that Ukraine is a problem. For some, it represents a distraction from China. Others fear Russian escalation and retaliation. Still others worry about the financial cost of supporting Ukraine's army and propping up its war-blighted economy.

These concerns are real and have their place, but they miss the main point. Vladimir Putin's ill-judged, ill-planned and ill-prosecuted war has ignited a national awakening in Ukraine. The country emerging from Putin's War will be a formidable new force in Europe whose interests and outlook place it firmly in alignment with the U.S.

On a visit to Kyiv last week, I spoke with Ukrainians including business executives, software wizards, survivors of the Russian occupation in Bucha and veterans of the bitter fighting in Mariupol. There was griping in plenty.

The country is under martial law. Corruption remains widespread. Inflation is making life difficult, and with refugees huddled into makeshift shelters where 60 people sometimes share a communal kitchen, daily life can be full of hardship. Russian missiles streak across the sky and every home has been touched by the war's human toll.

But I didn't hear from one person who believed Ukraine should trade Crimea or the Donbas for peace.

Ukrainians were clear-eyed about their situation. They expect a long war and a hard peace. "My grandfather fought the Russians," said one veteran of the fighting in Mariupol, "and I think my children and grandchildren will have to fight them too." Those words were echoed by soldiers and civilians across the city.

*To understand today's Ukraine, think of Israel. After centuries of oppression culminating in the unspeakable*

violence of the 20th century, Israelis are determined to take their fate into their own hands and are willing to make the economic and personal sacrifices necessary to defend their independence.

Ukrainians have reached a similar place. The two world wars, the Russian Civil War and Stalin's genocidal cruelty subjected Ukraine to unspeakable suffering during the 20th century.

Now, as Mr. Putin and the yapping propagandists of Moscow's bloodthirsty media threaten the country with a new dark age, Ukrainians have, quite simply, had enough. They don't know how this will end, and they don't know how long and how far the West will be willing to support them, but they are ready to do what it takes.

The Ukraine that emerges from this baptism by fire will be a formidable country with a battle-tested army, and it is going to transform the strategic landscape. It will join Poland, the Baltic republics and the Scandinavian countries in a defense-minded bloc against Russian expansion.

While danger persists, that bloc will be committed to the trans-Atlantic alliance and see the U.S. as an essential partner in its defense. It will use its weight in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union against any attempts by weaker-willed Europeans to triangulate between Washington and its opponents.

*Any end to the war widely perceived as a defeat for Mr. Putin will do more than create a powerful new ally for the U.S.* It will also underline the value of an American alliance. That the U.S. and its allies could enable a smaller country to defeat Russia, still anachronistically seen as a superpower by much of the world, will strengthen the American alliance network and dent the prestige of the revisionist powers.

The stakes are still higher. Mr. Putin's war is the first major international conflict of the information age, and Ukraine, which had a significant core of software engineers and IT experts beforehand, is developing new methods of war fighting. Sometimes using off-the-shelf gadgets bought directly by front-line soldiers with money from family and friends, Ukraine's tech wizards play a key role in enabling Ukraine's numerically inferior army to hold off Russian attacks.

Software engineers who joined the army at the start of the war have been called back from infantry brigades and, with new recruits leaving lucrative tech industry jobs to enlist, have formed fast-moving, informal units that develop methods of analyzing battlefield information to get granular insight into Russian plans.

Ukrainians want deeper partnerships with American tech companies and the Pentagon. Just as the uniquely close American cooperation with Israel's tech sector boosts American capabilities, tech cooperation with Ukraine will help U.S. business and the U.S. military maintain and even increase their lead over Beijing.

Helping Ukraine is not a charity project to be undertaken out of sentiment. Nor is it a strategic distraction that weakens our hand in the Indo-Pacific. In his blindness and folly, Vladimir Putin has handed the U.S. a golden opportunity. We should seize it with both hands.

---

*Walter Russell Mead is the Ravenel B. Curry III Distinguished Fellow in Strategy and Statesmanship at Hudson Institute, the Global View Columnist at The Wall Street Journal, and the James Clarke Chace Professor of Foreign Affairs and Humanities at Bard College in New York.*