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# A Free, Prosperous, and Secure Future for Ukraine

**SPEECH**

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**IGOR SIKORSKY KYIV POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE**

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**MR ZGUROVSKY:** Dear students, professors, honorable guests, today we have a great honor to meet with the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Antony Blinken. (Applause.)

Dear Mr. Secretary of State, on behalf of the many thousand family of Kyiv Polytechnic and the Kyiv academic community, we sincerely welcome you to our country and to our university.

Today's meeting has a special significance in this dramatic time for Ukraine. Our nation were back to back during World War II, American and Ukrainian, and now you stand with us. We are grateful to your country and to you personally for supporting us in this historical struggle for Ukrainian independence.

Our university connected with the institutions of your country by many outstanding personalities who started and worked at Kyiv Polytechnic Institute first and then made a great contribution to the development of United States and to the world progress. Among them, for example, Igor Sikorsky, Stephen Timoshenko, Serhiy Korolyov and a number of other scientists and engineers. And now, more than 500 KPI students are Microsoft employees; several hundred of our graduate – graduates work at the Boeing engineering center in Kyiv; and I could give many other examples of our close cooperation – the cooperation of our university with the institutions of your country.

Dear Mr. Secretary of State, students, and professors, honorable guests present and here, and many people from outside will be grateful for your address to them. Please take the floor, Mr. Secretary of State. (Applause.)

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** Well, good evening, everyone. And Dr. Zgurovsky, thank you for the introduction, but thank you especially for your decades-long contributions to science and education, and for leading Kyiv Polytechnic Institute through what is such a tumultuous time. And I am so grateful to be here with each and every one of you.

Today marks 811 days since Putin launched his brutal war – each day a grinding struggle, in which Ukrainians have demonstrated remarkable heroism, and suffered immeasurable loss.

A year ago, I spoke in Helsinki about how Putin's aggression against Ukraine had been a strategic failure for Russia – and what it would take to ensure that it stayed that way.

Today, I'm here in Kyiv to speak about Ukraine's strategic success. And to set out how, with our support, the Ukrainian people can and will achieve their vision for the future: a free, prosperous, secure democracy – fully integrated into the Euro-Atlantic community – and fully in control of its own destiny.

We're meeting at a critical moment.

Putin is ramping up yet another offensive against Ukraine in Kharkiv and across the east – sending wave after wave of Russian soldiers, Iranian drones, North Korean artillery, and tanks, missiles, and fighter jets built with machines and parts supplied by China.

The coming weeks and months will demand a great deal of Ukrainians, who have already sacrificed so much.

But I have come to Ukraine with a message: You are not alone.

The United States has been by your side from day one. We're with you today. And we will stay by your side, until Ukraine's security, its sovereignty, its ability to choose its own path is guaranteed.

And we're far from your only friend. Dozens of countries around the world are not just rooting for Ukraine's success – they are helping you achieve it.

Now, after the delay in approving the latest U.S. assistance package to Ukraine – a delay that left you more vulnerable to Russia’s attacks – some Ukrainians may be wondering whether you can count on America to sustain its commitment.

The \$60 billion aid package that was approved by our Congress with overwhelming support – across both political parties and both houses of Congress – I think demonstrates that you can. And a significant majority of Americans believe we should continue to provide assistance to Ukraine.

Indeed, the American people’s support for Ukraine has been consistent over the course of the war; it has never wavered.

Americans understand that our support for Ukraine strengthens the security of the United States and our allies.

They understand that if Putin achieves his goals here in Ukraine, he won’t stop with Ukraine; he’ll keep going. For when in history has an autocrat been satisfied with carving off just part, or even all, of a single country? When has that satisfied Vladimir Putin?

At the same time, the American people want to know that we have a plan for getting to the day when Ukraine can stand strongly on its own feet – militarily, economically, democratically – so that America’s support can transition to more sustainable levels.

The Ukrainian people want the exact same thing. They don’t want to have – they do not want to have to rely on others to guarantee their security and their prosperity.

And we do have a plan, and we're working together with Ukraine and a wide network of partners to realize it. And what I want to speak to you about this evening is what that plan looks like, and how we're going to fully achieve it.

First, we're helping to ensure that Ukraine has the military that it needs to succeed on the battlefield, to secure a just and lasting peace, and to deter future aggression.

Anyone who doubts your ability to attain this goal should just look at what you've already accomplished.

For two years, two months, and 21 days, you have denied Putin his goal of erasing Ukraine from the map and subsuming it into a greater Russia. You beat back Moscow's assault on Kyiv, and foiled his plot to install a puppet government. You've taken back more than half of the territory that Russia seized in the first weeks of its full-scale invasion. You pushed Russia's naval fleet out of the Black Sea without a fleet of your own.

