

VICTORY IN UKRAINE = EXAMPLE FOR ISRAEL

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War is no substitute for political strategy. As the great Clausewitz told us, war is politics by other means.

Russia's attack against Ukraine and Hamas' attack on Israel are different in so many ways. Ukraine faced an unprovoked and brutal attack by an adversary that is three times its size while Israel faced a horrific attack against its civilian population by an army of Hamas fighters that is barely one-fifth the size of Israel's. Hamas compensates for this asymmetry in size by hiding among civilians and underground in a purpose-built maze of tunnels. In neither case is the military strategy obvious. On the contrary, in both cases it is fraught with risk.

But even a successful military strategy in the air, at sea, on the ground or under the ground is not enough to ensure victory. Ukraine's leaders have understood that from the beginning and have devoted precious time and resources to crafting as wide a coalition as possible in support of their political objective of a fully sovereign Ukraine, free of Russian occupation. Sustaining that kind of political coalition is no easy task. And it has come at a cost on the battlefield. More than once, it has slowed down the supply of weapons to the battlefield as Ukraine's allies struggled to manage dissent amongst themselves.

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But Ukraine's leaders understand that to achieve their political objectives, they must maintain the support of the largest possible coalition of democracies. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has spent untold time and energy appealing for support to

leaders and societies on every continent. Doing so is as important as succeeding on the battlefield. Indeed, the two are inseparable.

Israel faces the same political challenge. It must craft its battlefield strategy so that it can sustain the support of democratic societies for its political - not military - objective of removing Hamas as the governing authority of the Palestinian people in Gaza. That means, first of all, going to extraordinary lengths to meet the humanitarian needs of people trapped between Hamas that hides among them and the IDF. It means making sure that humanitarian assistance gets through and gets through quickly where it is desperately needed. It means forswearing some targets where people have gathered in large numbers to seek shelter. It means not using technologies that are likely to kill large numbers of civilians. If Israel does not do that, it loses any chance of maintaining the support of allies that will be critical as the military campaign continues.

Protecting civilians will not be enough. Israel must do more. There is no road to political victory unless the Palestinian people can see a path -- at the end of this terrible violence -- to an independent state that can live side-by-side with Israel. Without that hope, indeed without that commitment, there is no reason for Palestinians to take the political risk to separate themselves from Hamas. And without that commitment, Israel will not sustain the support of its democratic allies.

Wars do create political opportunities, often in unexpected ways. Recently, there have been conversations that suggest that some Palestinians from outside Gaza may be willing to take that political risk, but only if there is a firm commitment by Israel's government and by Israel's allies to an independent state of Palestine that agrees to live in

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peace alongside Israel. That political commitment would, it is clear, shatter the current coalition government in Israel. But without that commitment, there is no path to victory on the battlefield.

Despite all the changes on the modern battlefield, despite advanced technologies that change both offense and defense, Clausewitz, writing so long ago, still got it right. War is politics by other means and all wars require a political strategy of victory.



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