

more than 18,000 women and children. More than 65,000 Palestinians have been injured, and 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza have been driven from their homes. Ninety percent of Palestinians in Gaza are surviving on less than a meal per day. The supply of clean water is woefully insufficient. Medicines are in desperately short supply.

As we ponder this, we must realize that we must value the life of every child the same, no matter who they are or where they call home. If we keep that in mind, we will find the right answer to the enormous suffering in Gaza.

The Palestinian people are not Israel's enemy. The Palestinian people are not America's enemy. The United States must end our complicity in this humanitarian catastrophe. The United States must pivot from simply "requesting" that the Netanyahu government fix the inspection and deconfliction processes that are restricting humanitarian aid to using every asset at our disposal to directly deliver a massive amount of humanitarian aid into Gaza. We must act boldly. We must act swiftly. To do otherwise is completely unacceptable and immoral. The United States must act now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

UKRAINE

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I recently read a book by the great historian William L. Shirer—not "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," which we all read some years ago, but a book about the fall of the Third Republic. It was about France between the wars, between World War I and World War II.

One of the most haunting parts of that book—more than a chapter—was about the failure of the European allies, particularly France and Great Britain, to confront Hitler in the late 1930s when stopping him would have been relatively easy.

Whenever people write to my office, they say: Why are we supporting Ukraine?

I answer: Google Sudetenland, 1938.

We could have stopped a murderous dictator who was bent on geographic expansion at that time—I say "we," the West—at a relatively low cost. The result of not doing so was 55 million deaths. That chapter has haunted me because it echoes so strongly in what is happening now in Ukraine.

We are going to have one of the most important votes that any of us have ever taken—hopefully in the next few days—on support for the people of Ukraine, as they fight for our values. This vote will echo throughout the history of this country and the history of the world for generations, particularly if we fail to meet what I believe is a commitment to the people of Ukraine.

If we back away, walk away, pull out, and leave the Ukrainians without the resources to defend themselves, it will compromise the interests of this coun-

try for 50 years. It will be viewed as one of the greatest geopolitical mistakes of the 21st century. Why?

First, it will embolden Vladimir Putin. He told us in 2005 that he felt that the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He has said that, and he has pursued the remedy to that catastrophe—in his eyes—ever since.

In 2005, he said that the greatest catastrophe was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 2008, he gobbled up part of what had been an independent country of Georgia; in 2014, we all know, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine; in 2022, he tried for the rest of Ukraine.

And I have talked to people about this. I talked to a fellow on the street in Maine recently, and he said: Well, he will stop with Ukraine.

I said: The Finns don't think so. The Swedes don't think so. The Baltic countries don't think so. And the Finns and the Swedes know Russia. Finland has a long border with Russia. They know Russia better than any of us. And they decided to join NATO. They haven't been in NATO for almost 75 years. Why did they decide to join this year? It wasn't just a coincidence: Oh, yeah. Oh, let's join NATO.

No. They know what is coming. They see the danger of our failure to stop Vladimir Putin in Ukraine.

Maya Angelou once said: If someone tells you who they are, you should believe them. Putin has told us who he is. He is an autocrat. He is an authoritarian. And he wants to rebuild the Soviet Union. And I believe we wouldn't stop there.

I don't have much doubt about that, in 2022, when those Russian tanks were headed for Kyiv, if Zelenskyy had run and if they had succeeded in dismantling and amputating the head of the Ukrainian Government, the people of the Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia—would also be facing threats from Russia.

We have to take him at his word. He doesn't like the West. He despises the West. He thinks NATO is an aggressive alliance, somehow designed to invade or otherwise threaten Russia.

NATO doesn't want to invade Russia. NATO wants to keep the lines where they are. And that is one of the significances of the invasion of Ukraine. It was the first crossing of a border of this nature since World War II. The lines of Europe had been drawn. He crossed into a separate country.

He doesn't like the concept of democracy. He doesn't like the rule of law. He has a nostalgic view of the Soviet Union.

What we are looking at here is an important piece of a global struggle that is really the struggle of the 21st century, in my opinion. It is the struggle between the idea of democracy and the rule of law and the authoritarianism and totalitarianism. That is what is going on here. And Ukraine is the opening wedge in that debate.