Any territorial gains that Russia has made over the last year have come at tremendous cost to the Kremlin – in lives lost, in military equipment destroyed.

You've fought with courage and creativity, developing new weapons and new tactics to deploy them.

People from every region, every community, every institution have stepped forward to serve.

Including at this university, where students, alumni, teachers, and other employees of Kyiv Polytechnic have answered the call to defend their homeland – putting aside their

studies, their careers, their dreams, leaving loved ones behind.

Eighty-eight of those men and women gave their lives for Ukraine's freedom. Many of their names are etched in the memorial on campus that I just visited with the rector. They include an aspiring book illustrator, a cancer researcher, a marathon runner, a musician who opened Kyiv's first rock and – school of rock and roll. A veteran who lost both of his legs fighting against Putin's previous invasion in the Donbas, and volunteered to serve again when Putin re-invaded in 2022.

Like countless Ukrainians, these citizens never asked others to fight for them.

Indeed, all that Ukrainians have asked is that you get what you need to defend yourselves and your right to survive as a nation.

Your recent mobilization was a difficult decision – but a necessary one. The defenders who have so courageously held the line for more than two years need help. They need rest. This will allow both, while providing your military with additional troops to fight off bigger invading forces.

The mobilization will also allow you to harden your defenses, to build more units, to take the fight to Russian aggressors.

Now, our joint task is to secure Ukraine's sustained and permanent strategic advantage. So that Ukraine can not only deliver on the battlefield today, but deter and defend against future attacks.

As President Biden said, we want Ukraine to win – and we're committed to helping you do it.

In the immediate term, the United States and dozens of other countries will get Ukraine the assistance that you need – and we'll get it to you quickly.

We're going to help you hold off Russia's attacks, make it harder for them to strike you, and keep the Black Sea open so you can keep growing your economy and keep helping to feed the world.

We know that time is of the essence. That's why just one minute after Congress approved our massive aid package, President Biden sent ammunition, armored vehicles, missiles, and air defenses to Ukraine. Much more will be delivered to the battlefield in the coming days.

Other partners are also speeding up delivery of vital military assistance. Poland continues to facilitate the transfer of nearly all of the aid that's flowing into Ukraine, including hefty contributions of its own. The Czech Government is leading a Europe-wide effort to purchase half a million artillery shells. The UK recently announced a robust, multi-year military aid package. Australia committed new support for air defense.

A truly global coalition is behind you – made up of countries that see your security, and in turn European security, as a core security interest of their own.

Countries determined to defend the principles at the heart of the United Nations Charter – sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence.

Countries that know that allowing Putin to redraw borders by force will embolden would-be aggressors everywhere.



As Japan's Prime Minister Kishida said when addressing the U.S. Congress, "The Ukraine of today may be the East Asia of tomorrow."

Through the Defense Contact Group – which we set up shortly after Putin's invasion and is led by Secretary of Defense Austin – more than 50 countries are working hand in hand with Ukraine's military to identify and fill urgent needs.

We've developed "capability coalitions" – groups of allies and partners who are addressing needs crucial to Ukraine's defense. Denmark, the Netherlands, and the U.S. are leading the coalition on air force, Estonia and Luxembourg on information technology, Norway and the UK on maritime security. These coalitions are pumping more support into Ukraine right now.

As we help meet your immediate needs, we're also working together to help Ukraine build its future force.

Our goal is to lay a foundation so strong that it dispels any doubts about Ukraine's ability to impose punishing costs on those who try to take its territory.

As President Zelenskyy recently said, we're creating the security architecture "that Ukraine has never had, but has always needed."

We're bringing Ukraine closer to – and then into – NATO. We'll make sure that Ukraine's bridge to NATO is strong and well-lit.

At the last NATO Summit in Vilnius, Allies agreed that Ukraine won't have to complete a Membership Action Plan before being invited to join, shortening its onramp to the Alliance.

We launched the NATO-Ukraine Council, elevating our cooperation and joint decision making to the most intensive level NATO has to offer.

Ukraine is much more than a recipient of advice and assistance. Your warriors are confronting the greatest threat to transatlantic security since the end of the Cold War, and have as much experience as any on Earth in fighting the wars to come. You have a lot to teach the Alliance – and NATO will be more secure with your military by our side.

When we hold the Washington Summit in July, we'll take tangible steps to increase NATO's role in building a resilient, capable Ukrainian force, supporting its ongoing reforms, better integrating Ukraine into the Alliance.

