



If Russia takes Ukraine, insurgency could be Putin's nightmare

By James Stavridis

IF RUSSIA invades Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin will face an immediate and difficult choice: how far to go. Most analysts believe he will probably move forward with an invasion, but is likely to have his military stop within the pro-Russian enclaves of southeastern Ukraine. This would allow him to declare independence for the Donbas region and secure a "land bridge" from Russia proper to its annexed territory in Crimea.

But what if he decides to drive to Kyiv, and overturn the democratically elected government of President Volodymyr Zelenskiy? Putin has positioned enough firepower on the border — troops, tanks, missiles — as well as naval and cyberwarfare assets to conduct a shock-and-awe campaign similar to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

This is something the US and Western allies are thinking about seriously. In the aftermath of such a total invasion, would there be a strong Ukrainian resistance movement? And what would the West do to support it?

In my visits to Ukraine as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's military commander, I found its troops and government officials to be fiercely proud of their language, heritage, and national sovereignty. Ukrainian troops deployed to Afghanistan under my command, and also participated in several other NATO missions. What they may have lacked in training and equipment they made up through determination and toughness.

The Ukrainian collective memory stretches back through many involvements with Russian troops in the interwar years of the 20th century, during the famines and fighting of World War II, and during the Cold War years of the

Soviet Union. As Timothy Snyder points out in his book *Bloodlands*, the Ukrainians suffered greatly and at the hands of Russians over the past century. They can and will fight. And the Western democracies can help.

The US has been on both sides of insurgencies, of course. It fought a long war in Vietnam that it ultimately lost to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. More recently, the Taliban simply outlasted US patience in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Washington supported a successful insurgency, ironically, against the Soviets during their occupation of Afghanistan — American Stinger missiles may have been the key technology that helped turn the tide. Allied support to the French resistance in World War II was a crucial element in undermining German control over the population in the months leading up to D-Day.

This kind of support can be done clandestinely, led by the Central Intelligence Agency. But in the situation of a democracy overrun by an authoritarian neighbor, there seems little value in hiding the ball. If the US makes the decision that it will support a potential Ukrainian resistance movement, it should be laying the groundwork immediately, while Russian tanks are still parked on the other side of the border.

This means getting supplies into the hands of Ukrainian special forces, who would be a central part of such a resistance force. They would need the ability to move out of the population centers, organize and live off the land, communicate collectively, and, above all, inflict damage on the occupiers.

This implies a need for transportable explosives, light but lethal handheld missiles to use against Russian tanks and close-air support, and plenty of conven-

tional ammunition and hardware including sniper rifles, high-end optical sights and night vision devices. Cyberwarfare support would be a must. And trainers in-country — both military and CIA.

One key would be for the Zelenskiy government to get out of Kyiv before the Russians consolidated control. The government-in-exile should be welcomed in a NATO capital, and provided full support from the alliance administratively and diplomatically. It should continue to function via its system of ambassadors worldwide, and communicate effectively with the resistance leadership within the country. The model of Charles de Gaulle's Free French government — despite occasionally being a challenge to the World War II allies — would be suitable.

And much as the mujahideen of the 1980s gradually turned Afghanistan in a killing field for Russian troops, so could a well-

armed and supported resistance force make Ukraine a very deadly experience. This would entail cutting Russian supply lines, targeting senior officers, destroying Russian heavy equipment, using cybertools to damage Russian command and control, and rallying the populace for civil resistance (strikes, shop closures, and transportation shutdowns).

No one wants to see an invasion of Ukraine, and we should all hope diplomacy and common sense will prevail. And if Putin chooses to unleash his forces, it's likely they will be limited to the southeast of the country.

But combat has a way of getting out of control, of climbing the ladder of escalation. If Russian tanks roll across the Dnieper River to the capital, Ukrainians will fight — and a powerful resistance movement may be the best hope. The West should preparing now to help. ■

BLOOMBERG OPINION

Interview no-show and the Marcos myths

It was disappointing that Bongbong Marcos opted not to participate in Jessica Soho's presidential interview last month. Although I am aware that he has much to avoid, I never thought of him as a man who would easily back down from public discourse. His refusal to participate confirmed two of my assumptions about him. First, that he is unable to defend his family's wealth, human rights record, and his personal achievements in a serious interview. And second, that he would rather let trolls fight his wars for him through half-truths and disinformation.

What are the issues Marcos Jr. cannot seem to defend? What are the questions he is hesitant to answer?

Through well-produced videos, memes, and messages on social media, certain myths have formed about the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos and about Marcos Jr. himself. Some of these myths cannot be defended in an intelligent, fact-based interview.

Myth No. 1. That the 1970s, under martial law, was the golden era of the country. It was the era when the country was prosperous and when poverty did not exist.

