



Andrei Illarionov: Putin was preparing war for 11 years, it will be long

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The Kremlin expects the war with Ukraine to become a part of the “fourth world war”.

Andrei Illarionov, a former advisor to the Russian president and now a senior fellow at the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity (Washington), said it at a conference in Brussels, UNIAN reports.

The expert is confident that the events in Ukraine cannot be called “the crisis in Ukraine or the Ukrainian crisis”. “This is not a crisis. This is a war. The war in the simplest meaning of the word,” he said.

“This is a Russian-Ukrainian war. To be more precise, this is Putin's war against Ukraine. Most Russians do not support the war. Putin's war against Ukraine is already a long-term one,” the expert is confident.

Speaking about the duration of the war, Illarionov said he was sure that the preparation took at least 11 years. “Since 2003. I can say that certain questions relating to the future war with Ukraine were discussed in my presence. I didn't think the talks would really lead to a real war,” he said.

The expert recalled the year 2004, when preparations for the future occupation and annexation of Crimea were checked during the Orange Revolution. In 2008, Russian Journal published the leaked plan of the military command, “in which you will see a detailed draft project of a war against Ukraine”. Information about actions to support separatists in Ukraine began to appear in 2009.

“So, they were preparing the war for a long time. The other matter is that it is a long war that has been continuing for more than 16 months. It was officially launched on July 27, 2013, by Putin's speech in Kyiv on the occasion of the anniversary of the baptism of Kyivan Rus. You can find here clear remarks about the start of the hybrid campaign, an intervention, but not a war,” he thinks.

“Unfortunately, the war won't end in the nearest time,” Illarionov thinks. “We see what Putin says and what he does. We have faced a long-term war. But this is not only Putin's war against Ukraine,” the expert is confident.

He recalled problems with Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Transnistria and Kazakhstan. “Putin said Kazakhstan didn't have historical statehood. It means that the state without historical statehood can lose it when Nazarbayev is not here,” the expert said, pointing at the events in Latgale, a region in eastern Latvia with Russian-speaking population, in the past few weeks.

“He [Putin] has the same intention he had in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. He uses the same approach. This is not a challenge only to post-Soviet countries. This is a challenge for the entire EU and NATO. And there's no answer to the challenge,” Illarionov said.

The expert says these actions are aimed at “breaking Europe's order of the last few decades”.

Illarionov also turned attention to Putin's latest speeches in Valdai and Sochi “that are important for any European policy”. He compared the speeches to Adolf Hitler's letters to UK prime minister Chamberlain on 23 and 25 August 1939, in which Hitler offered to change the world order.

The expert says the letters and Putin's speeches have 25 common points. “Almost the same words, sentences and ideas. We spoke some months ago about Putin's idea to restore the so called “Russian world”. The idea is out-of-date now. Ambitions are more far-reaching. They include the proposals to change the world order, the international system existing since World War II. We now see not just regional problems, such as Putin's war against Ukraine or a war against neighbours in the post-Soviet area, but a war against the EU and NATO. It is an intention to change the entire world order,” Illarionov said.

According to him, Putin and “his propaganda machinery said clearly that it is the fourth world war”. “It is obviously for you if you listen to them. They regard the cold war as the third world war and say the fourth world war must change the game rules,” the expert thinks.

Illarionov mentioned two aspects of the confrontation. “This is an information war, or to be more precise, a disinformation war in all languages that creates a new vision of the world order. Unfortunately, we have to admit that they have achieved certain success both in Russia and other countries,” he said.

Another aspect is what the former president's advisor calls “nuclear blackmail”. “This is the most dangerous thing. Any responsible politician in Europe or America will do his best to prevent a nuclear war. The message of the Valdai-Sochi speeches is very clear: you must accept the new world order, otherwise I will threaten you with nuclear weapons. This is the challenge that the world cannot respond to yet,” the experts said about Putin's speeches.

Illarionov is confident the war can end “only when Russia becomes a free democratic state”. “Risks and threats will exist for as long as Russia remains dictatorial,” Illarionov thinks.