

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's address to the Ukrainian Parliament: 3 May 2022

President Zelenskyy, Mr Chairman, members of the Verkhovna Rada

It is a big honour for me to address you at this crucial moment in history and I salute the courage with which you are meeting, the way you have continued to meet, in spite of a barbaric onslaught on your freedoms

Day after day missiles and bombs continue to rain on the innocent people of Ukraine

In the south and the east of your wonderful country, Putin continues with his grotesque and illegal campaign to take and hold Ukrainian soil

And his soldiers no longer have the excuse of not knowing what they are doing

They are committing war crimes, and their atrocities emerge wherever they are forced to retreat – as we've seen at Bucha, at Irpin at Hostomel and many other places

We in the UK will do whatever we can to hold them to account for these war crimes

and in this moment of uncertainty, of continuing fear and doubt

I have one message for you today:

Ukraine will win

Ukraine will be free

And I tell you why I believe you will succeed, members of the Rada

When they came to me last year, and they said that the evidence was now overwhelming that Putin was planning an invasion

and we could see his Battalion Tactical Groups – well over 100 of them – gathering on the border

I also, I remember a sense of horror but also of puzzlement.

Because I had been to Kyiv on previous visits – and I actually met some of you and I had stood in the Maidan and seen the tributes to those who had given their lives to protect Ukraine against Russian aggression

and I've wandered the lovely streets of your capital

and I've seen enough about Ukrainian freedom to know that the Kremlin was making a fundamental miscalculation, a terrible mistake

and I told anyone I knew, anyone who would listen that Ukraine would fight and Ukraine would be right

and yet there were some who believed the Kremlin propaganda that Russian armour would be like an irresistible force going like a knife through butter,

and that Kyiv would fall within days

Do you remember they said that? And people rang Volodymyr and offered him safe passage out of the country, and he said – no thanks

and that this Rada of yours would have to be reformed outside Ukraine maybe in Poland or even in London perhaps

and I refused to believe it.

And today you have proved them completely wrong, every one of those military experts who said Ukraine would fall

Your farmers kidnapped Russian tanks with their tractors

Your pensioners told Russian soldiers to hop as we say, although they may have used more colourful language

Even in the parts of Ukraine that were temporarily captured, your populations, your indomitable populations turned out to protest, day after day

And though your soldiers were always outnumbered – three to one it is now – they fought with the energy and courage of lions

You have beaten them back from Kyiv

You have exploded the myth of Putin's invincibility and you have written one of the most glorious chapters in military history and in the life of your country

The so-called irresistible force of Putin's war machine has broken on the immovable object of Ukrainian patriotism and love of country

This is Ukraine's finest hour, that will be remembered and recounted for generations to come.

Your children and grandchildren will say that Ukrainians taught the world that the brute force of an aggressor counts for nothing against the moral force of a people determined to be free.

They will say that Ukrainians proved by their tenacity and sacrifice that tanks and guns cannot suppress a nation fighting for its independence,

and that is why I believe that Ukraine will win

You have proved the old saying – it's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog – which is an old English saying, I'm not sure how well that translates in Ukrainian but you get what I'm trying to say.

And as you turned the Russian army back from the gates of Kyiv, you not only accomplished the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century,

you achieved something deeper and perhaps equally significant.

You exposed Putin's historic folly, the gigantic error that only an autocrat can make.

Because when a leader rules by fear, rigs elections, jails critics, gags the media, and listens just to sycophants,

when there is no limit on his power = that is when he makes catastrophic mistakes.

And it is precisely because we understand this danger in Britain and in Ukraine – precisely because we are democracies, and because we have a free media, the rule of law, free elections and robust parliaments, such as your own,

we know that these are the best protections against the perils of arbitrary power.

When an autocrat deliberately destroys these institutions, he might look as though he is strong and some people might even believe it,

but he is sowing the seeds of catastrophe, for himself and for his country,

because there will be nothing to prevent him committing another terrible mistake. Putin's mistake was to invade Ukraine, and the carcasses of Russian armour littering your fields and streets are monuments not only to his folly, but to the dangers of autocracy itself.

What he has done is an advertisement for democracy.

On a day when Putin thought he would be in charge of Kyiv, I had the honour of being able to visit your wonderful city,

and I saw the defiance of the people of Ukraine,

I know so much about the terrible price that Ukrainians have paid and are paying for your heroism.

Today, at least one Ukrainian in every four has been driven from their homes, and it is a horrifying fact that two thirds of all Ukrainian children are now refugees, whether inside the country or elsewhere.

So no outsider like me can speak lightly about how the conflict could be settled, if only Ukraine would relinquish this or that piece of territory or

we find some compromise for Vladimir Putin.

We know what happens to the people left in the in clutches of this invader.

And we who are your friends must be humble about what happened in in 2014, because Ukraine was invaded before for the first time, when Crimea was taken from Ukraine and the war in the Donbas began

The truth is that we were too slow to grasp what was really happening and we collectively failed to impose the sanctions then that we should have put on Vladimir Putin.

We cannot make the same mistake again.

And it is precisely because of your valour your courage your sacrifice that Ukrainians now control your own destiny:

you are the masters of your fate, and no-one can or should impose anything on Ukrainians.

We in the UK will be guided by you and we are proud to be your friends,

I am proud to say our Ambassador, Melinda Simmons, is back in Kyiv to reopen our embassy.

In January of course– just before Putin launched his onslaught – we sent you planeloads of anti-tank missiles, the NLAWS which I think have become popular in Kyiv,

and we have intensified that vital effort, working with dozens of countries, helping to coordinate this ever- bigger supply line,

dispatching thousands of weapons of many kinds, including tanks now and armoured vehicles.

In the coming weeks, we in the UK will send you Brimstone anti-ship missiles and Stormer anti-aircraft systems.

We are providing armoured vehicles to evacuate civilians from areas under attack and protect officials – what Volodymyr mentioned to me in our most recent call – while they maintain critical infrastructure.

And I can announce today from the UK government a new package of support totalling £300 million, including radars to pinpoint the artillery bombarding your cities, heavy lift drones to supply your forces, and thousands of night vision devices.

We will carry on supplying Ukraine, alongside your other friends, with weapons, funding and humanitarian aid,

until we have achieved our long-term goal, which must be so to fortify Ukraine that no-one will ever dare to attack you again.

Here in the UK, in my country, you will see Ukrainian flags flying from church spires and in shop windows

You see Ukrainian ribbons on the lapels of people up and down the country

There are many reasons your country has evoked such astonishing sympathy in the British people

It is a conflict that has no moral ambiguities or no grey areas

This is about the right of Ukrainians to protect themselves against Putin's violent and murderous aggression

It is about Ukraine's right to independence and national self-determination, against Putin's deranged imperialist revanchism

It is about Ukrainian democracy against Putin's tyranny

It is about freedom versus oppression

It is about right versus wrong

It is about good versus evil

And that is why Ukraine must win

And when we look at the heroism of the Ukrainian people and the bravery of your leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy – we know that Ukraine will win

And we in the UK will do everything we can to restore a free sovereign and independent Ukraine

Thank you all very much for listening to me today, and slava Ukraini!