Here are the facts. During the 21 years that Marcos was in charge, the economy grew by an average rate of only 3.8%. We were left behind by Thailand and Malaysia whose economies grew by 6-7%.

The peso depreciated from a strong P3.92 to one US dollar in 1965 to P19.99 in 1986 — a 500% loss in value; real wages (spending power) plummeted from

NUMBERS DON'T LIE ANDREW J. MASIGAN

P100/day in 1966 to just P27/day in 1986; per capita income increased by only three-fold over 21 years while it increased 10-fold in Thailand and Malaysia; unemployment was at 7.2% in 1965 and surged to 33% in 1986; poverty rates were at 7.2% in 1965 and rose to a staggering 44.2% in 1986.

By the time Marcos was ousted, the Philippines was among the poorest countries in Asia where per capita income was below that of Japan, Singapore, Brunei, Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Maldives, Thailand, and even Mongolia.

We lost competitiveness in most of our industries. Martial law gave Marcos extraordinary legislative and executive powers which he used to sequester successful industrial companies such as those in auto manufacturing, steel mills, and textile mills. These companies were taken over by cronies, all of whom failed to sustain their profitability. The failure was due in one part to corruption and in another part to the sheer lack of management expertise. Marcos selected his cronies not for their talents but for their loyalty.

In agriculture, the cronies were made to establish monopolies to give the dictator absolute economic control of the sector. As court records indicate, Danding Cojuangco controlled the coconut industry, Juan Ponce Enrile controlled logging, and Roberto Benedicto controlled sugar.



These industries eventually collapsed too.

The martial law era was not the golden years of the Philippines, rather, it was the time of our great fall from one of the richest countries in Asia to one of the poorest.

Myth No. 2. That the Marcos era was the heyday of infrastructure.

Here are the facts. With borrowed funds, Marcos established the Construction and Development Corporation of the Philippines (CDCP). While it is true that

roads, bridges, and classrooms were built by the CDCP, large chunks of funds fell into personal pockets. It was the same story for the power sector, the housing sector, and the transport sector.

History further shows that the infrastructure projects were often over-engineered, designed to extract maximum commissions or kickbacks.

Prestige projects like the Cultural Center, the Coconut Palace, and Folk Arts Theatre gave the image of progress but yielded little or no economic returns. They

were built to create an illusion of prosperity, all of which were funded by debt.

Speaking of debt — from a foreign debt of only \$600 million when Marcos took office in 1965, foreign obligations increased 43X to an eye watering \$26 billion by 1986. In October 1983, the Marcos government ran out of dollar reserves and had no option but to declare a debt moratorium. To keep the economy afloat, Marcos resorted to short term loans at high interest rates. By 1986, Our debts were so massive that debt service alone accounted for half of the country's exports. This resulted in a currency crisis and the need to devalue the peso even more.

Economist agree that the Philippine economic collapse of the 1980s was due to Marcos' debt-driven economic policy. The heavy debt load was also the reason why succeeding governments in the 1990s and early 2000s could not invest much on infrastructure and social services.

Myth No. 3. Marcos fought the Oligarchs.

The fact is, Marcos was the oligarch of oligarchs. In 1998, Imelda bragged in an *Inquirer* interview, and I quote: "We practically own everything in the Philippines, from electricity, telecommunications, airlines, banking, beer, tobacco, newspaper publishing, television stations, shipping, oil, mining, hotels and beach resorts, down to coconut milling, small farms, real estate and insurance."

Successful companies were sequestered by Marcos from hard-working entrepreneurs. But because the Marcoses and their cronies had little manage-

ment expertise, these companies eventually fell into bankruptcy. This is why the Philippines lost its economic competitiveness in multiple industries.

Myth No. 4. Marcos Jr. is the most prepared and the most trustworthy presidential candidate.

We all know that Marcos Jr. lied about his academic credentials, lied to the courts about his family's ill-gotten wealth, lied about human rights abuses, and failed to file his income tax returns. How can a liar and a tax delinquent be considered trustworthy?

As for his governance abilities, the best reference is to look at Ilocos Norte. Marcos Jr. and his kin controlled Ilocos Norte for decades. Yet, it remains one of the poorest regions in the country where the majority live from hand to mouth. A quick look at NEDA statistics on regional GDP proves this. They have no world class industries to speak of. The Bangui wind farm, for which Marcos Jr. takes credit, was not built by him but by Northwind Power, an Ayala subsidiary.

Interviews and debates are meant to reveal the real mettle of a candidate. They are meant to clarify doubts and shed light on grey areas. By refusing to be interviewed, it is clear that Marcos Jr. prefers to live in the shadows — relying on trolls to propagate the myths. ■

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