And Ukraine's bridge to NATO will be bolstered by a series of mutually reinforcing bilateral security agreements.

We now have 32 countries who are negotiating these agreements with Ukraine, nine of which have already been completed.

These agreements send a clear message that Ukraine can count on its partners for sustainable, long-term support. That's not a matter to be debated from one year to the next – nor is it a commitment by any one country. It's guaranteed by a broad and powerful network of nations for the next decade.

Under our own ten-year agreement, the United States will support Ukraine's defense and security across a range of essential capabilities – from its air force to its air defense, from drones to demining. If Russia or anyone else were to attack Ukraine, we will work with Ukraine immediately – at the highest levels – to coordinate how to help you beat back the threat.

Our bilateral security agreement will accelerate our joint efforts to build and build up Ukraine's defense industrial base – so that you can produce artillery, ammunition, air defenses, and other crucial weapons you need here in Ukraine.

Ukraine's innovation and resourcefulness has been central to its success on the battlefield – figuring out how to use old Soviet launchers to fire U.S. and other Allied air defense missiles, manufacturing new kinds of air and naval drones that can effectively evade detection.

That same spirit has driven the growth of Ukraine's burgeoning defense industry, which counts more than 500 companies and hundreds of thousands of skilled employees. The key now is to ramp up production without losing that spirit of experimentation and adaptation that has fostered so many amazing breakthroughs. That will also help Ukraine's businesses attract more private investments to scale up – and increase Ukraine's potential to become a defense exporter in weapons and in training.

The U.S. has provided concrete support to build that industry. In December, we convened some 350 government and industry representatives from the United States and Europe to deepen defense industrial cooperation with Ukraine.

We created what we call a "Deal Team" with representatives from our Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce to help U.S. defense companies navigate the regulatory hurdles of investing in Ukraine's industry. American companies have already reached several major agreements to produce munitions in – and for – Ukraine. And more are in the works.

All of these measures – Ukraine’s increased integration with, and support from, NATO; a growing network of security agreements with individual countries; a booming defense industrial base – all of these will ensure that the moment conditions are met and Allies agree, Ukraine’s invitation and accession to the Alliance will be swift and smooth.

These measures will also ensure that if Russia is ever serious about negotiating a truly just and lasting peace with Ukraine, your military prowess will be formidable, your hand strong, your path to Europe and NATO secure.

Second, we will ensure that Ukraine’s economy not only survives, but thrives.

Ever since Putin failed to conquer Ukraine, he’s been trying to lay waste to its economy.

What he can’t have he wants to destroy.

And yet, just as Ukrainians have courageously held their ground on the battlefield, Ukrainian workers, entrepreneurs, business owners have kept the economy running.

From the farmers retrofitting tractors with artificial intelligence to sweep fields for landmines, to the workers repairing power stations to keep the lights and heat on, Ukrainians’ grit and ingenuity are fueling the economy. And they are the root of Ukraine’s extraordinary potential for the future.

In 2023, despite living with nearly a fifth of the country occupied by Russian forces and with your cities and industries under relentless bombardment, Ukraine’s GDP grew by 5 percent. Private investment increased by 17 percent. State revenue rose by 25

percent. In 2023, 37,000 new businesses registered in Ukraine – more than in the year leading up to the Russian invasion.

Over the last six months, Ukraine's steel factories have doubled their output. In April alone, Ukraine exported more than 13 million tons of goods by road, by rail, by sea, exceeding prewar levels.

Yet, as Ukrainians know so well, this economic dynamism hangs on our ability to provide security.

Patriots and other sophisticated air defenses – they do more than protect soldiers and save civilian lives. They create umbrellas of safety under which Ukrainian workers and entrepreneurs can adapt, innovate, build, and attract more foreign investment. That's why we're working relentlessly with allies and partners to procure more air defense, and to do it fast.

And just as security enables prosperity, prosperity enhances security. A more robust economy means that Ukraine can put more revenue into building and hardening your defenses.

Ukraine's economic renewal will also encourage a speedier return of refugees and internally displaced people, the vast majority of whom want to go home, bringing with them skills and resources that will be a boon for Ukraine's economy.

Together, Ukraine's partners have contributed \$85 billion in economic and development aid, providing a lifeline to Ukraine's government at a time when beating back Putin's invasion has forced the government to invest almost all of its revenue in self-defense.

That assistance means that first responders can charge into residential buildings to pull people from the rubble of Russian strikes. It means that doctors and nurses can care for wounded civilians and soldiers. It means that teachers can educate Ukraine's rising generations – the future of the country.

