

Dear sir

Questions for the interview

1. How do you view the current situation in Ukraine?

Clearly Putin made several strategic miscalculations in invading Ukraine. First, he thought it would be a rapid, relatively bloodless operation and that Ukraine resistance would quickly collapse. Second, he thought that this invasion would split NATO and weaken the Alliance. Third, he did not expect a strong, united global negative reaction of sweeping and unprecedented sanctions.

So, he overestimated the competence and capabilities of his armed forces, he greatly underestimated the unity and fighting spirit of the Ukrainian people and forces, and he badly miscalculated the unity of NATO and the strong global actions to punish Russia for this aggression.

Putin has put himself in an untenable situation: he cannot withdraw, that would be a strategic defeat. On the other hand, the cost and pain to Russia to occupy Ukraine will grow exponentially. The longer it takes to occupy Ukraine, the worst it will be for Russian forces as the Ukrainian defenses and resistance grows stronger every day.

2. Do you think that NATO, the EU, and the US could help Ukraine more, or are sanctions against Russia and arms supplies is the maximum help?

I know that the US, NATO and the West are doing much more behind the scenes to support, train and arm the Ukrainian resistance. And these support networks are being put in place to help the Ukrainian armed resistance for a long war. Also, the world is answering the humanitarian crisis, supporting those countries that are receiving refugees with physical support, accelerated visa processing and other impactful actions to mitigate this humanitarian tragedy.

But the sale of Russian oil and gas is the "oxygen" for Putin, and the countries that continue to purchase oil and gas from Russia are directly providing Putin the resources he needs to continue his aggression. While it will be painful to Western economies in the short-term, we must cut off the purchase of Russian oil and gas as fast as possible. We must do more in this regard.

3. Could the war in Ukraine affect the security situation in the Western Balkans?

Yes, it could. Russia and its surrogates were opposed the Western Balkans integration into European institutions *before* the invasion of Ukraine. No one really knows what Putin will do next in reaction to the failure in Ukraine and the unprecedented international sanctions. So, he may try to destabilize the region to put pressure on the EU and the West.

4. Prime Minister Kurti, as well as some other politicians, have repeatedly said in recent days that it is necessary for Kosovo to join NATO as soon as possible. How realistic is that option at the moment?

NATO is at a strategic decision point — does it expand, now, while Russia is attacking Ukraine? Or does it delay expansion so as to not exacerbate tensions with Russia at this critical moment? I believe that NATO will not expand, for the moment, as the main objectives are to stop Russian aggression, contain the war and not escalate tensions or give Putin a pretext to expand the war.

5. How do you view the claims that the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 actually opened the door to Russia's current actions and that international law was violated at that time because the attack on Serbia was without the approval of the Security Council UN?

In Putin's view, the West has repeatedly humiliated Russia and this is one, in a long list of grudges, that he is irrationally using to justify this war. In reality, in the Balkans in the 1990s, the West and NATO acted to stop aggression, mass killings and forced deportation in 1999. However, in Putin's warped view of history, he has equated NATO's actions in the Balkans to justify the unjustified invasion of Ukraine. This, obviously, this is false equivalence, and we should reject this ridiculous narrative.

6. How will the war in Ukraine end and will Russia withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea?

Putin will not accept a defeat, he will follow the same strategy that we have witnessed in Grozny and Syria, he will blast and rubble his way into Ukraine. He will indiscriminately use firepower to destroy the resistance and destroy anything in the path of his forces.

I expect that he will put a puppet regime in place and occupy most, or all, of Ukraine. But this war will be an increasingly grinding and costly campaign as the Ukraine resistance will extract a high cost in blood and treasure from Russian forces. I think we will see a long period of violence in Ukraine with a very active, well-organized, motivated and well-resourced resistance that will extract a high cost to Russian forces.

7. How do you view the fact that Serbia voted in the UN for a resolution condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine?

I think that the Serbian leadership did a cost-benefit assessment and realized that continued support to Russia was a dead-end and suicidal. Serbia's only real future is in alignment with the West, and it had to support international actions to condemn Russia. Russia has made itself an international pariah state and Serbia acted in its best interests. Now, Europe and the West must support Serbia's integration with open doors to western economies and institutions.

8. Over the past two weeks, many politicians from Kosovo have stated that Serbia could attack Kosovo, like Russia Ukraine. How realistic is such a scenario at all and whether such statements unnecessarily raise tensions?

I do not see that. The strong and comprehensive sanctions and punishment that Russia has incurred will serve as a strong deterrent to any aggression in the Balkans.

NATO, the EU, and the international community will punish any attacks against Kosovo and the cost of any aggression would be prohibitive.