

# WE MUST GIVE UKRAINE THE TIME TO WIN

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*“[Putin comparing himself to Peter the Great](#) (6/10): ‘During the war with Sweden, Peter the Great didn’t conquer anything, he took back what had always belonged to us, even though all of Europe recognized it as Sweden’s. It seems now it’s our turn to get our lands back. Beware when small men acquire great power and grand dreams. Putin is a thug, a petty thief and chekist who believes he is a mighty emperor. End his imperial fantasy now because his ambitions begin in Ukraine, they won’t end there.’ –[Garry Kasparov](#), World Chess Champion*

One quality that is sometimes observed as lacking in democratic societies is patience. We have become used to rapid Amazon deliveries, 24/7 news cycles, and shorter, faster versions of old sports. This is hardly a new phenomenon.

In his book *The Vertigo Years*, an exploration of the technological and societal changes in the lead up to World War I, author Philipp Blom wrote that “speed and exhilaration, anxiety and vertigo were recurrent themes of the years between 1900 and 1914, during which cities exploded in size and societies were transformed”.

But, as shown in the long wars of the 20th century, the populations of democracies also have the capacity for strategic patience in the right circumstances.

The Russo-Ukraine War, which began in the hopes of a rapid and decisive victory by the Russians, has now settled into the ebb and flow that is normal for large-scale international wars of this type. Both sides have suffered massive casualties, and both have made gains and suffered battlefield losses. This will be a long war.

Those supporting Ukraine must commit to long-term assistance. But leaders of democratic nations must explain to their citizens why this fight is important, why it will take time, and why we must nurture strategic patience if Ukraine is to successfully throw back this invasion of its territory.

Why is this strategic patience required in the nations that support Ukraine?

First, the Ukrainians need time to integrate the massive flow of Western weapon systems that have begun to cross their western borders. This is not as simple as issuing soldiers anti-tank weapons.

Systems such as the American-supplied HIMARS long-range multiple launch rocket system, the M109 self-propelled artillery howitzers provided by Norway, and Western anti-ship missiles all require operator training, digital integration, and complex instruction for those who maintain and repair them.

And all of these Western weapons systems use standard NATO ammunition. While this is good in the longer term, it means in the short term that Ukraine must adapt its logistic systems away from Soviet-era munitions to integrate NATO ammunition.

Second, both sides are approaching a level of exhaustion. The Ukrainians will need time to rebuild, retrain and re-strategize the next phase of this war.

The initial stages of this war, and every war, are characterized by a rapid tempo of operations. Both sides

maneuver to achieve a quick military victory, so that the political, economic and human costs are minimized. The Russians failed in this, and we can already discern a narrowing of Russian aims because of their losses.

Both sides are weary, and we might expect an operational pause (not a ceasefire and not a stalemate) at some time in the coming weeks. This occurs in every long war where a tempo is established of constant maneuvering and preparations, punctuated by short periods of vicious combat.

We must have the patience to support the Ukrainians during this pause.

Third, strategic patience is needed because helping Ukraine win is the right thing to do. Not only do we have an obligation to a fellow democracy, but we must ensure the Ukrainians have agency in how they win.

The advice of world leaders such as France's President Macron has been less than helpful in this regard. In essence, if left up to France, this war would be concluded in a way that perhaps involved Ukraine's aspirations but definitely avoided embarrassing the Russian leader.

This strategically bankrupt, selfish and impatient French approach will only encourage future aggression.

The Ukrainians have fought for the right to determine how this war ends. We must give them time to retake all their territory and inflict a military defeat on Russia. If that also humiliates Russia, that is the price they must pay for their brutality, destruction and unwarranted aggression.

Finally, strategic patience is required because it is a demonstration that the democracies of the world have the resilience, unity and perseverance to resist the coercion and aggression of all of this era's techno-authoritarian regimes.

The 21st century is seeing a return to the long-term ideological competition that characterized the four-decade Cold War.

Whether it is the Russians, or the Chinese in the Indo-Pacific, we are now engaged in a long-term struggle to protect our sovereignty and preserve the values which generations before us have fought to sustain. We must nurture, and continuously demonstrate, the long-term capacity and patience to confront and deter those who seek to coerce or attack us.

Asking our citizens to remain patient as their costs of living escalate, and their attention to the war declines, is a tough ask for government. It will probably not be popular. And there is huge uncertainty about both Russian and Ukrainian capabilities and losses, as well as the eventual outcome of the war.

Yet, as US scholar Eliot Cohen has recently written, "The moment calls for intestinal fortitude, standing by the government and people of Ukraine." The fight in Ukraine is as much about the kind of world we wish to live in as it is about defeating Russian aggression. We owe the Ukrainians the time to win.

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