Now, for every dollar that the United States has put toward economic and development assistance for Ukraine, other donors have invested three more.

Japan and Korea are supplying generators and gas turbines to rebuild Ukraine's energy grid.

Italy, Latvia are helping address the massive humanitarian and environmental costs of Russia's destruction of the Kakhovka dam.

Norway is helping rebuild schools, hospitals, other essential services.

I could go on. We talk a lot about burden sharing. This is exactly what it looks like.

At the same time as we help Ukraine meet these immediate needs, we're again laying the foundation for Ukraine's long-term success through its full economic integration into Europe and the West.

The G7 is leading other countries, international financial institutions, the private sector, and foundations in boosting the number, the scale, the speed of transformative projects in rails, roads, ports, energy, digital, among other areas. Not after the war ends, but right now.

These projects will foster growth and increased revenues that allow Ukraine to shoulder more of its military costs. And as Ukraine prospers, we all stand to benefit from the goods and services it will provide and the innovations you will produce.

And yet, for all the resources our government and others will invest in Ukraine's infrastructure, in its innovation, in its people, Ukraine's economic transformation will ultimately be driven by the private sector.

So we're accelerating our efforts to help Ukraine attract more private investment, especially toward dynamic industries like technology, like energy, like agriculture, like defense. As more countries stop doing business with Russia, Ukraine is uniquely positioned to seize the opportunities that Putin has squandered.

We're helping to lower the cost of doing business in Ukraine. Thanks to the provision of war risk insurance, more grain is being exported through the Black Sea today than before the war, and Ukraine's breadbasket is once again feeding the world.

Now we're working with providers to expand war risk insurance to other areas like road and rail cargo. We're putting the U.S. Government backing on the table to shoulder part of the risk. That's the strongest signal that we can send that companies can do business safely and profitably in Ukraine.

Now, they don't need to take our word for it. Nine of ten American businesses in Ukraine are running at the same or higher capacity than they were before Putin's full invasion.

But for all the steps that we can take, the most powerful lever to draw more companies to Ukraine, more investment to Ukraine, lies in your hands and lies with

reform.

Ask any company in the United States, in Europe, in Asia what they are looking for when considering doing business in Ukraine. You'll hear pretty much the same thing from all of them: a strong and predictable regulatory environment; open and fair competition; transparency; the rule of law; effective anti-corruption measures.

In fact, the list includes many of the same reforms that Ukraine will need to make to get into the European Union.

The Ukrainian people, they're also demanding these changes. Ninety percent of Ukrainians want to fast-track economic reforms so that their country can more swiftly move into the European Union.

The Ukrainian Government has taken important steps to combat monopolies, to strengthen anti-money laundering tools, to liberalize its energy market, but more remains to be done.

EU membership will be a windfall for Ukraine and for the EU – enabling the free movement of goods, capital, services, workers, and people – to mutual benefit.

Ukraine will get full access to one of the most dynamic single markets in the world, hundreds of millions more consumers for key exports like grain, steel, eventually clean energy, and greater access to the financing it needs to rebuild and further power innovation.

For its part, the European Union will benefit from one of the region's most dynamic, skilled, and resilient economies. And Europe will have a stronger footing in the fields



that will drive the 21st century economy – like advanced IT and AI – where Ukraine has emerged already as a leader.

Now, there is one more crucial step that we can take: making Russia pay for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction.

What Putin destroyed, Russia should – and must – pay to rebuild. It's what international law demands; it's what the Ukrainian people deserve.

Our Congress has given us the power to seize Russian assets in the United States. We intend to use it. We're working with our G7 partners to see that Russia's immobilized sovereign assets are used to remedy the damage that Putin continues to cause.

The G7 can unlock billions of dollars – and send a powerful message to Putin that time is not on his side.

Finally, we will help the Ukrainian people fully realize their democratic aspirations.

For more than three decades, the Ukrainian people have been defending their right to choose the path to democracy, to Europe, to the West. That's the path that millions of Ukrainians from every region of the country voted for in 1991. It's what Ukrainians came to the Maidan to defend in 2004 and then again in 2014. And it's why you've fought back so tenaciously against Putin's full-scale invasion.

Your determination to write the future of your nation is why so many people around the world have been inspired by your fight, including so many Americans who now hang the yellow and blue flag next to the stars and stripes.

And that's why it's so important that Ukraine keeps taking the difficult steps to strengthen and consolidate your democracy.

Because the choices that you make – the kind of democracy that you build – will determine the strength and the staying power of the coalition by Ukraine's side.

That means not just passing reforms, but making sure they are implemented – and having a tangible impact on people's lives.

