



Mateship vital for Ukraine victory – and a safer world

[VASYL MYROSHNYCHENKO](#), The Australian, 24 February 2023



[Anthony Albanese with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv in July 2022.](#)

[Picture: AFP](#)

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022, a year ago now, Australia was one of the first nations to condemn the attack and step up for Ukraine.

Let’s recall Australia’s fast and firm stance when international commentators – and certainly Vladimir Putin’s propagandists – said Kyiv would fall in three days. A year on, the capital stands strong, even as Russia has intentionally damaged or destroyed 1100 of Ukraine’s medical facilities and 3000 of its schools, and tried to permanently put Ukrainians into the dark and cold.

Indeed, on the war’s first day, Australia was crystal clear and stated its “staunch support for Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity – the bedrock principles of a rules-based world order”.

Australia’s stance wasn’t surprising to Ukrainians, who have long admired this remarkable country. We knew Australians and their governments have long stood up to bullies, taken seriously their international responsibilities, and maintained strong commitment to human rights and democracy. Australians have also experienced Russian terror; together, we mourn and seek justice for the 38 innocent Australians on Malaysia Airlines flight MH17.

Military aid to Ukraine – some \$475m worth or 1 per cent of Australia’s defence budget – by the commonwealth government shows Australians have big hearts and stand up for what’s right. Doing the right thing is naturally ingrained in Aussies, and we don’t take that for granted.

The government of Ukraine is very grateful for Australia’s material and moral support. President Volodymyr Zelensky made this clear to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on the occasion of his courageous visit to Kyiv last July. In turn, Prime Minister Albanese’s words resonated with Ukrainians when he said his visit “sends a clear message that democratic nations like Australia stand side by side with the Ukrainian people in their time of need ... The road ahead is hard, but I am confident Ukraine will prevail”.

Ukraine’s Ambassador to Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko says last year was "about defending Ukraine" but this... year is about "helping Ukraine win". “It’s helping democracy win and Australia traditionally has always demonstrated a largest strength from what its size would dictate,” Mr Myroshnychenko told Sky News host Sharri Markson. “This is [More](#)

This is real leadership. And we thank thousands of everyday Australians who have generously donated to humanitarian initiatives that lift our people.

Australians tell me they appreciate that Ukraine’s campaign to face up to and prevail over Russia is important for the world. It’s about opposing aggression and authoritarianism while striving for peace, prosperity and a strong rules-based system. As part of that, we have leveraged Australia’s military support to enable successive battlefield victories at Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson.

Aussie Bushmasters are a prime example. Every day, they are being used to evacuate wounded personnel from the frontlines; to rush soldiers to where they are needed to block renewed Russian incursions in eastern Ukraine, and; to tow away captured Russian tanks. They are handy, hardy “jacks of all trades” in a war where Ukrainian troops rely on mobility, flexibility, ingenuity and absolute bravery to win. I think of them as the Anzac spirit on four wheels and they make a big difference.

Even after the displacement of some 16 million Ukrainians, including 6000 refugees warmly welcomed to Australia, the war is now at a very bloody stage. After a long winter of our ammunition depleting and the need for more equipment, the Russians have had the chance to dig in, switch tactics and escalate. This is their predictable playbook when the pressure is off or they sense a lack of Western resolve.

The Ukrainians have “impressed the world,” says Internet 2.0 co-founder Robert Potter. “The Ukrainian army today...

But we know our major allies and friends will support us and stand with us. With that support, we know we will not only defend our lands, but take them back for our people.

Right now, however, Russian forces, including thousands of Wagnerite mercenaries, are using up to 20,000 rounds of artillery shells every day – or 15 every minute – against Ukrainian positions and cities. Russian rockets worth \$6m each are fired from aircraft carriers into apartment buildings in places such as Dnipro and Mykolayiv. Kids die in their beds.

It’s become a truism: if Russia stops fighting, there is no war; if Ukraine stops fighting, there is no Ukraine. And the Western values it fights for will have been sacrificed and scuttled. The door will then be open to not only full-scale invasion but full-scale genocide.

That’s why we must maintain our resolve and bring this conflict to an end – a Ukrainian victory – as soon as possible. It is not in Australia’s or Ukraine’s interest that this war settles into a bloody, protracted stalemate. We cannot settle for that. The war needs to be won not only

to make Ukraine and the world safer again but to end Russia's desire to destroy others for glory and gain.

Now moving into the second year of the war, you have our commitment that the values Australians and Ukrainians share will be strongly protected by Ukraine. When you invest in us – politically, emotionally and materially – you invest in a safer, democratic world. Our victory, with Australia's steadfast support, will be the free world's victory. Thank you for your mateship and trust.

Vasyl Myroshnychenko has been Ukrainian ambassador to Australia since March last year.