

The Mad King Of Kyiv: Why Zelensky Can't Afford To End The War

By John Mac Ghlion - The Hill. February, 2025

Not long ago, Volodymyr Zelensky was a comedian in Ukraine. He made his living playing a fictional president on television. Then, by a twist of fate, he became the real thing. And before he had time to adjust to the role, history threw him onto the world's stage, catapulting him from a middling entertainer into an international symbol of resistance.

Overnight, the media transformed him into the embodiment of courage, the Churchill of Kyiv, the man who refused to flee, the warrior standing against tyranny. But what if this narrative is entirely false? What if Zelensky, rather than being the hero in this story, is actually the man who won't allow the war to end — not for the good of his people, but because peace would mean his own downfall?

A good leader prioritizes the survival of his nation. He knows when to fight, and more importantly, he knows when to negotiate. Zelensky, however, has made it clear that his power depends on war, and war alone.

It is no coincidence that as Ukraine's battlefield prospects worsen, as soldiers defect, as forced conscription spirals into something resembling kidnapping, Zelensky has once again extended martial law. No elections. No peace talks. No escape. Because if the war ends, so does his presidency. And this, more than anything, explains why the war must go on.

The mainstream media — particularly in the West — does not allow for nuance. The world must be simple: Putin is the villain, Zelensky is the hero.

That is the framework. That is the script. Anything outside of this binary is "pro-Russian propaganda." Yet reality is not a comic book; it's not a Marvel movie. Zelensky is not some saintly soldier defending democracy. In fact, Ukraine barely resembles a democracy at all.

Since Russia's invasion in 2022, Zelensky had banned several opposition parties, banned certain media outlets and postponed elections with the justification that wartime voting is "impossible." Impossible for whom? For the soldiers in the trenches, or for the civilians now living under indefinite martial law?

Ukraine is in a desperate position. The country's losses are catastrophic. Manpower is running thin, which is why Zelensky has resorted to hunting men down in the streets. There are countless reports of Ukrainian men being dragged from cafes and nightclubs and thrown into vans like criminals.

Martial law means there is no way out. You cannot leave the country. You cannot refuse. This is not the mark of a confident government. This is the behavior of a desperate regime trying to hold itself together by force.

And yet the war must continue. It is the only thing keeping Zelensky in power. If he were to call elections, he would likely lose. Support for him is falling. The longer this drags on, the more obvious it becomes that Ukraine cannot win — not in any meaningful sense. This is not 2022. The optimism of those early months, when the world believed Ukraine might push Russia back, is gone. Even the U.S., Ukraine's biggest backer, is slowly dialing down support, with Washington insiders admitting that a total Ukrainian victory is no longer the goal.

The Zelensky saga is not new. History is filled with leaders who refused to let go, clinging to power even as their nations crumbled around them. There was Napoleon Bonaparte, who, after leading France to disaster in Russia, could have accepted the inevitable. Instead, he chose more war, dragging his exhausted nation into further bloodshed before his final exile.

More recently, Saddam Hussein held onto his dictatorship long after Iraq had been battered by sanctions and strife, ruling over a devastated country rather than relinquishing control. Muammar Gaddafi could have sought asylum and spared Libya from a bloody collapse, but his ego demanded he fight to the bitter end, ultimately leaving him to be dragged down the street and executed. Robert Mugabe plundered Zimbabwe while his people starved, stretching his rule for decades until even his own party could no longer tolerate the wreckage.

Zelensky joins a long line of leaders who prioritize their own well-being over the well-being of their nations. This represents a pathological form of selfishness, where self-preservation comes at any cost, even if it means thousands more women and children will die. And they will. Ukraine is being fed into a meat grinder. Yet, perversely, the illusion must be maintained.

And the media, ever compliant, helps sell the fiction — the indomitable Zelensky, the unbreakable Ukraine, the noble fight for democracy. It is a clean, simple story, easy to digest, and easy to justify. Another weapons shipment. Another aid package. Another extension of a catastrophic conflict that should have ended long ago. **But objective reality does not care for emotionally charged narratives. It is cold. It is brutal. And the hard truth is this: Ukraine is losing, and Zelensky is making sure it keeps losing.**

A rational leader would see the writing on the wall, confront the inevitable, and make the painful but necessary choice to negotiate — to salvage what remains rather than reduce the nation to nothing but ashes. But Zelensky has chosen a different path, one so often walked by men drunk on power and blind to consequence. And for that, Ukraine will bleed — until there is no blood left to spill.