It means rooting out the scourge of corruption – once and for all.

Winning on the battlefield will prevent Ukraine from becoming part of Russia. Winning the war against corruption will keep Ukraine from becoming like Russia.

Ukraine's security is eroded if the resources for its military are siphoned off by individuals looking to enrich themselves.

Ukraine's economic potential is undercut if investors and innovators cannot count on a level playing field.

Ukraine's democracy is weakened if citizens stop believing that they can hold their government accountable and fix the flaws in their system from within.

No wonder Putin sought to weaponize corruption in Ukraine. He knows how powerful corruption can be in sowing division and distrust, undermining faith in government and its institutions. After all, he's been fine-tuning these tactics at home for nearly 25 years.

Ukrainians have been battling corruption for decades, and you have results to show for it. Ukraine is one of the few countries whose rating has been consistently rising in Transparency International's ranks over recent years, in no small part thanks to its incredibly tenacious and skilled anti-corruption activists, NGOs, independent media.

But more work remains to be done. Eight in ten Ukrainians still believe that there's one set of law for the elites and another for everyone else. And entrenched interests are doing their best to st

Ukraine's defenses against corruption have to be just as strong as its military defenses.

And we know what those defenses are: an independent judiciary; a free press; a vibrant, inclusive civil society; free and fair elections; independent, empowered anti-corruption investigators, prosecutors, and judges.

For decades, the United States and Europe have been helping you build these democratic pillars, from the bottom up. And we'll keep supporting you as you accelerate these reforms.

That's why we're working with the government and civil society groups to shore up Ukraine's election infrastructure. That way, as soon as Ukrainians agree that conditions allow, all Ukrainians – all Ukrainians, including those displaced by Russia's aggression – can exercise their right to vote. People in Ukraine and around the world can have confidence that the voting process is free, fair, secure.

Now, we sometimes hear that time is on Putin's side, that Russia's bigger population – Putin's willingness to throw more Russians into a meat grinder of his own making and

sink more of Russia's resources into trying to subjugate Ukraine – means that Russia can't lose.

In fact, Russia's been losing the battle to control Ukraine's destiny for 20 years. And Putin has it wrong – time is on Ukraine's side.

Because with each passing month, the work we're doing together moves Ukraine closer to membership in the European Union and NATO.

With each passing month, Ukraine signs more bilateral security agreements, ramps up its defense industrial base, churns out more advanced weapons, strengthens its economy, consolidates its democracy.

As the war goes on, Russia is going back in time. Ukraine is moving forward.

Here is why I'm confident that Ukraine will continue along that trajectory and ultimately succeed: Because of all of you, because of the people of Ukraine.

There's one thing that Putin has always underestimated but that Ukrainians understand to their core, and that's the fierceness – the fierceness – with which free people will defend their right to shape their own destiny.

The powerful dedication to one's neighbors, community, and nation that democracies stir in their citizens. A spirit born of love, not hate – of hope, not fear – of perpetual possibility.

We see it in the countless people across this nation who've opened their homes and their hearts to fellow citizens who've been displaced by Russia's brutal war.

We see it in the artist who paints the boarded-up windows in eastern Ukraine with the verses of Ukrainian poets, which she calls a special kind of armor.

In the bedrooms and basements, in the warehouses and farmhouses across this country that ordinary citizens have converted into donation centers for soldiers and for the displaced.

In the Ukrainian teachers who have set up makeshift schools in underground metro stations in Kharkiv, and start every day by telling their students, "I love you."

In 1847, the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko was arrested in Kyiv for daring to discuss with others the idea of building a more free society. He was sentenced to exile in the remote hinterlands of Russia.

As he signed off on the verdict, Tsar Nicholas added to Shevchenko's punishment, in his own hand, writing: "Under strictest surveillance, with prohibition to write and paint."

Shevchenko endured nearly a decade of brutal exile. His health deteriorated considerably. He pined constantly for Ukraine. But he managed to keep writing, even hiding tiny scraps of poetry in his shoes.

And he later wrote this in his diary: "For all this unspeakable grief, every kind of degradation and harshness passed by as though it hadn't touched me...not a single part of the inner me was changed."

For decades, Putin has caused unspeakable grief for the people of Ukraine. He's inflicted every kind of degradation and harshness.

And yet, like Shevchenko before you, what is inside Ukrainians, that has not changed.

The spirit of Ukrainians cannot be destroyed by a bomb or buried in a mass grave.

It cannot be bought with a bribe or repressed with a threat.

It is pure. It is unbreakable. And it is why Ukraine will succeed. Slava Ukraini! Thank you. (Applause.)

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