

Ukrainians are dying for democracy. In America, Republicans won't stand up to Trump.

John Bridgeland, CNN March 27, 2022

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The contrast now between Ukraine and the United States is striking, but in an unexpected way – in the defense of democracy.

The world is seeing the bravery of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people, who are willing to die to defend their democracy and freedom. When offered a flight out of the country, President Zelenskyy and his family chose to stay.

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As Russian tanks roll into Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, Ukrainians are using their bodies to stop them, making Molotov cocktails to defend their cities and building barricades with whatever they can assemble to repel the attacks. No cost is too high to defend their democracy and beloved Ukraine.

Ironically, the threat to democracy in America is coming from our own. When America was [confronted by an insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021](#), incited by a president who was trying to overturn an election, the majority of Republican senators and members of Congress cowered and failed to check President Donald Trump's power.

This was striking, given that [seven people died, including three Capitol police officers, and that 140 Capitol police officers were injured](#). Had the rioters penetrated sooner into the House and Senate chambers, members of Congress and the vice president, who was the subject of rioters chanting, "[hang Mike Pence](#)," could have lost their lives.

By failing to check power that threatened the foundation of our democracy, these Republican senators and representatives became enablers of Trump in their quest to maintain their own political power.

There were signals of the undercutting of our democracy along the way – a rebuke of the president from the chief justice of the United States, hearings and votes when the president broke the law by withholding military aid from Ukraine for information on his political opponent, and other violations of democratic norms. There were repeated moments to check presidential power and too many Republican policymakers turned a blind eye, putting their political ambitions ahead of our democracy.

The lurch toward authoritarian rule in America – from within – in the very country that inspired other countries to create democracies is a startling contrast to the brave patriots in Ukraine we see daily on our television screens. For the Ukrainians and their leadership, they are willing to die for their freedoms – to defend a cause greater than self.

In America, too many of our policymakers are not willing to risk the ire of their base to defend our system – not willing to sacrifice perceived self-interest for democracy itself. Americans themselves value their freedom and expect their leaders to defend it. Thankfully, many leaders did.

7 senators showed courage

The seven Republicans in the U.S. Senate who by voting to convict Trump decided to honor their constitutional oaths, protect democracy first and suffer whatever consequences are worth calling out for their bravery: Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania. They are profiles in courage and deserve our praise.

Ten House Republicans – Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington, Liz Cheney of Wyoming, Anthony Gonzalez of Ohio, John Katko of New York, Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, Peter Meijer of Michigan, Dan Newhouse of Washington, Tom Rice of South Carolina, Fred Upton of Michigan and David Valadao of California – stood up as well to vote for impeachment because they believe no president regardless of political party should overturn an election, foment insurrection and deny the will of the people.

As Gen. Colin Powell said, “It’s ‘we the people,’ not ‘me the president.’ ” No one – not even the president – is above the rule of law.