

# The Counsel of Timidity Should Be Ignored

By Don Sutherland

Western military aid flowing into Ukraine coupled with actionable intelligence to assist Ukrainian efforts is increasing the possibility of a Ukrainian victory that would oust invading Russian forces. Yet, some still try to yank the proverbial rug from under the effort, even as the decisive and desired inflection point approaches.

John Mearsheimer, who largely blames the West for Russia's invasion, asserts that the possibility of Russia's "decisive defeat" increases the risk of its using tactical nuclear weapons. The implied remedy? Stop now! It's too dangerous to press on.

Little could be more misguided or more dangerous. Such counsel would set a precedent where raw power tramples bedrock principles of international law, shatters the liberal post-World War II order, and supplants any notions of justice. Then, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who knew much of totalitarian oppression explained, the world would be "inundated by the brazen conviction that power can do anything, justice nothing."

The Laws of War—Hague and Geneva Conventions alike? Gone. Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Meaningless. Territorial integrity and national sovereignty? Subject to the whim of stronger powers.

Solzhenitsyn had much to say about the "Spirit of Munich" that pervades the counsel of fear-driven capitulation that is worth recounting. In his Nobel lecture, he told his audience:

*The spirit of Munich is a sickness of the will of successful people, it is the daily condition of those who have given themselves up to the thirst after prosperity at any price, to material well-being as the chief goal of earthly existence. Such people—and there are many in today's world—elect passivity and retreat, just so as their accustomed life might drag on a bit longer, just so as not to step over the threshold of hardship today—and tomorrow, you'll see, it will all be all right. (But it will never be all right! The price of cowardice will only be evil; we shall reap courage and victory only when we dare to make sacrifices.)*

In a free society, one cannot suppress voices such as Mearsheimer's nor should one attempt to do so. However, one is free to tune out their bad advice—advice that is more speculation than based on empirical evidence—when devising policy.

Then, there would be a better chance that policy continuity could be sustained until Ukraine achieves its victory. Following that victory, a world in which democracy thrives, free peoples flourish, and basic human rights are enjoyed by all, would be just a bit closer to realization.