

10 Leadership Lessons We Can Learn from Ukrainian President Zelensky

The historic global rise of Ukrainian President Zelensky is replete with applicable leadership lessons for all. His story is so compelling thus far that at this point, in my opinion, he is the leading candidate for TIME magazine's "Person of the Year."

The following are 10 leadership lessons based upon observing his life:

- 1. It is never too late to pivot toward your greater purpose:** Zelensky, born January 25, 1978, is a former Ukrainian actor and comedian who is the sixth and current president of Ukraine. At about the age of 41, he pivoted, shifting his career and defeated an incumbent, Petro Poroshenko, becoming the president of Ukraine in 2019. Hence, he completely redirected his life at mid-age, showing that it is never too late to redefine yourself and fulfill your highest purpose.
- 2. You never know your leadership capacity until a crisis hits:** As Winston Churchill manifested his greatness during WWII and was rejected during peacetime, Zelensky's courage and leadership abilities have manifested during the greatest crisis in Europe since WWII. History has shown that a huge crisis usually reveals the destiny and capability of its leaders.
- 3. Life is not worth living if it's not worth dying for something:** A U.S official confirmed that Ukraine President Zelensky rejected an offer from the American government to evacuate Kyiv. A senior American intelligence official with direct knowledge of the conversation quoted the president who said, "the fight is here" and that he needed anti-tank

ammunition, "not a ride." He refused to escape despite the fact there have been numerous assassination attempts upon his life, in addition to the threat of war, which also directly impacts his family. Thus, Zelensky has demonstrated that he will die for his nation's freedom.

4. Despite all odds, take your stand for truth: When a great leader strongly believes in something, his commitment to the cause overcomes any inherent fear that can cause him to overthink or calculate based on the percentages for success and failure. He and Ukraine are like David fighting the Goliath-like Russian army to many. Nobody gave the Ukrainian army much of a chance, yet they are still resisting the Russian military, both on the ground and in the air, at the time of this writing!

5. One person's courage can inspire billions of people: Zelensky and his beloved Ukraine have already inspired billions of people worldwide, whether they ultimately win or lose the war! Consequently, Vladimir Putin and Russia have already become worldwide pariahs attacking a sovereign nation.

6. Never negotiate a compromise with your enemy: When Russian President Putin offered to negotiate with Zelensky, the Ukrainian president refused to negotiate any deals without a ceasefire and the immediate pullout of all Russian troops. He knew that anything less than that was not worth negotiating since it would have compromised their national sovereignty.

7. You must stand for truth, even if all your allies abandon you: Zelensky has taken a bold stand against Russia, despite feeling abandoned by the United States and other western nations who pledged their military support. Some of their aid came much too late!

8. Never take the easy way out if it compromises you: Zelensky could have compromised before the Russian attack by pledging that Ukraine would never join NATO. He could have also escaped

with his family before the war broke out. However, he probably would not have been able to live with himself if he did not remain faithful to his values.

9. Peace and safety should not be the ultimate priority:

Unfortunately, history has illustrated that many people would surrender their freedom for peace and safety. Conversely, the American Revolutionary War was won because they had people like Patrick Henry, who famously said in a speech, "Give me liberty or give me death!" Similarly, during one Zoom meeting, President Zelensky told world leaders that that might be the last time they see him alive. If his highest priority were merely peace and safety, he would have immediately surrendered his nation to Russia when the war commenced. Thankfully, he exhibits the attitude of one who values freedom over mere peace and safety!

10. When you take a stand, others will come out of hiding to support you:

A few days ago, after an inspiring speech from President Zelensky, approximately 16,000 fighters from foreign nations volunteered to fight for Ukraine. This new development enabled the Ukrainian army to increase its fighting and weapons capacity with people they never knew before. This happened because people often will follow a compelling vision from inspired visionary leaders who will stand despite the odds stacked against them. {eoa}

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