



**Senator Peter Welch
Remarks as Delivered
November 13, 2024
On the War in Ukraine**

Madam President, the United States must continue to support the people of Ukraine as they continue to defend their country from Russia's invasion.

The support provided by the United States has been indispensable in thwarting Russia's advances, but Ukraine needs continued assurances today—and tomorrow—that this support will continue.

There will be policy shifts in the next Congress and with the next Administration. But we can't abandon our fundamental support for Ukraine. Doing so would be existential for the Ukrainian people. Dangerous for Europe. And dangerous for the United States.

Allowing a large country to invade its smaller, neighboring country, with impunity, clears a path for authoritarian leaders with similar aspirations and it sends the message that these actions are acceptable. Left unchecked, these violent actions threaten America's partners and allies.

Madam President, we are at an inflection point. The President-elect has praised Vladimir Putin, the man waging an unjust war against Ukraine, for being a strong leader. He called him a "*genius*" and "*savvy*," and said "*I got along with him great. He liked me. I liked him.*"

Madam President, I struggle to find common ground or agreement with someone who gets along with one of America's most ruthless adversaries.

But I hope we can all agree that America's security is inseparable from the security of Europe. Republicans and Democrats alike have always recognized that. And I want to pay tribute to many of my Republican colleagues for their stalwart continuation of support for Ukraine to defend itself.

We must all stand up against a brutal authoritarian who has sparked a war that has killed and wounded one million people and displaced millions more, killed dissidents, stolen children, and imprisoned journalists, civil rights advocates, and political opponents.

If the U.S. were to withdraw our support from Ukraine, the consequences would be severe and exactly what Russia wants.

Madam President, the Ukrainian people are doing their part. They are fighting to defend their territory and Ukraine's sovereignty with every ounce of strength, in every part of Ukraine. And they have fought back against Russian aggression since 2014, when Russia invaded and annexed Crimea.

The Ukrainian people have been steadfast and resilient in protecting their land, their culture, and their heritage.

Ukraine isn't only fighting—they are also reforming and strengthening their country. Since 2014, Ukraine has adopted anti-corruption reforms and continues to advance its efforts, including strengthening Ukraine's Constitutional Court and judicial reforms and cracking down on unauthorized trade. To date—this is really good news—there have been no credible allegations of corruption associated with international donor support.

And, in the midst of this brutal war, Ukraine's economy remains tenaciously strong. Despite the war, Ukraine's GDP growth is reportedly up 5% from last year. Since September, more than 60 million tons of grain and steel have been sent to the global market through the Black Sea.

The World Bank and others are developing investment plans to rebuild energy, manufacturing and agricultural infrastructure—a reconstruction for Ukraine that will cost nearly \$500 billion dollars.

We must be firm in our military, economic and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine, and equally unequivocal in imposing consequences for Russia's aggression.

United States, European and global support for Ukraine must continue. As Penny Pritzker, former Special Representative for Ukraine's Economic Recovery at the Department of State and former Secretary of Commerce under President Obama has [said](#), *"Military assistance alone is not enough. We must match a hardened security umbrella with a comprehensive economic recovery framework."* I could not agree more.

Putin has brought war back to Europe. Putin's imperialist invasion has brought back memories of World War II. If the U.S. had not stayed the course to defend Europe against the Nazis, our world would look very different today.

The world needs a multilateral court to prosecute the crime of aggression. Sanctions must continue and the international community must seek reparation and compensation to the victims of Putin's violence, the return of Ukrainian children to their homes and families and proper registration of damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We should also give Ukraine the flexibility it needs to use U.S.-provided weapons effectively against Russian military targets. Many European countries have already done so, and it would empower Ukraine to blunt the Russian attack and put Russian forces on the defensive.

Madam President, Putin's plan to isolate and erase Ukraine has backfired. There are more joint security commitments between the European Union and Ukraine than ever before. Finland and Sweden have joined NATO, strengthening the defense alliance. The European Union and member states have increased their support to Ukraine in military equipment, economic, humanitarian support, refugee assistance and so many other aspects of resilience and defense.

The whole world is watching Ukrainians fight to defend our common values, our fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

The world is also watching us. We are leaders, and we must remain leaders. We are not naive to the challenges ahead for Ukraine. But if we walk away now, we may seal Ukraine's fate.

Madam President, I yield back.

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