

Taras Kuzio: Putin's cold, callous and calculated threat to Ukraine and European security

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An Ukrainian girl cries as she stands on the road with her luggage after she left her home near the village of Hrabove (Grabovo), some 80km east of Donetsk on August 2, 2014. The insurgent stronghold of Lugansk in eastern Ukraine is on the verge a humanitarian catastrophe, the mayor warned Saturday, as a siege by government troops has seen water, electricity and food supplies cut off. AFP PHOTO/ BULENT KILIC

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The European Union in consultation with the United States, Canada and its international allies has adopted long over due third stage sectoral sanctions against Russia. The reasons are due to Russian President Vladimir Putin's cold, callous and calculated old-fashioned imperialism towards Ukraine and his threat to European security.

The West long harboured illusions about both Putin and former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich only to eventually reach the conclusion they were kleptocratic liars, cold and violent thugs.

This was already evident in the case of Putin as soon as he came to power with allegations the FSB, the domestic successor to the KGB that he had been an officer in, blowing up apartments to re-ignite the Chechen conflict, in the massive war crimes committed in Grozny and against Chechens and Russian-backed separatism and ethnic cleansing in Georgia. Yanukovich's two jail sentences and ties to organised crime should have provided a reliable guide to his likely brutal behaviour in asset stripping Ukraine, murdering unarmed Euromaidan protesters and with big brother Putin fomenting Donetsk terrorism.

Putin and Yanukovich are cold through and through without a morsel of human empathy for those who have suffered at their hands, either the 600 Russians blown up in their apartments and innocent passengers on MH17 or the thousands killed, wounded, abducted, tortured and displaced during the EuroMaidan and Donbas separatism.

Putin's callousness was evident in the aftermath of the downing of the Kursk submarine and after the shooting down of MH17. Russian leaders not only brazenly lied but displayed complete disrespect for the innocent victims that included 80 children. Indeed, lying has always been an integral component of Soviet and post-Soviet leaders repertoire.

Passengers remains were left to rot in the heat, their personal belongings were rifled through, credit cards and mobile phones were used by the terrorists, and Dutch and Australian investigators are still blocked from visiting the crash site.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay reported this week, following Amnesty International's lengthy report issued earlier this month, that the terrorist criminals have abducted, tortured and murdered over a thousand innocent local politicians, public officials and 'employees of the local coalmining industry.' Pillay said 'The majority are ordinary citizens, academics, teachers, journalists, members of the clergy and students.'

Russia unleashed criminals and mercenaries in east Ukraine whose defeat is imminent because they have never been seen as "liberators" by Ukraine's Russian speakers. Putin's Russian chauvinism has produced a xenophobic and Ukrainophobic that has destroyed tens of thousands of Russian, Chechen and Ukrainian lives and hundreds of innocent MH17 passengers.

Putin is calculated and assumed the EU would continue to talk of 'red lines' that would become meaningless. The same was after all true of the numerous 'red lines' issued and always ignored made towards Yanukovich over the incompatibility of his imprisonment of opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko with European values.

But, on this occasion the EU stood firm when it - and the entire world - became sickened by Putin's coldness and callousness. Without Russian massive military and intelligence support the Donbas terrorists would have long ago been defeated and with Ukrainian forces advancing and his proxies on the run Putin had to either admit defeat or up the ante. Sending advanced BUK surface to air missiles was meant to deny Ukrainians the air superiority that was proving devastating against the terrorists but ended up instead exposing Putin's real face to the world.

Following the shooting down of MH17, instead of backing down Putin expanded the supply of high-tech military equipment to his proxy forces and launched missile attacks from Russian into Ukrainian territory, as revealed in satellite images released by the Pentagon. This calculated affront to international order




and human decency successfully united the West for the first time in its attitudes to Putin and Russian imperialism.

Yanukovych and his cronies fled to Russia six months ago and they will never renew their political influence in Ukraine. The Party of Regions popularity is in the doldrums, its candidate won only three per cent in the May elections and its oligarch backers are either awaiting deportation in Vienna to stand trial in the US (Dmytro Firtash) or in hiding in Ukraine afraid to travel to Europe (Rinat Akhmetov).

Putin on the other hand remains in power with high levels of support whipped up by nationalist fervour on state controlled television and he remains a threat to European security and the global order. US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey said 'Russia had made the conscious decision to use its military force inside of another sovereign nation to achieve its objective for the first time probably since 1939.'

If Czechoslovakia and Poland were the first casualties of Nazism seven decades ago, Ukraine is the first casualty of today's 'Putler,' as Ukrainians describe the Russian President. Europe has finally woken up to the threat of a new fascism in Europe.

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