

The Putin Problem

What does Putin want? It's not clear. It's likely he wants more than Ukraine. Those who believed that he would stop with South Ossetia and Abkhazia were wrong.

What drives Putin? Avenging the humiliation of the USSR is a clear motivation. Having held arbitrary power within the KGB, he longs to exercise it again. He does so within Russian territory but he longs to exercise it at least to the extent of the old Soviet boundaries.

How does Putin operate? He sows discord among his enemies. He knows when to hold and when to fold but he's always at the table. He doesn't need allies, only that his enemies are not completely aligned. He relies on his enemies not being committed to action, a glimmer of fear, a seam of pacifism.

He lives by obfuscation, behaves erratically, arbitrarily and disingenuously. In a word, he is capricious.

Those who engage him are bewildered by his irrationality, a gambit he employs well. They misread him. The illogic is designed to confuse and to conceal a deeper logic which is only revealed when it is too late. Putin needs to be dealt with firmly. Europe's prevarication plays into his hands. Their measured and considered approach is based more in hope than experience and they will pay for it. This man does not mean to stop at Ukraine. Nor are his ambitions circumscribed by geography. He is a danger to Europe and to world order. Deal with him meekly and the world will pay.