A few days ago, Russian troops invaded Ukraine. The movement of Russian troops went far beyond removing Ukrainian forces from the Donbass region that they have occupied and challenged for the past eight years. The uproar from Western nations was as predictable as it was hypocritical. In 2014 an American backed coup took place against the lawfully elected and legitimate government of Ukraine. The silence then at this blatantly undemocratic move from western nations was stunning.

The two regions of the Donbass, and the island of Crimea declared their independence. In Crimea’s case the government held a referendum of the people. They overwhelmingly (more than 90%) voted to leave Ukraine and apply to re-join Russia. The word “re-join” is used advisedly. Crimea had been part of Russia for hundreds of years until 1954 when the then Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev gifted Crimea to Ukraine. Neither the Russian parliament, nor, more significantly, the Crimean people were consulted.

The western attitude to Crimea has been marked by hypocrisy ever since it voted to re-join Russia. The British, for example, have refused to recognise the legitimacy of Crimea’s actions. Late last year a British war ship violated Crimea waters and had to be chased away by a Russian warship.

The two Donbass republics have had a hard time of it since their similar declaration that they wished no part of the new Ukrainian government. It is not an overstatement to call that government fascist, a fact that seems not to trouble western governments that are now loudly proclaiming Ukraine’s right to be free of Russian interference.

Among those western nations that have condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine are France and Germany. These
two nations are part of the Normandy grouping that negotiated a settlement of the Donbass problem. They then did
nothing for the next eight years as Ukraine refused to implement the agreement to which they had been a party. The
protestations that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a violation of international law rings especially hollow. For eight
years they have remained silent, not only on Ukraine’s refusal to abide by the terms of an agreement that they had
willingly signed, but worse, waged war against the two Donbass regions.

The arrogance and hubris of the Australian government has been especially notable. The Prime Minister and the
Opposition Labor Party have both condemned the Russian move. In Australia’s case they have gone so far as to shut
down the Russian television channel Russia Today and prevented it from being broadcast in the country. Even the
Americans have not gone that far.

The actions of the Australian government in isolating Russia for its invasion of Ukraine demonstrates a particular
historical blindness. Australia has been a consistent cheerleader and willing participant in multiple acts of United
States aggression around the world. Australian troops willingly joined the United States invasion of South Vietnam
and waged war against the North. This was despite overwhelming evidence that the initial justification for the war,
an alleged attack on a United States warship in Vietnamese waters, was manifestly a staged operation. Australian
participation in that war lasted more than a decade before the newly elected Labor government withdrew Australian
troops, an act that earned the Australian Labor Party the enmity of the Americans who were instrumental in the
overthrow of that government three years later.

Obviously, no lessons were learnt by Australia as in 2001 they willingly joined the United States invasion and
occupation of Afghanistan. That was only ended last year with the ignominious withdrawal of United States troops
from that country. It is notable that the Americans loyal allies, including Australia, were not consulted about that
decision. The result was an ignominious and rapid withdrawal of Australian forces and the messy betrayal of
thousands of Afghan citizens who had been employed by the Australians.

The invasion of Afghanistan was followed in short order by an equally illegal and unjustified invasion of Iraq. The
difference here however, is that 18 years later Australian troops still occupy Iraq and have refused a demand from
the Iraqi government that they should leave. In that decision, Australia simply looked once again the to United States
who similarly refused to leave Iraq.

This history is worth bearing in mind when one listens to the sanctimonious prattle of the Australian Prime Minister
talking about the sanctity of national borders and the right of governments to be free of the fear of invasion and
occupation. It is a lesson that his own government should heed, but that is unlikely to happen.

We are many more examples where the Australian government has refused to condemn, this alone sanction,
egregious acts by foreign powers.

One has to look no further than the actions of the state of Israel. Its treatment of its own Palestinian population, the
illegal seizure and takeover of the Syrian Golan Heights and Israel’s constant bombing of Syrian territory are all
subjects that were met with complete silence from the Australian government.

It may well be that Russia has gone too far in invading Ukraine. One sincerely hopes that the matter will be resolved
and Russian troops can return to their own country. But the west is far from justified in sanctimonious condemnation
of the Russian move. There is an old biblical saying, “those who are without sin amongst you, cast the first stone.”
There are precious few western governments that are in a position to throw that stone.

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