

Why Putin Can't Allow Ukraine to Succeed and Why the West Must Make Sure It Does

Opinion

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At a time when many in Western capitals seem to have grown tired of the Ukrainian crisis brought on by the Russian Anschluss of Crimea and invasion of the Donbas and want to focus on Moscow alone, Vladislav Inozemtsev's argument is critical: If the West really wants Russia to change in the ways it says it does, then the West must make sure Ukraine succeeds.

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": In the course of a wide-ranging discussion in advance of the release of his new book on Russia now, Moscow economist Vladislav Inozemtsev provides perhaps the most compelling argument yet on why Vladimir Putin will do everything he can to ensure that Ukraine fails in its efforts to become a modern state and why the West must make sure it succeeds. Arguing that Russia at present is not threatened by disintegration and that as a result, the Kremlin may not feel compelled to make major changes in its manner of rule, the commentator says that Russia may only "begin to change if an attractive example of what such changes could bring were to appear" (znak.com/2017-05-15/ekonomist_vladislav_inozemcev_o_tom_kogda_rossiya_smozhet_postroit_de_mokratiyu). "Only Ukraine," he says, could play that role and "shake up" Russia; but it could do so only if it were to be rapidly "transformed into a developed Western country, become a member of the European Union by 2025, and thus become 'a new Jerusalem' showing the way to the future for former Soviet republics. But so far, Inozemtsev continues, the Kremlin has been "lucky" in that in Kyiv, one kleptocrat has replaced another in power while "talented young people flee" and there is "complete stagnation as far as reforms are concerned." And growing Ukrainian Russophobia which Putin has sponsored by his actions works to the Kremlin leader's advantage. As a result, for Russians as Putin intends, Ukraine "has become an example of how not to act – and this is the most powerful factor which in our days strengthens the Russian regime," the commentator says, adding that in his view, "all the members of the Kyiv council of ministers should be awarded order 'For services to the [Russian] fatherland' of various degrees." At a time when many in Western capitals seem to have grown tired of the Ukrainian crisis brought on by the Russian Anschluss of Crimea and invasion of the Donbas and want to focus on Moscow alone, Inozemtsev's argument is critical: If the West really wants Russia to change in the ways it says it does, then the West must make sure Ukraine succeeds. That won't be easy, but the Moscow commentator has performed a useful service by reminding everyone that what is at stake in Ukraine is not just Ukraine and its heroic people but the fate of Russia and much else.

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and

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