I hate to call it a "debate." It is a conflict, where we have

authoritarianism and totalitarianism. And they are saying—Xi Jinping and Putin and others—are saying our system can't work; it is too messy; it is too complicated; it takes too long to make decisions. And they are betting—they are betting—that we don't have the staying power, that our democracy is too feckless to stick to our guns—in this case, literally. We would be rewarding naked aggression. Sudetenland 1938—the lesson we learned from the '30s was that appeasing dictators—appeasing authoritarians—just doesn't work.

But it wouldn't only embolden Putin; it would embolden Xi Jinping. Many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are gravely concerned about the future of Taiwan. It is inevitable that if we cut and run in Ukraine, that will change Xi Jinping's calculus about Taiwan.

He is going to say: Well, the Americans aren't going to stick. We don't have to worry too much about them helping the Taiwanese defend themselves.

That is going to make it easier for him to make that decision because he is going to look and take a lesson. We aren't as good as our word. We left. We walked away. He is watching this like a hawk—and not a friendly hawk.

Do you know who else is watching us like a hawk? Kim Jong Un. Just in the last few days, he is making threatening noises about South Korea and about war on the peninsula. Do you think he doesn't pay attention to what we are doing or not doing in Ukraine? It will be a signal to him: You can't count on those Americans. You can't count on them sticking with the South Koreans against aggression from the north.

It will embolden Iran. It will be the most—I hate to use the word "catastrophe" because that is what Putin used, but it would be a catastrophe for this country.

It would also shatter the confidence of our allies and our commitments. Our asymmetric advantage in the world right now is allies. China has customers. We have allies. Russia has Iran and North Korea. We have allies across the world. But our allies are going to say, Well, wait a minute, you are with us now, but when the going gets tough and you have to, maybe, have a budget supplemental to stick with us, you are going to walk away. And it is going to undermine the confidence of our allies.

And in places like Japan and South Korea, they may say: We can't count on the Americans to defend us. Therefore, maybe we better develop our own nuclear arms, for example. Maybe we can't count on the famous American nuclear umbrella: proliferation, heightened tension—a higher likelihood of these unthinkable weapons being used.

The other reason we can't walk away is, we are undermining our ability to negotiate and make deals in the future. Who the heck is going to deal with us if they know we can't be trusted, that we can't keep our word? People who

don't keep their word, nobody wants to deal with them. Nobody wants to make agreements. Nobody wants to make concessions. Nobody wants to work together.

"We will be your ally when times are good, but don't count on us when it gets tough. Don't count on us if it is not easy. Don't count on us when times are tough."

What an awful thing, what an incredible wound—self-inflicted wound—on this country, not only on our moral standing but on our practical, because the allies are going to go their own way because they say we can't be trusted. We would be abandoning the people of Ukraine who are literally dying for our values.

And I was doing a little historic research the other day. The Battle of Yorktown, 1788—the battle that ended the Revolutionary War and really made America—it was the key battle. It was the French fleet that bottled up Cornwallis at Yorktown. It was a French Army, along with the Continental Army, that won the Battle of Yorktown.

What if the French had said: It is going on too long, this war has gone too long; we are just going leave, we are to walk away? There is a reasonable chance we wouldn't be the United States of America today if our ally had walked away.

"Ally" means somebody you can count on. The whole idea of an alliance is that you can count on somebody when the times are tough. And we are sending ammunition; they are sending lives.

And, by the way, there is not much doubt if we cut and run, if we stop, if we cut off aid—it would be very difficult for the Ukrainians to continue to defend themselves. Russia is a bigger country. It has a bigger war machine, a bigger army, more wherewithal in terms of munitions. Let's not kid ourselves. If we walk away this week, it is highly likely that Russia will control Ukraine within a few months.

We can't have this fantasy that somehow this isn't a big deal and, oh, it will all get fixed. We are sending ammunition. They are sending lives. They are not asking us to fight their battles. They are not asking us to send troops. All they are asking is for the means to defend themselves.

