



EDITORIAL

The Heroes of the 21st Century

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If freedom is to survive and prosper, it will require the sacrifice, the effort, and the thoughtful attention of every citizen.

—John F. Kennedy
35th President of the USA

Like many of you, I closely follow the horrifying situation unfolding in Ukraine. Russia has launched a full-scale attack against Ukraine with an unimaginable magnitude. The news and pictures from Kyiv, Kharkiv, and elsewhere, with indiscriminate attacks of airstrikes and missiles hitting hospitals and universities, rockets dropping in residential buildings, are almost unbearable to watch. The stories of untold death of civilians, including children, and colossal destruction by creating millions of refugees are hard to absorb. And the prospect of much worse to come tragically real lies in front of us.

This war occurs in a period where authoritarian regimes are surging globally within a highly interconnected world, with the consequences extending well beyond Ukraine. Many hazards lie ahead based on the nature of the conflict, but all the odds are on the Ukraine's side. The valiant Ukrainian population is willing to fight to the end, and the West has found the unity and resolve to aid it. At this

moment, the important thing is to move with scale and urgency in support of such an insurgency. Since February 24, 2022, Ukrainians have written a new chapter in global history by defending the truth and their freedom. Every individual who would like to stand on this golden side of history has a remarkable job.

As an engine of genuine democratic progress, physicians, including oral and maxillofacial surgeons, their healthcare institutions, academic organizations, and journals, have a clear role. In the frontline facilities by directly providing advanced oral and maxillofacial surgical care and humanitarian assistance, and on the backstage, by mobilizing the communities worldwide as trusted voices of truth.

Today, Ukraine is facing a vicious form of nationalism from a country that saw a million more deaths than births last year, that is burdened with a corrupt and limited economy, and an isolated, aging dictator leading that. A dictator, who I should acknowledge, has only one advantage: he knows how to play head games with his enemies. However, these games have been heavily crashed on the courage of Ukrainians as they bravely fight for their right to live in a sovereign country. Fear is not the consequence

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of Russian actions but rather their objective.

The last weeks have been saturated with significant trauma, physical and emotional exhaustion on the battlefield. However, surprisingly, we can discover real hope in these deadly events. Now is the most suitable time to ask the biggest questions about how a nation wishes to look once this war is over. We should look beyond the dark horizon by preparing the building blocks of our reconstructive phase. Under normal circumstances, future imagination is limited, indicating that the inspiration for a nation's long-term vision must begin now. Yes, it might sound crazy to do this in the present days. But at the same time, as missiles and rockets fall in cities, villages, and neighborhoods, more fertile seeds are planted in the nation...

Because in the end, the globe will remember Ukraine on how it emerged stronger from this experience!!!

To all those who fight in the battlefield to defend Ukraine, I address: “Ἡ τὰν ἢ ἐπὶ τὰς.”*

To all those who died defending Ukraine or trying to escape the attacks against civilians, I narrate: “Ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος, καὶ οὐ στηλῶν μόνον ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ σημαίνει ἐπιγραφή, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῇ μὴ προσηκούσῃ ἄγραφος μνήμη παρ’ ἐκάστῳ τῆς γνώμης μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ ἔργου ἐνδιδαιτᾶται.”**

Concluding, to all those defenders in Ukraine and all Ukrainians around the world, I will continue to keep you at the forefront of my thoughts, and please let me take this opportunity and recite: “At the dawn of 2022, hence, I will not say that Ukrainians fight like heroes, but I shall say that heroes fight like Ukrainians.”***

With brave regards,
The author

* “Either with it or on it.” Found in Lacaenarum Apophthegmata by Plutarch, it is the farewell phrase Spartan mothers or wives said to their departing warrior sons or husbands upon giving them their shield. A warrior returning with his shield meant that he did not flee the battlefield. Had he done so, he must have dropped the large, heavy bronze shield to run faster. A warrior returning on his shield was dead, and his corpse would have been carried home thus. Therefore a Spartan warrior's options were to return either victorious or dead. Returning in shame without a shield was not an option. Spartans were the most powerful and famous warriors in ancient times...

** “The whole earth is the tomb of famous men, and not only inscriptions set up in their country mark it but even in foreign lands an unwritten memorial, present not in the monument but in mind, abides within

each man.” Written in Pericles' Funeral Oration, a famous speech in Thucydides' book “History of the Peloponnesian War.” The address was supposed to have been delivered by Pericles, the eminent Athenian politician, at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 Before the Common Era [BCE]) as a part of the annual public funeral for praising the war dead...

*** The iconic British statesman Winston Churchill, who led the United Kingdom during World War II, famously praised the Greek people in a BBC speech during the first days of the war for their incredible courage and fierce resistance against the evil Fascist and Nazi invaders by stating: “Hence we will not say that Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks.”