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Volodymyr Ishchenko: “I feel that the Ukraine of my birth is lost forever”

Published on Facebook after the Russian invasion

Friday 25 February 2022, by [ISHCHENKO Volodymyr](#) (Date first published: 24 February 2022).

Many people from all over the world are starting to follow me [on social media]. There won't be any hot news reporting or hot takes on the military developments here. Personally, I am devastated and can't concentrate on anything but the news. I feel that the country I was born in is lost forever.

It feels like the continuation of the same process since November 2013, since the crackdown of the riot police on the Euromaidan protesters. The growing conviction that now it can develop only from bad to worse, and even worse, and even worse. The consequences of violence never simply dissipate. They contributed to a spiral of radicalization. There was some weak hope after Zelenskyi won but all the opportunities to break the vicious circle were shamefully missed. Emotionally, the horror of today feels like the culmination. But rationally, I understand that even worse things are ahead.

I anticipated a different Russian strategy, a slowly developing disaster of Ukraine's destabilization. Putin decided to accelerate the disaster.

Maybe the plan is for a quick surrender of Ukraine's government (like happened in Georgia in 2008) and forcing to recognize the Crimea annexation, step back on NATO membership, and some harsher version of the peace settlement. That's why allegedly no goal of occupation.

But the declared goal of “denazification” can hardly mean anything but a “regime change” and installing a pro-Russian government. I have already explained why it is going to be of weak legitimacy, unstable, and one of the most repressive on the post-Soviet space. I can't see how they can avoid a long de-facto occupation in support of the new government.

The sarcasm about “decommunization” of Ukraine in the earlier Putin's speech on Monday means a partition of Ukraine. One of the horrible projections I've read in one expert discussion was the strategy of “mowing the lawn”. This is what Israel does in the Western Bank and Sector Gaza. In Ukraine, it could mean creating an impoverished buffer grey zone between Russia or a part of Ukraine under pro-Russian government where any strong structures won't be allowed to grow.

The military defeat of Russia in Ukraine would mean the beginning of the end for Putin.

In any case, there would be drastic changes not only for Ukraine or Russia but the whole region and the world. The trope about the “new reality” is trivial but true. With more violence and repression than we've seen.

NATO is not fighting for Ukraine. They would arm the resistance planning to turn Ukraine into another Afghanistan for Russia. The US projects the fall of Kiev in 72-96 hours. Is it possible to stop

the war before that? The anti-war rallies in Russia today were small and looked like a typical opposition mobilization. Of course, they can grow larger and more diverse in case of massive casualties but it would be too late.

An elite coup-d'etat? The invasion means also changes in Putin's relation with Russian elite. It is assumed that many are not glad about breaking ties with the West. But it looks like they've been preparing for any of the possible sanctions long discussed. And not even fully implemented. Besides, Putin would hardly risk an invasion without China's support, which is now practically open.

Volodymyr Ishchenko

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