And, by the way, most of the money that we are talking about here ends up going back into our economy for the arms and ammunition that we are sending them. It ends up back in our States, in our communities.

What is another argument not to do it? Corruption—I hear this—corruption. I have been there. I spent an entire day in Kyiv. And my principal mission was: What about corruption? How serious is it? And I met with everybody from Zelenskyy to officials who were running software to keep track of every bullet that goes into their war effort.

I am satisfied that it is one of the best and strongest and most closely ac-

counted for provisions of aid ever. Does that mean it is perfect or that there might be a scandal here or there? I don't think there will be. But nothing is ever perfect.

But I looked President Zelenskyy in the eye. My question was, If you have a scandal, Mr. President, it is going to kill us; we can't support you. And I didn't know what he was going to say. But his answer was, I know. And they are working on that.

And, by the way, another point that I think is important is, who is supporting—I hear this: We are giving all the money. What about the rest of Europe?

Well, actually, here is the chart of support for Ukraine. Here is Poland, and here is the United States. We are No. 14 in percentage of GDP in support of Ukraine. The blue line is actual military and financial support. The gray line is refugees.

In Poland, they have taken in millions of refugees. They are in their schools, in their communities. They have made an enormous commitment. It is up to 2.5 percent of their GDP. We are at .3 percent. So the idea that nobody else is contributing and Europe isn't doing its part is just bunk. I think that is very important to consider.

Democracy matters. Values matter. Freedom of expression, the rule of law matter. And that is what is at stake. That is the point I am trying to make. This is a historic struggle between authoritarianism, arbitrariness, surveillance, and the radical idea that people can govern themselves. That is what this is all about. This is a battle for the soul of our democracy in the world.

Democracy is an anomaly in world history. It is unusual that the norm is dictators, Pharaohs, Emperors, Kings. What we are doing in this country is an anomaly. But it is a glorious idea. It is a huge, radical idea. It was radical in 1776. It had to be fought for in 1865. And it had to be fought for in the plains of Europe and the Pacific in World War II. It is worth fighting for. And, in this case, we don't even have to do the fighting; we just have to supply the arms and ammunition. So I have a question for my colleagues: When the history of this day is written, as it surely will be, do you really want to be recorded as being on the side of Vladimir Putin? All those in favor of Putin, say aye. That is what is at stake here.

Or on the side of China, as they contemplate the invasion of Taiwan, all those in favor of invading Taiwan, say aye.

No, we don't want that. But history is going to record this vote as one of the most important votes that any of us has ever made.

One final note—my wife says I say "finally" too much; it gets people's hopes up.

Finally, people say: Well, secure our border before we worry about Ukraine's border.

OK, a group of the best of our Senate have been working on that for months.

Apparently, they have come to an agreement. I am told by those who know that it is the strongest border security legislation in something like 40 years. So we have that.

Do you want to secure our border before we do Ukraine? Hey, we can do them both in this bill. We can do them both in this bill. And if we don't do the border now, who knows when this opportunity will come again.

The dictators are betting we can't do it. They are betting against our system. They are betting that democracy can't work, that we can't make tough decisions and tough commitments and live up to them.

I want to stand on the side of resisting authoritarianism, on the side of democracy, on the side of the values that the country has stood for and that people have been fighting for, for 250 years.

There is a wonderful hymn that we sing in my church, and it starts out like this, and it just seemed to me to fit the situation so well:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side.

This is our moment: "Once to every man and woman and nation comes the moment to decide."

On December 1, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln came to the Congress, and he was trying to shake them out of the politics—and, by the way, the politics is what we are talking about here, politics—to focus on the crisis of the Civil War and what it really meant. And he wanted to bring that home to the Members of Congress, and here is how he ended that speech. On December 1, 1862, here is what Abraham Lincoln said:

[My] fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.

"The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation."

Mr. President, I deeply hope we choose honor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, a huge thanks to my colleague from Maine and for his scholarly and passionate presentation of the challenge that we face at this moment. And, as he summarized the end, may we choose honor and sustain our support and partnership with the people of Ukraine.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 181 and 487 through 505, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force,