

## Time for a Robust Defense of Principles

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Since 2011, My wife and I, along with the Jay Lapeyre family of New Orleans, have continued to sponsor a Free Market Civil Discourse Speaker Series. We hold an event for the public and organize our designated speakers to lecture at several prominent high schools throughout the New Orleans area. This year's speaker was Dr. Tom Palmer, Executive Vice President for International Programs at the Atlas Network and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. Tom has been courageously delivering medical supplies into the interior of Ukraine and bringing suffering refugees out. The subject of the lecture was "The Ukraine Fight is for Freedom: Its own and the World's." So, is the Ukrainian fight for their freedom truly connected to our own cherished liberty?

Palmer makes the compelling case that the world is witnessing a reemergence of collectivist ideologies consisting of dictatorship, violence, statism and raw state power versus a civilization of tolerance, freedom, open ideas, and the rule of law. He states that "the Russian state is building its own Orwellian version of 'Oligarchical Collectivism' and must be stopped."

This collectivist approach, according to Palmer, is serving as a powerful ideological spur to war. Under this track, the consent of the people is irrelevant. The only "truth" is the one put forth by the state. And the justification of violence and war on an innocent, peaceful nation is through vilification of the target, and propagating falsehoods through state-owned media. In the case of Ukraine, Putin claims that it has been "Nazified," regardless of the small fact that Ukraine President Zelensky is Jewish. Russian leadership uses this absurd "Nazism" claim to insist that Ukraine must therefore be "purified." The "purification" goal harkens back to Hitler and Fascism while the "collective" narrative adopts Stalin and Communism. Quite a combo!

In Putin's mind, he and his cabal cannot allow a functioning democracy subject to the rule of law as a counter example to his dictatorship at the border. This Russian hegemonic appetite threatens all Eastern Europe with real potential to spread further. The original plan, likely hatched with China dictator, Xi Jinping, during the Beijing Olympic games, was for Putin to quickly succeed in Ukraine, providing the green light for Xi to launch an assault on Taiwan. But the two reputed masterminds overestimated Russia's military prowess, underestimated the courage and ability of the Ukrainians, and misjudged the world's subsequent mobilization in defense of liberty. Putin's currently botched takeover of Ukraine has likely slowed Xi's voracious appetite to attack Taiwan. And the Chinese now likely view a weak Russia as an opportunity to commence a

possible expansion into Eastern Russia. Palmer astutely describes this current dictatorial dilemma as akin to “two scorpions in a glass jar just waiting to now sting the other.”

Palmer eloquently discusses the global conflict underway between “Oligarchical Collectivism” and the human ideal and quest for liberty and free markets, which lead to unparalleled prosperity. Facts exist and allowing distortions between right and wrong should be rejected. Yes, we live in an imperfect society, but a free society based on the rule of law. We evolve and historically make the necessary changes for improvement. We have multiple media outlets- watch Fox or CNN, read the Wall Street Journal or New York Times. In Putin’s Russia, there is no free media, it’s all state owned. Palmer vigilantly warns against “what aboutism” in which the opponents to civilized society attempt to portray a moral symmetry between freedom and dictatorship. This effort at relativism- to see everything the same as everything else- is perilous as it attempts to connect a moral equivalence to every instance. Palmer correctly asserts that is vital to stand up for moral principles and virtues, and to reject “what aboutism” and relativism.

Palmer concludes by urging a robust defense of our country’s founding principles, democratic deliberations, and constitutional governance. Free market policies work far better than big government solutions, and facts and data can illuminate the prosperity gained through a dedication to liberty and the rule of law. Palmer also implores all Americans to learn to live together. We may have many political disagreements, but we should not hate our neighbors for having differing views. We are all citizens of the same great country. We must learn to live together, respect one another, rely on facts, data, and history to support our positions. We must stand up together against tyranny, statism, and “Oligarchical Collectivism.”