



UKRAINIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Асоціація Українських Правників Америки

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ANALYTICAL STATEMENT:

Is Ukraine the Canary in the European Coal Mine?

An invasion and occupation of another European country's territory constitutes what German chancellor Angela Merkel has accurately described as conduct reflective of the law of the jungle. Such conduct is in itself dangerous to the Euro-Atlantic region's safety and stability. But when it is combined with a host of other factors involving authoritarianism, recently introduced indicia of totalitarianism, and a toxic and delusional ideology then such conduct becomes so alarming as to require sustained, resolute and severe counter measures beginning with economic and political sanctions and, if such conduct continues, possibly even military counter measures.

Russian president Putin's invasion and occupation of Crimea are not merely the actions of a bully, which would be bad enough. It is incontrovertible that his Russia is an authoritarian state in which he controls the legislature and judiciary as well as traditional media. But what is worse, he and his former colleagues at the KGB who are now his closest advisors have recently launched a campaign to silence the remaining independent media voices in Russia by, for example, replacing the longtime editor-in-chief of the news agency Lenta.ru with a Kremlin toady and forcing all major cable providers to remove Dozhd, an independent news outlet, from the air. This makes it possible for the Putin regime to lie about what is happening in Ukraine with impunity. And given the highly centralized and controlled "management" of the news and thus of public debate, it should not be surprising that opinion surveys show that a majority of Russians are supportive of Putin's aggression in Ukraine.

But it is the toxic ideology and worldview prevalent among Putin and his former KGB officers that when added to the above set of factors evokes even greater concern. Putin has famously stated that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geo-political catastrophe of the 20th century. Given that the Soviet Union had the blood of many millions on its hands and also caused the enslavement in the Gulag of still other millions, Putin's opinion about the Soviet Union constitutes a pathological view of history (imagine if, for example, a post-war German chancellor had stated that the defeat of the Third Reich was the greatest geo-political disaster of the 20th century). But it is the popularity of the so-called Eurasian project that is outright alarming.

Alexandr Dugin is reported to be the chief ideologist of Eurasianism, an ideology that, according to most accounts, is supported by Putin. Dugan has explained that the Eurasian movement seeks to restore Russian power and prestige, and he has written that the new Eurasian empire will be constructed on the basic principle of opposition to the common enemy, namely, Atlanticism and the American New World Order. After Russia invaded Crimea, Dugan wrote an article in his blog in which he predicted cataclysmic events in Ukraine, which he elsewhere describes as not being a real nation, and the establishment of a new "Continental Association" (another name for the Eurasian union) led by Russia that will stretch from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

This all sounds a bit nutty, except we need to remind ourselves that similar things may have been thought about the musings of an itinerant painter from Austria when he wrote his *Mein Kampf*. Since the Eurasian project sounds nutty, the natural reaction is to laugh it off as about as likely of success as transforming the moon into green cheese. But the issue is not likelihood of success, but the likelihood of attempts at actualization. The idea of a thousand year Reich was preposterous too, but it was the *attempt* to actualize that fantasy that caused more than a little mischief.

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