



Written by [James Heiser](#) on July 16, 2014

Ukraine's Civil War Has "Irreversible Consequences"

After months of supplying pro-Russian militants waging civil war in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, Moscow is now warning Kiev of the "[irreversible consequences](#)" of a single shell that was allegedly fired from within Ukraine and landed on Russian territory.



According to Moscow, one Russian was killed in the incident. Ukrainian analysts believe that, following the accidental shelling, [the Russian military is directly responsible](#) for shooting down a Ukrainian transport aircraft which was flying at an elevation of over 21,000 feet — a distance far outside the range of weapons in the possession of pro-Russian militants. And [Reuters reports](#) that Ukrainian officials are claiming that Russian officers may be overtly fighting side by side with anti-Kiev forces:

Accusing Russia of embarking on a course of escalation in Ukraine's eastern regions, National and Security Council spokesman Andriy Lysenko told journalists: "In the past 24 hours, deployment of [Russian] units and military equipment across the border from the Sumy and Luhansk border points was noticed. The Russian Federation continues to build up troops on the border."

NATO said Russia had increased its forces along the border and now has 10,000-12,000 troops in the area.

Moscow's seemingly disproportionate response to the single shell that landed on Russian soil may mark a movement on the part of Vladimir Putin to establish a casus belli. For perspective, [at least 110 Ukrainians were killed](#) between January 22 and February 20 of this year during the Euromaidan protests in Kiev that ultimately caused the pro-Moscow kleptocratic president, Viktor Yanukovich, to flee to Russia. (The Ukrainian parliament then followed the constitutional procedure for selection of a new president.) A [March 30 article for the online site The Daily Beast](#) offered seemingly irrefutable proof that the Russian-trained "Alfa Team" of the Ukraine's state security service — under Yanukovich's control — systematically murdered protesters, killing 53 individuals on February 20 alone.

Since the beginning of the Russian-backed civil war in Donetsk and Luhansk, at least 550 people have been killed. Given the ferocity of the fighting that has transpired within Ukraine near the Russian border, Moscow's official reaction to a single shell landing across the border is extreme — especially since a steady stream of men and materiel has been flowing from Russia into Ukraine's eastern oblasts. Thus far, Ukraine has demonstrated restraint in striking at the flow of "volunteers" and military hardware — at least as long as they remained in Russian territory — because Ukraine is endeavoring to avoid war with Russia, while some of the leading voices within Russia have been demanding a war against Ukraine for months.

Opposition sources within Russia have noted that the Putin regime has expended vast amounts of money to prepare the nation's military for a new war. According to [Boris Nemtsov](#), since 2011, "military spending has risen 80 percent, and spending on the special services [intelligence] and police has gone up 50 percent." As Paul Noble [recently wrote](#) concerning Nemtsov's data, this shift in budgetary priorities has caused profound hardship throughout Russia:



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The central Russian budget has also cut financing, with inflation taken into account, to the regions by 40 percent over the past four years. Given that the Kremlin has imposed a wide range of unfunded liabilities, it is no surprise that many regional governments are in debt and have had to freeze development projects, pay and benefits.

Putin is endeavoring to establish a Eurasian Union as a geopolitical force capable of overcoming the influence of the United States on the global stage. But the Eurasian Union requires the involvement of Ukraine if the union is to advance Putin's goals.

In the immediate aftermath of the Euromaidan protests, [Timothy Snyder reported for the New York Review of Books](#) that even during the protests, Moscow feared that Yanukovich's loss of control could endanger prospects of incorporating Ukraine in the new Eurasian Union:

The course of the protest has very much been influenced by the presence of a rival project, based in Moscow, called the Eurasian Union. This is an international commercial and political union that does not yet exist but that is to come into being in January 2015. The Eurasian Union, unlike the European Union, is not based on the principles of the equality and democracy of member states, the rule of law, or human rights.

On the contrary, it is a hierarchical organization, which by its nature seems unlikely to admit any members that are democracies with the rule of law and human rights. Any democracy within the Eurasian Union would pose a threat to Putin's rule in Russia. Putin wants Ukraine in his Eurasian Union, which means that Ukraine must be authoritarian, which means that the Maidan must be crushed.

Having failed to crush the Ukrainians in the Euromaidan protests, Putin's proxies in Luhansk and Donetsk endeavor to add their territories to those that were already illegally seized by Russia in Crimea. In short, the "desirable" portions of Ukraine may be severed from the nation in a piecemeal fashion.

In 2005, Putin declared that the "collapse" of the Soviet Union was "[the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century](#)," and his promotion of the Eurasianist ideology from the fringes of Russian society to the center of his geopolitical strategy lends support to the formation of Evraziia, the Eurasian Movement, and gives a public platform to the ideologists of Eurasianism.

[Aleksandr Dugin](#), Russia's chief ideologist of the doctrine of Eurasianism, caused widespread outrage when he purportedly called for the murder of Ukrainians, declaring in a [May 6 interview with Anna-News](#) that it was time to "kill, kill, kill. There should be no more talking. As a professor, this is how I think." The international outrage that resulted from his comments led to Dugin being suspended from the faculty of Moscow State University, though the suspension has had no measurable effect on his public activities in Russia and abroad.

Beginning in Kiev, and now in the battle for eastern Ukraine, Putin appears to be finding it hard to build a Eurasian Union out of the states of the old Soviet Union. But there are many Russians — especially among the young — who pine for the "[glory days](#)" of the U.S.S.R., and the architects of the Eurasian Union may prove as bloodthirsty in the pursuit of their goals as the Bolsheviks were in their own day.

Photo of Ukrainian protestor: AP Images



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