

Rebuilding Ukraine

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Submitted : March 2022, Published May 2022.

Citation: Safaa Bahjat. Ukraine Russia war time health crises. Middle East Journal of Business. 2022; 17(2): 22-27

DOI: 10.5742/MEJB.2022.93916

The moral imperative

It is blatantly apparent that dictators have no morals, hence in 2022 almost the entire world is in the situation where criminals and idiots rule their destined to fail empires, purely on the power dynamics of out of control evil and it seems that most of them have no conscience whatsoever about destroying all natural and cultural life on planet earth before they will deny their egos.

People's lives and livelihoods are not the only collateral damage in the unfathomable Russian invasion of the Ukraine. In Putin's scorched earth attempts to turn Ukraine into a shattered concrete wasteland, as he did in Syria (though the poor Syrians had no weapons to defend themselves with), he is also destroying priceless world heritage buildings some of which have stood since mediaeval times. It is to be noted that while fleeing for their lives some Ukrainians have tried to also protect their architectural and cultural heritage, along with their families.

UNESCO reports that at least 98 Ukrainian cultural and religious sites have been damaged or destroyed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine. UNESCO has used satellite images and witness reports to verify information provided by the Ukrainian authorities about the damaged sites.

Some of these sites and monuments will take time to rebuild and others probably cannot be rebuilt at all.

None of the Ukrainian sites confirmed as damaged are on the list of UNESCO World Heritage list, for example the Saint-Sophia Cathedral and monastic buildings of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra in the capital but Eloundou Assomo (an architect and heritage advisor appointed head of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre) warned that any targeting of buildings bearing the UNESCO-backed Blue Shield that signals cultural heritage "is a violation of international law and could also be considered a war crime."

Ukraine's rich architectural heritage



Mariyinski Palace



The Golden Gate



St. Michael's Monastery

Ukrainians Protecting their Cultural Heritage





Damage already incurred



It is to be hoped the insanity in this world caused by dictator's egos will soon end, and hopefully never recur, but this leaves the Ukrainian people with no homes or towns or public utilities to return to.

While "scorched earth" is likely Russia's plan toward genocide and de-nationalisation of Ukrainians, such is to be avoided at all costs for the sake of all humanity, and the Ukrainian people deserve to have their homeland rebuilt to a standard that can heal the great wrong committed against them and restore their pride in their country and also alleviate their cost of living.

When it comes to rebuilding Ukraine, new buildings and facilities should not only to be the best of sustainable architecture of the modern era, but, like inspiring architecture of old, it needs to restore spirit and trust, and heal the wounds of the brutal acts and violent war crimes against peaceful and innocent people.

Those landmark buildings that can be restored should be, but where they cannot be perhaps the world can help Ukraine build 'future proof' houses and cities – state of the art and totally sustainable buildings and facilities run by renewable energy.

Central Business Districts or City Centres have been particularly affected and they usually consist of high rise corporate towers of offices with retail premises at street level. The huge influx of workers to the CBDs in normal times also support a myriad of smaller businesses that cater to the needs of office workers, office supplies and food outlets being prime examples, as well as the lunchtime shopping of office workers. (Pocock/Shams)

We can rebuild all these places to generate their own power and retain their heat in winter. Solar power can be collected not only by photovoltaic solar panels on roofs and walls, but also through the use of state of the art construction materials.

A team of researchers from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) have developed solar paint that generates energy from water vapour. The paint works by absorbing moisture from the air and using solar energy to break the water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen can then be used to produce clean energy.

So far, the lifeblood of the solar industry has been traditional solar panels which are a well-proven technology that provide huge cost savings in both domestic and commercial buildings. However, the expense of rooftop panel installations often deters people from switching to solar energy.

Newly built cities can be readily converted to uplifting habitation precincts for city workers without the need for commuting from suburbia, with for example, the use of rooftop and vertical gardens, and the retail sector could extend to include more domestic facilities like supermarkets. Theatres, Art Galleries and Museums also attract out of city and inner city users and tourists, and will likely remain viable. (Pocock/Shams)

The new Ukrainian cities can even have inbuilt health security features such as temperature screening of people entering or even some form of UV disinfecting and automated facilities in washrooms and toilets. Architects and designers will increasingly call on antibacterial fabrics and finishes, including those that already exist and many other options will now be developed. (P/S)

Parks, gardens and fountains in new city centres are essential for both helping clean the air and cooling of the air in summer. Nature in the cities brings in birds and bird song and small animals into the city centres and uplifts the mood of the citizens in the way that only nature can.

The world responded to the fire in Notre Dame, Paris, in 2019 and circa \$200 million was donated from ordinary people around the world, as well as grants from various national and international organisations to rebuild Notre Dame to its former state.

The entire world is shocked and appalled by the barbarism of Russia's actions and while neighbouring countries have provided the most assistance, the rest of the world can help rebuild a clean and green Ukraine. It will provide a way to both help the Ukrainian people and to heal the wounds of all decent world citizens who have had to witness this barbarity.

Ukraine's new cities and towns should be the start of a new era in sustainable architecture and sustainable living and the development of such communities can be an educational process for all of us, as the real war on this planet is the survival of the human race and this travesty in Ukraine should be the end of our barbaric and senseless past, and the rebuilding of Ukraine should be a shining light to guide us to a new approach to living, by intelligent, decent and worthy people.

The reconstruction of Ukraine could become the epitome of what can lead us out of these darkest times. Ground Zero could develop a new and civilised meaning – the place where human history began again, where we saw the light and collectively changed to an intelligent species that is capable of managing a planet, a planet, our home, that was once a jewel in the universe.